West Yorkshire Combined Authority | Tracy Brabin Mayor of West Yorkshire

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE CORPORATE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE HELD ON FRIDAY 22 SEPTEMBER 2023 IN CONFERENCE ROOMS 1/2, WELLINGTON HOUSE, 40-50 WELLINGTON STREET, LEEDS, LS1 2DE

Present:

Cllr Alun Griffiths	Bradford Council
Cllr Ralph Berry	Bradford Council
Cllr Mike Barnes	Calderdale Council
Cllr Rahat Khan	Calderdale Council
Cllr Susan Lee-Richards	Kirklees Council
Cllr Jo Lawson	Kirklees Council
Cllr Moses Crook	Kirklees Council
Cllr Barry Anderson (Chair)	Leeds City Council
Cllr Jane Dowson	Leeds City Council
Cllr Paul Wray	Leeds City Council
Cllr Samantha Harvey	Wakefield Council
Cllr Betty Rhodes	Wakefield Council

In attendance:

Alan Reiss	West Yorkshire Combined Authority
Craig Taylor (Item 10)	West Yorkshire Combined Authority
Hannah Scales	West Yorkshire Combined Authority
Katie Wilby (Item 9)	West Yorkshire Combined Authority
Khaled Berroum	West Yorkshire Combined Authority
Patrick Bowes (Item 9)	West Yorkshire Combined Authority
Sam Bacon (Item 9)	West Yorkshire Combined Authority

1. Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Richard Forster and Brench Monteith.

The meeting was confirmed as quorate with 12 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 meeting held on 20 January 2023**

   Resolved: That the minutes of the meeting held on 20 January 2023 be approved.

5. **Notes of the meeting held on 10 March 2023**

   Resolved: That the notes of the informal meeting held virtually on 10 March 2023 be noted as accurate.

6. **Chair's comments and update**

   The newly appointed Chair, Cllr Anderson, introduced himself and welcomed new members through introductions. The Chair also informed the committee he had undertaken several briefings over the summer and on particular topics and reports relevant to Corporate Scrutiny.

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

7. **Scrutiny and Governance Arrangements**

   The Statutory Scrutiny Officer presented a report providing an overview of the governance and scrutiny arrangements established by the Combined Authority at its annual meeting.

   Resolved: That the report be noted.

8. **Corporate Scrutiny Work Programme**

   The Statutory Scrutiny Officer presented a report providing an overview of the work programme agreed by members over the summer period, following the work planning session in July.

   Resolved: That the submitted Work Programme is approved.

9. **Strategic Focus and Performance Monitoring**

   The Chief Operating Officer provided a report summarising the Combined Authority's approach to strategic planning and performance monitoring, including the latest published quarterly KPI data.

   The Chair reminded members of the committee's remit and that the KPI data points pertaining to the other two scrutiny committees' remits of transport, infrastructure, economy and skills should be scrutinised by those committees.

   Following discussion and questions, the following points and conclusions were made:

   - **New RAG system**: The previous RAG (Red-Amber-Green) system is being updated for accessibility reasons to a new "temperature" colour palette (from cool to hot, with blue as the new green) though some

members reported finding it difficult to read text on a blue background and concern about different authorities using different schemes and standards which would make smoother comparative analysis across authorities harder.

- **Context and narrative behind figures**: Scrutiny needs greater context for why certain KPIs are not being achieved. It was suggested that the reasoning, and any problems, be included on the document in future for pre-scrutiny. For example, it was clarified that the Housing target was marked down from last year's figures as the Housing Strategy was not yet complete and only some houses were delivered through the Brownfield Housing Fund (mainly in Leeds), largely due to internal staff capacity issues and limitations around criteria, respectively. Another example was the retrofitting homes KPI entry which did not clarify it was a pilot scheme in one area, hence the 150 homes target, rather than region wide target.
- **Change in KPIs per-year**: Changes in KPI are determined every year during business planning stage and overseen by the Internal Leadership Board of directors. It would be useful for the Committee to know which KPIs are added, revised or abandoned each year during the business planning process so that Members can track long term achievement and see how focuses and targets have changed over time.
- **Categorisation of data**: Each KPI is monitored internally monthly and signed off by officers, based on objective metrics (i.e. achieved or not) and not subject to value judgements. The reason many KPIs were currently marked as Amber, compared to last year's data, is because they are mid-year preliminary assessments which remain under review, compared to the final actuals from the previous year.
- **Consistency and relevance of data points**: It was noted that retirement data is reported as 64+ despite the retirement age in the UK being higher now, as this was due to the data being the international standard used by the ONS and is in the process of reform. It was also noted that comparison of housing affordability and rented housing costs in West Yorkshire to the national average was not helpful in determining relative affordability within the region and whether local targets and needs are being met.
- **Presentation of data and headings**: It was felt that the attached documents are 'working documents' more attuned to the needs of officers than members. It was in A3 excel format, which is easy to read on excel on a screen, but harder to read in the report. It would be more useful if performance data could be catered to the audience in mind, in this case only the headings relevant for scrutiny be presented in future e.g. on narrative behind key/top level – in essence being 'longer' rather than 'wider'.
- **Reporting timelines**: The CA reports KPI and performance data on a quarterly basis for strategic indicators, but some key data sets are only available on an annual basis especially data gathered at international level. Internal management KPIs are reported monthly to internal officer boards, before they are summarised quarterly for the Finance, Resources and Corporate Committee.
- **Scrutiny overview:** The Committee requested that the same quarterly performance reports submitted to the Finance, Resources,

Corporate Committee are also submitted to scrutiny for regular scrutiny and overview.

- **Police KPIs**: The Mayor's police KPIs are reported quarterly to the Police and Crime Panel via statutory process. A suggestion was made that domestic abuse data is included in the State of the Region report as part of the Mayor's Pledge.
- **Real Living Wage:** The Combined Authority currently paid a 'living wage' supplement to staff and is in the process of becoming Real Living Wage Foundation accredited, in addition to launching a "Fair Work Charter" in November 2023 which a number of businesses had signed up which would support organisations to become fairer employers – including the CA.
- **Corporate energy source**: Report wording was clarified to confirm that the CA purchases all its energy for internal use from renewable sources.
- **Governance of cross-border issues**: Many issues are not limited to West Yorkshire borders and there a number of ways cross-border issues are tackled including having York as a non-constituent member of the CA, a Yorkshire Leaders Board (including metro-mayors), Transport for the North, and regular coordination with South Yorkshire and Greater Manchester Combined Authorities.
- **Executive member presence at scrutiny**: It was noted that while officers do an excellent job in answering questions on what is happening and the detail and technicalities, questions about the logic behind certain strategies, decisions and KPIs were better directed to the political leadership and executive members such as the Mayor and portfolio holders to explain why certain decisions are made, for example if KPIs and Mayors Pledges were challenging enough.

In conclusion, the Committee asked that:
i)   their suggestions above be taken on board and
ii)   a further report on corporate performance monitoring, along with the quarterly KPIs themselves, return to a future meeting.

Members also had comments and questions on KPIs not related to the Corporate Scrutiny remit, and asked that their concerns be circulated to the other two scrutiny committees to be considered, including on: progress on housing targets and criteria, investment in and number of electric vehicle charging points, challenges in meeting bus patronage increase targets, cross border/operator bus ticketing, mcard uptake statistics, and progress on Better Homes Hub project and the need to greatly accelerate retrofitting homes.

Resolved:

i)   That the report be noted.

ii)   That the committee's feedback and suggestions on corporate performance monitoring – outlined above – be taken on board.

iii)   That this topic return to a future committee meeting for further scrutiny.

iv)   That the quarterly performance monitors submitted to the Finance, Resources & Corporate Committee also be circulated to Corporate Scrutiny Members.

10.   Assurance Framework

The Head of Strategic Portfolio Office presented a report providing an overview of the review, peer review and the planned changes to the Assurance Framework.

The discussion covered the following points:

- **Elected Member Involvement:** Elected members' views were canvassed via email, but there was a very low response rate. It was suggested that in future there would be a different approach to ensure that members are encouraged to respond and contribute at review stage.
- **Reprioritisation of projects:** Last year, a review was undertaken as part of the response to the inflation and cost of living situation leading to a rise in cost for projects, to identify which projects/programmes could be reprioritised to save money, without cancelling strategically sound projects. Reports were presented to the Transport Committee and Combined Authority and changes to the pipeline and timelines were made.
- **Planning issues**: The Assurance Framework doesn't cover planning law and issues, but planning matters are highlighted at business case stage.
- **Alignment with local authorities**: MCAs are required to have Assurance Frameworks, which must fulfil government guidance and are annually reviewed, as a condition of the funding settlements. Local authorities are not required to have a similar framework and each have their own processes and standards – although local authority promoted schemes with MCA funding must go through the MCA's assurance processes.
- **Single pot funding arrangements**: The CA currently has a number of different funding sources with different criteria, conditions and reporting arrangements. Greater Manchester and West Midlands are currently trialling single settlement funding as part of 'trailblazer' devolution deals which the government intends to roll out nationally to other MCAs.

Resolved:

i)   That the report and the Committee's feedback be noted.

ii)   That the final Assurance Framework return to committee before it's final approval by the CA if substantive changes are made.