

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE
FINANCE, RESOURCES, AND CORPORATE COMMITTEE
HELD ON THURSDAY 5 SEPTEMBER 2024 AT COMMITTEE ROOM 1,
WELLINGTON HOUSE, 40-50 WELLINGTON STREET, LEEDS**

Present:

Mayor Tracy Brabin (Chair)	West Yorkshire Combined Authority
Councillor Silvia Dacre	Calderdale Council
Councillor James Lewis (Deputy Chair)	Leeds City Council
Councillor Denise Jeffery	Wakefield Council
Asma Iqbal	West Yorkshire Business Board
Jocelyn Manners-Armstrong	Independent Member

In attendance:

Alan Reiss (Chief Operating Officer)	West Yorkshire Combined Authority
Angela Taylor (Director)	West Yorkshire Combined Authority
Jo Dent (Assistant Director)	West Yorkshire Combined Authority
Caroline Norreys (Assistant Director)	West Yorkshire Combined Authority
Gary Dowson (Officer)	West Yorkshire Combined Authority
Jenny Sharp (Officer)	West Yorkshire Combined Authority
Adam Hunt (Committee Services Officer)	West Yorkshire Combined Authority

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Susan Hinchcliffe (Bradford Council), Carole Pattison (Kirklees Council) and Jane Scullion (Calderdale Council).

Councillor Silvia Dacre (Calderdale Council) attended the meeting as a substitute for Councillor Jane Scullion.

2. Declarations of Pecuniary Interests

There were no declarations of pecuniary interests at the meeting.

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

There were no agenda items present on the agenda which required the exclusion of the public and press.

4. Minutes of the Meeting held on 7 March 2024

Resolved: That the minutes of the meeting of the Finance, Resources and Corporate Committee held on 7 March 2024 be approved as a correct record.

5. Governance Arrangements

The Committee considered a report which advised members on the governance arrangements approved by the West Yorkshire Combined Authority at its Annual Meeting on 20 June 2024. The report provided details on the establishment and operational structure of the Finance, Resources and Corporate Committee.

Officers introduced the report and highlighted that the Combined Authority had resolved to appoint the Committee and specified a quorum of three members. Mayor Tracy Brabin was appointed as Chair, with Councillor James Lewis as Deputy Chair. The report also included a membership table with voting arrangements and confirmed the Committee's meeting dates for the year; 5 September 2024, 5 December 2024, 19 February 2025, and 5 June 2025.

Resolved: The Committee noted the governance arrangements approved by the Combined Authority at the Annual Meeting on 20 June 2024.

6. 2023-24 End of Year Financial Position

The Committee considered a report which advised members on the final outturn position for the Combined Authority for 2023/24, which was subject to external audit. The report highlighted a significant net surplus of £7.1 million, which was driven by additional income from investments and Enterprise Zones.

Members noted that the final revenue expenditure was £285 million, with capital expenditure having totalled £276.2 million. The surplus allowed for general reserves to be replenished to £12 million and budgetary pressures to be addressed in 2024/25. The report highlighted that significant progress was made in the West Yorkshire Transport Fund, with several schemes having been completed.

The Mayor emphasised that significant progress was being made in the West Yorkshire Combined Authority's efforts to deliver on transport plans, particularly mass transit and other related programmes, and that the West Yorkshire Combined Authority was now fully prepared to implement the plans.

Members raised concerns about the Enterprise Zone Income predictions. In response, officers acknowledged that this had been the subject of extensive discussion during the previous financial year. They noted that, for the current financial year, there had been an increased focus on having identified the risks and opportunities across the West Yorkshire Combined Authority. This approach had been implemented to improve the financial forecast and better prepare the West Yorkshire Combined Authority for any potential surprises.

Resolved: The Committee noted the financial position as outlined in the submitted report.

7. 2024-25 Quarter 1 Financial Position

The Committee considered a report which updated members on the 2024/25 quarter 1 financial position. The report advised on the current revenue position and year-end forecast and outlined the capital expenditure and reserve movements for the year.

It was noted that the Combined Authority had reported a net expenditure of £2.4 million for quarter 1 and had exceeded the budget by £0.4 million. The capital expenditure forecast for 2024/25 stood at £445.7 million, with actual spending at 11.38% of the forecast. Ongoing work, aimed to manage financial risks and identify funding options for future pressures, were addressed in the report.

The Mayor acknowledged there was some uncertainty ahead regarding the Single Settlement Fund and indicated that changes could occur to this following the election of the new government. The Mayor highlighted the importance of non-transport projects, particularly in the areas of net zero housing. These aligned with her manifesto commitments and it was confirmed that further updates on the West Yorkshire Combined Authority's priorities and expectations for these projects would be presented to the committee in the future.

Members enquired about the Quarter 1 revenue position and noted that the actual spend on employment costs was below budget. Officers explained that there was a brief pause in recruitment in December due to the implementation of a new recruitment software, CIA Anywhere, which had impacted the hiring process figures. Officers further stated that recruitment had improved and that the time to onboard new staff had decreased, which had contributed to the lower spend in recruitment.

The Mayor expressed satisfaction with the use of the CIA Anywhere system, which had allowed for better collection of equity, diversity, and inclusion statistics; this data would help to address the gender pay gap.

Members discussed the agency worker cost overspends. Officers clarified that the overspend figure was primarily due to grant income targets being exceeded and not agency staffing. Officers confirmed that they would separate the grant income and agency costs in future reports to the Committee.

Resolved: The Committee noted the financial position as outlined in the submitted report.

8. HR Management Information - Quarter 4 2023/24 and Quarter 1 2024/25

The Committee considered an update report on workforce data for the Combined Authority. The report focused on employee sickness, turnover, workforce stability, EDI (Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion) measures and vacancy fulfilment.

Officers introduced the report and noted a decrease in sickness absence during Quarter 4. This indicated that earlier increases had likely been due to a

new reporting system. Staff turnover and stability remained positive, though low turnover presented challenges in improving workforce diversity.

The Mayor emphasised the importance of ensuring diversity at all levels in staffing, particularly in early career and senior roles, to reflect the communities served by the Combined Authority. Officers noted that the Combined Authority continued to grow due to an increase in powers and funding and that there was nearly a 50-50 split in a balanced mix of internal promotions and external recruitment for new positions. It was acknowledged that there was historically a lack of ethnic minority representation in senior positions. However, it was noted that improvements were being made by the Authority to increase ethnic minority representation in these positions.

The Mayor highlighted those individuals who declared a disability and met the job criteria/specification were guaranteed an interview. Officers stated that the 'We Can' staff network group was active and provided valuable recommendations on inclusivity for staff with disabilities.

Members enquired about the retention of ethnic minority staff and the use of exit interviews. Officers confirmed that exit interviews were undertaken for all departing staff. Members praised the improvements in recruitment timelines of staff.

Concern was raised from members regarding the high sickness absence rates in the Transport Operations team. Officers provided reassurance that the rates were below the national statistics for sickness and that there were ongoing efforts to contextualise sickness data with benchmarks. Officers also discussed the need for sensitive data-sharing agreements to better target diversity initiatives. Officers were working to explain the importance of data collection to new starters whilst having ensured confidentiality of any data accumulated at the Combined Authority.

Resolved: The Committee considered and noted the content of the Management Information update, which reflected performance in the period 1 January 2024 to 31 March 2024 in addition to the overall review of performance in 23/24, as attached at Appendix 1 of the submitted report, and the period 1 April 2024 to 30 June 2024.

9. Combined Authority Performance Q1 2024/25 and Q4 2023/24

The Committee considered a report on the organisational performance for 2023/24 and Quarter 1 of 2024/25. The report provided an insight into the achievements and challenges related to the Combined Authority's business plans and corporate objectives and focused on the progress toward the five missions outlined in the West Yorkshire Plan.

Officers introduced the report, which included key accomplishments, such as the completion of significant sustainable transport projects, and acknowledged that the Combined Authority had surpassed business growth targets. The report noted that 87.9% of corporate plan outputs and 92.3% of business plan outputs had been achieved in 2023/24. For Quarter 1 of 2024/25, 92% of the indicative metrics fully or partially met key requirements, with only four outcomes at risk of non-delivery. Performance monitoring would continue to focus on having achieved the strategic goals set in the West Yorkshire Plan.

The Mayor emphasised that transparency was crucial for Combined Authorities and that openness to scrutiny was essential when performance was being assessed. The Mayor noted that not all the initiatives would succeed and acknowledged the importance to learn from disappointments in order to achieve better outcomes in the future for performance.

Members queried about the completion of the environmental scope in relation to the mass transit programme. Officers advised that recruitment for key posts in the transport team was underway to enhance capacity and stressed that any environmental data collection delays would not hinder progress on larger schemes.

Resolved:

- (i) The Committee noted the performance against business plans for Quarter 1 2024/25.
- (ii) The Committee noted the performance against the indicative measures of success outlined in the Corporate Plan for Quarter 1 2024/25.
- (iii) The Committee noted performance against business plans for 2023/24.

10. Date of the Next Meeting

The Committee was advised that the next meeting of the Finance, Resources and Corporate Committee was scheduled to take place on Thursday 5 December 2024.