



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 14 January 2010, 10am, Fry Club, Keynsham

Present

Bath & North East Somerset Council

Cllr John Bull
Cllr Paul Crossley
Cllr Charles Gerrish
(substitute for Cllr Francine Haerberling)

Bristol City Council

Cllr Helen Holland
Cllr Richard Eddy
Cllr Jon Rogers
(substitute for Cllr Barbara Janke)

North Somerset Council

Cllr Elfan Ap Rees

South Gloucestershire Council

Cllr John Calway
Cllr Ruth Davis
Cllr Roger Hutchinson

Social, Economic & Environmental Partners

Ian Ducat, South West Trade Union Council
Steve Grainger, Avon Biodiversity Partnership
Stephen Harrison, Price Waterhouse Cooper, Chair Employment & Skills Board
John Savage, Business West

In attendance

Peter Jackson, Bath & North East Somerset Council
Jan Ormondroyd, Bristol City Council
David Turner, North Somerset Council
Amanda Deeks, South Gloucestershire Council
Peter Jackson, South Gloucestershire Council
Hilary Neal, Government Office for the South West
David Warburton, Homes & Communities Agency
Terry Wagstaff, West of England Partnership
David Draycott, West of England Partnership
Penny Bell, West of England Partnership

1. Apologies for absence

Cllr Barbara Janke, Bristol City Council
Cllr Nan Kirsan, North Somerset Council
Cllr Nigel Ashton, North Somerset Council
Cllr Francine Haerberling, Bath & North East Somerset Council

Sonia Mills, Social, Economic & Environmental Partner
David Clarke, Social, Economic & Environmental Partner
Rachel Robinson, Social, Economic & Environmental Partner
Graham Turner, North Somerset Council
Ian Knight, Regional Development Agency
Georgina Clampitt-Dix, Wiltshire Council

2. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

3. Member and Public Forum - Statements

David Redgewell addressed members to present a statement that highlighted various concerns regarding rail issues. A copy of the statement is available at:
<http://www.westofengland.org/media/172415/pubic%20statement%20-%20dr.pdf>

David also requested that the letter to the Department for Transport (DfT) in support of rolling stock be sent as a matter of urgency. Penny Bell informed members that the Joint Local Transport Team was currently dealing with this issue.

4. Minutes of meeting held on 03 December 2009

The minutes were agreed as a true record of the meeting.

5. Matters arising from the minutes

Page 3 – Transport Infrastructure: Weston Package

A response had been received to the letter to the Secretary of State for Transport. The original letter and reply had been circulated to members.

Page 4 – Joint local Transport Plan 3

As requested, a list of members on the Transport Plan Commission had been emailed to members, and future dates of meetings would be circulated as they were planned.

Page 7 – 2009/10 Partnership Forward Plan

A statement on the powers that could be exercised by the Joint Transport Executive Committee was in draft form and had not yet been confirmed with DfT. Board members would receive more information after the matter had been presented to the Joint Transport Executive Committee.

6. Resignation of Sonia Mills, Chief Executive, North Bristol NHS Trust and Social, Economic & Environmental Partner

Councillor Calway announced, with regret, that Sonia Mills had resigned from the Partnership, as she was to take up new employment in Oxfordshire. Sonia Mills was the

Chief Executive of North Bristol NHS Trust and had been a member of the West of England Partnership as a Social, Economic & Environmental Partner. She was very highly regarded in her profession and had been very dedicated to her role within the Partnership.

Councillor Calway proposed a letter be written to Sonia Mills to thank her for her valuable contributions to the Partnership and to wish her well in her new role.

Discussion ensued regarding the appropriate form of action to find a replacement for Sonia Mills. Terry Wagstaff recommended taking advice from Chief Executives of Primary Care Trusts, which members agreed with. Councillor Holland also commented that it would be worth consulting the Regional Director of Public Health for advice.

Resolved:

That a replacement should be sought and that officers should take advice from Chief Executives of Primary Care Trusts and the Regional Director of Public Health.

7. Single Conversation: Delivery & Infrastructure Investment Plan

Terry Wagstaff presented the report and its appendices, which summarised the progress with the Single Conversation and the next steps.

The Draft Strategic Case was attached at Appendix A. More work was needed on this but members' comments on the draft were welcomed.

Significant investment was planned during years 1 to 3; the Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR) and public spending restrictions made it difficult to anticipate the availability of capital for infrastructure. The aim was to report the Delivery & Infrastructure Investment Plan to this Board on 25 February and to Council Cabinets in March.

The next steps in the process were the firming-up of specifics, prioritisation with officers and members, bringing plans for years 1 to 3 to the Board on 25 February and to Council Cabinets in March, and planning up to 2019/20 to build a strong strategic case for investment.

The main challenges ahead included being specific, prioritisation, assessing viability of development sites in the economic upturn, the uncertainties surrounding the Regional Funding Allocation 2 for Transport and capital investment more generally because of expected cuts in public expenditure.

David Warburton of Homes & Communities Agency (HCA) emphasised that the Delivery & Investment Plan was a delivery document that would determine where HCA would put its investment.

It was important to use the document in the next CSR period, as a document with key place-based and thematic priorities would provide a powerful case for future debates and resources. Negotiations were at a good stage, and the West of England was still at a more advanced stage in the process than the majority of other areas in the region.

- Councillor Davis wished to congratulate all who had been involved in the process so far for the work that had been achieved. She commented on the links to

authorities' Core Strategies and was concerned with the timings, as South Gloucestershire Council's Draft Core Strategy was not in the public domain yet.

- Councillor Davis proposed an alteration to the recommendation on the report that the Board 'noted progress and endorsed the next steps'. Councillor Rogers seconded the proposal and members agreed.
- Councillor Davis commented on the basis for calculating figures and the need to ensure that the process was correct so that priorities were correct, and also questioned how locations were prioritised and whether there should be more member involvement. She also suggested that Avonmouth/Sevenside could be looked at and questioned whether there was a need to bid for extra money for Capacity Building. Terry Wagstaff highlighted that there would be member involvement in prioritisation during late January/early February.
- Councillor Rogers also commended the work done by officers and the individual authorities for endeavouring to put together a strong case and ensuring links with each other.
- Councillor Holland felt that the key test for the Partnership was the deliverability of schemes on the ground. There was also a good opportunity to advertise and highlight the work between HCA, the Partnership and other partners by erecting signs and banners in investment locations.
- Councillor Gerrish was concerned that sites should not be delayed or given a lower priority due to the state of the market and felt that caution was needed to ensure that investment was secured to bring forward the development of brownfield sites.
- Councillor Rogers also felt that there was scope to build on publicity and community involvement. It was important to bring local matters to peoples attention and to engage the public more widely.
- Councillor Bull sought clarification on the meaning of Capacity Building. David Warburton explained that it was a local asset-backed vehicle, using land to lever in private investment. It was a model that was designed around delivery.
- Councillor Holland commented on the disparity between the numbers of new homes in Bristol compared to the number of new jobs. In all of the other areas the figures appeared to be a lot closer, but the Bristol figures showed great disparity.
- Councillor Ap Rees stated that the Plan was work in progress and that the figures were likely to continue to change. He also commented that South Bristol was much closer to the urban area of Bristol City than other areas such as Weston-super-Mare, where a higher number of jobs were required to reverse the trend of travelling out of the area to places of work.

- Councillor Bull commented on the earlier comments regarding community engagement, and felt that this should be incorporated into the Delivery Plan.

Resolved: To agree the amended recommendation as follows:

That the Board notes progress to date and endorses the next steps to prepare the Delivery & Infrastructure Investment Plan.

8. Skills & Competitiveness Board: Acquisition of powers to set priorities and direction for delivery of adult (post 19) skills

Terry Wagstaff presented the report, which set out the arrangements for establishing a Skills & Competitiveness Board, including its Constitution and for acquiring statutory strategy-setting powers for adult (post 19) skills. It would replace the existing Employment & Skills Board in the new Civic Year.

The Board will be employer-led, and with business organisations would further strengthen the Partnership overall.

Terry summarised the challenges as follows:

- Further specifying the priorities, plans and outcomes of the Board, through the Multi-Agency Officer Support Group
- Settling staff appointments
- Establishing the Board in shadow form
- Working with the Department for Business, Innovation & Skills (DBIS) to secure statutory skills strategy-setting powers.
- Stephen Harrison, Chair of the current Employment & Skills Board and Social, Economic & Environmental Partnership Board Member, described how the role of the proposed Board was one of coordination and cooperation. Its function would be strategic and not operational, and it would be used to pull together individuals and organisations to develop presence and focus, and to help solidify a strategy for the West of England.
- David Draycott highlighted the challenge of achieving devolution of powers and advised that it was important to get the Board underway as soon as possible, and to meet the commitments made in the Multi-Area Agreement (MAA).
- John Savage added that the development of the Board should give the West of England priority. It would also help employers in the area to understand training requirements to reverse the diminishing workforce, and help them plan for the future.
- Ian Ducat commented on the process for recruiting members to the Board in the draft Constitution, and the need to ensure that the right people are represented. It would probably prove difficult to get small businesses involved. He also suggested that consideration be given to employee representation on the Board.
- Stephen Harrison acknowledged the difficulties of engaging small businesses but

felt that it was possible if they believed that they could make a difference and add value. He also added that the involvement of involving employees in the process was important and that he would take that point away.

- Councillor Crossley disapproved of the proposals to develop the Board and felt that the issues were best dealt with by the individual local authorities.
- Councillor Gerrish highlighted the risk of over-representation of large employers on the Board and potentially missing the needs of smaller employers. Both had a key role. He also commented on the different employment requirements across the West of England, with Bath & North East Somerset, for example, having a high proportion of tourism-related jobs.
- Councillor Davis agreed that it would be ideal to tackle such issues at a local level, but also stated that the powers required to do so could only be acquired at the sub-regional level. She also commented that some of the largest employers in the West of England included the local authorities and health authorities, and recommended that these partners needed to be 'on board'. Councillor Davis then went on to recommend that the Board should be a formal part of the Partnership structure, so should be a public meeting and open to scrutiny, and sought confirmation that the Partnership Board would formally approve the planned Employment & Skills Strategy. She also felt that the Chair of the Board should always be a Social, Economic & Environmental Partner, which was a view shared by other members.
- Councillor Ap Rees was in favour of the proposals for the Board, particularly due to the cross-boundary nature of employment in the West of England.
- Councillor Davis proposed a number of amendments to the recommendations, which were seconded by Stephen Harrison and agreed by members.

Resolved:

- 1. That the Partnership endorses the further action taken and proposed to establish the Skills & Competitiveness Board as the body within the West of England Partnership responsible for developing and setting the strategy for adult (post 19) skills as set out in the 2007 Further Education & Training Act.**
- 2. That the Board should seek the formal endorsement of the Partnership in setting the strategy.**
- 3. That the Chair of the Board should always be a Social, Economic & Environmental Partner of the Partnership.**

9. Regional Spatial Strategy: Additional Sustainability Appraisal Work

Terry Wagstaff presented a report that summarised the Government's progress with the sustainability appraisal work, based on a response from the Government Office for the South West.

Resolved:

To note the report.

10. Outcomes from Partnership Conference

Members received a report that summarised the outcomes from the Partnership conference held in November.

Councillor Calway thanked the Partnership Office staff for the hard work that went into making the conference a success.

Councillor Ap Rees commended Barbara Davies in particular for her presentation in the Transport Workshop.

Resolved:

To note the conference outcomes.

11. 2009/10 Partnership Forward Plan

Members received that current version of the Partnership Forward Plan for 2009/10, which had been revised taking account of comments made at the last meeting.

Resolved:

To note the current version of the Forward Plan.

12. Next Meeting

Thursday 25 February 2010, 2pm, Council House, Bristol