



# West of England Partnership

**Bath & North East  
Somerset Council**



**North  
Somerset  
COUNCIL**

**South Gloucestershire  
Council**

**Minutes of meeting of the**

## **Joint Scrutiny Committee**

**Friday 19 February 2010, 10am, The Campus, Weston-super-Mare**

### **Present**

#### **Bath & North East Somerset Council**

Cllr Eleanor Jackson

#### **Bristol City Council**

Cllr Mark Bradshaw (Chair)

Cllr Barbara Lewis

Cllr Steve Comer

#### **North Somerset Council**

Cllr Clive Webb

Cllr Tony Moulin

#### **South Gloucestershire Council**

Cllr Pat Hockey

Cllr Malcolm Bridge

(Substitute for Cllr Geoff King)

### **In attendance**

Alun Owen

Bristol City Council

Chris Sane

South Gloucestershire Council

Terry Wagstaff

West of England Partnership

Barbara Davies

West of England Partnership

Laura Grady

West of England Partnership

Julia Dean

West of England Partnership

Sally Gregory

West of England Partnership

### **1. Apologies for absence**

Cllr Caroline Roberts and Cllr Martin Veal, Bath & NE Somerset Council

Cllr David Pasley, North Somerset Council

Cllr Ian Smith and Cllr Geoff King, South Gloucestershire Council

David Trigwell, Bath & NE Somerset Council

### **2. Chair's business**

The Chair, saying this was an exception to normal procedure, invited David Redgewell from the Campaign for Better Transport to speak on the issues raised by the Evening Post article from the previous day. David Redgewell said that the article focused on changes from 6 April to First bus services. He was concerned that this type of change needed to be properly publicised.

Julia Dean would talk to First and the media and try to ensure that information on all the routes and all the operators was made available. It was suggested that the article was written as a result of PR by First. There was concern that this appeared contrary to the agreed Understanding with First, under which First was to give notice to the Partnership of such publicity. This would be investigated.

### **3. Minutes of meeting held on 22 January 2010**

The minutes were agreed a true record of the meeting.

### **4. Matters arising from the minutes**

Copies of the letter sent to the Minister on 29 January about rolling stock were made available.

### **5. Single Conversation**

**It was agreed that under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the meeting for the consideration of the following items, on the ground that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Part I of Schedule 12A to the Act (as amended).**

*The public were readmitted*

### **6. Scrutiny Theme 2: Strengthening the Sub-Regional Economy**

Sally Gregory said that the Multi-Area Agreement was a key element of this second Scrutiny theme. It was being supported by the establishment of the Skills & Competitiveness Board, agreed by the Partnership Board, which would engage employers, who were currently being recruited. It was intended that the Board would apply for section 4 powers, which would enable them to set the sub-regional priorities for the new Skills Funding Agency.

The Partnership Office included a small Inward Investment Team which ran an on-line property database and promoted investment in the sub-region. This work was complemented by that of the local authorities' Economic Development Teams in their areas.

The following issues were raised in discussion:

- The Skills Academy in Hengrove had had its funding reduced by £3m. Terry Wagstaff said that this highlighted the need for s4 powers, to enable a strong sub-regional voice on skills priorities, involving expenditure of £30-40m. The 5 colleges were keen to have influence because of the perceived remoteness of the new national agency.
- The importance of investment in digital infrastructure, to support people who rely on IT, including access to broadband, for their businesses particularly small businesses and in rural areas. There was more work being done in the authorities in relation to running businesses and tackling digital exclusion.
- How representative would the Board be? It would be important to include the Third

Sector and to tackle structural employment, as well as a range of other issues. It needed to have wider engagement, beyond its own membership.

The Third Sector would have a voting representative on the Board. The Board would be purely advisory in relation to competitiveness.

- Bristol had its own inward investment team and this was part of a bigger picture linked to leisure, etc.  
The Partnership team worked with Economic Development across the authorities, but the other authorities had smaller teams without specific inward investment functions.

It was agreed that the Chair of the Skills & Competitiveness Board be invited to a meeting of the Joint Scrutiny Committee in the new municipal year.

## **7. Review of existing Local Transport Powers**

Terry Wagstaff said that the Joint Transport Executive Committee had looked hard at the opportunities under the Act and concluded that, considering their current pressing agenda, they could do almost as much as an Integrated Transport Authority (ITA) and could seek additional powers from the local authorities where necessary. The current federated approach enabled them to balance the strategic and the local, but this may not be possible with an ITA, whose remoteness could undermine its strategic purpose. The Board would be asked to support this approach. He went on to consider the four aspects of an ITA's powers, set out in the Appendix, and concluded that in the main an ITA would not add to the current work already being undertaken. In marketing the work being done, it was the quality of the message which was important.

The Chair said that this was about the clout of the West of England. They were all agreed on the need to press the case for the sub-region to the Department for Transport, but there was disagreement on how it should be done.

The following points were made in discussion:

- The public expected joined up working. Was this the best mechanism at the moment? Cllr Moulin said that he was not convinced that an ITA would deliver more and that it would not include the rail powers envisaged in the Act. He thought that more needed to be done to articulate the Vision for 2026. There was a need to persuade the public of an integrated public transport system.
- Cllr Hockey thought that the Joint Transport Executive Committee needed to get smarter at presentation. Consultations should be done across the sub-region in a joined up way. The whole of the Partnership, not just the local authorities, should be involved in meetings with ministers. There was a role for the Board, not just the Joint Transport Executive Committee.  
Terry Wagstaff agreed that there was a need to be clearer about the agenda and the work on the Joint Local Transport Plan 3 was an example. Rachel Robinson would be Chair of the Transport Plan Commission and the SEEPs took a keen interest in transport matters. In addition, Barbara Davies made regular presentations to businesses and stakeholders.
- Local buses were the main interest of the public. Cllr Lewis suggested that there should be cross-boundary commissioning.

Terry Wagstaff said that full franchising was a risky business, and risk needed to be shared between the authorities. He thought that the best way to do this would be through a separate company, rather than through the Joint Transport Executive Committee. He said that Bus Quality Contracts were not affordable in the sub-region and, in addition, the Partnership did not have operational responsibilities.

- It was suggested that the authorities needed to explore the integration of the commissioning work of the four unitary authorities' transport officers.

## **8. North Fringe to Hengrove Package – Major Transport Scheme Bid**

Barbara Davies gave a presentation in which she initially outlined the overall transport major scheme programme the Partnership was seeking to deliver. This was one of two bid submissions which the Partnership was intending to make to the Department for Transport in March. Comments made at this meeting would be fed into the South Gloucestershire Council Scrutiny process and the Cabinets of Bristol and South Gloucestershire. Work was continuing on these submissions, which were on track for submission, subject to the Cabinet decisions.

Barbara said that this scheme was seeking £168m of Government funding. She took members through the route of the Rapid Transit, explaining issues relating to each section, including the Park & Ride next to the M32 and the redesigning of the City Centre in Bristol. It was important that there was full integration with other forms of transport. She said that, following the comments of the Joint Scrutiny Committee previously and the public consultation, the route had been extended from Aztec West to Cribbs Causeway. A decision had not yet been taken on the type of vehicle. Technical and environmental issues were currently being looked at. There had been engagement with stakeholders and public consultation, the report of which would hopefully be on the website later that day.

The following questions/points and responses were made:

- Did the extension to Cribbs Causeway add to the cost of the scheme?  
Chris Sane said that the additional infrastructure cost would be £2m or less, because it could be tied in with the Northfield development.
- Why had Prince Street Bridge been chosen as the route, rather than Redcliffe Hill?  
Alun Owen said that there was no cost difference between the two, but there were criteria, including speed, which together gave a marginal advantage to the Prince Street Bridge route.
- Why was the M32 Park & Ride being sited on the smallholdings site; wouldn't Hambrook be a better location because of the access along the ring road to Southmead and the new hospital?  
Alun Owen responded, saying consultation on the Park & Ride site had identified four possible sites but, for a number of reasons, only one site was deliverable. Officers were now trying to focus on mitigation involved with using this site, eg providing improved land as close as possible for the smallholdings which had to be moved. Local residents had mixed views about gaining access to the Park & Ride site and it seemed that many would use it if they could walk or cycle. Officers were also considering a wider package of traffic measures in the area.
- Cllr Comer felt that general access was not a good idea, since it would displace

traffic and parking from Fishponds Road.

- It was agreed that local enhancements in the area would be important.
- Would there be unintended consequences relating to the site, eg UWE students using it as a car park?  
Officers said operational measures could ensure that it was used as intended.
- There needed to be connectivity to Southmead, Filton College and other sites in the North Fringe. It was suggested that there could also be a link with the Abbey Wood Station. Officers recognised that this was the largest single scheme bid in the South West programme and thought that in the current economic climate it was not realistic to add to it. The scheme would provide a solid base on which to build in the future. They would be looking at existing bus services to maximise the links and improve accessibility.
- Were the proposals set in stone or could they be altered?  
This was only the Programme Entry stage and, although officers were not looking for major changes there may be opportunities to amend aspects in the future, as long as these did not fundamentally alter the business case for the scheme.

The Chair summarised the discussion as follows:

- The Park & Ride continued to be contentious. It would be important that the reports to Cabinets set out the rationale and outlined the community engagement;
- The report needed to set out the importance of the reconfiguration of the centre proposals and there needed to be greater clarity about this;
- Members were interested in the services and the procurement process (stressing the need for them to be of an open nature, with low carbon vehicles sought);
- Southmead Hospital may lever in other opportunities for transport improvements, eg bus services, not necessarily funded by Rapid Transit;
- Useful work on community engagement had been carried out, especially in South Bristol, for this scheme, through the Neighbourhood Planning Network, which could be shared with the Cabinets.

He asked that the draft reference sheet for the Cabinets was circulated to Members prior to being finalised.

## **9. Forward Plan**

The Committee noted the Forward Plan.

## **10. Next meeting**

Friday 5 March, 10am, Guildhall, Bath