



West of England Partnership

**Bath & North East
Somerset Council**



**North
Somerset
COUNCIL**

**South Gloucestershire
Council**

Minutes of meeting of the

Joint Scrutiny Committee

Friday 30 October 2009, 10am, BAWA, Filton, BS34 7RG

Present

Bath & North East Somerset Council

Cllr Caroline Roberts
Cllr Martin Veal

Bristol City Council

Cllr Mark Bradshaw
Cllr Barbara Lewis
Cllr Patrick Hassell (substitute for
Cllr Steve Comer)

North Somerset Council

Cllr Tony Moulin
Cllr David Pasley
Cllr Clive Webb

South Gloucestershire Council

Cllr Pat Hockey
Cllr Ian Smith

In attendance

Professor Graham Parkhurst, University of the West of England
Terry Wagstaff, West of England Partnership
Barbara Davies, West of England Partnership
James White, West of England Partnership
Laura Grady, West of England Partnership
Sally Gregory, West of England Partnership
Penny Bell, West of England Partnership

1. Apologies for absence

Cllr Dr Eleanor Jackson, Bath & North East Somerset Council
Cllr Steve Comer, Bristol City Council
David Trigwell, Bath & North East Somerset Council

2. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

3. Member and Public Forum - Statement

Alan Matthews, Chair of Portishead Railway Group, presented a statement on issues related to the Portishead rail line.

Alan Matthews explained that the population of Portishead and the Gordano Valley had risen rapidly since the 1950s and this, along with the lack of suitable transport routes out of the area, had resulted in severe traffic problems on the roads, particularly for residents trying to access Bristol and the motorway at peak times. The only viable solution so far identified was to reopen the Portishead rail line.

Discussion ensued on the matter and Alan Matthews informed members that Network Rail felt that the reopening of the line was a viable option, but that there were concerns regarding the initial capital costs, particularly as the line may need relaying.

Councillor Bradshaw thanked Alan Matthews for presenting the statement and requested that he keeps this Committee informed on the developments of this issue.

Resolved:

- 1. To write a letter to Network Rail inviting a representative to attend a future meeting to discuss the concerns highlighted.**
- 2. To address the Portishead rail line in future monitoring reports this Committee.**

4. Minutes of meeting held on 04 September 2009

Members were unclear of the meaning of the first bullet point on page 4 of the minutes and it was thought that perhaps the point had been confused with the discussion that had taken place regarding external witnesses.

Members agreed to amend that particular bullet point to reflect the discussion that it would be helpful to get members views on external witnesses.

Resolved:

That the minutes were agreed a true record of the meeting subject to the above amendment.

5. Achievements of Joint Scrutiny Committee

Sally Gregory presented a report outlining the work and achievements of Joint Scrutiny Committee in 2008/09, in response to a request at the previous meeting. The report contained a summary, consisting of the background of the Committee and its main achievements, followed by a list of individual achievements and areas of work where the Committee had made a contribution.

Councillor Bradshaw thanked Sally Gregory for the report, which was a helpful tool for identifying the effectiveness of the work of this Committee.

Members discussed various ideas for enhancing the report to ensure the Committee's achievements were clearly communicated.

Resolved:

- 1. The Scrutiny Achievements report, once finalised, should be put on the West of England Partnership website.**
- 2. The summary of the report should be expanded to include the Committee's response to proposed changes to the Regional Spatial Strategy, its objectives on tourism, rural strategy and policy development, the Committee's aims and objectives for the future and also examples of the effectiveness and outcomes of the Committee's actions.**
- 3. More press releases to be prepared following meetings with details of decisions and business transacted by the Committee.**
- 4. More feedback to be sought – through meetings with the Chairs of the Board and the Partnership's other Committees.**
- 5. Minutes to be concise and well structured to show more explicit recommendations of the Committee.**

6. Ensuring a High Quality Sustainable Environment

Terry Wagstaff presented a report regarding Scrutiny Theme 1: 'Ensuring a high quality sustainable environment', and outlined how this objective was being addressed by the Partnership's work.

Terry Wagstaff informed members that this theme was being addressed through 2 main areas. The first was regarding planning for growth and building new communities and the second was regarding transport; reducing dependency on the car and tackling climate change. With government ambition to achieve a 21% reduction in carbon emissions on the 2005 levels by 2022, and to achieve carbon neutral homes by 2016, these issues needed to be high on the West of England Partnership's agenda.

There were 2 vehicles currently in motion to assist with the required developments in these 2 areas; the Multi-Area Agreement and the Single Conversation with Homes and Communities Agency and Regional Development Agency.

Terry Wagstaff reported that the Board would be receiving reports at its meetings in January and March regarding mitigation of and adaptation to climate change. These reports were to be produced by officers of the four authorities.

Councillor Bradshaw highlighted opportunities for joint procurement between the four authorities, and also scope for the sharing of good practice with regards to Flood Risk Plans.

Terry Wagstaff informed members that there was no specific remit within the Partnership for collaboration on joint procurement, and explained that the authorities worked together to share best practice.

Discussion ensued amongst members regarding opportunities for tackling climate change and benefits to the sub-region of doing so. It was agreed that climate change should be the over-arching priority and this should then drill down to a number of

identified themes that would work towards achieving the overall target.

Resolved:

The themes were identified as follows:

- 1. Green infrastructure opportunities: engaging with Natural England and the Environment Agency.**
- 2. Facilitated conversation between the four authorities on procurement opportunities to drive the green agenda.**
- 3. Green Travel Plans: produced by authorities but also private sector plans – ensure compliance.**
- 4. Sending out a consistent message to the private sector in terms of environment standards and compliance.**

Terry Wagstaff informed the Committee that advice would need to be sought on the issue of procurement.

7. 2009/10 Draft Work Programme

Terry Wagstaff presented the draft Work Programme.

Resolved:

- 1. To include Environmental Issues as a Scrutiny Topic at the meeting on 11 December 2009.**
- 2. To send a copy of this Committee's work programme to the Joint Health Committee and request a copy of its work programme in return.**
- 3. To invite a representative of the Joint Health Committee to a future meeting.**

8. Joint Local Transport Plan 3

James White presented a report outlining the programme and engagement proposals for Joint Local Transport Plan 3 (JLTP3).

JLTP3 was divided into 3 main sections. The first section was the strategy, taking a long-term policy view from 2011 to 2026. The second section was the delivery plan; a shorter-term plan of a rolling 3-year period. The third section was a range of supplementary documents.

The draft strategy would be ready for engagement with key stakeholders by February 2010, with a 3-month period of formal consultation from July to September 2010. The draft Plan would then be revised in October to December 2010, with approval from the four authorities in January 2011. The Plan would be in place by the end of March 2011 to conform to Department for Transport requirements.

The draft Engagement Plan had been produced largely using methods from the existing JLTP. A process of high-level engagement would be used to consult with key

stakeholders, and a wide-level engagement plan was proposed in an attempt to consult with hard to reach groups. A number of consultation techniques were planned including web-based materials, the Travel+ website, which had recently gone live, hard copies in libraries, adverts on petrol pumps, the Family Information Service, among many more.

James White reported that the first drafts of the first three chapters would be going to the Joint Transport Executive Committee on 12 November 2009 and that further updates would be brought back to future meetings of this Committee.

Councillor Bradshaw thanked James White for presenting the report and invited Professor Graham Parkhurst to make any comments as an expert witness.

Professor Parkhurst thanked the Committee for inviting him to the meeting and explained that he had an interest in transport policy and evaluations. He suggested that methods of engagement should move from a paper form to an electronic form where possible, as more than 50% of households now have regular access to Broadband. Some ideas for targeting included through social-networking sites such as Facebook and Twitter; if people felt a sense of ownership they would be more likely to respond.

Professor Parkhurst recommended the use of supermarkets as an effective form of engagement, and also suggested targeting communities of transport interest, for example people who travel to the same place or take the same journey. If the Partnership was to successfully change peoples travel behaviour it needed to highlight improvements to quality of life; people liked to see short-term benefits.

Other ideas for consultation suggested by members included the use of ward members to help identify hard to reach groups, branded messages and also the use of mobile phones to reach youth groups such as teenagers.

Members commented that there did not appear to be any reference to consultation with climate change organisations in the report. James White informed members that Government guidance for JLTP3 requires authorities to demonstrate how they planned to adapt to climate change. It was planned to seek advice from experts such as the University of the West of England, Natural England and Climate Change Officers from the four authorities.

James White responded to questions of how the consultation documents would take form by informing members that a framework would be used that was based on the existing Plan. The presentation to the public would need to be user-friendly and easy to digest to ensure the best response rate.

Members highlighted concern about recent cuts to bus services in the sub-region and enquired as to how the service operators themselves would be engaged in the process. There was also suggestion of using a method such as 'three Rs' for example 'Reduce, Revise and Rethink', as this was thought to be effective at attracting peoples attention.

Barbara Davies responded to the concern regarding bus service cuts by informing members that the same issue was also raised as an item for concern by Board members at the meeting held on 22 October 2009. In response to this concern, an urgent meeting was being set up between Executive Members and Justin Davies of First Bus, and Officers from the four authorities had prepared a paper to present to Justin that summarised the main points of concern.

Councillor Pasley informed members of the benefits of switching off traffic lights in terms of reducing traffic congestion. North Somerset Council had trialled this scheme with great success and it was important to consider innovation in traffic management when considering JLTP3.

Members requested to receive a copy of the West of England Vision and it was agreed that this would be circulated to all members following the meeting.

Resolved:

To endorse the draft Engagement Plan.

9. Local Transport Act 2008

Terry Wagstaff presented a report outlining the provisions of the Act and the actions that could be taken within existing powers.

There was some confusion amongst members regarding the form that the proposed new powers would take. Some members recalled the Minister suggesting that new powers would be available for this Partnership; whereas other members were of the understanding that new powers would only be available to Integrated Transport Authorities (ITAs).

Terry Wagstaff informed members that a report was being presented to the Joint Transport Executive Committee on 12 November 2009 and a verbal update would be provided at the next meeting of this Committee on 11 December 2009.

10. Multi-Area Agreement Draft Delivery Plan

Terry Wagstaff presented a report outlining the actions within the draft Delivery Plan.

Section A of the draft Plan, which related to growth in homes and jobs, was required by the Partnership Board to be set out in more detail, to include information on the member and officer responsible for each action. This would be included in the next version of the draft Plan.

Section B related to transport and Terry Wagstaff reported that good progress was being made on all of the actions in this section. The Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Highways Agency had been agreed by members of the Joint Transport Executive Committee at its meeting on 01 October 2009, and was due to be signed by both parties on 12 November 2009. The MoU with Network Rail was also in progress and should be in place early next year.

Sections C and D, which related to business investment and skills, both required further work and a review of capacity in order to take the actions forward. Both sections would be reported on in more detail at a future meeting.

Some members requested clarification on the Single Conversation process. Terry Wagstaff informed members that the Single Conversation was a method of engaging in dialogue with Homes and Communities and Agency and Regional Development Agency. The purpose was to develop and deliver a Local Investment Plan that would identify priority sites and where to concentrate priority investment.

Resolved:

- 1. To require for the next meeting a report providing clarification on the Single Conversation.**

11. West of England Strategic Housing Market Assessment

Laura Grady presented a report outlining the nature and findings of the West of England Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA), and the actions to be considered.

Laura Grady explained that it was a statutory requirement to carry out a SHMA, and informed members that they provided an important evidence base for authorities when producing Local Development Framework Core Strategies. It also linked into the Single Conversation process.

The report outlined the key findings of the SHMA and these were important for authorities to consider as they contained detailed information on affordable housing need across the sub-region.

Laura Grady referred to the emerging draft Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) and the threshold of 35% affordable housing stock on development sites of 15 homes or more. 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, therefore the planning system could not be solely relied upon to deliver the number of affordable homes that were required, particularly in times of an economic downturn. This raised questions about whether existing planning policy would be sufficient to provide the supply of affordable housing that was required across the sub-region.

Councillor Lewis thanked Laura Grady for the report and raised concern about the affordable housing threshold on sites of 15 homes or more as it often resulted in planning applications for sites of 14 homes. Bristol City Council recognised this problem and was looking into the possibility of using commuted sums as a way of penalising developers for developing sites under the 15-home threshold. Funds raised from commuted sums would then be reinvested into other affordable housing schemes.

Some members expressed concern regarding the need for 1-bed flats that had been identified in the SHMA, as they were thought of to be inadequate and unsustainable. An alternative suggestion was the development of Houses of Multiple Occupancy; to which Laura Grady reported that there was not enough evidence of need to consider this option in the SHMA.

Resolved:

That two issues required further attention, as follows:

- 1. Achieving consistency within the private sector of the quality of new-build homes across the four authorities.**
- 2. An understanding of the development economics that underpin house building and a sharing of that understanding between the four authorities.**

Laura Grady informed members that a Strategic Housing Market Assessment monitoring report would be brought to a future meeting of this Committee.

12. Next meeting

Friday 11 December 2009, 10am, The Campus, Weston-super-Mare, BS24 7DX