

# The West of England Partnership

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## Board Meeting

**12 March 2009**  
**The Campus, Weston-super-Mare**

**Present:**

**Bath and North-East Somerset**

Cllr Adrian Inker

**Bristol City Council**

Cllr Barbara Janke

Cllr Richard Eddy

Cllr Helen Holland

**North Somerset Council**

Cllr Nigel Ashton

Cllr Elfan Ap Rees

Cllr Nan Kirsan

**South Gloucestershire Council**

Cllr John Calway

Cllr Ruth Davis

Cllr Roger Hutchinson

**Social, Economic & Environmental Partners**

Steve Grainger, Avon Biodiversity Partnership

Rachel Robinson, ChangeUp Consortia

David Clarke, Bristol University

Tessa Coombes, GWE Business West

**Observers**

Hilary Neal, Government Office for the South West (GOSW)

Ian Knight, South West Regional Development Agency (SWRDA)

Mark Pople, Homes and Communities Agency (H&CA)

**In attendance**

John Everitt, Bath and North East Somerset Council

Jan Ormondroyd, Bristol City Council

Graham Turner, North Somerset Council

David Turner, North Somerset Council

Amanda Deeks, South Gloucestershire Council

David Draycott, Employment and Skills Board

Terry Wagstaff, West of England Partnership

Barbara Davies, West of England Partnership

Valentina de Micheli, West of England Partnership

Sally Gregory, West of England Partnership

**1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Cllr Francine Haerberling, Bath and North East Somerset Council

John Savage, GWE Business West

Sonia Mills, North Bristol NHS Trust

Ian Ducat, SWTUC

David Warburton, Homes and Communities Agency  
Georgina Clampitt-Dix, Wiltshire County Council

## **2. CHAIR**

Cllr Helen Holland had resigned from the Chair, following the change of Leadership in Bristol. She was thanked for her contribution to the Partnership as Chair.

**Resolved that:**

**Cllr John Calway be elected as Chair for the remainder of the year.**

## **3. PUBLIC STATEMENTS**

The question and statement from the Campaign for Better Transport were noted (no representative was present).

## **4. MINUTES OF MEETING ON 5 DECEMBER**

**Resolved that:**

**The minutes be noted.**

## **5. DEVELOPING SKILLS IN THE WEST OF ENGLAND**

David Draycott introduced the report which outlined the work being done with the unitary authorities and other partners in relation to the Skills Pledge, the improvement of Level 2 and 3 skills and above, and the delivery of apprenticeships, advanced apprenticeships and a graduate recruitment scheme.

**Resolved that:**

**The report be noted.**

## **6. ENGAGEMENT WITH SEEPS (SOCIAL, ECONOMIC AND ENVIRONMENTAL PARTNERS) & STRATEGIC ORGANISATIONS**

Terry Wagstaff introduced his report and said that officers from the Partnership Office were now meeting with SEEPs regularly. Steve Grainger was keen to see a focus on forward planning. Members of the Board welcomed this development.

Cllr Nigel Ashton felt it was not acceptable for members of the Board to work against a decision on a fundamental issue by the Board. However, members of the Board may have differences with each other and with the view expressed by the Board on other issues. Terry Wagstaff suggested that it was important that differences were explored before decisions were made. Steve Grainger was concerned to ensure that items were not published in the name of the Partnership where there had been no opportunity for discussion. David Clarke

said that the University of Bristol could not be bound by what the Board had decided. Cllr John Calway offered use of his office to sort out any difficulties.

**Resolved that:**

- **The arrangements proposed in the report be adopted.**

## **7. INWARD INVESTMENT**

Cllr Ruth Davis wanted to ensure that local businesses were supported. Terry Wagstaff said that local businesses did use the property database. Jan Ormondroyd said that the authorities had their own arrangements as well and they may well wish to review arrangements in the future.

**Resolved:**

**That the report be noted.**

## **8. SOUTH WEST REGIONAL FUNDING ADVICE 2009/10 – 2018/19**

Hilary Neal said that the next stage was for the Regional Minister, Ben Bradshaw MP, to submit his assessment to the government departments. She expected transport decisions by the end of June. She would follow up Cllr Helen Holland's letter to Ben Bradshaw.

There was concern on all sides about the speed of delivery. Hilary Neal accepted that this was an issue in relation to the Department and the councils were very aware that money would be diverted in future if there was slippage.

**Resolved:**

**That the report be noted.**

## **9. MAA (MULTI-AREA AGREEMENT)**

Terry Wagstaff circulated slides, which he presented. He was thanked for his work and Board members were encouraged to give him further feedback. Feedback/points made at the meeting included:

**Priorities**

- Action to address the effects of climate change needed to be a thread running through the whole document.
- There needed to be a clear focus on delivering sustainable communities.
- The terms 'workless'/'worklessness' and 'unemployed'/'unemployment' were not interchangeable and it was important to focus on worklessness in deprived areas.
- When improving access, it was important to remember the details, eg the need to transport infrastructure between Portishead and the Royal Portbury Dock.
- The decrease in services by First would mean that for some people there would be no alternative to using the car to get to work.

## **Recession**

- The University of Bristol was leading a consortium bid involving 13 universities, aiming to access extra funding for training and skills.
- Ian Knight would provide a script of all the areas the RDA is involved in, which could be circulated with the minutes. There were Area Action Forces involving the RDA and other agencies in responding to companies in trouble. Intelligence on this was fed into the Regional Minister's team and from there into government. The key issue was wage subsidy support, not available to companies in England, although other governments were providing support.
- Local authorities were also working on the recession and it was important that everyone was talking to each other. A sub-regional action group drew the organisations together.
- It was difficult to produce the high level of intelligence which the RDA had in a 'sanitised' form which could be useful without breaching confidentiality, but this should be in place soon.
- In North Somerset the involvement of the regional agencies and the Highways Agency was welcomed in helping to address issues which arose during the last recession, eg RAF Locking.
- Environmental issues should be addressed by working together and thereby gaining access to the investment available and creating green collar jobs.
- The Homes and Communities Agency was working with a list of projects to get sites moving. There should be positive news shortly.
- There should be a focus on economic issues at a future meeting. Hilary Neal offered to work with Ian Knight to present this. Ideas could be fed into the Budget, so this could be influential at a high level.
- Transport schemes could be looked at as part of the 'Single Conversation'.

## **Growth**

- The Single Conversation would require priorities and sites to be more specific.
- For the RDA, the planned work commissioned from consultants was fundamental to the agency response to the MAA. It would provide a strengthened relationship between the different parts of investment.

## **Access and Grow Business Investment**

- There was more potential for green collar jobs.

## **Skills**

- There was a bid for £8m over 3 years to tackle worklessness.
- Level 4 needed to be included.
- Local authorities needed to lead by example.

## **Resolved:**

**That the report and comments made be noted.**

## **10. CITY REGION PILOT**

Jan Ormondroyd apologised that the bid had had to be sent before the Board had had an opportunity to discuss it, but the timetable had been extremely tight and the Board's last meeting had been cancelled. The two city region forerunners would be announced with the Budget on 22 April. At a workshop held with civil servants it appeared that there were different views amongst the departments on the purpose of the pilots.

Amanda Deeks said that the bid was ambitious and that there was still room to shape it, since if the West of England was likely to be successful there would probably be further conversations. City region pilot status did not bring additional powers but would increase delivery expected in the sub-region.

The ownership of the bid was queried and it was established that support from the Partnership would be welcomed, although the process had required sign up by the councils. It was acknowledged that the timescales had stretched all organisations' ability to formally sign up. Hilary Neal was asked to feedback the message that the shortness of the process had caused these problems, and it had also cut out the 'bottom up' element.

Several board members expressed an understanding of the problems concerned and welcomed the opportunity to support the bid.

**Resolved:**  
**That the bid be endorsed.**

## **11. CORE CITIES**

Jan Ormondroyd said that the Core Cities Group had agreed that each Core City would invite a neighbouring authority to attend a future Core Cities meeting with them and Jan would be in touch with the other chief executives about this.

**Resolved:**  
**That the report be noted.**

## **12. DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

2 – 4pm on Thursday 16 April at the Guildhall, Bath.