



West of England Partnership

**Bath & North East
Somerset Council**



**North
Somerset
COUNCIL**

**South Gloucestershire
Council**

Minutes of meeting of the

West of England Partnership Board

Thursday 22 October 2009, 2pm, The Campus, Weston-super-Mare

Present

Bath & North East Somerset Council

Cllr John Bull
Cllr Tim Ball (substitute for
Cllr Paul Crossley)

Bristol City Council

Cllr Barbara Janke
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 and Environmental Partners

Stephen Harrison, Price Waterhouse Cooper
Ian Ducat, South West Trade Union Council
Rachel Robinson, Bristol and West of England ChangeUp Consortia
Steve Grainger, Avon Biodiversity Partnership

In attendance

Glen Chipp, Bath & North East Somerset Council
David Turner, North Somerset Council
Amanda Deeks, South Gloucestershire Council
Peter Jackson, South Gloucestershire Council
Hilary Neal, Government Office for the South West
Ian Knight, South West Regional Development Agency
Terry Wagstaff, West of England Partnership
Barbara Davies, West of England Partnership
Laura Grady, West of England Partnership
Penny Bell, West of England Partnership

1. Apologies for absence

Cllr Richard Eddy, Bristol City Council
Cllr Paul Crossley, Bath & North East Somerset
Jan Ormondroyd, Bristol City Council
John Everitt, Bath & North East Somerset Council
Graham Turner, North Somerset Council
Professor David Clarke, Bristol University
Sonia Mills, North Bristol NHS Trust
Peter Brown, South West Councils
Stuart Todd, South West Councils

2. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

3. Member and Public Forum - Statements

Dr Ian Ensum of Avon and Wiltshire Partnership NHS Trust addressed members of the Board to present an awareness raising statement regarding the development of local services for adults with Autism Spectrum Conditions (ASC).

Dr Ensum highlighted the complex health and social care needs of people suffering with ASC and explained that patient needs were not being met by existing mainstream services.

Dr Ensum introduced members to the Bristol Asperger Syndrome Service, currently funded by Bristol Primary Care Trust with a small contribution from Bristol City Council, and explained that it was a Department of Health national example of best practice. This service was looking to expand across the sub-region and required joint commissioning from health and social care budgets from the 4 authorities in the sub-region.

Cllr Calway thanked Dr Ensum for the presentation of his statement and members concluded that this subject was an issue for the 4 Unitary Authorities to pick up locally.

4. Minutes of meeting held on 11 September 2009

The minutes were agreed a true record of the meeting.

5. Matters arising from the minutes

Item 7 (iii): Waste Management Budgets

Terry Wagstaff informed members that the waste budgets had been circulated to members this week and would come back to this Board for approval in December after they had been presented to Joint Waste Management Committee.

Item 10: Transport Infrastructure Weston Package

Terry Wagstaff informed members that, in response to a request at the previous meeting of this Board, a letter had been sent to the Secretary of State on this issue and no reply had been received to date.

Terry Wagstaff also reported that representations to the Great Western Route Utilisation Strategy (RUS) were being produced for consideration at the next meeting of the Joint

Transport Executive Committee on 12 November 2009 to deal with issues of concern, including investment at Worle and Yate, and the additional platform at Bristol Parkway.

Members expressed concern that First Group was cancelling buses on the Greater Bristol Bus Network (GBBN) route, despite investments by this Partnership, and that this was unacceptable and should be dealt with as a priority.

Board members agreed that a high level meeting with First Group of the senior officers and members concerned should take place to pursue the issues highlighted. Officers of the 4 Unitary Authorities were asked to prepare a briefing paper on the issues and timescales involved, so that it could be presented to First Group prior to the meeting.

Cllr Holland felt that the basis of the RUS did not acknowledge growth of job and homes in the sub-region, and reported that Chris Irwin, Chair of Passenger User Group for South West Travel Watch, had produced a useful note regarding this to take to Minister Paul Clarke. Cllr Holland offered to pass this note to Barbara Davies and her team.

Board members agreed that a letter from the Chair of this Board should be sent to the Minister to raise the issues related to the draft RUS.

6. Major Transport Schemes to 2018/2019

Barbara Davies presented an update to members on major transport schemes across the sub-region. A copy of the presentation is available at:

<http://www.westofengland.org/meetings/partnership-board-/list-of-meetings/22-october-2009>

Cllr Davis requested that the information on the different schemes be presented in a comparable format. Barbara Davies reported that such information had been produced for the schemes submitted to Department for Transport and that she would arrange for it to be made available to members.

Some concern was raised regarding the proposed Rapid Transit schemes, and in particular the involvement that First Group had in the development of these schemes. Members felt that the contracts for these services should not be expressly available only to First Group, due to the current problems with GBBN.

Barbara Davies explained that the contracts for the services would not be expressly available only to First Group and that a due process inviting all potential operators would have to be followed. The involvement of First Group (and other operators) at this stage was to show a commercial element to the bids to prove the viability of the schemes. In doing this, there was no commitment for First Group to operate the schemes.

Steve Grainger referred to the term 'sustainable transport corridor' that was used in the presentation, and enquired as to its meaning. Barbara Davies explained that this term referred to the provision of higher-quality, safer, more sustainable transport routes, which provided more choice for travellers, for example, a Rapid Transit route with, where possible, a parallel cycle path and walking route.

Cllr Calway thanked Barbara for the informative presentation.

7. West of England Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA)

Laura Grady addressed members of the Board to present a report outlining the nature and findings of the West of England SHMA. She explained that it was a statutory requirement to carry out a SHMA, and informed members that it provided an important evidence base for authorities when producing Local Development Framework Core Strategies.

The report outlined the key findings of the SHMA; it contained detailed information on affordable housing need across the sub-region.

Laura Grady referred to the threshold of 35% for affordable housing on larger development sites included in the emerging draft Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS). This was a particular problem across the sub-region as approximately one third of new development sites were below the size threshold where affordable housing must be provided by developers. The planning system could not be solely relied upon to deliver the numbers of affordable homes that were required, particularly in times of an economic downturn.

Some members expressed concern about the need for 1-bed flats identified in the SHMA, as they viewed such homes as inadequate and unsustainable. With guidance on mortgage lending becoming stricter, there was concern that some households that had obtained mortgages in the past may not be able to do so now. Laura Grady informed members that the difficulty of providing for house deposits and the restricted mortgage lending market had been considered and would be monitored in future alongside other key market variables.

Cllr Janke commented on the strategic position and the fact that authorities in the sub-region were in competition for funding. The expanding population in the sub-region was an advantage, and if the West of England Partnership was to bid for funding it needed projected population growth to be included in the Assessment. Laura Grady explained that housing and population projections had been fed into the process, and that authorities were advised to consider the overall scale of need and supporting factors, as well as population growth.

Cllr Ashton reported that North Somerset Council was considering restricting the development of affordable 1-bed flats due to concerns about the poor quality of life for occupants and the risk of creating problem areas through groupings of 1-bed flats. North Somerset Council was also considering an affordable housing contribution on new developments of 30% instead of 35% due to site viability problems.

Cllr Ap Rees suggested the use of the Single Conversation to address real needs and to explore options such as 'staircasing' to bridge the gap between social rented and home ownership.

Cllr Bull reported that Bath & North East Somerset Council was well behind on affordable housing targets. It was currently consulting on its Core Strategy including the possibility of a policy of 50% affordable housing on development sites, and the abolition of thresholds altogether.

Cllr Ball commented on problems with water supply that the South East region was experiencing, and suggested that future water supply should be considered.

Cllr Ap Rees highlighted problems with regards to gypsy and traveller sites, which were very expensive for authorities. There was a particular problem with the application process for Government funding for such sites, as there is only one period in the year when authorities could apply for funding. If the deadline was missed the authority would have to wait 12 months to apply again. Hilary Neal was not aware of this process and agreed to investigate the matter.

Board members noted the report.

8. Multi-Area Agreement (MAA) Draft Delivery Plan

Terry Wagstaff presented the Draft Delivery Plan, which provided a summary of actions and timescales from the Multi-Area Agreement.

Section A of the draft Plan related to planning and managing growth in homes and jobs. Terry Wagstaff reported that the actions listed were being taken through the Single Conversation with both the Homes and Communities Agency and the Regional Development Agency. Particular focus was given to mixed-use developments, affordable/supported housing and strategic employment sites. Specific locations would be put forward and the draft Investment Plan would be brought to the Board in January.

Peter Jackson referred to the target for the re-negotiation of NI 154 and NI 155, which is March 2010, and asked whether the date could possibly be brought forward. Terry Wagstaff informed members that the deadline was already ambitious and so this would be unlikely. Peter Jackson explained that NI 154 referred to the target in the RSS for the amount of new homes expected to be built, and NI 155 referred to the number of new affordable homes expected to be built.

Section B of the draft Plan related to transport issues. It was reported that actions were already at an advanced stage in the case of complementary working with the Highways Agency (HA). A representative of HA had attended the meeting of Joint Transport Executive Committee on 01 October 2009, and the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) at the next Joint Transport Committee would assist joint arrangements for working together at a strategic and operational level.

Officers had begun negotiations on an MOU with Network Rail and other rail operators. The MOU should be settled during the civic year.

Section C of the draft Plan related to economic growth and competitiveness. It was reported that the actions within that section of the draft Plan were incomplete and had not yet been progressed. Discussions were currently taking place with the Heads of Economic Development.

Cllr Ap Rees referred to Action C2 in the draft Plan and suggested that the term 'city-region' should be amended to read 'sub-region'.

Section D of the draft Plan related to skills and worklessness. Stephen Harrison explained that particular focus was on 'post 19' adult needs. Another focus of this section was the reduction in worklessness in the sub-region, particularly in the 11 priority wards.

Stephen Harrison explained the need to have a private-sector led Board and to ensure diversity by involving organisations such as voluntary and community sector bodies.

At present, there were limited resources to work against these targets with only one manager in place, but processes were underway to obtain further resources in this area to take the actions forward.

Cllr Ball commented on the use of jargon on page 10, where reference was made to the 'customer journey'. Stephen Harrison explained that this term refers to identifying the types of support clients can expect and how this supported their progression in to employment and accredited skills.

Cllr Davis welcomed the draft Plan and the work done and commented that she would also welcome more details, for example further information to identify who was responsible for monitoring the achievements of the actions in the draft Plan.

Steve Grainger wished to welcome the Chair of the Employment and Skills Board. He also sought clarification on the infrastructure provision work the Partnership commissioned in the past. Terry Wagstaff informed members that, during the Single Conversation, sites across the sub-region and their infrastructure needs were being considered, and how the sub-region might respond to the challenges. The delivery of 2026 housing projections would be extremely difficult given the impact of the recession on site viability.

Board members received the report and requested that the recommendation on the report be amended to this effect.

9. Core Cities Update

Paul Taylor presented the report providing an update on the work of the Core Cities Group. The Group was a network of England's major regional cities outside of London, and included Bristol.

The Group had been approached by the Clinton Climate Initiative (CCI) to participate in large-scale projects that cut carbon dioxide emissions. The Group had also agreed to sign a Memorandum of Understanding agreeing in principal to work together with CCI to identify public buildings for energy retro-fitting through the Buildings Energy Efficiency Programme (BEEP).

The Group were making a strong case to Government for Accelerated Development Zones (ADZ). This is a US developed initiative for financing the infrastructure costs of a development up-front, securing borrowing against the expected increase in business rates generated by the development (known as Tax Increment Financing (TIF)).

This year had seen the development of a Core Cities pledge. This can be found at: <http://www.westofengland.org/meetings/partnership-board-/list-of-meetings/22-october-2009>

The Core Cities Summit would take place in Liverpool on 3 and 4 November 2009. Further information could be found at www.corecitiessummit.com.

Board members noted the report.

10. 2009/2010 Partnership Forward Plan

Terry Wagstaff introduced the Board's current Forward Plan.

Cllr Davis thanked Terry Wagstaff for the report and stated that it would be helpful to know which Officer is responsible for each aspect of the Forward Plan.

Cllr Holland commented that the Forward Plan did not mention the West of England Partnership Conference. Terry Wagstaff informed members that he would circulate further details about the Conference as soon as they became available.

Board members noted the current version of the Forward Plan.

11. Next meeting

Thursday 03 December 2009, 2pm
BAWA, Southmead Road, Filton, BS34 7RG

S:\WEP\WEP meetings\1. Board\2009\7. 03 December 2009\draft minutes 22.10.09.doc