



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 25 February 2010, 2pm, Council House, Bristol

Present

Bath & North East Somerset Council

Cllr John Bull
Cllr Paul Crossley
Cllr Francine Haerberling

Bristol City Council

Cllr Helen Holland
Cllr Peter Abraham (substitute for Cllr
Richard Eddy)
Cllr Barbara Janke

North Somerset Council

Cllr Nigel Ashton
Cllr Elfan Ap Rees

South Gloucestershire Council

Cllr John Calway
Cllr Ruth Davis
Cllr Roger Hutchinson

Social, Economic & Environmental Partners

David Clarke, University of Bristol
Steve Grainger, Avon Biodiversity Partnership
Stephen Harrison, Price Waterhouse Cooper, Chair Employment & Skills Board
Rachel Robinson, Change Up Consortia

In attendance

John Everitt, Bath & North East Somerset Council
Jan Ormondroyd, Bristol City Council
Alex Minshull, Bristol City Council (Item 8 only)
Graham Turner, North Somerset Council
Amanda Deeks, South Gloucestershire Council
Jane Antrobus, South Gloucestershire Council (Item 8 only)
Hilary Neal, Government Office for the South West
Colin Molton & David Warburton, Homes & Communities Agency (Item 11 only)
Tony Bray, South West Regional Development Agency
Terry Wagstaff, West of England Partnership
Barbara Davies, West of England Partnership
Pete Davis, West of England Partnership
Laura Grady, West of England Partnership
Sally Gregory, West of England Partnership

1. Apologies for absence

Cllr Richard Eddy, Bristol City Council
Cllr Elfin Ap Rees, North Somerset Council
Ian Ducat, SW TUC
Georgina Clampitt-Dix, Wiltshire Council

2. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

3. Member and Public Forum - Statements

The following statements were noted:

- Referral from Sustainable Development and Transport Scrutiny Commission, Bristol City Council
- Statement from Anne Lock, Corsham Station Campaign
- Statement from Ian Banks, David Redgewell and Jenny Ragget, South West Transport Network
- Statement from Ian Crawford, Greater Bristol Transport Alliance.

4. Minutes of meeting held on 14 January 2010

Cllr Helen Holland requested that in item 7 her comments were amended to read 'South Bristol' instead of 'Bristol' in both instances. With this amendment the minutes were agreed as a true record.

5. Matters arising from the minutes

Item 3: Copies of the letter to the Department for Transport about rolling stock were circulated.

6. Local Transport Powers

Terry Wagstaff said that it had been the view of the Joint Transport Executive Committee that they wanted to focus on progressing work through existing joint governance arrangements, rather than progress towards an Integrated Transport Authority (ITA). They considered that they currently had the powers that they needed, but would consider this further if their objectives were obstructed by a lack of powers. He said that the powers of the Joint Transport Executive Committee largely matched those of an ITA, as illustrated by the Appendix to the report, an amended version of which was circulated. The differences were, firstly, that an ITA could adopt a higher profile and, secondly, that the Joint Committee had no ability to raise a levy through taxation, although the authorities, if they wished, could increase the support they gave to transport through council tax and other sources.

During the discussion the following points were made:

- Cllr Roger Hutchinson said that he was very concerned when he read the report because he thought that the governance should be with the Partnership Board, rather than the Joint Committee, and he was concerned about the public perception and understanding, which varied massively. He accepted that cost was a factor in not progressing to an ITA, but he thought the Joint Committee would only work if it had

teeth and paragraph 17 suggested that this was not the case. He wondered if the Department for Transport recognised the Joint Committee's powers as being similar to those of an ITA.

- Cllr Helen Holland endorsed his remarks, saying that this report did not give the Partnership Board the opportunity she had hoped for, to think about governance arrangements.
- Cllr Nigel Ashton thought that the Partnership had the powers it needed and Cllr Francine Haerberling felt that the current arrangement suited everyone, since the public would not be happy with an extra tax, and that the Joint Committee was the right way to progress.
- There was concern about the public perception, since the public wanted integrated travel, and it was suggested that the Joint Committee's profile should be raised and promoted to government and the public.
- There should be an explanation of the powers listed in the report's Appendix. It was suggested that a version with a clearer message be prepared for stakeholders and the public. Board members considered that credibility and impact were important, as was being seen to be working together on issues that the public were concerned about, eg through ticketing.
- The door should be open to reconsideration in the future.

The Board endorsed the conclusions of the Joint Committee.

7. Major Transport Schemes: Progress with development and implementation

Pete Davis explained that the report updated members on the Major Schemes Programme. Appendix 1 outlined the current position with regard to the RFA2 (Regional Funding Advice) schemes and in Appendix 2 was a map of the sub-region, requested by the Joint Scrutiny Committee, showing all the schemes. Appendix 3 included high level summaries of progress with each of the schemes and he outlined the key issues. He said that the Multi-Area Agreement was helping to speed up the Department for Transport (DfT) processes.

There was concern about delay in getting a response from the DfT on submitted scheme bids, particularly because of the impact this had on costs. Hilary Neal said that she hoped that there would be an answer in the next week, but the schemes had been delayed by the dialogue between the DfT and HM Treasury. She advised that there was nothing more the Board could do to speed this up.

In response to questions about the regional situation, Hilary Neal said that the West of England was well placed to argue for the prioritisation of its schemes linked with the growth agenda. It would be important for the region to make decisions in the context of the scenarios for cuts of various amounts, which were currently being discussed, and to start by agreeing principles, rather than make ad hoc decisions.

Board members expressed concern about the fact that the sub-region's Leaders were a minority on the Strategic Leaders Board and the strength of the sub-region's case did not guarantee a decision in its favour. It was noted that if these schemes did not go ahead, more frequent gridlock on the road network in the sub-region was likely and this would

affect the whole of the sub-region. It was noted that a reduction in transport investment would also result in a reduction in development, since the two had to be linked.

Hilary Neal said that the Government Office was aware of this but Board members should remember that only the next five years was currently being discussed; the transport investment envisaged was required over the long term. The regions, through the Strategic Leaders Boards, had been made responsible for the decisions and the Government Office could not intervene in the decision-making.

It was agreed to write to Bryony Houlden (South West Councils) about the impact for the region of the schemes not progressing, bearing in mind at this stage the region had backed the schemes. It was noted that the Greater Bristol Bus Network, currently underway, showed that the sub-region could deliver.

Tony Bray reminded Board members that the final shape of RFA2 was a joint matter between the Strategic Leaders Board and the Regional Development Agency (RDA). The West of England was a priority place for the RDA, but decisions were difficult in a time of reduced expenditure.

The Board noted the progress made with the West of England Transport Major Schemes Programme.

8. Climate change

Steve Grainger introduced the item, saying that he had been trying to get the environmental aspects of the 2026 vision taken on by the Partnership, because of their importance in supporting other priorities, such as health. Addressing climate change was of fundamental importance, particularly in times of increasing pressure, eg on infrastructure. He had recently given a presentation to the Joint Scrutiny Committee on green infrastructure, which was of strategic importance to the sub-region. He said that the report focused on the role of the public sector, but it was also important to win over the private sector and the third sector.

Alex Minshull and Jane Antrobus introduced their report. Climate change provided large threats and opportunities, both for the sub-region and the globe. It would affect the sub-region's attractiveness. The MAA identified commitments related to climate change and this paper built on these and sought to support the Partnership in their delivery and in addressing weaknesses. Work was underway to provide clarity, an evidence base and integration of the priorities identified in the report. Once there were priorities agreed, the next stage would be to bring a draft an Action Plan to the Board setting out how these would be delivered.

There was agreement that this was a very big issue of huge importance. Cllr Paul Crossley said that he was disappointed that the Partnership had not drawn on the wealth of experience which existed in communities and action groups. He thought that the Partnership should use the skills and resources of 'transition groups' and be more inclusive.

It was also suggested that there was a need to be more overt about the steps being taken. It was requested that these focused on the additionality and remit of the Partnership.

The Board:

- Welcomed the report, supported the proposals and commitments and looked forward to considering a prioritised action plan, taking into account the local authorities' own priorities
- Agreed that in future an environmental impact assessment should be required with all reports.

9. Audit Commission Review of Partnership Governance Arrangements

Sally Gregory introduced work being carried out in response to an agreed action plan, following the review carried out by the Audit Commission the previous summer.

The Board noted the Action Plan and endorsed the actions being taken to meet particular requirements.

10. 2009/10 Partnership Forward Plan

Terry Wagstaff said that the plan for 2010/11 was being drafted.

11. West of England 2010/11 – 2014/15 Delivery & Infrastructure Investment Plan with the Homes and Communities Agency, for locations likely to require public investment

Please note that this item was agreed to be exempt under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 and the public were excluded from the meeting for the consideration of the item, on the ground that it involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Part I of Schedule 12A to the Act (as amended).

The Board endorsed the Plan (Appendix D & E), subject to final checks, prior to its consideration by council Cabinets.

12. Other business

- a. Rachel Robinson had agreed to chair the Transport Plan Commission for the Joint Local Transport Plan (JLTP3).
- b. The replacement for Sonia Mills was being dealt with by correspondence.

13. Next Meeting

Thursday 25 March 2010, 2pm at Campus, Weston-super-Mare

The meeting closed at 4pm.