

**West of England Combined Authority
WECA Overview & Scrutiny Committee**

Monday, 4 April 2022, Times Not Specified
Bristol City Hall Council Chamber
3 Rivergate, Bristol BS1 6ER

Present:

Cllr Winston Duguid, Bath and North East Somerset
Cllr Hal MacFie, Bath and North East Somerset Council
Cllr Geoff Gollop, Bristol City Council
Cllr Ed Plowden, Bristol City Council
Cllr Brenda Massey, Bristol City Council

Cllr Steve Pearce, Bristol City Council
Cllr Andrew Varney, Bristol City Council
Cllr Brian Allinson, South Gloucestershire Council
Cllr James Arrowsmith, South Gloucestershire Council
Tristan Clark, South Gloucestershire Council

Officers In Attendance:

Patricia Greer, Chief Executive
Stephen Gerrard, Interim Director of Legal and Democratic Services
Richard Ennis, Interim Director of

Katherine Vowles, Interim Director of Infrastructure

Also In Attendance

Metro Mayor Dan Norris
Cllr Huw James, North Somerset Council
Cllr Mike Bird, North Somerset Council

Apologies:

Cllr James Arrowsmith, South Gloucestershire Council (Cllr Tristan Clark attended as substitute)

Cllr John Ashe, South Gloucestershire Council
Cllr Peter Crew, North Somerset Council

Minutes

1	Evacuation Procedure The evacuation procedure was noted.
2	Apologies for absence Apologies for absence had been received from Cllr John Ashe and Cllr James Arrowsmith. Cllr Tristan Clark attended as substitute member on behalf of Cllr Arrowsmith. Cllr Peter Crew, North Somerset Council, also sent his apologies.
3	Declarations of Interest under the Localism Act 2011 There were no declarations of interest declared in relation to the Localism Act 2011.
4	Minutes The minutes of the meeting held on 24 January 2022 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair, subject to the correction to note that Cllr Tony Dyer attended the meeting as substitute for Cllr Ed Plowden who had given his apologies.
5	Items from the Public (questions and statements) Two questions had been received from Members of the Public in relation to this meeting. The questions and responses had been circulated to both the questioners and the Committee prior to the meeting and published on the Authority's website.

Additionally two statements had been received from members of the public as follows.

1. David Redgewell – Transport Issues
2. Maddy Longhurst – WECA's support for the Community Led Housing Sector in the West of England.

Each speaker was invited to speak on the subject of their statement for a maximum time of three minutes each. Both the speakers listed addressed the Committee in this way.

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Chair's business / announcements

The Mayor of the West of England Combined Authority, Metro Mayor Dan Norris, attended the first part of the meeting. A summary of the discussion is set out below:

- In respect of the points made during the public speaking item, the Metro Mayor stated the importance of supported bus services and was looking into ways to provide more resources in this area;
- The SDS was proceeding but it was a legal process that had to be negotiated in the correct way in order that the prescribed rules were not broken. There were certain ways of utilising green belt land that could be explored. At the moment the process was dealing with strategic level issues with granular details to follow. It was important to learn the lessons of the last SDS process;
- The Metro Mayor stated that he welcomed further opportunities to be held to account provided that it fell within his sphere of responsibility. This included more detailed forward plans to be published in the future for instance;
- The Metro Mayor was keen to explore all opportunities for investment and growth in the area including through maritime activities, transport usage, and thinking about solutions in new and innovative ways, etc;
- He acknowledged that there had been issues with some projects caused by a combination of Brexit, inflation and covid but hoped that everything could now be back. The Mayor was urged to raise the profile of the Portishead line pending the funding decision;
- It was noted that the Metro Mayor's position on the expansion of Bristol Airport remained the same. He reiterated that he felt more job opportunities locally could be gained through green endeavours;
- Providing training for offenders was paramount and could be linked into skills spending and initiatives including sharing of best practice;
- The Chair of the Committee welcomed the collaborative working in the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP). The Metro Mayor also welcomed this and stated that collaborative working regionally was improving all the time although a few disagreements between local leaders was inevitable from time to time;
- The Delivery Assurance Report being considered by the Authority's Committee meeting at its meeting on 8 April 2022 was establishing a 'use it or lose it' principle to with respect to regional funding allocations.

(The Metro Mayor left the meeting at 13:53)

The Chair announced that it had been useful to attend as an observer the recent Local Enterprise Partnership Board meeting where the benefit of collaborative working was evident. He reiterated that input from Scrutiny members on the Authority's Committees and Board meetings was welcomed in order to be mindful of the formulation of policy, especially in relation to the ecological emergency.

It was also noted that a vacancy existed on the Committee which would be filled by Cllr Steve Smith (Bristol City Council) from May 2022.

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Review of 8th April 2022 West of England Combined Authority Committee and West of England Joint Committee reports

The Committee considered the reports that were due to be determined by the meetings of the West of England Committee and the Joint Committee on 8 April 2022. The Committee made comments on the reports and these were summarised and circulated to the Committees for their consideration. These comments are attached at Appendix A.

Part 1 - West of England Combined Authority

Item 9 Mayoral Budget outturn

The committee noted this report and understood the comment about reserves.

Items 10 & 11 – Investment Fund Report (Item 10) & Investment Fund Report – Change Requests (Item 11)

The Committee noted these reports.

Items 13 & 14 - Climate and Ecological Emergency Strategy and Action Plan (Item 13) & Green Recovery Fund (Item 14)

The Committee were pleased to see this report and have been frustrated that what was originally planned to go through in October had been delayed. The report identifies the questions to be asked of government and the actions between now and 2030 to meet the net zero objective in specific areas of transport, the built environment, business, and energy policy. The plan breaks actions down to three timelines of immediate, medium term (2024-2028) and long-term vision (2028-30). There was also a need to address the Nature Recovery and specifically to reduce chemical use to avoid the harm to pollinating insects. It was also welcomed that the CA recognises it needs to work in collaboration with regional partners, residents, businesses and with Government. UAs could only achieve whatever was in their powers including review of their own estates but had roles in bringing the right people together. The CA was urged to help lobby government to increase local powers in this field. The Committee also stated that more ambition was needed when designing transport upgrades such as park and rides which could be used for instance as transport hubs and/or bus depots. All aspects of infrastructure needed to be looked at together as a whole (housing, parking, roads, schooling, park & rides, rail etc). Several instances across the region were given where the cart appears to be before the horse-e. g building housing before the infrastructure was in place to get persons to work in a sustainable transport mode. Parking revenue could be used to subsidise public transport provision for instance. The committee look forward to regular updates and intends to ask the UK climate change committee to benchmark us against other combined authorities later this year.

Item 15 - Regional Recovery & Adaptation Fund

The Committee welcomed the report with support for groups that faced barriers to access. The Committee requested as much support for start-up companies as possible to enable them to grow.

Item 16 - Business Case - "The Courts"

The Committee welcomed the support for the creative sector. The committee asked that given one objective was to breathe new life into an old Victorian building whether other industries could be approached in delivering skills in this task, such as building/renovation skills.

Item 17 - Business Case - "West of England Careers Hub"

The Committee was aware of a booklet that contained details of local businesses and asked that schools and careers hubs in the area had access to such information.

Item 18 - Bus services - Transport Levy

The Committee stated that any policy would have to recognise additional pressures such as fuel price increases and inflation and further recognise that 'hedging' against these pressures would be an additional financial pressure.

Part 2 - West of England Joint Committee

Scrutiny reiterated the importance of collaborative working amongst the Authorities, and other bodies such as the Western Gateway (on matters such as the Maritime Strategy). They requested an update at a future meeting regarding any plans for North Somerset to join the Combined Authority, **including a clear timeline/roadmap if possible**, and any affect this

	would have on the LEP activities as outlined in the recent White Paper.
	Tuesday, 3 May 2022, 2.00 pm, Council Chamber, Bristol City Council, College Green Bristol BS1 5TR