

Annual Report 2022/23

Overview and Scrutiny Committees

June 2023



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Introduction

This annual report provides a general summary of overview and scrutiny work undertaken during the 2022/23 municipal year and any conclusions and recommendations made.

What is 'Overview and Scrutiny'?

Overview and Scrutiny (shortened to scrutiny) acts as a check and balance to decision makers at the West Yorkshire Combined Authority, West Yorkshire Mayor and their partners. It holds them to account for:

- the policies they adopt
- the money they spend
- the services they provide

Scrutiny **investigates**, **influences**, **reports**, and **recommends** ways to strengthen policies, improve services, ensure best value for money and secure long-lasting positive outcomes for local people.

Although scrutiny does not have the power to make or block any decision of the Combined Authority (CA) or Mayor, it does have the power to:

- 'call-in' decisions and make a case for them to be formally reconsidered or changed
- oblige the Combined Authority to respond to its recommendations publicly within two months
- require any member (or senior officer) of the Combined Authority to appear before it

All scrutiny work is led by three independent, politically balanced group of elected councillors – the Corporate, Economy and Transport Scrutiny Committees.

Membership 2022/23

Our scrutiny function consists of three committees each with 16 cross-party councillors from across West Yorkshire (and 1 from York) who are 'backbenchers' – that is, councillors who are not members of the Combined Authority's 'cabinet' or main board.

The three committees are:

- **Corporate Scrutiny Committee** (chaired by Cllr Peter Harrand, Leeds, for the first part of the year and Cllr Geoff Winnard, Bradford, for the remainder of the year)
- **Transport & Infrastructure Scrutiny Committee** (chaired by Cllr Amanda Parsons-Hulse, Calderdale)
- **Economy Scrutiny Committee** (chaired by Cllr Richard Smith, Kirklees)

Note on substitute arrangements: Any member on a scrutiny committee may substitute for another member from the same council and party as them. If a member does not have a substitute 'pair' than they are able to nominate a personal substitute from their authority and party.

Corporate Scrutiny Committee

Chair: Cllr Geoff Winnard (2023 – present), Cllr Peter Harrand (2021 – 2023)

Deputy Chair: Cllr Geoff Winnard (2021– 2023)

Members 2022/23

District	Member	Substitute
Bradford	Cllr Alun Griffiths	<i>Cllr Aislin Naylor</i>
	Cllr Carol Thirkill	
	Cllr Geoff Winnard	
	Cllr Mike Barnes	
Calderdale	Cllr Brenda Monteith	
	Cllr Megan Swift	
	Cllr Moses Crook	
	Cllr Paul Davies	
Kirklees	Cllr Susan Lee-Richards	<i>Cllr Andrew Cooper</i>
	Cllr Jane Dawson	
	Cllr Peter Harrand	
Leeds	Cllr Paul Wray	
	Cllr Samantha Harvey	
	Cllr David Jones	
Wakefield	Cllr Betty Rhodes	

All information correct at time of print (June 23)

Economy Scrutiny Committee

Chair: Cllr Richard Smith (2021– present)

Deputy Chair: Cllr Chris Pillai (2022– 2023)

Members 2022/23

District	Member	Substitutes
Bradford	Cllr Aneela Ahmed	
	Cllr Bob Felstead	
	Cllr Zafar Iqbal	
Calderdale	Cllr Helen Brundell	
	Cllr Audrey Smith	
	Cllr Chris Pillai	
Kirklees	Cllr Richard Smith	
	Cllr Tyler Hawkins	
	Cllr Gwen Lowe	
Leeds	Cllr Gohar Almass	
	Cllr Colin Campbell	
	Cllr Sam Firth	
Wakefield	Cllr Isabel Owen	
	Cllr Ian Sanders	
	Cllr Tony Wallis	
York	Cllr Andrew Hollyer	

Transport & Infrastructure Scrutiny Committee

Chair: Cllr Amanda Parsons-Hulse (2021– present)

Deputy Chair: Cllr Andrew Pinnock (2022– present)

Members 2022/23

District	Member	Substitutes
Bradford	Cllr Joanne Dodds	
	Cllr Caroline Firth	

	Cllr Anna Watson	<i>Cllr Caroline Whitaker</i>
	Cllr Amanda Parsons-Hulse	<i>Cllr James Baker</i>
Calderdale	Cllr Tina Benton	
	Cllr Dot Foster	
	Cllr Andrew Pinnock	<i>Cllr Anthony Smith</i>
Kirklees	Cllr Harry McCarthy	
	Cllr Mark Thompson	
	Cllr Kayleigh Brooks	
Leeds	Cllr Robert Finnigan	
	Cllr Jessica Lennox	
	Cllr Stan Bates	
Wakefield	Cllr Tony Hames	
	Cllr Jackie Ferguson	
York	Cllr Ian Cuthbertson	

Chairs' Foreword



Cllr Geoff Winnard



Cllr Richard Smith



Cllr Amanda Parsons-Hulse

We are pleased to present the joint Scrutiny Annual Report for the 2022/23 municipal year. We have had another successful year investigating, influencing, and reporting ways to strengthen policies, improve services, ensure best value for money and secure long-lasting positive benefits for West Yorkshire.

In the municipal year of 2022/23, we dedicated some time to financial matters, particularly receiving detailed updates on budget and business planning, project / programme management and Assurance Framework processes amidst the inflation crisis. We were also presented with update reports on the new Integrated Corporate System and Cyber Security processes in this ever-changing digital world. We focussed on real time information, decarbonisation and looked at transport in planning in detail and looked at the Adult Education Budget, Business Enterprise Zones and the cost-of-living crisis's effect on workers and businesses in the region.

We each held successful Mayor's Question Times at each of our committees in which we questioned the Mayor on her decisions, policies and plans as they pertained to each of our committees' remits.

We would like to thank the members of our committees for their flexibility, commitment, and hard work this year and sincerely hope most of them are nominated again next year so we can continue our work.

We would also like to thank officers, as always, for their continued support, comprehensive reports, and invaluable contributions and advice in meetings and behind the scenes.

We would also like to take this opportunity to invite the residents of West Yorkshire to provide suggestions of topic areas in line with our Terms of References to be scrutinised in the coming year. Contact the Scrutiny Team: Scrutiny@westyorks-ca.gov.uk

Councillor Geoff Winnard
Chair, Corporate Scrutiny Committee

Councillor Richard Smith
Chair, Economy Scrutiny Committee

Councillor Amanda Parsons-Hulse
Chair, Transport & Infrastructure Scrutiny Committee

Work Programme 2022/23

Each Scrutiny Committee determines its work programme at the beginning of every new municipal year in July when members choose which issues from previous years to revisit and those coming up in the year ahead, they want to look at in more detail.

The Combined Authority supports scrutiny's work programming by outlining the key pieces of work and significant decisions planned or expected throughout the year.

Every year the Combined Authority agrees a **Corporate Plan**¹ which outlines its ambitions and targets. Seven key areas of focus for 2022/23 were:

1. Empowering our communities, towns, and cities to thrive.
2. Building a sustainable, nature rich and carbon neutral region.
3. Creating an accessible, clean and customer focussed transport system.
4. Supporting community safety and accountable, proactive policing.
5. Championing culture, sport, and creativity.
6. Driving economic growth and innovation to enable good jobs.
7. Enabling a diverse, skilled workforce and accessible learning for all.

Summary of 2022/23 Work Programmes

Committee	Topics
Corporate Scrutiny	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Inflation & Budget + Business Planning 2023/242. Social Value in Procurement3. Workforce and staffing4. Assurance Framework5. Integrated Corporate System6. Cyber Security
Transport Scrutiny	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Bus Service Improvement Plan (including real time information)2. Decarbonisation3. Transport Consultations4. Transport in Planning5. Freight: Rail and Waterways6. Affordable Housing
Economy Scrutiny	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. The state of the economy and cost of living crisis for businesses2. Adult Education Budget (AEB)3. Labour Market Assessment4. Economic Strategy5. Business Spaces and Enterprise Zones

¹ <https://www.westyorks-ca.gov.uk/media/8649/new-corporate-plan-2022-23.pdf>

All information correct at time of print (June 23)

2022/23 Highlights

This section briefly outlines some topic highlights from each scrutiny committee in 2022/23.

Corporate Scrutiny Committee

Inflation & Budgets

- 1. Risks and uncertainty around funding for tendered bus service:** wider budget pressures from cost increases affecting the level of funding available for existing tendered services and cuts of commercial services by bus operators.
- 2. Initial assumptions around inflation level:** In November/December 2022, the CA Members took the decision to operate under an assumption of 2% inflation, which was in line with similar analysis by most Local Authorities, generally based on then Bank of England estimates. The Committee noted that Scrutiny felt last year that, despite pressures on the revenue budget, a 2% assumption in the pay award was unrealistic and a 4% assumption might have been more accurate.
- 3. Gainshare and inflation:** Gainshare was not inflation indexed (this was a government decision when devolution was agreed) and this was a risk, so it would lose its initial value over time at a minimum of 2% a year (based on historic average of inflation). In light of recent inflation rises, this loss of value has accelerated at an alarming rate – a rise in inflation of 10%, as predicted this year, would essentially wipe off nearly £4m in funding a year from now on, and it is only the first year of Gainshare funds being available to the CA.
- 4. Possible cancellations of capital programme schemes:** The CA, was reviewing all schemes to determine the effect inflation costs have had on them and whether they are still viable. The current intention and plan was to avoid cancellation of projects – especially strategically aligned projects – and instead, reprioritise their position in the pipeline. The ultimate decision on whether schemes were cancelled would be made by the CA Members in a public meeting.
- 5. Reserve funds strategy:** It is not the CA's current policy to use reserves (or Gainshare) to 'plug' any gaps in general revenue spending e.g., corporate running costs or staff salaries. Reserves would generally only be used in 'emergency' type situations on a temporary and contained basis.
- 6. Consultation costs and 'Value for Money':** The 'not insignificant' cost of consultations was noted by the Committee and in the context of increasing costs and possible cancellation of schemes, any consultations for schemes that have not yet progressed could be cancelled, or delayed, to save on those costs until the fate of the wider capital programme is clearer.
- 7. Monitoring efficiency of contractors and suppliers:** It is a "double edged sword" when suppliers are profiting 'too much' from a contract as it calls into question value for money for the authority, but if they are struggling it calls into the question the quality of their service or overall business model.

Inclusive Procurement

- 1. Additionality:** It was difficult to ascertain exactly where the additional social value was being obtained in the examples given in the report. In one example of the rebrand contract, a social value of 44% of the contract's value was quoted due to the supplier engaging in equality and diversity (EDI) initiatives. It was felt that commitments of that nature amounted to a lack of additionality as the companies would be engaging in those things anyway, even without the contract.
- 2. Notional nature of the calculated 'Social Value':** The fundamental nature of the concepts behind determining social value meant the values were very notional and could be difficult

All information correct at time of print (June 23)

for people to understand and reconcile, especially when compared to the approach taken by some local authorities which simply asked for a direct financial contribution to a pooled social fund.

- 3. Additional real value cost to the CA and suppliers:** Even if the 'social value' is notional, the Social Value Portal and TOMs system nonetheless have a real cost in running and administering them – both for the CA and for the businesses.

Budget, Business Planning and Workforce 2023/24

Staffing, vacancies, and business plans:

1. The current Staff Terms and Conditions under negotiation are outdated and the Combined Authority is in the process of moving towards a more flexible and agile approach to work, in terms of location and hours, which the new proposed Terms and Conditions intend to reflect.
2. The savings generated from job vacancies has been set at £3 million, an increase compared to previous years. A vacancy management policy is in place which intends to encourage more consideration when deciding to replace leavers like-for-like. It was important to match the business plans to ensure there is sufficient resource.
3. The Combined Authority is reviewing business plans against resources. Where additional resource for delivery was required, it would be signposted in the business plan and remain under review.
4. Some teams such as Consultation and Engagement involve shared services. There had been discussions regarding shared services in internal audit and treasury management which had been done previously on a smaller scale.

Integrated Corporate System (ICS) and financial information:

1. Budget holders conduct monthly reviews to identify any risks, concerns and compare the actual spend to the forecasted budget.
2. The new integrated finance system scheduled to go live before 1 April 2023, would allow for a more robust way of live monitoring of budgets, enabling everyone access to collected financial information on demand.

Budget setting process:

1. It was confirmed that there were conversations taking place between the Combined Authority and the five partner authorities at political level and officer level with regards to the budget and common budget pressures.
2. Although all finance directors aspire to a 3-year medium term financial forecast, in the current climate, no-one had budgets balanced beyond next year.
3. The general approach to setting the budget was finding something that worked for the next year and then starting work on the future year's budget balance.

Inflation:

1. The inflation assumptions made in this year's budget were 10% for bus spending, 4% in pay award and staff salaries, and around 5% in operating costs of schemes and projects, and most service areas.
2. Inflation, particularly on capital programs remains a concern, and there was a recent large review of all capital programmes, and adjustments were made to various phases of various programmes to make savings which puts the Combined Authority in a better financial position.
3. It was not ruled out that Gainshare could also be used to support borrowing costs and as capacity funding.

Service provision & prioritisation:

1. The delivery of the Combined Authority's statutory concessionary travel scheme must be prioritised.
- All information correct at time of print (June 23)

2. The Combined Authority's biggest spend was on transport through the transport levy (also the main source of income) which would have to be assessed to see if things could be done more efficiently.
3. It was confirmed that bus franchising was under consideration and work is underway to work towards it through the statutory process.
4. Bus tendered services were considered a concern. As pressure on the budget builds, it gets more difficult to fund these services and issues in the commercial bus market is increasingly putting pressure on the Combined Authority to subsidise more and more socially necessary services.

Capital Projects:

1. Government does pay at the start of the year for projects scheduled to be completed later in the year. This was described as positive spot in the budgeting process due to it being a temporary position.
2. There were treasury management arrangements in place and the Combined Authority put money on deposit to get a return and defer borrowing as long as possible to manage cash to best effect.
3. It was proposed in December 2022 that a sustainable level of bank interest in the budget was set, and the excess put into a capital reserve to support projects.

Operational Income:

1. There was a large decrease in operational income from the coming financial year combined to two years' time. Some of this was bank interest because it had increased this year, which continues to increase next year and falls away in the following year. There was also a range of other grants included, such as government grants towards bus which would fall away as well.

Office Accommodation:

1. The Combined Authority had one office building, Wellington House, where all office-based staff were managed.
2. The building had less desks to the number of staff and collaboration space, there would be hotdesking. Usage of the building was being monitored including setting meetings to maximise the space. Hybrid working would continue to be encouraged, employees enjoyed hybrid working and it was also considered attractive in recruitment.

Business Plans and Budget 2023/24

Budget update

1. **Funding Gap:** Members asked questions around how the £462k funding gap previously reported had been closed.
2. **Risk and Vacancy Savings:** The pay award had been set at 4% in line with all five West Yorkshire local authorities. It was likely that the CA would over-achieve on the vacancy saving set which would help to offset any increase in salaries above that budgeted figure. Longer-term vacancies are not carried indefinitely, they are considered further – whether the post was still required in its original capacity, why the post might not be attracting the right people, etc.
3. **Transport Levy (the levy):** The CA worked in partnership with the Districts, for the good of the region and a decision on the approach to the levy is made collectively taken the wider matters into account.
4. **Bus-tendered Services:** The CA had a general duty around bus-tendered services as opposed to a statutory one; therefore, members could decide not to support the network in part or in full which would cause challenges. Despite most areas of spend more straightforward to forecast, bus tendered services are currently very volatile.
5. **£2 Mayor's Fare:** The government scheme of the £2 fare did not apply for the majority of West Yorkshire, with the local Mayors Fares (intended to be for 3 years) being a different scheme set up

well in advance of the government's one. The intention was to encourage increased patronage and in turn produce increased revenue.

Business Planning

1. **Accountability:** The Directors were accountable for the delivery of the business plans. The business plans were centrally monitored through the reporting of Key Performance Indicators and exception reporting on outcomes.
2. **Pressures and Resource:** Members questioned whether the business plans were realistic with pressures on resource and heard that the Directors had signed up to the business plans and therefore one could only assume Directors were confident the plans could be delivered. The main concern was around how much confidence the CA could have in the stability of the workforce.
3. **Workforce:** The certainty of delivery was heavily dependent on staffing levels. With the current staffing level, the business plans could be achieved but it was important that this was monitored regularly. The CA had been proactive in recruitment and there had been an increase in responses to job adverts.
4. **Social Value and Carbon Impact:** The Commercial Team had different tiers for procurement, teams were allowed to process smaller procurement independently. The CA aimed to have social value integrated into infrastructure schemes and therefore brought the value of the contract as low as possible. The £60k cap was deemed the lowest value that the CA could set where it was insisted that social value was included in the contract.

Assurance Framework

1. The main change in this year's framework was the approach to evaluation because there was now an Evaluation Team in place at the Combined Authority to oversee that part of the process.
2. A peer review had been set up with other Mayoral Combined Authorities so that they can review each other's frameworks and processes and learn from each other.
3. The Combined Authority found that the main frustration reported to officers reviewing the Assurance Framework was the number of forms and work that promoters felt they needed to do to get through the process.

Integrated Corporate System

1. The project had been delayed due to the interpretation and understanding of how parts of the payroll processing worked. The CA had a good relationship with the contractor but had held a hard line, payments had been held and the contractor was owed a significant amount of money which would not be paid until work was completed up to standard.

Staff Survey 2022 Results

1. In a private workshop the committee received a presentation which gave an overview of the staff survey results.

Cyber Security

1. In a private workshop the committee received an update report which provided details on the CA's current position regarding cyber security and ICT resilience.

Economy Scrutiny Committee

Labour Market Evidence

1. **Unemployment Claimant Count:** Through inferences, national data was not showing a severe impact due to the cost-of-living crisis at the current time. The claimant count had continued falling since early 2021, albeit remaining higher than pre-pandemic levels.

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- 2. Labour Shortages and Apprenticeships:** Around 20% of employment in West Yorkshire was public sector and pay was rising by around 2% as opposed to the private sector 7% average increase. There is a growing demand in higher skilled areas such as digital and ICT, and most of the job growth has been in hospitality and service roles which reopened after COVID. Some 'semi-skilled' roles such as secretarial support are also in decline and struggling to recruit.
- 3. Minority ethnic groups assessment:** The CA is due to publish a report analysing the labour market in the context of minority ethnic groups, in order to determine qualification, employment and attainment in these communities and where some groups perform better than the majority and where some groups perform worse.

Current Programmes for Young People

- 1. Source of Funding:** The Combined Authority delivers programmes and commissions employment and skills provision to support employers and adults some of which is funded through devolved sources, and some externally funded including by Department for Education, Careers and Enterprise Company and Department for Work and Pensions.
- 2. NEETs and School Engagement:** The proportion of NEETs (Young people not in education, employment, or training) was higher than the national average at 8% in Leeds. Young people with educational and mental health needs were more likely to be NEETs. Most businesses were keen to engage with students and young people but did not know how and the challenge is identifying these businesses in order to link them into existing engagement networks.
- 3. 'Future Goals':** The 'Future Goals' platform was explained, with over three million users (including schools) the website had a sizeable reach.
- 4. Apprenticeships:** The challenge of gender stereotyping in apprenticeships was discussed, and the importance of engaging with young people at an earlier stage to negate this.

Adult Education Budget (AEB)

- 1. AEB Background:** The Combined Authority has had the AEB (£65 million annually) since August 2021 which was the underpinning budget for adult education in West Yorkshire. Approximately £62 million had been used, however, the remaining funds stood and could be reinvested in future.
- 2. Funding:** The allocation process was described as demand led and based on pre-calculated amounts, which is why Kirklees, for instance, receives much less than Leeds. The previous allocations and system were retained in order protected the stability of the system and a review of the system of funding which might possibly result in retargeted funding in future is under discussion.

Future Employment and Skills Programmes

- 1. Skills for Growth Scheme:** The Skills for Growth scheme aimed to connect small and medium sized business owners with the region's 'top talent' such as local schools, colleges, and universities. This aimed to assist access to apprenticeship, graduate and intern opportunities that meet business needs.

Economic Plan

- 1. Other overlapping plans / strategies:** There is a concern that, with too many plans and strategies, the CA may struggle to monitor attainment of them effectively, and that many of them may overlap. The current plan was to review all existing plans and strategies as part of a new approach wherein a new encompassing 'West Yorkshire Plan' acts as an apex of a suite of strategies which all feed into its overall goals – the Economic Plan will sit below that.
- 2. Alignment between councils and districts:** A task and finish group of each of the councils had been established, and close work was being undertaken by relevant policy leads and directors in each council and the CA. The final Plan will be reviewed, and approved by, the LEP Board and

the CA's Business Committee which include senior representation from each council, alongside private sector business representatives to represent various areas and sectors.

- 3. Challenge of carbon emissions and inclusivity:** The Plan includes a goal for the economy to become carbon neutral by 2038 and ensure benefits are felt by all in an inclusive way, including by creating 'good jobs' not just jobs. A review of the entire economy was underway to assess where such support might be necessary to promote less carbon emissions and better paying jobs, debates about a 'circular' and sustainable economy are ongoing, and the biggest employers in the region are the councils and the NHS.
- 4. Necessity of financial and infrastructure investment:** It would be a challenge to achieve the most positive projections of economic growth without enough investment in key infrastructure, such as transport, and in skills and education, which would not be within the CA's current purview, instead relying on funding from the central government. In WY, the levels of national investment and subsidies in the region is understood to differ by area, with Leeds understood to be subsidised at ten times the rate that the next area Bradford is, according to ONS data seen by Members.

Business Spaces and Enterprise Zones

- 1. Success and performance of Enterprise Zones (EZs):** The 2017 EZs sites have not yet had the time to impact job creation as expected, with an estimated one-third of expected jobs currently created. The evidence suggests that where authorities can help unlock the stalled EZs sites, investment and the private sector does follow. The oldest, and most successful EZ site, Leeds Aire Valley, took a while to develop but is now fully built and filled. One area of challenge was that the original vision of attracting *advanced* manufacturing has only succeeded in pockets.
- 2. Level and use of business rates income:** EZs include both business rates relief up to £250,000 for five years for businesses based in them by March 2022 and allow WYCA to retain any business rates revenue generated thereafter until 2042. The projections for business rates revenue were last completed in 2020 when LGF funding was coming to a close and is currently around £2.5m income per annum. To date this revenue was redirected into supporting core business support services at the CA. The LEP has strategic oversight of the EZs, and it is understood that the government may reform LEPs further in future, but this should not have a negative impact as the CA acts as the accountable body for both the LEP and for retained business rates.
- 3. Demands for space and offices in the region:** Further research is still needed to determine exactly what business needs are with regards to space and if it is suitable for them to expand into and why they have or have not expanded – in addition to further work to identify all available spaces across the region. Demands for office space has changed since the pandemic and it is not yet clear what the long-term effect is, as it is a complex picture. There is still the challenge of businesses seeking to move into the region preferring Leeds city centre spaces, but big developments in other council areas such as Bradford's One City Park has shown that there is growing demand for space there too.

Transport & Infrastructure Scrutiny Committee

Bus Service Improvement Plan (with focus on real time information)

The Director provided a verbal update on the £70m awarded through BSIP; half of which must be used on fares, and the other half on network improvements not related to fixing COVID-related issues.

- 1. RTI as an important BSIP priority:** RTI is a key part of BSIP and a key element of having a reliable and customer focused bus network. This is highlighted in BSIP as part of a 'whole journey approach', of which RTI was one aspect of which RTI was one aspect as part of a wider overarching vision. It was also necessary to ensure that information systems such as RTI are in good working order ahead of the Mayor's £2 fare.

2. **RTI system used by the CA:** The RTI system used by the CA is one of the biggest in the country and in use across greater Yorkshire area, covering over 36,000 stops and 3,000 vehicles, to supply data to 2,500 stop displays (and apps) in West Yorkshire. Objectively, it is claimed that the RTI system in Yorkshire is one of the most efficient. It is funded by the CA and local authorities jointly, costing around £180,000 a year. The system works in three stages, data input, processing, and data output– errors in any of these three stages will result in any inaccuracy that is noticed.
3. **Dr Hanson’s research on inaccuracy and subsequent changes:** Dr Hanson at Leeds University conducted and published a piece of research over the summer which appeared to show that the times being displayed were very different from the actual times of buses arriving. This discrepancy in relation to ‘cross journey predictions’ was also noticed by technical staff at the CA and was subsequently corrected, in liaison with the supplier of the system with staff confident it had been fixed. Dr Hanson had agreed to rerun his research in order to see what changes the technical correction had led to on publicly displayed information.
4. **Dangers of being ‘too accurate’ and comparisons to other GPS location services:** Peoples’ expectations today are based on their experience with other services, such as ‘Uber’ and food delivery, which show accurate GPS based location data – so they rely on it and expect it to be accurate. The main difference between the GPS data and the bus RTI system is the timetable and the need to process the data with that in mind – the displayed time is a prediction comparing an average of where the bus is against where it should be in line with the timetable. While unreliability is not justified, there is a danger in being too reliable and traffic conditions creating a situation where the displayed time changes wildly from 10 mins to 5 mins due to traffic, leading to the same problem of perceived inaccuracy.
5. **Bus Operators providing accurate and frequent data:** The quality of the data output onto the boards and apps, relies on the quality of the data inputted into it. Currently the information is supplied through the ticket machines with a location ‘ping’ every 30 seconds. It can be argued that receiving this data every 15 seconds would improve RTI accuracy, but there is a limit on frequency so there is a balance to be had. There is a wider question of how well the CA engages with bus operators and how it can ensure that the right level of data is provided at the right frequency.
6. **Timetable accuracy, accountability, and penalties for non-compliance:** It is the bus operators’ obligation as part of their licensing agreement to supply accurate data, especially about delayed or cancelled services. It is common for the reliability of a service to deteriorate throughout the day, as delays accumulate – which effects accuracy of RTI. Although the CA can fine operators for not running contracted services, the CA has no influence on accountability of commercial services not running. The Combined Authority has an agreement with bus operators in place to try and limit the number of times the bus timetables change during each year for the betterment of the wider system.

Decarbonisation

Net Zero Targets and Carbon Impact Assessments:

1. The net zero targets are different at different levels (WYCA 2038, Leeds City Council 2030, and National Government 2050) but all a common methodology for carbon impact assessment (CIA), across all schemes.
2. Concerns were expressed that the CIAs in the Mott Macdonald report appeared to show that carbon emissions had not been reduced to date. Officers confirmed that, according to analysis, the Combined Authority was on target to achieve the 2030 target – though a lot of work is still needed between then and now.

Behaviour Change & Young People:

1. In addition to work undergone by local authorities and the national government, every person in the region would need to be a part of any long-term reduction in carbon emissions through changed habits.

Bus Service Quality and Transport Emissions:

1. Transport, roads, and cars is one of the biggest emitters of carbon in the region, at nearly half of all emissions.
2. Despite Combined Authority initiatives subsidising bus travel, as long as services remain unreliable or are reduced, patronage will not rise to the level needed to meet net zero targets. Bus services are still struggling and facing persistent issues with workforce and reduced patronage which has not been replaced following the pandemic.
3. Other historic structural challenges in the bus network also remain and are exacerbated by the reduced income and investment from reduced patronage.
4. The CA is intervening where it can, within a deregulated and commercially controlled bus network, for instance, to procure and roll out electric buses and other measures which seek to reduce the carbon footprint of bus services. The technology is still in its infancy but is progressing with time.

Energy Generation and Natural Environment:

1. Officers were assured by the National Grid that the system can withstand this increase in use.
2. Offshore and onshore wind is the cheapest form of electricity to in principle, but currently the cost of wind and other cheaper sources are tied to the price of gas, which makes them more expensive in practice. Discussions have been taking place nationally to decouple renewable energy prices from gas in order to incentivise its uptake further.
3. Some members also shared concerns with the definition of renewable energy, considering some power stations have reverted to burning wood which has a large carbon footprint and also affects the wider sustainability of the environment, as defined by the UN other goals related to natural environment, such as trees and animal habitats.

Transport Consultations and EDI

Seldom heard groups and local communities:

1. Asking personal questions within the consultation process helped the CA understand the communities they served and more importantly identify hard to reach communities and seldom heard groups.
2. EQIAs completed at the start of every consultation helped towards identifying seldom heard and accessibility groups so that the CA could reach out and involve said groups in the co-production of designs.

Promotion of Consultations:

1. The CA wanted to increase its co-production and co-produce plans with communities although this did make the process lengthier. There was a new section of the Consultation and Engagement Department, the new Communities Engagement Team which was solely responsible for making connections with communities face to face. The CA aimed to encourage neighbourhoods and communities to promote consultations through word of mouth, utilise social media and make it easier for the general public to promote consultations.
2. It was clarified that social media was used as a tool to promote consultations but was not as yet used to analyse data. Comments were not used as part of the consultation.

Representativeness of Your Voice and consultations:

1. There were 3000 people registered to 'Your Voice' compared to the 2.3 million population of West Yorkshire. Members questioned whether this was an accurate sample of the general public. The CA contacted specific groups through Your Voice through categorisation for relevance. Conversion rates were being looked at and the CA was hoping to involve more young people in the consultation process and converting clicks into responses.

Answering questions and tackling conflict:

1. Important that a 'two-way' street was created where members of the public could ask questions with ease. If a few members of the public asked the same questions we can deduce that it something that may need looking into. All the data collected helped to support proposals.

Remuneration of consultees and possible future methods of engagement:

1. There was not currently a consulting fee/renumeration, resource and funds was always going to be an issue for the CA in terms of paying particular groups for their views.
2. There was the suggestion that the CA created various panels such as a young person's panel or disability panel that in the future could be a paid for resource.

Transport and Planning

Reactive vs proactive comments in planning applications:

1. The Combined Authority was a non-statutory consultee on planning applications. This position is resource efficient as it allows us and partners to identify the circumstances where consulting us adds value. The CA provided two types of response, a view on alignment with policy and where funding for transport measures /infrastructure was sought.
2. Applications were monitored and judgements made on which applications would provide an impact and therefore trigger the CA to provide a response. The CA created a developer guide, an online tool that indicated the types of applications that the CA would engage on and scale of interventions that the CA might request as a result of a new development.

Developer leverage, their wants vs community needs in terms of transport link:

1. Historically, take up of the residential metro card scheme and wider incentive schemes had fallen short of expectations in some locations, so these were continually kept under review.

Progress of promised devolution planning powers:

1. Planning powers were included in the 'minded to' West Yorkshire devolution deal but due to the national reforms to the planning system these were not carried forward in the devolution Order. A letter from the Minister for Regional Growth and Local Government proposed that these powers (or equivalent) will be conferred 'when the position is clearer.
2. There remained uncertainty around national planning reforms, and the government's position on the role of Combined Authorities in strategic planning. The CA responded to the partial National Planning Policy Framework consultation in the previous week.

3. There were currently 5 local plans and the CA's role was to support those local plans in coming forward and ensuring that cross-boundary implications were considered.

Inclusive growth element and overlap with other policy areas:

1. The importance of inclusive growth running through all aspects of planning was emphasised, ensuring transport links, amenities and access must be considered.
2. The Spatial Priority Area work included looking at the most strategic locations in our region where there was likely to be significant change, infrastructure in these locations would need to be planned in a coordinated way.
3. The CA worked jointly with district partners and there were some areas of service provision that sat wholly with partners. The CA hoped that the funding being put together to do active work around Spatial Priority Areas would help to drive delivery in some locations with the CA playing a more active role in partnership with Local Authorities.

Active travel in planning applications:

1. Active travel such as cycling and walking infrastructure were included in the Combined Authority's responses to planning applications where appropriate.

Assurance process:

1. It was important the Assurance Process had a level of rigour which was not always popular as projects sometimes had to be brought through at pace. When the authority became a CA there was a lot more devolved money responsibility from the government to ensure delivery of the 'right' projects efficiently and effectively. This also meant that it was imperative an efficient assurance process was in place.
2. Internally processes included an Appraisal Team which reviewed internal and partner projects/business cases against an intensive set of criteria. Commentary was also provided as to whether projects were good to move forwards for approval.
3. There had been 150 projects in January to March 2023 thus far.

Freight: Rail and Waterways

The Chair shared evidence that uptake in water freight reduced carbon emissions necessary to meet the net zero target and brought the committees' attention to the 500-tonne capacity barge, the 'MMS Off-Roader' which had been transporting marine aggregate from ABP Humber's Albert Dock in Hull to Knostrop in Leeds.

Waterways forgotten about in strategy, especially when compared to other nations:

1. The Director for Transport Policy and Delivery recently attended the Transport for the North Conference in Newcastle which included a session on freight. It was interesting that the main focus was on freight by rail. As well as freight by rail, the CA had also been looking into the use of waterways.

Freight's inclusion in "Local Transport Plan 4" (LTP4):

1. There was ongoing work regarding in relation to freight, the LTP4 was currently in development although the CA was awaiting guidance from the Department for Transport (DfT). Consultation around the LTP4 was expected in the coming Autumn.
2. The CA was looking at the 'first and last mile' in particular, and how we could make better use of other ways of getting deliveries into towns/cities without using road vehicles.

Reopening of old railway lines for freight:

1. There were challenges around use of rail lines for freight in some locations where there were clear bottlenecks between freight and passengers.
2. Freight lines would be looked at through the LTP4, it boiled down to capacity on the railway and the lack of particular railways which are suitable and conflicts with passenger railway. The challenge of re-opening old railway lines was huge, the rail team were aware of what opportunities were there.

Difficulty of progressing Leeds and Normanton port schemes (suggestions about freeport):

1. The Leeds Inland Port Scheme was not a failed scheme, as the business case developed further it was clear it was not going to meet the certain amount of delivery objectives and freight transfer it aimed to meet.
2. The Leeds Inland Port Scheme had evolved over time and was now in the CA's pipeline list. The CA would initiate discussions with the Canals and Rivers Trust around how they could adapt the project to make it easier for the CA to support.

Affordable Housing

Delivery of the pledge (remained a challenge):

1. The delivery of the Mayor's Pledge of 5000 sustainable, affordable homes remained a challenge (the target figure was at least 2000 units over past delivery figures). There remained a risk around the CA meeting the pledge. There was value in setting high ambitions and it had provided the ability to continue to build and shape programmes in a way that drives delivery of affordable housing.
2. Although monitoring aligned to the mayoral pledge was important, the work of the CA went beyond this as driving an increase in provision of affordable housing was a long-term aspiration.
3. A new Strategic Place Partnership with Homes England was due to be launched.
4. The CA was in the early stages of writing a housing strategy and community housing was one of the things so far in consultation with partners that had been raised by partners that they would like to profile amongst others.

Risk:

1. On delivery risks aligned to construction, the CA's ability to spatially monitor risks, at the current time local authorities were monitoring those risks on a site by site, district by district basis, but it could be useful to look at whether risks seemed to be layered in particular locations more than others.

Brownfield Housing Fund:

1. The land supply and delivery of housing sat with local authority partners as a responsibility. The CA assisted in identifying the pipeline of sites.
2. There were some constraints on the programme which included the inflexibility of the way that government had designed the programme. There were only certain things the CA could spend funding on and specific rates that the CA had to hit in terms of return on investment which were limiting especially as brownfield sites often already had viability challenges.
3. A further constraint was that housing had to be built by 2025 (or the money would be returned to government) and for long-term stalled sites or very difficult brownfield sites it was an extremely hard deadline to meet. The Brownfield Housing Fund had not been designed to drive affordable housing delivery specifically.
4. Letters had been written by the 10 Mayoral authorities to push the point and try to explain that the inflexibilities around the programme were making it very difficult to meet local needs.

Region's needs & housing waiting list:

1. Calderdale had 8000 people on the waiting list and in Leeds, there were approximately 26,000 active 'bidders' on the housing waiting list, (6000 of which were band A). Only 2000 properties were available in Leeds each year.
2. The responsibility to assess housing need was a local authority function and in turn setting policies through planning to help deliver for that need. There was a balance to be made, particularly on brownfield sites, where there were other viability challenges, affordable homes was one infrastructure type across a series that had to be brought into the balance.

Definitions of 'affordable' and 'sustainable':

1. The CA was using the National Planning Policy definition of affordable which included all categories of affordable (not just social housing). This meant that the data was monitorable against the national data set. The CA and Mayor were mindful of all of the categories of affordable housing and the need in West Yorkshire for additional social housing.
2. Sustainable was even less easy to define, there was not an easy way for the CA to monitor the sustainability of new properties. EPC data was used for the housing stock across West Yorkshire to feed into the programme development activity such as retrofit, but the data was not yet available for new build only.
3. There was a live conversation within the district partnership regarding our ability to define a measure of sustainability for properties that were being built and whether there was something we could do locally to monitor our progress and the pledge.

The West Yorkshire Housing Partnership (the Partnership):

1. The Partnership was a voluntary partnership (it was not facilitated by the CA). It would be positive if it were a comprehensive group of all the providers in the region but as they are private organisations it had to be done on a voluntary basis.
2. The private organisations were obviously operating in a commercial context so even though they may be part of the Partnership, it would not be appropriate for them to share all of their data with partners.

Mayor's Question Time

In the 2022/23 municipal year the Scrutiny Committees each held one Mayor's Question Time to question the Mayor on the full range of matters within her remit and relating to her pledges relevant to each Committee. Below are the main highlights.

Corporate Scrutiny Committee

1. **New Mayoral Powers and “trailblazers”**
2. **The M10 and soft power relationships**
3. **Inflation, budgets, mayoral precept and gainshare**
4. **Equality, Diversity & Inclusion (EDI) and equity across the region**
5. **Strategic prioritisation of Mayor's Pledges amidst financial challenges**

Economy Scrutiny Committee

1. **Business Support, Engagement, and Investment**
2. **City Centres and support for Hospitality sector**
3. **Cost of Living and Energy Crises**
4. **Inward Investment Strategy and Activity**
5. **Creative New Deal and Creative Catalyst**
6. **Green Job Creation Pledge**
7. **Apprenticeships**
8. **Engagement with Education sector**
9. **Over-50's Re-entering Workforce**
10. **FutureGoals programme**

Transport Scrutiny Committee

1. **Buses**
2. **Mass Transit**
3. **Decarbonisation and Carbon Emissions**
4. **Active Travel: Cycling and Walking**

Next steps in 2023/24

The scrutiny committees are entering into the new municipal year with the hopes to continue monitoring pressing topics and establish working parties to drive positive change in West Yorkshire.

Find out more and get involved

Find out more about scrutiny at the Combined Authority and to view agendas, reports, and minutes, please visit the website here: <https://westyorks-ca.gov.uk/>

Scrutiny committee meetings take place in public, and everyone is welcome to attend.

Get in touch

Scrutiny is keen to hear from members of the public on issues of concern in the West Yorkshire and York area that relate to the functions and responsibilities of the Combined Authority and Leeds City Region Enterprise Partnership (LEP).

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