

# The West of England Partnership

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE  
WEST OF ENGLAND PARTNERSHIP  
JOINT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE  
13th MARCH 2009 AT 10.15AM**

**Members of the Joint Committee**

**Bath and North East Somerset**

- A Councillor John Bull
- P Councillor Eleanor Jackson (substituting for Cllr Bull)
- P Councillor Caroline Roberts
- A Councillor Martin Veal
- P Councillor Peter Edwards (substituting for Cllr Veal)

**Bristol City Council**

- P Councillor Barbara Lewis – Chair
- P Councillor Mark Bradshaw
- A Councillor Steve Comer

**North Somerset Council**

- P Councillor Tony Moulin
- P Councillor Clive Webb
- P Councillor David Pasley

**South Gloucestershire Council**

- P Councillor Pat Hockey
- A Councillor Geoff King
- P Councillor Terry Walker (substituting for Cllr King)
- P Councillor Ian Smith

**WEPJSC  
1.3/09**

**APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND SUBSTITUTIONS**

Apologies were received from Councillors John Bull and Martin Veal, Bath & North East Somerset Council and Councillor Geoff King, South Gloucestershire Council.

**WEPJSC  
2.3/09**

**PUBLIC FORUM**

There were no items of public forum.

**WEPJSC  
3.3/09**

**MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON 13<sup>th</sup> FEBRUARY 2009**

**RESOLVED - that as the minutes were not attached to the agenda paperwork, they be presented to the next meeting of the JSC for confirmation as a correct record.**

Arising from the discussion at the last meeting, reference was made to ;

- a request had been made to the Transport Minister, Ben Bradshaw MP for a meeting about transport priorities affecting the sub-region and RFA, but to date this had not been possible. Terry Wagstaff undertook to continue to press for a meeting.
- the Chair commented that she had met with the Conservative Shadow Transport Minister to explain the Joint Committee's concerns

**RESOLVED – that the officers continue to seek a meeting with the Transport Minister to discuss transport priorities for the sub-region.**

**WEPJSC  
4.3/09**

**GREATER BRISTOL METRO – PRESENTATION ON THE BID STATUS**

The Joint Committee received a presentation on the Greater Bristol Metro Scheme. Officers reported that ;

- in spite of recent press coverage the proposed scheme was very modest in nature, utilising existing infrastructure to provide cross Bristol services and regular services to other parts of the sub region

- having end points within the sub-region would allow for containment and reduce reliance on through regional services and the knock on delays which resulted from problems which may occur outside the boundaries
- uncertainties about the availability of new rolling stock meant that it was appropriate for the project to submit a bid for 5 new train sets as part of the RFA 2 submission
- the Greater Bristol Metro project was part of a package of bids which were submitted to Government for approval on 25 February
- it would take between 1 and 3 years to work up the project for programme entry and a further 2-3 years for the development of the business case.
- the project made the best use of existing resources and was considered to represent best value for money

During discussion, members raised the following issues;

- the tram-train development elsewhere in the country looked to be a cost effective model which could be deployed on a Greater Bristol Metro
- worries remained about funding in the WoE – were there sufficient resources available to actually develop a metro project
- the turnback facilities within the sub-region were sensible and would help to contain services, therefore it was a little surprising that FGW had recently indicated that it did not require one at Yate. Reliance on the Gloucester-Taunton service would not deliver the level of reliability needed.
- a member expressed the view that the scheme was very modest in relation to what was actually required. New rolling stock appeared to be 8 years away and he wondered where stock would be provided from in the meantime. The half hourly service proposal was also nothing special as some parts of the sub-region already had this.
- An officer responded by pointing out that a half hourly service would be the minimum standard. By implication some

services could be more frequent. However maximum use of current track infrastructure would only be possible in around 10 years time when the European Railway Traffic Management System had been rolled out across the network.

- Network Rail was in a position of complete control over the process thus maintaining a partnership between the WoE authorities and it whilst developing the business case was key. It would also be important to maintain links with neighbouring Councils outside the WoE boundary in the light the fact that many services were cross boundary and the impact of neighbouring travel to work areas.
- A further issue was the need to ensure inter changeability of tickets, appropriate fares and fare structures and times of services. Failure to get these right would diminish the return on investment. The new legislation on local transport arrangements would allow local councils to influence these factors.
- Reference was made to the RFA2 funding timetable. Disappointment was expressed at the slippage of the Greater Bristol Metro bid to 2017/18 but it was noted that this might provide an opportunity of WoE partners to bring forward some small scale proposals which could take advantage of any gaps in the programme and be completed earlier.
- Concern was expressed about timescales generally and it was worrying that much of the planned new housing development in the sub-region might be in place before the rail improvements were complete.
- It was agreed that much lobbying remained to be done in relation to service need, required investment and timing of work across the sub-region. It was suggested that Lord Adonis, the Rail Minister might usefully be invited to meet the Joint Committee to discuss some of the issues raised at this meeting.

After further discussion, it was;

**RESOLVED – that the presentation on the Greater Bristol Metro proposals be noted**

The Joint Committee received a report from the West of England Partnership (agenda no. 8) requesting its views on further developing the current draft.

The WoEP Chief Executive made a brief presentation. There followed a general discussion about the MAA and the following is a summary of the main points;

- The proposed Agreement should allow partners to properly plan, co-ordinate and start to deliver in advance, the infrastructure which would be needed to accommodate the new urban extensions. The Chair noted that experience with the Thames Gateway development proved that this was possible to do if approached in the right way
- Planning policy needed to be sufficiently robust to enable authorities to manage pressure from developers for particular kinds of housing in particular areas. The recent experience at Swindon was a matter for concern. The MAA should provide that in return for keeping to government targets on housing, partner authorities should be able to manage development in the way in which they planned.
- How should authorities best meet the need for new affordable housing? It was noted that in some places, due to the recession, market housing was having to be sold back to the Housing Corporation . The issue as to whether standards needed to be lowered below the level normally required in order that properties become more affordable, was one which needed to be addressed.
- The Chief Executive indicated that he would incorporate the points now made by members. He explained that the Partnership were discussing with Government, a process for setting 5 year targets for the sub-region and arrangements whereby councils specify and make changes to the programme as the needs arise.
- Agreement by local authority partners on the standards required for new accommodation was key. Failure to agree on these would mean that developers would move between authorities and select those where requirements were lowest, and would effectively play one authority off against another over time.

- It was understood that nationally, the current arrangements for Section 106 funding were to be reviewed. Partner authorities needed to consider how developer contributions might best be applied in the sub-region in a consistent manner, lobby for any change to the rules as necessary, in order that an agreed policy was in place when the market improved.
- A critical factor in new development proposals was the need for local jobs in the vicinity. Partners should focus on jobs and skills issues. The work on RFA 2 had tended to focus on the physical issues, and future planning should try and redress the balance.
- In relation to skills, the Chief Executive discussed the work which was in train with principals of the 5 main colleges, including an ESF bid in collaboration with the Learning and Skills Council and Job Centre Plus to support employers during the current recession. He also referred to the work of the Employment and Skills Board in terms of prioritising employment issues and embedding needs in future development planning.
- A member commented on the need to incorporate in the criteria for employment and skills, specific arrangements for helping those with learning difficulties in order that they are able to achieve their potential and play a role in the economy; also the needs of an ageing population where individuals wish to continue to work beyond retirement age.
- In relation to questions about transport in the sub-region, the Chief Executive explained that in the asks of Government, the Partnership were looking for regional agencies to fully co-operate with one another so that once the transport plan of the sub-region is agreed, there is a commitment to its implementation.
- In relation to the RFA, a member noted that overspend on RFA 2 would mean that there would be pressure to withdraw certain projects and place them in RFA 3. All of the WoE schemes were complex packages, which in many respects were interlinked. The Partnership therefore needed to be prepared to protect its position and prevent any drift.

After further discussion, it was ;

**RESOLVED - that the WoEP Chief Executive bring a further updating report to the next meeting, once the matter has been considered by the Cabinet's of the member authorities**

**WEPJSC  
6.3/09**

**LOCAL TRANSPORT ACT AND INTEGRATED TRANSPORT AUTHORITIES**

The Joint Committee received a report from the West of England Partnership (agenda item no. 5) consider issues arising from the Local Transport Act 2008 relating to Integrated Transport Authorities and seek views.

An officer explained the potential impact of the Local Transport Act 2008 on the future delivery of local transport services and members asked questions thereon. During the discussion, reference was made to ;

- Funding; it was noted that creation of an integrated transport authority would not attract any new money from government Therefore, should such an entity be created, the 4 unitaries would need to agree on the charge to be levied.
- It was noted that the DfT were keen for the Council's to establish a joint executive committee for transport, to oversee local schemes and oversee the local transport plan. What was not clear at the moment was the powers which such an entity would have and what it might achieve. Clarity was being sought from the DfT.
- The impact which an ITA might have on the Greater Bristol Bus Network was currently being investigated.
- the creation of a new ITA for the sub-region was an issue which would need to be considered carefully. Initial thoughts were that the circumstances pertaining in the sub-region might mean that such a body was not the best way forward.
- Members discussed the implications for community transport organisations of the new Local Transport Act provisions. It was noted that one effect might be to enable them to function more as businesses and as such, to become more self-financing.

- Members considered that it would be worthwhile for the Joint Committee to invite a civil servant from DfT to address them on the options available to the Sub-Region under the new legislation; also to hear from someone who could give further information about the establishment of a quality bus transport partnership.
- A further detailed report to a future meeting of the Joint Committee to take these issues forward might be one option; the establishment of a small member working group could be another.

After further discussion, it was

**RESOLVED –**

**(1) that the report be noted.**

**(2) that an item be placed on the agenda for the next meeting to enable consideration to be given to how to take forward and further investigate, the options available under the new legislation.**

**WEPJSC  
7.3/09**

**CONSULTATION ON LOCAL TRANSPORT PLAN 3 GUIDANCE**

The Joint Committee considered a report of the West of England Partnership (agenda item no. 6) considering the implications and seeking views on draft guidance issued by the Department for Transport (DfT) in December 2008.

The Chair noted the time, the fact that that Bath & North East Somerset members had left the meeting, and the need for other members to leave shortly, and it was;

**RESOLVED – that any member views on the Local Transport Plan 3 guidance be forwarded to the Chair who would ensure that this is passed on to the DfT as the Joint Committees response.**

**WEPJSC  
8.3/09**

**WEST OF ENGLAND RAILWAY LAND ASSET REGISTER**

The Committee considered a report of the West of England Partnership (agenda item no. 7) informing Members of the setting up of the West of England Railway Land Register and seeking their views.

Members discussed the various sites listed in the schedule which was attached to the report.

During discussion;

- in relation to the site at Ashton Gate , members enquired why the City Council had decided not to purchase the land, in the light of possible need for it for rapid transit and/or rail use. It was agreed that the matter be taken up with the relevant executive member / chief officer.
- British Rail Property Board and DfT should be asked to consult authorities in future, where their intention is to dispose of any former railway land within the area of the Partner authorities.
- Similarly, planning officers should draw to the attention of members, any planning applications / development proposals submitted, which affect areas of former railway land .
- Planning Officers of the partner authorities should be asked to protect railway land where possible, in their LDF's.

**RESOLVED - that the report be noted.**

**WEPJSC  
9.3/09**

**RESPONSE TO STATEMENT MADE AT SCRUTINY ON 13<sup>TH</sup>  
FEBRUARY 2009**

The Committee received a response from the West of England Partnership (agenda item no. 9) to the statements made at the February 2009 Joint Scrutiny Committee meeting.

David Redgewell of the Campaign for Better Transport commented further thereon.

**RESOLVED – that the report be noted.**

The meeting ended at 11.55am

**CHAIR:.....**

S:\Reports\2008-09\Scrutiny\West of England Partnership\Joint Scrutiny Committee\Minutes\12) 13th March 2009.doc