

**West of England Joint Transport Executive Committee
26th November 2013**

Views of Joint Scrutiny Committee

Purpose

1. To inform members of the views of the West of England Joint Scrutiny Committee (JSC) following a meeting held on Tuesday 26th November 2013

Background

2. The last JTEC agreed that the views of the Joint Scrutiny Committee become a standing item on the agenda

Joint Scrutiny Committee Views

3. The following members were present at the meeting:

Bath & North East Somerset Council
Cllr Martin Veal

Bristol City Council
Cllr Helen Holland
Cllr Tim Kent
Cllr Mark Weston

North Somerset Council
Cllr Tony Moulin
Cllr David Pasley
Cllr Clive Webb

South Gloucestershire Council
Cllr Pat Hockey
Cllr Bill Bowrey

4. The JSC received representations during the public forum on the following:
 - On the budget proposals of Bristol City Council and the possible impact on bus services across the West of England.
 - Access and equalities issues for people with disabilities in using public transport and the Mayor's proposed budget cuts.
 - Officers advised that the comments on Bristol City Council's budget proposals were beyond the remit of JSC, there was a six week consultation period and members of the public could participate in this.
 - The proposed South Bristol Link and its' financial implications with a request to abandon MetroBus
 - It was explained that JSC was not a decision making body and didn't have the power to act as had been requested.
 - Decisions had been made in the individual authorities and it was unlikely that these would now be reversed.
 - Cycling in Bristol and the need to consider gender and equalities issues in the planning of schemes to increase cycling and walking.
 - It was agreed that an item would be added to the forward plan to produce a report examining this issue.
 - The closure of Highwood Road in Patchway, South Gloucestershire

- Members considered this to be a matter for South Gloucestershire Council to resolve but acknowledge the right of members of the public to raise the issue at West of England meetings.
 - Questions regarding local railway matters and in particular the opening of the Henbury line to passenger use.
 - This matter was discussed later in the meeting.
5. Members received an update which covered the key issues for JTEC and the Local Transport Body Board including an update on Major Schemes, smart ticketing and MetroWest. Members had received copies of the papers that were published on Friday 22nd December 2013.

Members commented on:

- Smart cards expressing concern about the following:
 - That ITSO technology was being overtaken.
 - Asked if the expressions of interest process for MetroBus had asked bidders to declare the type of technology they would use.
 - That there was a reluctance on the part of First to establish a multi-modal smart ticket.
 - That £2.7m had been spent on the project so far and there was a lack of progress. With this in mind could the project be delivered by the authorities in the West of England, or should this be left to Government to deliver smartcards on a national basis?
 - It was suggested that the West of England office contact the DfT as a member had been to an LGA Public Transport Consortium meeting and a presentation had been given on the issue of smartcards by Jeni Borg of the DfT. Members requested that she be invited to a future JSC meeting.
 - The chair requested that JTEC be made aware of the very strong feeling of dissatisfaction at the situation.

Officers responded:

- Giles Fearnley, Managing Director of First Bus was coming to the December meeting of JTEC.
- There was a clear JTEC aspiration for a multimodal smart ticket.

- The Local Transport Body Board:
 - Members asked about and commented on governance and voting rights.

Officers responded

- It was explained that under the Joint Working Agreement and constitution, the local authority members could not be outvoted by the two business representatives.

- MetroWest:
 - The importance of dialogue with neighbouring authorities in particular Wiltshire and a possible station at Corsham.
 - The answers provided to the questions posed in the public forum were discussed.
 - Members were concerned about the timescales involved in delivering a service on the Henbury line.
 - The need for the electrification of local railways as a means of attracting passengers.
 - The need for joined up thinking to ensure that there was no inhibition of rail capacity.
 - There was still a long-term aspiration for a station at Charfield.

- Concern was also expressed about the cascading of diesel units into the area.
- Members sought clarification on the contractual obligations of Bristol Port and Network Rail in relation to freight use on the Henbury Line.
- There was a need to display greater ambition in regard to the Henbury line by pushing for the loop rather than spur option.
- It was suggested that officers should be open to, and welcome ideas submitted by members of the public and stakeholders.

Officers responded:

- It was explained that the Halcrow work on Phase 1 indicated that extending MetroWest into Wiltshire would add an additional cost of £500k per annum and the amount of revenue support required would be difficult to find.
- Charfield had not been included in Gloucestershire's Local Transport Plan and although in South Gloucestershire's Core Strategy no work was being undertaken on the station proposal.
- The GRIP 1 and 2 stages would provide the necessary information to determine the most viable option for the Henbury line.

Recommendation

6. That members note the views of the West of England Joint Scrutiny Committee

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