

## MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE CORPORATE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE HELD ON FRIDAY 18 NOVEMBER 2022 AT COMMITTEE ROOM 1/2, WELLINGTON HOUSE, LEEDS

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### Present:

Councillor Peter Harrand (Chair)	Leeds City Council
Councillor Geoff Winnard (Deputy)	City of Bradford Council
Councillor Alun Griffiths	City of Bradford Council
Councillor Carol Thirkill	City of Bradford Council
Councillor Brenda Monteith	Calderdale Council
Councillor Mike Barnes	Calderdale Council
Councillor Paul Davies	Kirklees Council
Councillor Moses Crook	Kirklees Council
Councillor Susan Lee-Richards	Kirklees Council
Councillor Jane Dowson	Leeds City Council
Councillor Paul Wray	Leeds City Council
Councillor Samantha Harvey	Wakefield Council
Councillor David Jones	Wakefield Council

### In attendance:

Mayor Tracy Brabin (Minute 6 only)	West Yorkshire Combined Authority
Hannah Scales	West Yorkshire Combined Authority
Ben Still (Minute 6 only)	West Yorkshire Combined Authority
Angela Taylor (Minute 6 only)	West Yorkshire Combined Authority

### 1. Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Betty Rhodes and Fiona Fitzpatrick.

The meeting was confirmed as quorate, with 13 members present out of 11 needed for quorum.

### 2. Declarations of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests

There were no declarations of disclosable pecuniary interests.

### 3. Possible exclusion of the press and public

There were no items requiring the exclusion of the press and public.

### 4. Minutes of the last meeting held on 23 September 2022

**Resolved:** That the minutes of the meeting held on 23 September 2022 be approved.

## 5. Chair's update and comments

The Committee was introduced by the Chair who reminded Members of the process and proceedings for the Mayor's Question Time.

**Resolved:** That the Chair's verbal update be noted.

## 6. Mayor's Question Time – Tracy Brabin

The Chair thanked the Mayor Tracy Brabin for attending Corporate Scrutiny to answer the Committee's questions. The session would be split into pre-agreed topic areas and members would be able to ask any questions under those topic areas, and any follow ups. The topic areas were broadly around *Mayoral Powers and partnerships, Impact of Inflation and budgets and the Mayor's Pledges on Equality, Diversity & Inclusion.*

### **Mayoral Powers and "trailblazers":**

- The Mayor wished to deepen devolved powers relating to skills, transport, climate, and culture.
- There were two "trailblazer" schemes taking place at the West Midlands and Greater Manchester combined authorities which sought to trial certain additional powers and funding models before potential rollout to other combined authorities.
- It is not currently known if previously promised planning powers would be part of this rollout and the future of fire authority devolution is also still in consideration.
- The importance of resourcing local authorities was emphasised, as the Mayor felt that the partnership could not be efficiently transformational when the five local authorities were facing financial and delivery challenges due to uncertainty and lack of long-term funding.

### **The M10 and soft power relationships:**

- The Mayor had been elected Chair of the M10 which, as a group, was an effective way to come together as one 'voice' speaking on areas of mutual interest such as bus service funding and HS2/northern powerhouse rail. There are preliminary plans to make the M10 a more formal body, but this is in its infancy.
- The Mayor hoped to deepen her profile as a spokeswoman for the West Yorkshire region, the M10 and globally. She recently completed a trade delegation to India, securing some agreements and investments. The Inward Investment teams were increasingly seeing a demand from other countries to directly engage with City Mayors and Regional Governates, instead of only going through national ministries.
- The Mayor had also been accepted onto the Bloomberg Mayors Project, consisting of mayors across the world, and is part of the project

the Mayor had been chosen to participate in a data track programme which aimed to deepen understanding of mass transit and bus reform.

- The Mayor continued to develop working relationships with Government Ministers, letters had been sent to new Ministers following the change in government – stability in ministers is welcomed after a period of changeover that was not ideal.
- All of these ‘soft power’ relationships and stakeholder engagement had benefited from the Mayor’s increasing profile among the public and the engagement strategy since her election.

### **Inflation, budgets, and mayoral precept and gainshare:**

- The Mayor acknowledged the strain on budgets and reminded members of the partner and business packages on offer.
- Budget forecasting was consistent with the Combined Authority’s Local Authority partners and is based on national projections on inflation and expected national spending freezes in some areas.
- The Director for Corporate and Commercial Services had mapped out the budgets going forwards and the Combined Authority is in the midst of a complete in-depth review of capital programmes and schemes to see where money could be saved.
- The current cost management process is to prioritise phases of certain schemes instead of cancelling anything – as it is important that strategically sound projects are retained, and that the authority has ‘shovel ready’ schemes which can be ready to go as soon as government announce funding.
- It is estimated that around £270m will be taken out of the overall £1.4bn transport capital programme.
- The Mayor did not intend on implementing an increase on the Mayoral Precept, which, in any case, can only be spent on transport and on a specified thing – due to expected rises in council tax.
- The Mayor has used Gainshare funds to support cost of living alleviation programmes. Addressing concerns around Gainshare which is supposed to be used as investments for economic growth, in the Mayor’s view, the economy cannot grow or be sustained if people are unable to buy the basics.
- Internal procurement and contracts were also under review to ensure that the authority was receiving value for money from suppliers contracted to deliver services and upcoming launch of a new internal corporate system is also expected to save money long term.

### **Equality, Diversity & Inclusion (EDI) and equity across the region:**

- The Golden thread running through the Mayor’s approach was equality, diversity, and inclusion. As part of this:

- The Combined Authority was in the process of recruiting an Inclusivity Champion, a specific individual with a managerial and health background to lead on diversity, inclusion, and equality across West Yorkshire.
- The Mayor was also keen to ensure that all parts of West Yorkshire benefit from combined authority activity and are represented in any profile building, trade delegations, inward investment queries and any services the authority provides.
- The Mayor considers “Levelling Up” locally as important as “Levelling Up” nationally. The council leaders were agreed in the need to promote the entire region as a whole, and often support each other in doing so, instead of just promoting their areas.

### **Strategic prioritisation and Mayor’s Pledges:**

- The Mayor told the Committee that all pledges held equal weight of importance in her view, however, some pledges had already been achieved and others are still in progress or face strategic challenges.
- In terms of achievement, the pledge for 1,000 well paid, skilled jobs for young people had been achieved and in response to the ‘put keeping women and girls safe at the heart of my policing plan’ pledge, 20 PCSOs had been placed in the bus network.
- The Mayor was hopeful that despite cost pressures, all 10 of her pledges would be addressed by the May 2024 election.
- Though commitments such as the one to tackle the climate emergency was harder than others, and £40 million had been allocated to the pledge – though more funding would be needed to achieve it.
- Local authorities also worked together to ensure that all priorities could be achieved, supporting each other’s strengths.
- Many schemes are jointly delivered with local authority partners, and everyone used each other’s existing community networks to deliver pledges.

**Resolved:** That the Mayor be thanked for attending and the Committee’s feedback and conclusions be considered further.

## **7. Corporate Scrutiny Work Programme 2022/23**

The Deputy Chair reminded members of the workshop to be held on 25 November at 2pm focusing on internal staff and workforce issues and plans. All members are invited to attend virtually. The Chair also reminded members of the budget workshop due to be held on 20 December at 11am, virtually, which all members are also invited to. The purpose of the workshops was to lay the groundwork for discussion of these topics at the next committee meeting on 20 January 2023.

**Resolved:** That the appended 2022/23 Work Programme be noted.

8. **Date of the next meeting – 20 January 2022**