

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE
WEST YORKSHIRE COMBINED AUTHORITY
HELD ON THURSDAY, 16 MARCH 2023 AT COMMITTEE ROOM 1,
WELLINGTON HOUSE, 40-50 WELLINGTON STREET, LEEDS**

Present:

Mayor Tracy Brabin (Chair)	West Yorkshire Combined Authority
Councillor Susan Hinchcliffe	Bradford Council
Councillor Jane Scullion (Substitute)	Calderdale Council
Councillor Shabir Pandor	Kirklees Council
Councillor James Lewis	Leeds City Council
Councillor Rebecca Poulsen	Bradford Council
Councillor Sam Firth	Leeds City Council
Councillor Sue Holdsworth	Calderdale Council
Mark Roberts	LEP Board Representative

In attendance:

Ben Still	West Yorkshire Combined Authority
Melanie Corcoran	West Yorkshire Combined Authority
Dave Haskins	West Yorkshire Combined Authority
Liz Hunter	West Yorkshire Combined Authority
Dave Pearson	West Yorkshire Combined Authority
Kevin Murray	West Yorkshire Combined Authority
Alan Reiss	West Yorkshire Combined Authority
Philip Witcherley	West Yorkshire Combined Authority
Caroline Allen	West Yorkshire Combined Authority
Ian Parr	West Yorkshire Combined Authority

77. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Jeffery, Cllr Morley, Cllr Swift and Cllr Waller.

The Mayor welcomed Cllr Sam Firth as a new member of the Combined Authority.

The Mayor reflected upon the Spring budget presented by government on 15 March 2023, and welcomed the announcement that West Yorkshire will contain one of 12 investment zones across the UK. Work will be undertaken with government and local partners to design how the investment zone will be implemented.

The Mayor welcomed the announcement of Trailblazer devolution deals which strengthen the existing devolution deals. Trailblazer deals have already been agreed with Greater Manchester and the West Midlands, and the Mayor has already and will continue to make a case for West Yorkshire to be next in line for deeper devolution.

The Mayor welcomed the extension of the domestic energy price cap for a further three months, but raised concerns that there seems to be no additional help for businesses. The confirmation of a second five-year City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement is encouraging and the Combined Authority is anticipating using this to part-fund its mass transit ambitions. The Mayor continues to seek reassurance that the slow-down of work on HS2 will not affect the overall ambition of the project or have a detrimental impact on the region.

Members welcomed the stability for local businesses, but noted businesses still need to be given confidence to make longer-term investment decisions. The increased eligibility for childcare funding will encourage more parents to re-enter the workforce and have a positive impact for businesses. It was noted that government support for LEPs will be withdrawn from April 2024, but the LEP integration work puts West Yorkshire in a strong position to maintain and grow its public and private sector partnerships.

Members raised concerns that the budget does not solve key issues for the region such as the high price of energy which has resulted in the closure of multiple leisure centres due to inability to meet costs. Local authorities cannot always fund at-risk services and the constituents are the most negatively affected when they are withdrawn.

78. Declarations of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests

There were no declarations of disclosable pecuniary interests.

79. Exempt Information - Possible Exclusion of the Press and Public

There were no items that required the exclusion of the press and public.

80. Minutes of the Meeting of the Combined Authority held on 2 February 2023

The Mayor requested a typing error in the minutes be corrected.

Resolved: That subject to amendments, the minutes of the meeting of the West Yorkshire Combined Authority held on 2 February 2023 be approved and signed by the Chair

81. West Yorkshire / Homes England Strategic Place Partnership

Members received a report seeking approval for the West Yorkshire/Homes England Strategic Place Partnership (SPP) – Partnership Business Plan. The Mayor noted the partnership will help to unlock funding and support the delivery of 5,000 affordable homes for the region.

Officers noted the report was discussed and endorsed by the Place, Regeneration and Housing Committee. Members emphasised the importance of consulting the local authorities throughout the process, and queried what the longer term aims of the partnership. Officers responded that, subject to approval, the first board meeting is scheduled in April 2023 with further dates to agree the next steps. The focus has been on the first year to support the initial stages, and all parties acknowledge more work will be required over the course of the partnership.

Resolved: The Combined Authority agreed:

That entry into the Strategic Place Partnership be agreed.

That the Strategic Place Partnership Business Plan be approved.

That the Terms of Reference for the SPP Board be approved.

82. Bus Reform Update

Members received a report providing an update on the Bus Reform Assessment and to seek approval to secure the conditional availability and preliminary briefing of a suitably qualified independent audit organisation.

The Mayor noted that buses are vital to a strong economy, and West Yorkshire needs a London-style transport system to meet its ambitions. The government has extended the bus recovery grant for a further three months, but bus operators are still cutting back on services. The Combined Authority is undertaking a bus franchising assessment and is required to go through audit and consultation. , An additional Combined Authority meeting will be scheduled shortly after the local elections to discuss bus reform.

Members queried what conversations are happening are happening with operators to mitigate the planned operator cuts to services. Officers responded that the Mayor as well as the Chair and Deputy Chairs of the Transport Committee have regular meetings with operators about the issue, but as private businesses operators can make any decisions they feel necessary. A list of withdrawn services was circulated to members of the Transport Committee as soon as it was feasible.

Members queried why Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) funding is not yet used to restore service cut by operators. Members responded the BSIP funding is not intended to replace services, but to increase the quality of existing services.

Resolved: That securing the conditional availability and preliminary briefing of a suitably qualified independent audit organisation ("Auditor") be approved, so that after having prepared the assessment and should the Combined Authority wish to proceed, the Auditor may then be instructed to prepare a report in accordance with section 123D of the TA 2000.

83. Mass Transit Programme Update Report

Members received a report providing a progress update for the West Yorkshire Mass Transit Programme. The Combined Authority has an initial £200 million of funding towards the programme, but more funding is required to deliver on the intended aims. Members noted the system will provide a significant boost to the regional economy and is a key reason for mayoral devolution.

Members questioned the extent of the data collection, officers responded the travel surveys are being undertaken in partnership with local authority partners, and a stratified sample of homes has been identified to best represent the population of West Yorkshire for a household travel survey element. Further details were requested, and it was agreed details would be supplied outside of the meeting.

Resolved: That the content of the report be noted.

84. West Yorkshire Tourism

Members received a report proposing changes to the promotion of West Yorkshire level at a regional level, and seeking the establishment of a Local Visitor Economy Partnership (LVEP) for West Yorkshire.

The Mayor expressed the importance of Tourism to West Yorkshire, contributing approximately £5 billion to the regional economy and providing employment to roughly 10% of the workforce. West Yorkshire is a major tourist destination and promotion on a regional level will increase its draw to potential visitors.

Officers noted the changes are a response to government policy relating to VisitEngland and destination management. Three tiers of destination management have been introduced with the North East as the only top tier region. West Yorkshire has been placed in the second tier, and will be accredited by VisitEngland which qualifies for funding and support. The LVEP for West Yorkshire will be led by Leeds but represented by all local authorities. Members noted there is also strong private sector report for the establishment of the LVEP.

Members expressed that the governance of the partnership will need to be finalised. Members noted the Leeds team has had success in promoting the city and a partnered approach will bring benefits to the whole region. The Mayor noted she will chair the board, and the many cultural events across West Yorkshire in this and coming years will provide many opportunities to celebrate the region.

Resolved: The Combined Authority agreed

That a Local Visitor Economy Partnership (LVEP) application for West Yorkshire to Visit England be supported.

That as part of this work, appropriate governance will be developed. The Mayor will play a key role in championing the tourism sector and this will be reflected in the governance.

That an independent Destination Management Plan be commissioned, utilising capacity gainshare funding already allocated to Leeds City Council.

85. Project Approvals

Investment Priority 1: Good Jobs and Resilient Businesses

Members introduced the Business Productivity Programme scheme, which aims to boost small and medium enterprises by providing financial and advisory support to a minimum of 283 businesses. Members noted improving productivity is key to growing the economy, and providing access to new and good jobs is a significant way to achieve this.

Resolved: The Combined Authority approved:

The change request for approval of £3,500,000 of UKSPF funding to replace £3,500,000 of the gainshare funding and increase the programme delivery timeframes from March 2025 to March 2026. To note UKSPF to be spent by March 2025.

Future approvals be made in accordance with the assurance pathway and approval route outlined in this report. This will be subject to the scheme remaining within the tolerances outlined in this report.

Investment Priority 3: Creating Great Places and Accelerated Infrastructure

Officers introduced the Investment Priority 3 scheme, which consists of a portfolio of programmes which will deliver resilient infrastructure in line with the West Yorkshire Investment Strategy. Where possible, extra funding will be sought to contribute to the overall cost. Officers noted the Place, Regeneration, and Housing committee has discussed the range of projects at great length, and the schemes will deliver a wide range of outcomes.

Officers noted two further schemes, the Safety of Women and Girls – Pillar 1, and Rural England Prosperity Fund are recommended to be delegated to the Chief Executive to allow for expediency of delivery due to tight timelines.

Resolved: The Combined Authority approved that:

The Investment Priority 3 - Creating Great Places and Accelerated Infrastructure portfolio proceeds through decision point 1 (strategic assessment) and work commences on the development of individual business cases.

An indicative approval to the Combined Authority's contribution of £7,132,098. The total capital value of known projects and programmes in the IP3 portfolio is £72,044,680.

Development costs of £632,098 are approved in order to progress the individual business cases, taking the total approval to £745,833. Future approvals be made in accordance with the assurance pathway and approval route outlined in this report.

Additional Recommendations

Where scheme approval is required before 30 June 2023, the schemes outlined in paragraph 3.11 are delegated for approval to the Chief Executive, due to expediency of delivery.

Any change requests for the Capital Flood Risk Management Programme are delegated to Climate, Energy and Environment Committee.

The update on the Langthwaite Enterprise Zone Phase 1 project be noted.

Investment Priority 4: Tackling the Climate Emergency and Environmental Sustainability

Officers introduced the Social Housing Decarbonisation – Wave 2 scheme for approval. The Wave 1 element was agreed by the Climate, Energy and Environment Committee in January 2022. The funding is the result of a bid from the government and so if approved and the bid is successful the work can begin as soon as possible. The scheme will be completed in partnership with West Yorkshire housing providers and local authority partners.

Resolved: The Combined Authority approved that:

The Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund programme proceeds through decision point 1 (strategic assessment) and work commences on activity 3 (outline business case).

Indicative approval to the Combined Authority's contribution of £15,032,090 be given. The total scheme cost is £31,967,212.

That the Combined Authority enter into the Memorandum of Understanding and Data Sharing Agreement with BEIS.

That delegated authority be granted:

- (i) To the Head of Economic Implementation to accept receipt of the funding from BEIS for the SHDF.
- (ii) To the Head of Economic Implementation and the Head of Legal and Governance Services in consultation with each

other to finalise the Memorandum of Understanding and Data Sharing Agreement with BEIS and the Funding Agreements / letter between to Combined Authority and the Housing Providers (Accent Housing Limited, Chartford Housing Limited, Manningham Housing Association Limited, Wakefield District Housing Limited, Leeds and Yorkshire Housing Association Limited, Leeds Federated Housing Association Limited, Yorkshire Housing Limited, Kirklees Council, Incommunities Limited) and all other related legal documents that may be required.

That future approvals be made in accordance with the assurance pathway and approval route outlined in this report, any change requests are delegated to the Climate, Energy and Environment Committee. This will be subject to the scheme remaining within the tolerances outlined in this report.

Investment Priority 5: Future Transport

Officers introduced two schemes for delivery, the Castleford Growth Corridor and the CRSTS Programme. The Castleford Growth Corridor brings two separate schemes together by including the Wheldon Road pedestrian and cycle bridge. The scheme will improve the existing road provision which is more dangerous and discourages active travel. The CRSTS Programme consists of 39 schemes across 10 packages, enabling wider access to public transport and more safety improvements to walking and cycling in line with district, regional and national strategies. Further delegation requests for a number of schemes are requested for delegation to the Transport Committee and Chief Executive to maintain delivery targets.

Members queried how quickly the delivery will take place for projects, officers responded that the timescales can vary depending on external factors, but officers are able to provide updates to relevant members outside of the meeting.

Resolved: The Combined Authority approved that:

Castleford Growth Corridor

The change request to the Castleford Growth Corridor scheme to increase the Combined Authority contribution funding to £11,519,000 and to increase the outputs as detailed in this report be approved. The total scheme value will increase from £9,491,000 to £11,740,000.

The Combined Authority enters into a variation to the existing Funding Agreement with Wakefield Council for expenditure of up to £3,497,473. Future approvals be made in accordance with the assurance pathway and approval route outlined in this report. This will be subject to the scheme remaining within the tolerances outlined in this report.

CRSTS Programme

The Combined Authority, approved that:

The change request to the CRSTS Programme to increase the approved programme development costs by £7,000,000 to £10,000,000 be approved, and delegation to the West Yorkshire Combined Authority's Chief Operating Officer to authorise schemes access to these development costs, in accordance with the Assurance Framework be approved.

The Combined Authority be authorised to enter into funding agreements between the Combined Authority and Districts for District led schemes for business case development for CRSTS led schemes.

Where scheme approval is required before 30 June 2023, the schemes outlined in paragraph 3.5 be delegated for approval to the Transport Committee, due to expediency of delivery.

Where scheme approval is required before 30 June 2023, the schemes outlined in paragraph 3.6 be delegated for approval to the Chief Executive, due to expediency of delivery.

86. Regional Investment Vehicles for Innovation Finance

Members received a report providing an overview of Northern Gritstone Ltd, and seeking approval of, following appropriate assurance and due diligence, a £1.5m contribution from the Combined Authority towards the Northern Gritstone investment company from the Single Investment Fund.

Officers informed members that Northern Gritstone is an investment vehicle founded by the Universities of Leeds, Manchester, and Sheffield aiming to support science and technology businesses. The company has raised £215 million out of a £500 million target, and the return on investment of the funds is expected to be in excess of 20% over the next decade. Investment would help to fund university spinouts, furthering growth and employment opportunities for the region. Due diligence will be undertaken before any investment is made.

Members questioned how funding fits into the Investment Strategy. Officers responded that the strategy required proposals to address market failure, which was not evident in this case. However, the proposals was being recommended to the Combined Authority despite this, because of the clear contribution towards priorities and the potential for a financial return. The strategy is reviewed annually, and the upcoming 2023 amendments would clarify that similar situations are in line with the Investment Strategy.

Members questioned how Northern Gritstone identifies funding targets, officers answered that the company is experienced and understands which businesses are likely to develop a strong return. The company has strong existing links within West Yorkshire spanning a variety of industries. Members agreed that investment in businesses is a priority and West Yorkshire should explore innovative ways to produce positive results.

Resolved: That delegated authority be granted to the Chief Executive Officer to approve £1.5 million investment to Northern Gritstone. This delegation is requested to allow time for further due diligence and application of the Combined Authority assurance processes before the deadline for investment.

87. UK Shared Prosperity Fund

Members received an update regarding progress made on implementing the West Yorkshire UKSPF Local Investment Plans, including Core UKSPF, Multiply and the new Rural England Prosperity Fund.

Members noted there has been considerable work so far and expressed thanks to officers for their efforts. The Local Partnership Group last met on 6 March 2023, receiving helpful advice towards the progress included within the report. The Local Partnership group raised concerns about the timescale of delivery, but noted officers are doing as much as possible so there are no missed funding opportunities.

Officers noted the delegation of funding was already approved, but there is a deadline in early May to inform the government about how the money is spent. The government funding comes with guidelines about how it can be spent, and the Combined Authority is trying to align the spending with the Investment Strategy. The Mayor noted the needs of West Yorkshire are different to the needs of other areas of the country, and will support any dialogue with government to make a stronger case for being a part of the next Trailblazer devolution deal.

Members asked which partners have been consulted as part of the rural fund, members noted there are members on the panel who specifically engage with the network of rural stakeholders including the National Farmers' Union, the Yorkshire Agricultural Society, and the Land and Business Association among others. Members asked if local parishes are included in consultation, officers responded they are not but consultation with them can be explored.

Resolved:

That the progress made on implementing the West Yorkshire UKSPF Local Investment Plans be noted.

That the recommendations made by the West Yorkshire UKSPF Local Partnership Group at its meeting on 6 March 2023 be noted and approved. The recommendations made are:

- the LPG was supportive of the £972,762 Women and Girls Programme providing their feedback and advice is taken in to account as the business case is finalised.
- the LPG endorsed the design of the Calls and the scoring framework at its meeting on the 6th March 2023 including the proposed funding envelopes and key policy areas for intervention as set out above providing their feedback and advice is taken in to account as the Invitation to Bid is finalised.

- the LPG endorsed the operating model at its meeting on 6 March 2023 providing their feedback and advice is taken in to account as the full business case is finalised.

That the progress made on Pillar 1 Safety of Women and Girls strand and the delegation requested in Item 10b for the Chief Executive to authorise the scheme to proceed through the Assurance Process with full delivery costs approved for an April 2023 start be noted.

That the funding envelopes and priority areas for the three Pillar 2 Business Support open calls for projects via an invitation to bid be approved, and the Chief Executive be authorised to agree, prior to publication, the full Invitation to Bid documentation in consultation with the Mayor, the Chair of the Business, Economy and Innovation Committee and the Interim Chair of the LEP – also Chair of the UKSPF Local Partnership Group (LPG), given the launch timescales.

That the progress made on Rural England Prosperity Fund be noted, the operating model be approved, and the delegation requested in Item 10b for the Chief Executive to authorise the scheme to proceed through the Assurance Process with full delivery costs approved for an April 2023 start be noted.

88. Spatial Priority Areas

Members received a report seeking endorsement to the inclusion of two additional Spatial Priority Areas (SPAs) to the existing locations agreed across West Yorkshire, and endorsement of an amendment to the boundary of one existing SPA.

Officers noted the report has been discussed by the Place, Regeneration and Housing Committee, and all affected authorities have been involved in discussions as well as in any future discussions.

Resolved: The Combined Authority agreed:

That the content of the report be noted.

That the SPA name changes listed in Table 1 be approved.

That the additional two SPAs of North Halifax Growth Area (Calderdale) and Huddersfield Station to Stadium Enterprise Corridor (Kirklees) and the amended South Kirkby and South Elmsall Urban Extension SPA in Wakefield be approved. Subject to this approval, the content on the Combined Authority website relating to SPAs will be refreshed.

89. Corporate Plan 2023/24

Members received a report seeking endorsement to the approach for developing and publishing the Corporate Plan 2023-24.

Officers noted the new corporate plan will focus more on outcomes and reflect the new organisational structure. The targets will be measurable so progress is as transparent as possible.

Resolved:

That the approach to the development of the Corporate Plan 2023-24 be endorsed.

That final approval of the Corporate Plan be delegated to the Mayor, LEP Chair and the Managing Director.

90. Governance and Appointment Arrangements

Members received a report regarding several changes to committee membership, to consider the report and recommendations of the Independent Remuneration Panel (IRP) in relation to the payment of remuneration to the LEP Chair. Given the gap between meetings, the appointment of Executive Directors, the Chief Operating Officer, and Directors was agreed to be delegated to the Chief Executive in consultation with the Mayor and following notification to Combined Authority members.

Mark Roberts left the room during the discussion of the Independent Remuneration Panel.

The Mayor noted that the input of private sector members is invaluable to the Combined Authority, and the outcome of the IRP was discussed at the previous meeting of the LEP. The Spring budget was clear that LEP funding would end by 2024. Officers noted the IRP report has been provided to members, and clarified the panel was chaired by Declan Hall and joined by Fara Butt to provide broader private sector input. The panel recognised the changes to the role of LEP Chair and so there is the potential need to review the outcome if it is required.

Members questioned if the LEP Chair being a Mayoral appointment will affect the level of scrutiny. Officers responded the LEP Chair is expected to be a member of the Combined Authority and subject to the same code of conduct as the elected members, and the three scrutiny panels will also have the same level of oversight as at present. Members agreed the need for private sector input and noted that members will make any concerns known if the LEP Chair does not deliver in their role.

Officers noted that Cllr Sam Firth has replaced Cllr Robinson a member of the Combined authority, as well as the Governance and Audit Committee. Officers noted that Cllr Peter Harrand has resigned as Chair of the Corporate Scrutiny Committee, Cllr Geoff Winnard is recommended as his replacement. The Mayor expressed thanks to Cllr Harrand for his work during his tenure as Chair.

The Mayor noted that further recruitment to director posts may be made ahead of the annual meeting and so for expediency the Chief Executive should be delegated authority to make the appointments.

The Mayor announced the appointment of Simon Warburton to the post of Executive Director for Transport, and noted his experience developing transport in Greater Manchester will be crucial to the Combined Authority achieving its ambitions.

Resolved: The Combined Authority agreed:

That with effect from 17 February 2023, Councillor Sam Firth replaces Councillor Matthew Robinson as one of the three political balance members of the Combined Authority be noted.

That Councillor Sam Firth be appointed to the Governance and Audit Committee as the Conservative Group replacement for Councillor Matthew Robinson.

That the resignation of Councillor Peter Harrand as Chair of the Corporate Scrutiny Committee be noted, and Councillor Geoff Winnard be appointed as his replacement.

That a representative of the Local Skills Improvement Plans (LSIPs) be appointed as a non-voting advisory representative to the Employment and Skills Committee.

That the report and recommendations of the Independent Remuneration Panel at Appendix 1 and determines the level of remuneration which is expected to be paid to the LEP Chair from the start of the new municipal year be considered.

That the Chief Executive be authorised, in consultation with the Mayor, the LEP Chair as appropriate and following notification to Combined Authority members, to make future appointments to the roles of Exec Director, Chief Operating Officer and Director following the outcome of the respective recruitment processes.

91. Minutes for Information

Resolved: That the minutes and notes of the Combined Authority's committees and panels be noted.