

Report to: Overview & Scrutiny Committee

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Subject: **The Combined Authority's engagement with the public**

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1. Purpose of this report

- 1.1 To inform the Overview and Scrutiny Committee about the ways the Combined Authority engages with the public and other local stakeholders and what functions are in place to facilitate their involvement in decision making, consultations, campaigns, policy and service improvements.
- 1.2 The report is presented in four sections:
- (1) Involvement in decision making and governance (2.1 - 2.15)
 - (2) Communications and marketing (2.16 - 2.29)
 - (3) Consultation and engagement (2.30 - 2.41)
 - (4) Customer Service feedback and improvement (2.42 - 2.50)

2. Information

Public involvement in governance and decision making

- 2.1 The Legal and Governance Services team is a key mechanism by which the Combined Authority keeps the public informed of decision making and the democratic process. The team provides secretariat and governance support to all of the Combined Authority's public committee meetings, primarily ensuring that: all agendas and papers are published in accordance with statutory guidelines, meetings are accurately recorded, a forward plan of key decisions is published, Combined Authority meetings are webcast and that members and committee chairs are supported in their duties. The service also oversees the scrutiny function and facilitates freedom of information enquiries.

Public committee meetings and transparency

- 2.2 All of the Combined Authority's committees, panels and sub-committees meet in public (with public seating areas) and all agendas, papers, minutes and decision notices are published according to statutory requirements. All elected and private sector members are required to complete and publish a register of interests and are appointed through an open, transparent process.
- 2.3 In mid-2016, the Combined Authority and Leeds City Region Enterprise Partnership (LEP) agreed to integrate their governance structures (structure attached at **Appendix 1**) and reform the LEP Panels making them formal advisory committees of the Combined Authority, appointed in accordance with the Local Government Act 1972. These new advisory committees first began meeting in public in the 2017/18 municipal year. The LEP Board further adopted a series of measures in February 2018 strengthening transparency commitments even further.
- 2.4 In June 2017, the West Yorkshire Combined Authority became the first combined authority in the country to adopt the Modern.Gov software system, a decision management tool used for managing and publishing committee agendas, decisions, governance materials and information on membership of the Combined Authority's committees and panels. The following provides a link to the Modern.gov area of the Combined Authority's website:
<https://westyorkshire.moderngov.co.uk/uuCoverPage.aspx?bcr=1>.
- 2.5 Here the public, members and officers across the region can find information and documents on:
- **Committees** including membership, meeting dates, agendas, reports, minutes and terms of reference.
 - Register of interests for Combined Authority, Local Authority Co-optee, private sector and LEP Board Members.
 - **Decisions taken** including information and records of key (and non-key but significant) decisions taken, or due to be taken, by decision making committees or officers with delegated powers.
 - **Governance documents** including:
 - Assurance and Governance frameworks
 - Standing Orders and the Access to Information annex
 - Codes of conduct for officers and members
 - Allowance schemes and complaints policies
- 2.6 In August 2017, Governance Services began live webcasting of meetings of the Combined Authority to provide greater transparency and public accessibility to the main decision making body of the Combined Authority. An archive of past, recorded webcasts for a 12 month period is also maintained on the website.
- 2.7 The Communications teams advertises each committee meeting and agenda through social media and other communications channels and assigns communications officers to each committee to oversee any communications matters relating to that committee in order to promote public attendance.

2.8 Work is being undertaken in conjunction with other directorates to further improve transparency around recording and publicising decisions and information relating to project / programme progress and decision points. The Delivery Directorate has recently adopted a new Portfolio Information Management System (PIMS) which will improve transparency and tracking around project / programme development, progress, spending and decision making.

District Consultation Sub-committees

- 2.9 The Combined Authority's Transport Committee has five sub-committees, District Consultation Sub-Committees (DCSCs), one for each constituent council area of West Yorkshire. The membership of those committees consists of the relevant Transport Committee members for that district and a number of public representatives proportionate to the population size of the district.
- 2.10 The District Consultation Sub-Committees act as a forum for the Transport Committee and Combined Authority to consult with, and consider representations from, users of local public transport services and facilities and the DCSCs are authorised to advise the Transport Committee in relation to:
- the views of users of local public transport,
 - service delivery objectives and performance,
 - improving co-ordination between the constituent council and the Combined Authority,
 - the progress of planned projects and programmes, and
 - any proposal referred to it by the Transport Committee.
- 2.11 The meetings are open to the public and press and agendas and minutes are published according to statutory obligations. Each District Consultation Sub-Committee meeting has a standing 'open forum' agenda item designed to facilitate questions and suggestions from sub-committee members and the consideration of any petitions, presentations or deputations by members of the public or local groups. Successful petitions and motions may then be presented to the Transport Committee for further consideration.
- 2.12 All bus and rail operators also have standing invitations to the DCSCs and have a regular item on the agenda to deliver operator updates and receive questions from public members.
- 2.13 Public representatives are recruited through an open application process managed by the Governance Services team in coordination with Communications and Transport Services colleagues. Vacancies are advertised across social media, partner councils and through the Combined Authority's transport network infrastructure including bus stations and real time displays. The current public representative membership was recruited in 2017 for a three year term, due to be re-opened for applications in 2020.

Scrutiny

- 2.14 At its 13 July 2018 meeting, the Committee expressed a desire to see greater involvement of the public in the scrutiny process and greater engagement with the public, local businesses, organisations, academic experts and other local stake holders including district scrutiny committees and networks in the scrutiny work programme.
- 2.15 As part of the ongoing review into scrutiny arrangements, work is currently underway to develop a scrutiny focused section on the Combined Authority's website as a first step to the development of a wider scrutiny communications strategy in order to help deliver the Committee's ambitions of securing greater public involvement in the scrutiny process and fulfil the Committee's obligation to represent the public interest. Progress will be reported to the Committee.

Communications, marketing and engagement

- 2.16 The Combined Authority's Communications and Marketing team has strategic oversight of the organisation's communications and engagement activity. The team was formed as a result of the organisation-wide restructure in June 2017. It brought together officers formerly responsible for Metro, the LEP, inward investment, CityConnect and other aspects of communications, marketing and engagement activity into a single, streamlined team covering the full breadth of the Combined Authority's economic, transport and public reform agenda.
- 2.17 The team covers the following functions:
- Consultation and public engagement
 - Internal communications and culture change
 - Inward investment marketing (including supporting the City Region's shortlisted Channel 4 bid)
 - Transport marketing, including support for MCard campaigns which deliver £32m in revenue annually
 - Dedicated engagement and communications support for active travel initiatives, enabling more businesses, schools and individuals to benefit from cycling. This includes oversight of £350m of grant programmes in addition to communications and behaviour change activity (funded through the Department for Transport Cycle City Ambition Grant)
 - External affairs and media relations which supports the organisation's strategic objectives – particularly around transport investment – as well as supporting the 18 councils and Sheffield City Region mayor pursuing a One Yorkshire devolution deal and other devolution negotiations and engagement
 - Digital support, delivering a significant programme of improvements to the Combined Authority and LEP's website(s) and social media engagement – a new website suite will be delivered in 2019 and a new Intranet by the end of 2018.

- Design & production & Market research for partners across the region creating an income stream to the CA.
- Core communications and marketing support covering the full breadth of the organisation's activities – including delivery of marketing campaigns, partnership initiatives and corporate communications. This includes marketing of the LEP business and skills services and those of Transport Services (Metro).

2.18 The purpose of bringing together the team in this way was to ensure that communications, marketing and engagement activity is strategically managed and coordinated across the organisation, both to improve public awareness of the organisation and what it does, and to save money by enabling more activity to be undertaken in-house, thereby reducing expenditure on agencies.

2.19 In the first year since the team was brought together, it has achieved a budget saving of 20% on discretionary spend, delivered 3x the coverage of 18 months ago and is on target to achieve 5x this year. As part of its communications strategy, the team has established a baseline public awareness and business awareness measure of the organisation and will monitor growth in awareness as a result of its activities.

2.20 The Communications and Marketing team has adopted the [Government Communications Service's Modern Communications Framework](#) – a best practice framework for public sector communicators. This framework places public engagement at the heart of modern government communications and aims to “change lives for the better, running campaigns rooted in the objectives of the organisation that provide powerful, timely and relevant information to allow people to make effective choices”. It also puts significant emphasis on the importance of insight-driven campaigns and evaluation of communications activity.

2.21 The Communications and Marketing team is leading on a number of key corporate projects aimed at improving the Combined Authority's engagement with various external audiences:

Combined Authority brand and identity

2.22 Research identified one of the key barriers to improving public engagement with the Combined Authority was confusion around its role in relation to other bodies – particularly the LEP and Metro. Addressing this confusion by developing a clear, streamlined brand identity was the purpose of this key project within the Combined Authority's organisational transformation programme.

2.23 This project has seen the number of brand identities within the organisation reduce from 30+ to just four (the Combined Authority, the LEP, Metro and CityConnect), which is expected to save the organisation at least £20,000 in the first year by eliminating the need for separate campaign identities and channels.

Website project

- 2.24 A project is underway to bring together the eight existing websites from the former organisations into a single, streamlined web platform. Like the brand and identity project, this will make it easier for various audiences to learn about and engage with the Combined Authority and LEP's work. It is also estimated to save the organisation over £100,000 in projected costs in the coming 2 years.

Partnerships work stream

- 2.25 It is recognised that within the Combined Authority/ LEP partnership it is local councils which have the closest relationships with their local residents, and are therefore best placed to communicate and engage with the public about the work they do together through the Combined Authority/ LEP. A key aim of the Combined Authority's partnerships workstream is to support members and council officers in their role as influential advocates for the organisation and region. To date the following activity has been delivered:

- An event has been held to improve joint working between officers of the Combined Authority and partner councils
- briefing sessions with individual political groups within all of the West Yorkshire and York councils, giving all 418 elected members across the Combined Authority geography the opportunity to learn more about the organisation and make suggestions to improve ways of working
- partner eNews launched, providing monthly updates on the Combined Authority's and LEP's activities to all elected members in West Yorkshire and York (average open rate is 32%)
- exchange sessions organised between the Combined Authority senior leadership team and their counterparts in partner councils, with the view to addressing specific challenges and opportunities at an institution level
- weekly conference call with council heads of communications to brief them on upcoming activities in the Combined Authority's communications grid (which is also shared).

Further activity is planned over the coming year, including a series of roadshow events for elected members.

Corporate Plan and budget engagement

- 2.26 The Combined Authority now publishes a publicly accessible version of its Corporate Plan on its website annually, and communicates its key achievements/ objectives from the Corporate Plan through its social media channels. Copies of the plan are shared with elected members electronically and in hard copy so that they can communicate how the organisation is benefitting their ward members. Information about how each council area's Transport Levy contributions are spent is included in the annual council tax communication produced by each council each year.

- 2.27 On the recommendation of the Budget Member Working Group¹, this year the Communications and Marketing team is undertaking a public engagement exercise on the Combined Authority's budget process, including developing an animation on how the Combined Authority spends its money and opportunities for residents to ask questions via the organisation's "Your Voice" digital engagement platform. The Combined Authority's District Consultation Sub-Committees also recently held an exercise consulting the public representatives on the committees on their priorities for transport services spending.

Regular communications about the organisation's achievements

- 2.28 A key element of the Combined Authority's communications, marketing and engagement strategy is communicating with local people and businesses about the positive impact of its work for local communities through a wide range of on and off-line channels. Over the past year the organisation has secured £4 million Advertising Value Equivalent. There have been 73,600 twitter engagements during 2018 and we now average 2,000 Metro Facebook engagements per month.

Design & Market research functions

- 2.29 The Communications, Marketing and Engagement team has a specialist market research function, the aims of which are to understand the needs of audiences when developing campaigns to help people and organisations access support. This approach improves the outcomes of campaigns by ensuring audience needs are at the heart of campaign design and reduces costs.

Consultation and engagement

- 2.30 The Combined Authority's Consultation and Engagement team is part of the wider Communications and Marketing function. As a result of the corporate restructure in 2017 it has developed from a function focused exclusively on bus service consultation to covering the full breadth of the Combined Authority and LEP's work, and supporting partners with their consultation and engagement requirements.
- 2.31 The purpose of the Consultation and Engagement team's work is to give people across Leeds City Region a meaningful say in decision-making. Consultation and Engagement projects the team has delivered over the past 12 months include:
- engagement with local businesses on changes to LEP grant criteria to support inclusive growth outcomes;

¹ The Budget Member Working Group comprises of the following Members:

- Cllr Susan Hinchcliffe, Chair of the Combined Authority
- Cllr Tim Swift, Deputy Chair of the Combined Authority
- Roger Marsh, Chair of the LEP Board
- Cllr Kim Groves, Chair of the Transport Committee
- Cllr David Hall, Combined Authority Member

- engagement with the public, businesses and partners on the development of a Digital Strategy for the City Region;
 - engagement on proposals for the LEP Review;
 - and significant consultation and engagement activity on major transport projects.
- 2.32 The team also continues to provide consultation and engagement support to the Transport Services directorate on changes to bus services and the modernisation of bus stations.
- 2.33 There has been significant demand from partner councils for support from the Consultation and Engagement team on West Yorkshire-plus Transport Fund schemes. Support provided by the Combined Authority's Consultation and Engagement team is enabling partners to strengthen business cases as these progress through the assurance process by demonstrating that adequate community and stakeholder engagement has been undertaken.
- 2.34 The team is also saving partners money by enabling them to access Consultation and Engagement expertise at significantly lower cost than market rates. For example, Consultation and Engagement support for the £173.5million Connecting Leeds programme is projected to save hundreds of thousands of pounds, which can be re-invested back into the programme. Other Transport Fund schemes the Consultation and Engagement team has supported include A629 improvements in Kirklees and Calderdale and corridor improvement programmes in Calderdale and Bradford.
- 2.35 A key element of the Consultation and Engagement team's work is the development of its 'Your Voice' digital engagement hub yourvoice.westyorks-ca.gov.uk. This online platform is enabling the Combined Authority and partner councils to reach a wider audience at lower cost than traditional Consultation and Engagement methods. By adopting this "digital by default" approach, resources for face to face consultation methods (such as community drop-in events) can be prioritised and targeted towards enabling participation among seldom heard communities.
- 2.36 The 'yourvoice' platform was launched in June 2018 and has already hosted nine separate consultation / engagement activities. To date there have been 19,500 visits to the site. 6,000 people have engaged with a project. Over 3,000 written responses have been provided to date (survey responses, questions, letters and emails).
- 2.37 The team is in the process of finalising corporate Consultation and Engagement protocols to be adopted by the Combined Authority. These will set out standards by which the organisation & partners should undertake Consultation and Engagement activity consistently and in line with best practice guidelines from the Consultation Institute and Market Research Society.
- 2.38 A comprehensive toolkit for Combined Authority staff is also in production and will include guidance, a checklist and a range of "how to" guides.

The LEP and the Business Communications Group (BCG)

- 2.39 The work of the Consultation and Engagement team, as described in sections 2.30-2.38 above, is a key mechanism through which the Combined Authority involves people and organisations across the region in its decision-making and service improvements. The Communications team is particularly responsible for managing the Business Communications Group.
- 2.40 The Business Communications Group (BCG) is a key advisory group supporting the LEP Board. It is chaired by LEP Board member, Joanna Robinson (also the LEP's SME Representative), and brings together key business representative bodies from across the region (for example Chambers of Commerce, the Federation of Small Businesses, the Confederation of British Industry (CBI) and various sector representative bodies), which collectively represent an estimated 20,000 businesses across the region.
- 2.41 The Group meets quarterly to receive updates on the LEP's work and provide feedback about trading conditions and barriers to growth experienced by their members. This feedback is reported to the LEP Board and used to influence LEP policies and the design of business support services delivered by the Combined Authority. The Group is also an important conduit for business engagement on key policy developments, and has been engaged in the LEP Review, the forthcoming Local Inclusive Industrial Strategy and continuous improvements to business support provision.

Customer Services, feedback and improvements

- 2.42 The Combined Authority's Customer Service team, part of the Transport Services directorate and transport facing brand 'Metro', undertakes regular liaison and engagement with local communities and organisations to seek feedback on and influence the development of local transport services and facilities, in addition to structured consultation and engagement with stakeholders and local communities on key projects schemes and strategies..
- 2.43 The Customers Services team also provides a range of customer facing services under the 'Metro' transport brand which encourage both engagement with and feedback from customers. These include the following:
- A **Metroline contact centre**, co-funded with bus operators, open 7 days a week, engaging in webchat, social media, real time messaging, incoming phone calls, feedback and complaints.
 - **Travel Centres** located at six bus stations in West Yorkshire selling direct to the public, giving information, help and advice on concessionary travel, journey information, routes, times and ticketing options and taking feedback and complaints.
 - www.wymetro.com - the Metro website which in addition to delivering a wide range of information services and the journey planner also facilitates feedback from the public.

- **Young people and Bus 18** – focusing chiefly on engagement with young people to improve the Transport offer.
- **Information services** – a range of online, social media and printed information outputs to customers.

Customer Service Excellence accreditation

- 2.44 The Transport Services team of the Combined Authority's transport facing arm ('Metro') also meets the criteria of the Customer Service Excellence standard. The Customer Service Excellence (previously known as Chartermark) standard tests in depth the areas that research has indicated are a priority for customers, with particular focus on delivery, timeliness, information, professionalism and staff attitude. There is also an examination on developing customer insight, understanding the user's experience and robust measurement of service satisfaction.
- 2.45 The Transport Services team is tested every year against key criteria in order to both achieve and maintain the accreditation. There are 19 elements including customer insight, service improvement through consultation, engaging and involving customers and ensuring frontline staff input to service improvement. If there are any areas in which the independent assessor believes the organisation delivers over and above the required standard they can award a compliance plus for that element. Last year the Combined Authority maintained 10 compliance plus awards. The next assessment is on the 14 and 15 November 2018.

Young People & Bus 18

- 2.46 Engagement with young people focuses on understanding the barriers to bus travel, seeks views on what would encourage more bus travel and ongoing engagement with young people in the design of solutions. This has included:
- Focus groups with young people in schools, through youth groups and at youth councils.
 - Ongoing engagement with local youth parliament members and youth councils – who have chosen “Improving Transport” as a key campaign for this year
- 2.47 The Combined Authority worked with Leeds youth council, youth summit and other young people for their input into concepts, names and branding for a new ticket product. Over 150 under 19-year olds had input into the development of the new ticket and its name. Feedback from young people has already led to the following improvements:
- Removal of the need for young people in school uniform to show a young person's photocard to travel for half fare from January 2018
 - Introduction of the new MyDay ticket which enables young people to travel all day, on any bus in West Yorkshire for just £2.60
 - Also as part of the Bus 18 initiative and as a result of feedback operators have agreed they will accept each other's tickets during periods of service disruption/ bad weather across the network.

West Yorkshire Bus Strategy

- 2.48 In developing the West Yorkshire Bus Strategy, the Combined Authority undertook a three-month consultation to find out views on local bus services and the county's transport system. Analysis of the feedback showed that while people largely supported the proposals, the policies on accessibility needed strengthening. A specific Accessibility Policy was developed through further consultation and engagement, including with a range of disability led organisations.

Ongoing Dialogue

- 2.48 As a result of feedback received through the range of customer touchpoints services are constantly reviewed and redesigned. A number of examples are set out below;
- i) Customers applying for entitlement passes, especially the senior bus passes, said they were struggling to know how to complete the online process and that they found it both difficult and unnecessary to verify their email address. In response to this feedback the email verification process was removed and a video was produced showing a step by step guide of how to apply online and how to upload a photo.
 - ii) The Combined Authority recently updated the design and layout of timetables at bus stops. To ensure the new layouts were designed to meet customer requirements, a workshop was attended by customers to present prospective layouts. A preferred option was chosen based on a majority vote and progressed into posting along several key routes to obtain feedback in a live environment. Initial feedback from displays on street highlighted a number of issues connected with font sizes and templates scaling up in size when more space was available. A number of system improvements were carried out to address the issues and the latest version of the display is now on street. Further on-street surveys will be carried out in the next couple of months to ensure the new displays are working for customers.

- 2.49 Future plans include developing Bus 18 into an alliance with operators that will design the service experience around the customer based on feedback and consultation. An extensive consultation programme will also be carried out as part of the development of the new Bus Information Strategy.

Accessibility and disability groups engagement

- 2.50 The Combined Authority's Transport Accessibility Coordinator also ensures regular and ongoing engagement with disability groups and organisations to provide information on our services and strategic initiatives and receive feedback on issues and improvement needs. Feedback from these organisations is used to inform and shape the development of products and services, recent examples include:

- Development of an easy read disabled person's bus pass application form
- Feedback from people with a learning disability on draft designs of easy read information on the ENCTS disabled person's bus pass
- Work with regional and local learning disability organisations and a local bus operator to influence content of driver training
- Input from RNIB regional officer and people with low vision on design options for new real time display units

3. Financial Implications

3.1 There are no financial implications directly arising from this report.

4. Legal Implications

4.1 There are no legal implications directly arising from this report.

5. Staffing Implications

5.1 There are no staffing implications directly arising from this report.

6. External Consultees

6.1 No external consultations have been undertaken.

7. Recommendations

7.1 To consider the report and provide feedback on progress and possible next steps as to how the Combined Authority could take to further engage with the public, service users, other stakeholders across the region and other target audiences nationally and internationally.

7.1 To consider the Overview and Scrutiny Committee's role, within the powers and resources available to it, in improving and developing engagement with the public, local businesses and other local stakeholders.

8. Background Documents

None.

9. Appendices

Appendix 1 – Governance structure: West Yorkshire Combined Authority / Leeds City Region LEP