MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE WEST YORKSHIRE COMBINED AUTHORITY HELD ON THURSDAY, 30 JANUARY 2025 AT COMMITTEE ROOM 1, WELLINGTON HOUSE, 40-50 WELLINGTON STREET, LEEDS

Present:

Mayor Tracy Brabin (Chair)	West Yorkshire Combined Authority
Councillor Susan Hinchcliffe	Bradford Council
Councillor Martin Love	Bradford Council
Councillor Sue Holdsworth	Calderdale Council
Councillor Jane Scullion	Calderdale Council
Councillor Carole Pattison	Kirklees Council
Councillor Alan Lamb	Leeds City Council
Councillor James Lewis	Leeds City Council
Councillor Matthew Morley (Substitute)	Wakefield Council
Councillor Claire Douglas	City of York Council

In attendance:

Councillor Barry Anderson	Chair of Scrutiny Committee
Ben Still (Chief Executive)	West Yorkshire Combined Authority
Alan Reiss (Chief Operating Officer)	West Yorkshire Combined Authority
Simon Warburton (Executive Director)	West Yorkshire Combined Authority
Sarah Eaton (Director)	West Yorkshire Combined Authority
Liz Hunter (Director)	West Yorkshire Combined Authority
Felix Kumi-Ampofo (Director)	West Yorkshire Combined Authority
Damon Lawrenson (Director)	West Yorkshire Combined Authority
Simon Pope (Director)	West Yorkshire Combined Authority
Caroline Norreys (Assistant Director)	West Yorkshire Combined Authority
Alexander Clarke (Officer)	West Yorkshire Combined Authority
Myles Larrington (Committee Services)	West Yorkshire Combined Authority

1. Chair's Opening Remarks

The Chair welcomed everyone to the first Combined Authority meeting of 2025, including Damon Lawrenson, Interim Director of Finance, and Simon Pope, Transport Capital Programme Director, who were attending their first meeting since joining the organisation. Emphasising the significance of the meeting, the Chair highlighted the approval of the annual budget. Acknowledging the funeral of the Rt Hon Lord Prescott in Hull, the former Deputy Prime Minister, the Chair expressed condolences and reflected on his dedication to Yorkshire and the North, recognising his advocacy for regional

equality, social justice, and environmental conservation.

2. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Denise Jeffrey (Wakefield Council) and Mandy Ridyard (West Yorkshire Business Board). Cllr Matthew Morley (Wakefield Council) attended as the substitute for Cllr Jeffrey.

3. Declarations of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests

There were no declarations of pecuniary interests at the meeting.

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

The Chair advised members that Agenda Item 6 – Bus Franchising (Appendix 1, Appendix 2, Appendix 3) had been identified by officers as containing exempt information within the meaning of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972, and where officers had considered that the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighed the public interest in disclosing the information, for the reasons outlined in the report.

The Combined Authority was asked to accept the recommendation in respect of the agenda item listed above, which was unanimously agreed.

Resolved: That in accordance with paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972, the public were excluded from the meeting during consideration of Agenda Item 6 – Bus Franchising (Appendix 1, Appendix 2, Appendix 3) on the grounds that it was likely, in view of the nature of the business to be transacted or the nature of the proceedings, that if members of the press and public were present there would be disclosure to them of exempt information and for the reasons set out in the report that in all the circumstances of the case, the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighed the public interest in disclosing the information.

5. Minutes of the Meeting of the Combined Authority held on 12 December 2024

Resolved: That the minutes of the meeting of the Combined Authority held on 12 December 2024 were approved as a correct record.

6. Mayor's Update

The Chair provided a brief update, beginning with the successful reopening of Bradford Interchange on 5 January 2025. Thanks were given to the people of Bradford for their patience and to staff at the Combined Authority and Bradford Council for their efforts. The Chair noted the launch of Bradford UK City Year of Culture 2025, the launch of which, attracted over 10,000 attendees to Centenary Square in Bradford earlier in the month.

The Chair highlighted the publication of the English Devolution White Paper, which was launched in West Yorkshire. The significance of this moment was emphasised, with increased powers and funding flexibilities transferring from

Whitehall to local communities.

Following the last Combined Authority meeting, the Chair attended a roundtable in Darlington with the Chancellor and other Mayors, discussing local growth and fiscal devolution. The Chair also participated in the second Mayors' Council in Sheffield, engaging with Ministers on employment, child poverty, and devolution. Evidence was given to a select committee, advocating for deeper devolution.

The Chair then concluded the update and took a question from Cllr Alan Lamb. Cllr Lamb raised concerns about government delays to proposed upgrades at Leeds General Infirmary, now expected to start no earlier than 2032 with revised upscaled costs of around £800m. He suggested that the Chancellor of the Exchequer, the Rt Hon Rachel Reeves, a Leeds MP, had overlooked the city and urged the Combined Authority to challenge the decision while pushing for progress on the Innovation Village, a new world-class hub for science, research and technology. The Chair disagreed with this assessment, emphasising ongoing private discussions to secure a positive outcome. The Chief Executive confirmed discussions with Leeds City Council and partners were continuing, with a public update expected soon.

7. Bus Franchising

The Combined Authority considered a report providing an update on the Bus Franchising Scheme, following the decision made in March 2024. The report outlined progress on the lotting strategy, depot strategy, and transport branding.

The Chair expressed encouragement at the progress made, recognising team efforts and partnerships. The Chair reminded members that Appendices 1, 2, and 3 contained exempt information, and explained that the agenda item would begin with a public discussion, followed by a private session to address sensitive matters. The meeting would then return to the public session to consider and resolve the recommendations.

The Chair invited Cllr Susan Hinchcliffe, the Chair of the Transport Committee, to speak. Cllr Hinchcliffe acknowledged the significant progress already made on the Bus Franchising Scheme. Cllr Hinchcliffe also highlighted the work still to be done, including preparing for franchising, transitioning bus operators to a different model, and addressing branding, all while aiming to keep costs as low as possible.

Officers then introduced the report, summarising key developments in mobilising the franchising programme, including approvals for funding, delegations to the Chief Executive, and the adoption of a new transport network brand.

Members discussed the Bus Franchising scheme, highlighting its importance in improving local bus services. One member welcomed the creation of the shadow board, emphasising the need for accountability and addressing service gaps, citing Calderdale as an example. Another member raised concerns about bus operators' performance and the reliability of services,

stressing the significance of oversight in the process. A further member questioned the funding strategy, potential increases in bus patronage, and the practical impact on residents.

The Executive Director for Transport, Simon Warburton, reassured members that the shadow board membership would align with the political leadership of the five West Yorkshire authorities. The Executive Director provided clarification on funding, the balanced cost of franchising, and the ongoing commercial negotiations that would shape the bus network's future. The Executive Director also highlighted the importance of performance data and fleet investment. Members discussed the urgency of the scheme, the need for a communication strategy, and the swift establishment of the shadow boards.

The Chair then turned to the discussion of Appendix 1, Appendix 2, and Appendix 3. In accordance with the resolution passed during Agenda Item 4, the Combined Authority sat in private for the duration of the discussion, with the press and public excluded from the proceedings. After the discussion had concluded, the Combined Authority returned to public proceedings.

Resolved: That the Combined Authority:

(i) Noted the updates provided in the report.

(ii) Approved the contents of the Bus Franchising Lotting Strategy at Appendix 1.

(iii) Delegated authority to the Chief Executive Officer, in consultation with the Mayor, to undertake all such activities as were appropriate to progress and finalise the Lotting Strategy, including conducting market engagement with bus operators on the approach as set out in the exempt appendix.

(iv) Approved the contents of the Bus Franchising Depot Strategy at Appendix 2.

(v) Delegated authority to the Chief Executive Officer, in consultation with the Mayor, to undertake all such activities as were appropriate to implement the Depot Strategy, including the negotiation for and acquisition of depots and land.

(vi) Approved that the Bus Reform Depot Programme proceeded through decision point 2 (strategic outline case) and that:

- Work commenced on activity 5 (delivery) for acquiring and refurbishing up to 10 depots, subject to conditions.
- Work commenced on activity 3 (outline business case) for any depots to be redeveloped.
- Work commenced on activity 3 (outline business case) for a programme of zero emission bus infrastructure across the acquired depots.

(vii) Approved development funding of £67,000,000, to commence delivery on

acquiring and refurbishing up to 10 depots and progress the depot redevelopment and zero emission bus infrastructure programme schemes to decision point 4 (full business case), taking the total scheme approval to £67,000,000.

(viii) Approved that future approvals in relation to depot business cases were made in accordance with the assurance pathway and approval route outlined in Appendix 3, subject to the scheme remaining within the tolerances outlined in the report.
(ix) Noted the Combined Authority's potential funding in relation to depots as set out in Appendix 2.

(x) Endorsed the proposal to retire the 'Metro' transport network identity and to adopt a new name and brand identity for West Yorkshire's integrated transport network.

8. Business Planning and Budget 2025/26

The Combined Authority considered a report on approving multi-year outcomes and the 2025/26 business plan, alongside the proposed revenue budget, transport levy, and treasury management statement.

The Chair noted a slightly different approach this year with approval sought for both multi-year outcomes and the 2025/26 business plan. Despite a challenging financial landscape, the Chair highlighted achievements in skills, housing, and sustainable transport. It was noted that the transport levy had been kept flat for ten years, creating pressures, and would increase by 2% a year from 2026-27 in line with the bus franchising assessment. The Chair also discussed plans for the mass transit system, a universal skills system, and the Home Energy West Yorkshire scheme. The Chair reiterated a focus on delivery and the upcoming single settlement for devolution.

Officers introduced the report, which discussed the 2025/26 budget and funding challenges, with continued support for major regional projects.

The Chair thanked the Interim Director of Finance, Damon Lawrenson, for presenting a comprehensive report on the budget and reassured members that the financial oversight process was being effectively managed. Cllr Lamb also commended the Interim Director of Finance for his work, particularly in implementing upcoming zero-based budgeting, and requested an update on a financial issue reported to the Governance and Audit Committee meeting held on 20 January 2025. This issue related to a £853 million reconciliation variance in the Combined Authority's 2023/24 accounts, latterly highlighted by External Audit.

The Interim Director of Finance clarified that this variance resulted from an inadvertent duplication of data during the consolidation process of the Combined Authority's Statement of Accounts with that of the Police and Crime Commissioner's Statement of Accounts. He assured members that the variance affected only budgetary data inputs, not the approved budget itself, and had no material impact on the Combined Authority's financial status, which remained unchanged. It was also confirmed that the error in no way

reflects on the accounting procedures or reporting of West Yorkshire Police.

The Interim Director of Finance further indicated that the issue with the financial data would be rectified and confirmed that the recruitment of additional personnel had enhanced the resilience of the finance team's operational capacity.

Resolved: That the Combined Authority:

(i) Approved the draft 2025/26 business plans in principle, as set out in the plans on a page at Appendix 2.

(ii) Noted the revised outturn revenue budget for 2024/25.

(iii) Approved the proposed revenue budget for 2025/26.

(iv) Approved the indicative capital programme and funding for 2025/26 – 2028/29.

(v) Determined a levy of £102 million for the year ended 31 March 2026, in accordance with the Local Government Finance Act 1988 and related regulations.

(vi) Authorised the Director, Finance and Commercial Services, to issue the levy letter for the financial year ending 31 March 2026 to the five District Councils in West Yorkshire.

(vii) Approved a payment of £4,099,410, to reflect a partial refund of the Transport Levy, to be made to the five District Councils in accordance with Table 7 of the report.

(viii) Authorised the Director, Finance and Commercial Services, to arrange appropriate funding for all expenditure in 2024/25 and 2025/26, subject to statutory limitations, including the most appropriate application of capital funding as set out in the report.

(ix) Noted that work would be undertaken to revise the Authority's approach to capitalisation of costs.

(x) Reaffirmed the adoption of the CIPFA Code of Practice for Treasury Management in Public Services.

(xi) Approved the treasury management policy as set out in Appendix 7.

(xii) Adopted the prudential limits for the next three years as set out in Appendix 7.

9. English Devolution White Paper

The Combined Authority considered a report on the English Devolution White Paper, which outlined the Government's new approach to devolution in England. The report set out the anticipated next steps for planning the

implementation of the White Paper and the workstreams for 2025.

Officers introduced the report, detailing ongoing efforts to secure deeper devolution, including local growth, integrated settlements, health and work programmes, and public service reform, while continuing engagement with Government to influence the forthcoming English Devolution Bill.

The Chair highlighted the significant opportunity for regional growth through increased mayoral powers, emphasising West Yorkshire's strong position due to its collaborative approach and experience. Members recognised the challenges ahead, particularly in recruitment and resourcing, and stressed the need for financial stability for local authorities. Concerns were raised about housing and strategic planning, with Members seeking reassurance on how these would align with local authority responsibilities. The Chair emphasised that the focus was on unlocking opportunities rather than duplicating efforts, with a priority on increasing affordable housing and strengthening partnerships with Homes England and developers.

Members also discussed the capacity for effective scrutiny given the wide-ranging responsibilities of the Combined Authority, including transport, devolution, and economic growth. The Chair acknowledged the challenge and stressed the need for active participation from committee members. The Chief Executive highlighted the lack of mainstream funding for Combined Authorities and ongoing lobbying efforts with government to address this. The Chief Executive also outlined measures to streamline recruitment and resource allocation while adapting to evolving workforce expectations. The Chair concluded by reaffirming enthusiasm for devolution and confidence in delivering meaningful outcomes for West Yorkshire.

Resolved: That the Combined Authority:

(i) Noted the update provided and the implications of the English Devolution White Paper for West Yorkshire.

(ii) Endorsed the work undertaken to implement the measures set out in the English Devolution White Paper.

10. All-Age Careers Blueprint

The Combined Authority considered a report on the West Yorkshire All-Age Careers Blueprint, a framework for creating a person-centred careers service.

The Chair introduced the update on the West Yorkshire All-Age Careers Blueprint, highlighting its role in improving skills and careers education to drive economic growth and widen opportunities. The Chair welcomed collaboration between partners in shaping the framework and looked forward to its progress, emphasising the importance of further education in supporting lifelong skills development. The Chair then invited Cllr James Lewis to provide further comments on the report.

Cllr Lewis welcomed the Blueprint and the development of a clearer careers appraisal service for West Yorkshire, recognising its importance alongside

other initiatives. Cllr Lewis noted that the new government was reviewing the role of job centres and highlighted the Economy Committee's role in shaping the Blueprint. Cllr Lewis thanked those involved in bringing the work forward.

Officers proceeded to introduce the report, detailing its development and focus on improving the fragmented careers system. They highlighted the Blueprint's alignment with regional priorities, including early years workforce support, technical education, and seamless career transitions, and the upcoming implementation plan.

Members welcomed the report, particularly the focus on early intervention at primary school level to maintain aspirations. Concerns were raised about the difficulty small businesses face in offering work experience due to resource constraints, with calls for funding and reduced bureaucracy to encourage participation. The Chair acknowledged these challenges and highlighted ongoing discussions with Ministers and the potential role of the Fair Work Charter in addressing them.

The Director for Inclusive Economy, Skills and Culture emphasised the importance of employer engagement and supporting young people through key transition points. The Director noted lessons from past programmes and the Local Growth Plan's commitment to ensuring young people have meaningful employer encounters. The need for better college engagement with small and medium-sized enterprises (SMES) was recognised, with reference to the SME graduate scheme as a model for improving support and participation.

Resolved: That the Combined Authority:

(i) Noted the update and forward look for employment, education, and careers, as presented in the report.

(ii) Approved the adoption of the West Yorkshire All-Age Careers Blueprint, as outlined in the submitted report, to support the development of an integrated, person-centred careers and employment support system for the region.

11. Project Approvals

(a) Investment Priority 4 – Creating Great Places and Accelerated Infrastructure

West Yorkshire and York Broadband Gainshare – Delegation of Approval

Resolved: The Combined Authority:

(i) Approved the delegation of authority to the Combined Authority's Chief Executive to approve the split of the £2,700,000 repayments to the six authorities, made under the original contract funding framework.

(ii) Approved the delegation of authority to the Combined Authority's Director of Inclusive Economy, Skills and Culture to approve the funding of future regional connectivity interventions from the remaining £3,600,000 accrued

funds.

(b) Investment Priority 5 (IP5) - Delivering Sustainable, Integrated, Inclusive and Affordable Transport

The Chair highlighted the poor state of accessibility at West Yorkshire's railway stations, noting that 72% lacked proper access. Despite an unsuccessful funding bid to central government for accessibility improvements, the Combined Authority proceeded with station upgrades and prioritised accessibility in Mass Transit and Bus Franchising plans. The Chair also emphasised the importance of active travel, particularly along canals, though unexpected costs had arisen.

The Transport Capital Programme Director explained that initial cost estimates were based on strategic-level assessments, with additional works required for canal walls. He confirmed that the Canal and River Trust was a key stakeholder.

Members discussed accessibility issues in rail travel, concerns about rolling stock, and the need for improvements. The Chief Executive outlined how some transport projects, despite falling below a benefit-cost ratio of 1, were still recommended due to wider strategic benefits. Members also debated the impact of bus hotspots and enforcement measures on rural services, with ongoing discussions on bus reliability, speed, and infrastructure improvements.

Rail Accessibility Package: Step-free Access (Guiseley Station)

Resolved: The Combined Authority:

(i) Approved that the Rail Accessibility Package: Step-free Access scheme proceed through decision point 2 (strategic outline business case) and work commence on activity 4 (full business case).

(ii) Approved that development funding of £1,680,074 be released to progress the scheme to activity 4 (full business case), taking the total scheme approval from £175,000 to £1,855,074.

(iii) Approved that future approvals be made in accordance with the assurance pathway and approval route outlined in this report. This was subject to the scheme remaining within the tolerances outlined in this report.

(iv) Noted the Combined Authority's possible funding contribution of £10,072,546. The estimated total scheme cost was £10,072,546, including £1,776,000 for risk, contingency, and inflation allowances.

Huddersfield Broad Canal – Aspley Basin to Cooper Bridge Towpath Resurfacing

Resolved: The Combined Authority, subject to conditions:

(i) Approved that the Huddersfield Broad Canal scheme proceed through decision points 2–4 (business justification) and work commence on activity 5 (delivery).

(ii) Approved the Combined Authority's funding of up to £1,833,264. The total scheme cost was £1,833,264.

(iii) Approved that the Combined Authority enter into an addendum to the existing funding agreement with Kirklees Council for funding of up to £1,833,264.

(iv) Approved that future approvals be made in accordance with the assurance pathway, approval route, and tolerances outlined in this report.

(v) Noted that £198,992 of the total scheme cost was for risk and contingency allowances.

Huddersfield Narrow Canal Phase 3

Resolved: The Combined Authority, subject to conditions:

(i) Approved that the Huddersfield Narrow Canal scheme proceed through decision points 2–4 (business justification) and work commence on activity 5 (delivery).

(ii) Approved the Combined Authority's funding of up to £1,497,412. The total scheme cost was £1,497,412.

(iii) Approved that the Combined Authority enter into an addendum to the existing funding agreement with Kirklees Council for funding of up to £1,497,412.

(iv) Approved that future approvals be made in accordance with the assurance pathway, approval route, and tolerances outlined in this report.

(v) Noted that £189,933 of the total scheme cost was for risk and contingency allowances.

Calderdale Bus Hotspots

Resolved: The Combined Authority, subject to conditions:

(i) Approved that the Calderdale CRSTS Bus Hotspots scheme proceed through decision points 2 to 4 (business justification) and work commence on activity 5 (delivery).

(ii) Approved the Combined Authority's funding of £1,341,000. The total scheme cost was £1,341,000.

(iii) Approved that the Combined Authority enter into a Deed of Variation to the existing funding agreement with Calderdale Council for funding of up to £1,341,000.

(iv) Approved that future approvals be made in accordance with the assurance pathway, approval route, and tolerances outlined in this report. This was subject to the scheme remaining within the tolerances outlined in this report.

(v) Noted that £252,000 of the total scheme cost was for risk and contingency allowances.

Delegated Decisions

Decisions Delegated to the Chief Executive:

ATF4 Silsden to Kildwick Canal Towpath

(i) That the Active Travel Fund Tranche 4 (ATF4) Silsden to Kildwick Canal Towpath scheme was assessed in line with the Combined Authority's assurance process and approved through the agreed delegation to the Combined Authority's Chief Executive/Executive Director for Transport.

(ii) That the scheme proceeded through decision points 2 to 4 (business justification) of the Combined Authority's assurance process and commenced activity 5 (delivery).

(iii) That the total grant allocation was £1,053,429, representing the total value of the scheme funded through the Combined Authority.

(iv) That the total value of the scheme was £2,027,885.

Decisions Delegated to the Executive Director for Transport:

Leeds-Bradford Airport Parkway Station

Resolved: The Combined Authority noted the following delegated decision:

(i) That the change request for the Leeds Bradford Airport Parkway Station scheme was assessed in line with the Combined Authority's assurance process and approved through the agreed delegation to the Combined Authority's Chief Executive/Executive Director for Transport.

(ii) That a further £250,000 of development costs was released from the West Yorkshire Plus Transport Fund (WY+TF), which included £65,000 to enable the scheme to carry out a Minimum Viable Product exercise, taking the total approval to £6,000,000.

(iii) That the total value of the scheme was £65,544,365.

(iv) That the total value of the Combined Authority's funding was £65,544,365.

Bradford Forster Square Station Gateway

Resolved: The Combined Authority noted the following delegated decision:

(i) That the change request for the Bradford Forster Square Station Gateway scheme, which remains a priority scheme within Bradford Council's portfolio, was assessed in line with the Combined Authority's assurance process and approved through the agreed delegation to the Combined Authority's Chief Executive/Executive Director for Transport.

(ii) That further business case development costs were committed from within the scheme's existing approval of £3,885,314 to enable the resubmission of its outline business case (decision point 3).

(iii) That the total value of the scheme was £17,311,000.

(iv) That the total value of the Combined Authority's funding was £17,061,000.

TCF Huddersfield Bus Station

Resolved: The Combined Authority noted the following delegated decision:

(i) That the change request for the Transforming Cities Fund (TCF) Transforming Huddersfield Bus Station (Canopy and Public Realm) scheme was assessed in line with the Combined Authority's assurance process and approved through the agreed delegation to the Combined Authority's Chief Executive/Executive Director for Transport.

(ii) That further development funding of £1,206,000 was approved to progress the scheme to decision point 4 (full business case), taking the total scheme approval to £4,283,100.

(iii) That the total value of the scheme was £28,700,000.

12. Governance Arrangements and Amendments to Contract Standing Orders

The Combined Authority considered a report regarding several key governance matters, including the appointment of co-opted members to the Employment Panel, changes to Contract Standing Orders in line with the new Procurement Act, and consent for a statutory instrument related to adult education funding. Officers introduced the report, seeking approval for the recommendations and noting a consultation on the standards and conduct framework for local authorities.

Resolved: That the Combined Authority:

(i) Approved the co-option of members to the Employment Panel as set out in Appendix 1, in line with the nominations provided by the West Yorkshire

Constituent Councils.

(ii) Approved the revised version of the Contract Standing Orders as provided in Appendix 2.

(iii) Approved, in principle, consent to the creation of the Combined Authorities (Adult Education Functions) (Amendment) Order 2025 and delegated authority to the Chief Executive of the Combined Authority, in consultation with the Mayor, to finalise and consent to the final draft of the Order.

(iv) Noted the commencement of the MHCLG's consultation on the standards and code of conduct framework for local authorities in England.

13. Minutes for Information

The Combined Authority noted a report which provided details of published minutes and notes since the last meeting.

14. Chair's Closing Remarks

Before concluding the meeting, the Chair acknowledged Alan Reiss, the Chief Operating Officer, who was departing the Combined Authority in March after six years of service. The Chair noted that this was Mr Reiss's last Combined Authority meeting and expressed gratitude for Mr Reiss's significant contributions, including securing the Mayoral Devolution Deal, leading the response to the pandemic, and driving forward key initiatives. The Chair wished Mr Reiss every success in his upcoming role as Director of Operations at the North East Combined Authority.

15. Date of the Next Meeting

It was noted that the next meeting of the Combined Authority was scheduled to be held on Thursday 27 February 2025.