

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE
WEST YORKSHIRE COMBINED AUTHORITY
HELD ON FRIDAY, 22 OCTOBER 2021 AT COMMITTEE ROOMS 6&7,
CIVIC HALL, LEEDS**

Present:

Mayor Tracy Brabin (Chair)
Councillor Susan Hinchcliffe
Councillor John Lawson
Councillor James Lewis
Councillor Shabir Pandor
Councillor Rebecca Poulsen
Councillor Matthew Robinson
Councillor Tim Swift MBE
Councillor Andrew Waller

West Yorkshire Combined Authority
Bradford Council
Kirklees Council
Leeds City Council
Kirklees Council
Bradford Council
Leeds City Council
Calderdale Council
City of York Council

In attendance:

Ben Still
Brian Archer
Liz Hunter
Dave Pearson
Alan Reiss
Angela Taylor
Craig Taylor
Caroline Allen
Dominic Martin

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43. Chair's Comments

The Chair reported that she had attended the Global Investment Summit 2021 earlier in the week, and highlighted that many investors, including large global companies, were interested in investing in the region. The Chair noted her thanks to the Combined Authority Trade and Investment team who had supported herself and Sir Roger Marsh during this trip.

44. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Jeffery and Sir Roger Marsh, as well as both their substitutes.

45. Declarations of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests

There were no pecuniary interests declared by Members during the meeting

46. Exempt Information - Possible Exclusion of the Press and Public

Resolved: That in accordance with paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of Appendix 1 to Agenda Item 10 on the grounds that it is likely, in view of the nature of the business to be transacted or the nature of the proceedings, that if members of the press and public were present there would be disclosure to them of exempt information and for the reasons set out in the report that in all the circumstances of the case, the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.

47. Minutes of the Meeting of the Combined Authority held on 9 September 2021

Resolved: That the minutes of the meeting of the West Yorkshire Combined Authority held on 9 September 2021 be approved.

48. Covid-19

The Combined Authority received an update on developments around the COVID-19 pandemic and work to support economic recovery in West Yorkshire.

The number of Covid-19 cases in the region had increased by 15% and was approaching the November 2020 peak, particularly in the 10-14 years age group. Calderdale was particularly affected, with the 9th highest rate of infections in England.

Retail spending in the region had fallen since the previous meeting – feedback had been received that rising energy prices were disproportionately affecting retail businesses, the Bank of England had forecast that inflation may rise up to 5%, and it was expected there would be pressure to increase interest rates. To address this the Combined Authority had made attempts to address skill shortages across all sectors, and part of the adult education budget would be repurposed to help with the national driver shortage. An increase in referrals to the Combined Authority's employment hubs from Jobcentre Plus had been received since the furlough scheme had ended, and the Combined Authority was working with Local Authorities to match these referrals with employment opportunities. A new business start-up offer was also due to be launched to support those considering self-employment as well as existing business.

The support offered to businesses in the region was welcomed by Members, and targets aiming to ensure fair access to support for groups such as BAME residents, women, and those with disabilities were praised, but it was also noted that place-based inequalities existed, with some areas of the region having been hit harder by the pandemic than others, and it would be important to consider this to achieve fully inclusive growth. Members also questioned

how this support was tracked in relation to the Help to Grow grant scheme, to ensure that funding was being used to the best effect in regards to the resilience of the economy and particularly small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs); officers advised that any businesses engaged would always be directed to appropriate resources such as Help to Grow as part of a wider portfolio of linking businesses with available support. It was also requested that details on any council tax support be included in future reports on this topic.

Members cautioned that the recovery would be a challenging time for many in local communities, with the end of the furlough scheme, cuts to universal credit, rising energy costs and high property prices all contributing to this, and that it may be some time before the situation stabilised into a 'new normal'. To avoid adding a further burden for families already being stretched by these factors, the Mayor would not be introducing a mayoral precept for the current year.

The link between the health of the region's residents and the health of the economy was discussed, with it being noted that children from low-income families were more likely to suffer from poor nutrition, leaving them more susceptible to other conditions. With over a third of West Yorkshire children living in poverty, addressing these inequalities was noted as being vital. Similarly, people who were ill or looking after an ill family member may need to take increased time off of work, and were less likely to spend money in their local economies.

Members noted it would be important to support the Government's vaccination and booster programmes, and it was suggested that low-level interventions by the Government now, such as increasing social distancing in schools, could prevent more serious interventions such as another lockdown. Concerns were also raised over adult social care funding, which faced serious upcoming challenges, and Members expressed disappointment over a lack of Government support other than an assumption of a continuing social care precept on council tax.

The importance of funding for skills as a path toward a strong and inclusive recovery was highlighted. Members questioned if the capacity to deliver the needed training was available, and what measures were in place to ensure the right people were provided with opportunities for skills and training. Officers advised that the capacity and capability was there, with many excellent colleges and other training providers throughout the region, but with the total devolved Adult Education Budget having fallen by over 50% over the last ten years funding and resources were the limiting factor in supplying this training.

The Chair noted that she and Sir Roger Marsh had recently held a roundtable event with businesses on the driver shortages currently impacting the HGV industry and invited Members to share their concerns and suggestions on this issue.

Councillor Waller joined the meeting during discussion of this item.

Resolved: That the Combined Authority notes the update on Covid-19

support in West Yorkshire.

49. WY Climate and Environment Plan

The Combined Authority considered a report on the climate emergency. It asked them to approve the West Yorkshire Climate and Environment Plan, which would be the Mayor and Combined Authority's response to address the climate emergency, to protect the environment, and to achieve net zero carbon emissions in West Yorkshire. The Combined Authority was also asked to endorse plans for the Mayor to bring forward a Climate and Environment Fund and to secure £85 million in funding for carbon reduction projects, with sources for this funding to be identified after the publication of Comprehensive Spending Review.

The importance of the plan was noted, with increasing occurrence of flooding events such as that of Boxing Day 2015 highlighted as examples of the significant impact of climate change in the region, and the approval of this plan would be particularly timely due to the upcoming attendance of the Mayor and the Managing Director at the 2021 United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP-26). As part of efforts to raise awareness of these climate issues and the important role of the bus service in combatting them, Sunday 31 October had been announced as 'Free Bus Sunday', where travel on buses throughout the region would be free. Encouragement toward greater use of public travel would be vital in combatting the climate emergency, and it was hoped that the event would support this.

The Government's Net Zero Carbon Strategy had been launched earlier in the week, and Members welcomed announced initiatives such as greater support for electric vehicles and grants to replace gas boilers with zero-emission heat pumps, but it was felt that the ambition of the Strategy was not sufficient to achieve a full, inclusive and just recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic, with it being noted that any incentives to support reducing emissions had to be accessible to all, rather than only those who were already wealthy. It would be important to support Government in tackling the crisis, but it was noted that MCAs and Local Authorities could use their knowledge and experience in local communities to be a leading voice in encouraging a change in priorities and behaviour.

The Plan had been developed with the support of the Climate, Energy and Environment Committee. Three potential pathways toward net zero emissions had been explored in the Plan; it was noted that the early actions set out within the Plan were consistent with all three pathways, and did not preclude any future decisions regarding this. The Committee would be happy to take a further role in the monitoring of the progress of the Plan and in discussions regarding which pathway would be taken, as well as timescales surrounding this.

The Committee had also raised the importance of ensuring that the carbon impact of existing road schemes was being robustly measured within the Plan; a piece of work was currently underway to improve technical guidance for developing schemes and improve analysis for investors and stakeholders, as well as to assess the impact of schemes currently in the pipeline. This was a

complex task, as factors such as potential modal shift could be difficult to measure, but a report would be shared when the work had been completed.

Members questioned what work was being undertaken with private developers in the region to encourage them to work in an environmentally-conscious way now, prior to any legislation being implemented. Although retrofitting homes with environmentally-friendly technology was noted as typically being more difficult and costly than new builds, building new carbon zero homes could also be extremely difficult to achieve in certain regions with low margins and viability without costs being passed on. Further Government funding was highlighted as needed in order to incentivise this.

It was also noted that the Mayor's pledge for 5000 sustainable homes aimed to work in partnership with developers, and work would also be done in the social housing sector to lower carbon emissions. A project currently underway in retrofitting Kirklees homes was mentioned as a positive example of the work already underway, and lessons learned from this pilot would be useful going forward. It was hoped that use of the existing technology, such as heat pumps, would lead to further innovation and a reduction of costs.

Mentions in the report about the reduction of parking were discussed, and Members raised concerns over the impact this could have on tourism, as well as the difficulties faced by some in charging electric cars. Officers advised that any approach toward parking would be carefully considered and multi-faceted to ensure people had different options for travel where possible. The Combined Authority would be working in close partnership with district councils, and it was noted that it would be important to gather further evidence about the impact of parking charges, in order to find most effective path toward encouraging modal shift. The use of Mayoral powers to introduce electric vehicle charging points at filling stations was also under consideration.

Members raised the following other comments and questions:

- a) Investment into heat insulation was highlighted as vital, as it would allow residents to simultaneously lower emissions while reducing the impact of cost of living increases.
- b) The report's discussion of digital infrastructure investment and pension divestment was welcomed, but further progress was needed, and a more targeted investment of pension funds could be an important next step.
- c) The idea of a Mayoral 'gold standard' for developers was raised, highlighting developers with environmentally-conscious practices and encouraging building new homes with green technology.
- d) Members raised concerns around residents on lower incomes facing difficulties with the costs of switching over to electric/hybrid vehicles, or with supplementary charges including parking.
- e) Further investment was also noted as being needed in social housing stock, and Members questioned what could be done to develop this into a sustainable market.
- f) It was noted that the impact of works on biodiversity was not frequently discussed, despite the onus of Combined Authorities to deliver a net gain in this in its residential planning and civil engineering. Officers would explore what further action could be taken in this area.

- g) The importance of preserving river cleanliness was discussed, and it was requested that the Plan include further detail on this.

Resolved: That the Combined Authority:

- a) Approves the West Yorkshire Climate and Environment Plan and agrees to delegate, if required, any final changes to the Managing Director in consultation with the Mayor.
- b) Endorse the Mayor to bring forward a Climate and Environment Fund and to secure the £85m funding needed for the actions for the Combined Authority. The Combined Authority would work with partner local authorities to design the delivery mechanisms for this fund.
- c) Endorse the Mayor to identify potential funding sources for the Fund, including the Single Investment Fund. Decisions would be taken after the Comprehensive Spending Review, which would indicate whether and when there would likely be further national funding available to support this work.

50. Capital Spending and Project Approvals

The Combined Authority considered a report on proposals for the progression of, and funding for, a number of Combined Authority supported projects that had been considered at stages 1, 2 or 3 of the Combined Authority's assurance process. The report also listed approvals that had been made by the Managing Director in delegation.

Three projects had been submitted for approval at the meeting:

- The Green Jobs Taskforce and Gateway scheme requested £500k from the Single Investment Fund (SIF) to research the future demand of green skills, investigate availability, and develop an action plan.
- The Creative New Deal project also requested £500k from the SIF to support two strands of delivery for support to creative industries across West Yorkshire. One strand focused on boosting capacity for the Mayor's Creative New Deal pledge (including the continuation of the Beyond Brontës programme) and another would progress the concept of a 'Town of Culture' award for West Yorkshire. The use of Langthwaite Enterprise Zone for creative industry purposes would also be explored.
- A bid had been submitted for £12.36 million from the third tranche of funding from the Emergency Active Travel Fund. This would be used to provide delivery of permanent schemes building off of the temporary schemes funded by the earlier two tranches of funding. It was requested that approval for this spending, as well as approval for the Leeds A660 Otley Road full business case, be delegated to the Managing Director of the Combined Authority in order to allow flexibility, particularly if the awarded funding differed from the expected amount.

Members discussed the 'night-time Czar' role proposed under the Creative New Deal and questioned whether its focus would be on supporting the economic recovery of businesses operating at night or on the safety of women

and girls. Officers advised that funding was often aimed to link between multiple pledges; the primary focus of the role would be the safety of women and girls, but it was hoped that both aspects could be fulfilled as the role was developed. These issues and others, such as how the 'Town of Culture' award would link to the 'UK City of Culture', would be further discussed as part of the work of the Culture, Arts and Creative Industries Committee.

It was highlighted that a large proportion of the Green Jobs Task Force and Gateway funding was proposed to be spent on three roles within the Combined Authority, rather than on delivering skills training. Officers advised that this was necessary to increase capacity within the team for the next stage of work, particularly for strengthening links between businesses and those exiting the education system. It was requested that future reporting be made more clear in tracking where Combined Authority funding was being used to create new jobs, rather than only supporting the business in what it had already been doing.

Approval was also sought for the delegation to the Climate, Energy and Environment Committee to approve the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund scheme, in order for delivery to meet Government timeframes.

Resolved:

- a) That in respect of the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund, and in order to ensure that schemes can be delivered within the tight timescales, the Combined Authority approves the delegation of authority to the Climate, Energy and Environment Committee to accept the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund and approve the scheme in accordance with the Assurance Framework (decision point 4 (Final Business Case)), so that delivery can commence in line with government's delivery timeframes.
- b) That in respect of the Green Jobs Taskforce and Gateway, the Combined Authority approves that:
 - i) The Green Jobs Taskforce and Gateway scheme proceeds through decision point 2 (Strategic Outline Case) and decision point 4 (Full Business Case) with Approval to Proceed to activity 5 (Delivery).
 - ii) Approval to the Combined Authority's contribution of £500,000 (which will be funded from the Single Investment Fund to progress the mayor's pledges) be granted. The total scheme value is £500,000.
 - iii) Future approvals are made in accordance with the assurance pathway and approval route outlined in the submitted report and any change requests are delegated to the Employment and Skills Committee. This will be subject to the scheme remaining within the tolerances outlined in the submitted report.

- c) That in respect of the Creative New Deal, the Combined Authority approves that:
- i) The Creative New Deal project proceeds through decision point 2 (strategic outline case) and decision point 4 (full business case) and work commences on activity 5 (delivery).
 - ii) Approval to the Combined Authority's contribution of £500,000, funded from the Combined Authority's Single Investment Fund is given. The total scheme value is £500,000.
 - iii) Future approvals are made in accordance with the assurance pathway and approval route outlined in the submitted report and any change requests are delegated to the Culture, Arts and Creative Industries Committee. This will be subject to the scheme remaining within the tolerances outlined in the submitted report.
- d) That in respect of Local Authority Capital Funding 2021/2022, the Combined Authority approves that, subject to a successful bid to DfT:
- i) The allocation to the Combined Authority of the Active Travel Fund: Local Authority Capital Funding for 2021/22, subject to a successful bid, for expenditure of up to £12,361,310 and that the programme proceeds through decision point 4 (full business case) and work commences on activity 5 (delivery) for all schemes except the Leeds A660 Otley Road scheme which commences work on activity 4 (full business case)
 - ii) Delegation to the Managing Director to approve the Leeds A660 Otley Road full business case.
 - iii) The allocation of the Active Travel Fund: Local Authority Capital Funding for 2021/22 funding, should it be secured, between the Combined Authority and the five West Yorkshire partners as set out below:
 - Bradford - £3,056,300
 - Calderdale - £475,000
 - Kirklees - £2,260,000
 - Leeds - £4,785,000 including development costs of £470,000
 - Wakefield - £585,000
 - Combined Authority - £850,000 (for Cycle Parking and School Streets Programmes across all five districts with a further £350,010 for programme costs)
 - iv) Development costs of £470,000 to progress the Leeds A660 Otley Road scheme to full business case.
 - v) In order to ensure that schemes can be delivered within the tight timescales, the Combined Authority delegates authority to the

Managing Director to amend the approval and allocation of Active Travel Fund: Local Authority Capital Funding for 2021/22 if the DfT award differs from £12,361,310, or if further changes to individual allocations is required, as a result of changes to the programme and approaches to delivery.

- vi) The Combined Authority enters into a funding agreement with Bradford, Calderdale, Kirklees, Leeds and Wakefield for expenditure as set out above, including potentially the Canal and River Trust, in agreement with the relevant partner council.

Future approvals are made in accordance with the assurance pathway and approval route outlined in the submitted report and any change requests are delegated to the Place, Regeneration and Housing Committee, which will be subject to the scheme remaining within the tolerances outlined in the submitted report.

51. Corporate Matters

The Combined Authority considered a report from the Director of Corporate and Commercial Services seeking approval of outstanding appointments of private sector members to several committees, noting work done toward of the 2022/2023 budget, and seeking acceptance of the proposed debt cap for 2021/2022 of £248 million offered by Her Majesty's Treasury.

Members questioned how the proposed debt cap compared to that of other Combined Authorities across the UK. It was advised that there was significant variation regarding debt caps, ranging from under £100 million to nearly £1 billion in some cases for longer-established Combined Authorities. It was noted that the cap request was above the amount that had been set out in the budget for the current year for borrowing, so should not impact on any decision-making regarding borrowing before its expiration in March 2022.

Resolved: That the Combined Authority:

- a) Appoints private sector members to the Culture, Arts and Creative Industries Committee as set out in Appendix 1 attached to the submitted report.
- b) Appoints Sam Keighley as a private sector member of the Place, Regeneration and Housing Committee.
- c) Appoints Karl Oxford as a private sector member of the Business, Economy and Innovation Committee.
- d) Accepts the debt cap of £248.326 million for 2021/22 as offered by HM Treasury.
- e) Notes the work underway on the 2022/23 budget.

52. Trans Pennine Route Upgrade

The Combined Authority considered a report on the current position regarding the Transport and Works Act Order pertaining to the upgrade of the Trans Pennine rail route, and its implications for land and assets operated by the Combined Authority. The report included recommended actions to safeguard the operation and redevelopment of Huddersfield Bus Station

Although the Combined Authority was supportive of the planned Trans Pennine route upgrade there were some technical issues that remained to be resolved with Network Rail. The Combined Authority was asked to approve delegation to the Managing Director to enter into an agreement with Network Rail to obtain safeguards to ensure the proposed work did not significantly negatively impact on the operation of Huddersfield Bus Station and bus network in Huddersfield. If this agreement was reached, the Combined Authority would submit a supportive letter to the upcoming Public Inquiry for the Transport and Works Act Order noting that the issues had been resolved; otherwise, the Combined Authority would participate in the Public Inquiry. It was noted that officers felt an agreement was close and would likely be reached within the next few days.

Members requested further information on improvements on the Trans Pennine more generally, particularly in light of uncertainty surrounding previous transport commitments. However, it was noted that further useful information would likely not be available until the Integrated Rail Plan was published by Government.

Resolved: That the Combined Authority:

- a) Delegates to the Managing Director, authority to enter into a binding legal agreement which safeguards the Authority's interests in and around Huddersfield Bus station and provides appropriate measures to manage travel disruption during the construction phase of the Trans Pennine Route Upgrade.
- b) Approves that, in the event that a binding legal agreement cannot be made with Network Rail, the Combined Authority shall participate in the Public Inquiry regarding the Transport and Works Act Order (TWAO) application to the Secretary of State for Transport for the proposed improvements to the railway between Huddersfield to Westtown (Dewsbury) to present the specific matters relating to impacts in and around Huddersfield Bus Station.
- c) Approves that, in the event that a binding legal agreement can be made with Network Rail, the Managing Director submits a letter to the Public Inquiry reaffirming the Combined Authority's support for the Trans Pennine Route Upgrade and advises that the matters relating to Huddersfield Bus Station have now been resolved.

53. Bus Service Improvement Plan

The Combined Authority considered a report providing an overview of the content included in the Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) and requesting approval for its submission to the Department for Transport.

The Mayor's pledge to improve the bus service and bring it back under public control was noted, with the BSIP intended as a first step toward this, creating a safe, accessible and fully inclusive bus system. It presented an ambitious picture for bus travel in the region, but this would be vital for the Combined Authority's decarbonisation and sustainable travel agenda and in achieving the net zero carbon by 2038 target, particularly with 90% of transport emissions currently coming from cars and vans.

Members welcomed the strong ambition demonstrated in the BSIP, particularly regarding the capped fare of £4.50 and the Flexibus and Demand Responsive Transport (DRT) schemes, noting it was an opportunity for the region to significantly improve bus service. However, it was cautioned that bus operators were in the process of cutting some services, and it was important that BSIP not become a means to simply fill the gap left by this.

It was noted that the BSIP funding was short-term, so the Combined Authority would need to ensure it did not find itself in the position of having to withdraw any improvements made due to being unable to find continued funding. In this vein, it would be vital to keep lobbying the Government on the importance of levelling up the region, and on providing funding for other important aspects of improving service such as new buses. Members noted their disappointment on being required to go through multiple rounds of competitive bidding to access this funding, as it took up considerable time and resources.

The free bus pass scheme for elderly and disabled passengers was discussed, with Members questioning whether the permitted hours of use could be extended to help those with early or late shifts. A possible extension was under consideration, but this would need to be funded from the budget rather than in the context of the BSIP. The need to support these passengers making journeys before the cut-off was noted, but a cost/benefit analysis would need to be undertaken to determine the best approach.

Members discussed the connection difficulties faced by more rural communities, which typically required more complex journeys, or where services ended earlier in the day. However, it was noted that urban communities also often faced similarly difficult or infrequent journeys, and that aspects such as poverty, health inequalities, and other things needed to be also considered. Further work was needed on making different modes of transport more interchangeable, and this would hopefully make a positive impact across the region.

Members also raised the following comments and questions:

- It was questioned why Park and Ride schemes were not mentioned; officers advised that Park and Ride schemes tended to be dealt with in the context of each local council's parking strategy.
- The report's description of a 'gender-neutral' bus system was discussed as part of efforts to ensure the connectivity of the bus network were not biased toward any one gender. The possibility of offering a reduction in fares for passengers on maternity or paternity leave was also mentioned, but it was noted that funding would need to be found for this.

- The condition of school buses, which were cited as often old and had poor emissions compared to newer models, was raised. As these were often the first experience of independent travel for young people, a positive experience here could encourage future use of public travel as opposed to private car usage.
- The need for interventions to ensure that all residents were able to access vital locations such as healthcare and educational facilities was emphasised.

It was highlighted that comments had been received throughout the week on the exempt appendix; these were not reflected in the version included with the papers distributed for this meeting, but had been taken into due account.

The Chair noted her thanks to Cllr Groves, as well as to the Transport officers involved in producing the BSIP, for their hard work in showcasing the region's ambitions for its bus service.

Resolved: That the Combined Authority approves the BSIP and agrees to delegate any final changes to the Managing Director in consultation with the Mayor. The BSIP will be submitted to DfT before the deadline of 30th October 2021.

54. Minutes for information

Resolved: That the minutes of the Combined Authority's committees and panels be noted.