

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE  
WEST YORKSHIRE COMBINED AUTHORITY  
HELD ON THURSDAY, 24 JULY 2025 AT COMMITTEE ROOM 1,  
WELLINGTON HOUSE, 40-50 WELLINGTON STREET, LEEDS**

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**Present:**

Mayor Tracy Brabin (Chair)	West Yorkshire Combined Authority
Councillor Susan Hinchcliffe	Bradford Council
Councillor Jane Scullion	Calderdale Council
Councillor Moses Crook	Kirklees Council
Councillor James Lewis	Leeds City Council
Councillor Denise Jeffery	Wakefield Council
Councillor Claire Douglas	City of York Council
Mandy Ridyard	West Yorkshire Business Board
Councillor Martin Love	Bradford Council
Councillor Stewart Golton (Substitute)	Leeds City Council
Councillor Alan Lamb	Leeds City Council

**In attendance:**

Councillor Barry Anderson (Observer)	Chair, Scrutiny Committee
Ben Still (Chief Executive)	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
Paul Matthews (Director)	West Yorkshire Combined Authority
Simon Pope (Director)	West Yorkshire Combined Authority
Kate Taylor (Director)	West Yorkshire Combined Authority
Tim Taylor (Director)	West Yorkshire Combined Authority
Satinder Sahota (Assistant Director)	West Yorkshire Combined Authority
Sarah Bowes (Officer)	West Yorkshire Combined Authority
Michelle Burton (Officer)	West Yorkshire Combined Authority
Myles Larrington (Committee Services)	West Yorkshire Combined Authority

**1. Chair's Opening Remarks**

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting of the Combined Authority and extended a warm return to Committee Services Officer, Myles Larrington following his recent accident, noting that he had been greatly missed as a valued colleague.

At the Chair's invitation, Councillor Lewis then informed the meeting of the sad passing of former Councillor Mick Lyons at the age of 93. He highlighted

Mick's long service as Chair of the West Yorkshire Passenger Transport Authority and as a Leeds City councillor for 40 years. He noted that many of the agenda items, including Bus Franchising, were issues close to Mick's heart. He also extended condolences to Mick's daughter, Councillor Debbie Cooper, Deputy Leader of Leeds City Council, and to all of Mick's family.

The Chair thanked Councillor Lewis and requested that a letter of condolence be sent to Councillor Cooper and her family on behalf of the Combined Authority.

## 2. **Apologies for Absence**

Before presenting the apologies, the Committee Services Officer expressed his sincere thanks to the Chair, committee members, and senior leadership at the Combined Authority for their support during his recovery following a road traffic accident in Bradford. He gave particular thanks to Councillor Hinchliffe, the Chief Executive, the Interim Assistant Director of Legal, Governance and Compliance, the Service Lead for Governance, Risk & Compliance, Natalie Rotherham and Committee Services Team Leader, Sarah Naylor. He also acknowledged the Chair's ongoing commitment to Vision Zero, noting the importance of having a strong advocate for road safety.

The Chair responded by warmly welcoming him back and reaffirmed the Combined Authority's commitment to Vision Zero. The Committee Services Officer then confirmed that apologies for absence had been received from Councillors Carole Pattison (Kirklees Council) and Sue Holdsworth (Calderdale Council) with Councillors Moses Crook and Stewart Golton attending as their substitutes respectively.

## 3. **Declarations of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests**

There were no declarations of interests given at the meeting.

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

The Chair advised members that **Agenda Item 15 – Bus Franchising Update** (Appendix 1) (referred to as Agenda Item 17 in the minutes) 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 15 – Bus Franchising Update (Appendix 1) 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 19 June 2025**

**Resolved:** That the minutes of the meeting of the Combined Authority held on 19 June 2025 were approved as a correct record.

## **6. Mayor's Update**

The Chair reported on several developments since the last meeting, including the publication of the Government's Industrial Strategy, which had been informed by the Combined Authority's Local Growth Plan. The Strategy aligned closely with local sector priorities and introduced new funding streams such as a £600 million Strategic Sites Accelerator, a £500 million Local Innovations Partnerships Fund (with £30 million allocated to the region), and a £500 million Mayoral Recyclable Growth Fund.

The Chair had joined the Chancellor in Leeds for the launch of the 'Leeds Reforms', which aimed to boost the Financial Services Sector nationally and reinforced the region's status as the 'Northern Square Mile'. She also accompanied the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport to Production Park in Wakefield for the launch of the Creative Industries Sector Plan, highlighting the role of the One Creative North collaboration.

Further engagements included a visit to Bradford with the Minister for Energy Consumers to showcase retrofit work, and roundtables with the Secretary of State for Education, the Chief Secretary to the Treasury, and the Industrial Strategy Minister to discuss post-16 education, infrastructure, and the Industrial Strategy, respectively. The Chair also spoke with the Minister for Devolution and Local Government regarding the English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill, which would be discussed later on the agenda.

## **7. Travelling to School Consultation & Policy Update**

The Chair introduced the item outlining proposed changes to home-to-school transport provision. Members welcomed the scale of the consultation and noted the aim to create a more consistent level of service across West Yorkshire, with no changes proposed before September 2026.

Some members raised concerns about the principle of the policy and whether the Combined Authority had met its public sector equality duties and adhered to the Gunning Principles (which require that consultations are conducted at a formative stage, provide sufficient information, allow adequate time for responses, and that responses are properly considered). Officers confirmed that Recommendation 2.2 was not a final decision but would enable further engagement with Schools and service users, and any future decisions would return to the Board.

Questions were raised about how equity was being defined and applied between districts, and about the potential impact on faith-based education. Officers explained the policy sought to address longstanding inconsistencies and committed to further engagement with affected communities and schools. The Chair emphasised the need for a clear framework ahead of bus franchising.

**Resolved: That the Combined Authority:**

(i) Approved the changes to the School Transport Policy as set out in the report.

(ii) Members endorsed the need to engage with affected schools to plan for proposed changes to services in September 2026.

(iii) Members noted the implications of the policy over time and supported how changes to services would be managed to minimise the impact on pupils and parents, and how this aligned with franchised bus service implementation plans.

The resolutions on School Transport Policy changes, stakeholder engagement, and implementation planning were agreed.

**8. West Yorkshire Infrastructure Strategy & Spatial Development Strategy (Preparatory Phase)**

The Chair introduced the report, highlighting its importance in advancing regional infrastructure and spatial planning. Members welcomed the proposal to begin preparatory work on both the West Yorkshire Infrastructure Strategy and Spatial Development Strategy, recognising their strategic value and statutory basis.

Officers confirmed that the aim was to produce a draft Infrastructure Strategy within 12 months and that preparatory work would be aligned with existing local plans and Government timeframes. Members raised concerns around planning capacity, public consultation, and the need for adequate resourcing, particularly for constituent authorities. Officers noted initial Government funding had been provided and further support would be sought.

**Resolved:** The Combined Authority approved the commencement of work on developing a West Yorkshire Infrastructure Strategy and Spatial Development Strategy while the Planning and Infrastructure Bill progressed through Parliament, utilising additional one-off government revenue funding provided in 2025/26 for this purpose.

**9. Region of Learning & Creativity**

The Chair introduced the item and invited the Chief Executive to propose an amendment to the recommendations regarding the Connect to Work scheme. It was explained that to allow the newly formed Healthy Working

Lives Board to fully consider the proposals before formal approval, the following amendments to the original recommendations were proposed and agreed:

- Delegation of decision-making on whether the Connect to Work scheme proceeds through decision points 2-4 (business justification case) and commences delivery (activity 5) to the Combined Authority's Chief Executive, in consultation with the Mayor and Chair of the Economy Committee (amending recommendation 2.2(i)).
- Delegation of all future approvals relating to the Connect to Work scheme to the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Mayor and Chair of the Economy Committee (amending recommendation 2.2(v)).

The Chair moved the amended motion, seconded by Councillor Lewis, and it was agreed.

Members welcomed the Connect to Work scheme's role in tackling economic inactivity and supporting both individuals and employers. One member asked for clearer presentation of risks and mitigations to aid decision-making, which was acknowledged by the Chair and officers, who committed to improving future reporting. Another member stressed the importance of robust evaluation and KPIs to demonstrate local impact despite limited government flexibility.

Members praised progress in areas like Bradford and highlighted the need for clear targets to support jobseekers and employers alike. The discussion noted the challenge of balancing these priorities, with a member reminding others of broader cost pressures on businesses that must be considered alongside employment efforts.

**Resolved:** That the Combined Authority commented on the priorities for strategic areas of work within Employment and Skills and approved the following schemes: Connect to Work.

Subject to government approval of funding, the Combined Authority further resolved that:

(i) Agreed that a decision on whether the Connect to Work Scheme proceeded through decision point 2-4 (business justification case) and commenced activity 5 (delivery) was delegated to the Combined Authority's Chief Executive, in consultation with the Mayor and the Chair of the Economy Board, to enable the Healthy Working Lives Board to consider the proposals.

(ii) Approved the Combined Authority's contribution of up to £50,340,000 and delegated authority to the Combined Authority's Chief Executive to accept and spend any amendments to the funding. The total scheme value was £50,440,000.

(iii) Approved that the Combined Authority entered into funding agreements

with partner councils for expenditure of the Connect to Work funding, with allocations still to be determined.

(iv) Approved delegation to the Combined Authority's Chief Executive to enter into funding agreements with partner councils for expenditure of the Connect to Work funding and to amend allocations, where appropriate.

(v) Agreed that future approvals were delegated to the Combined Authority's Chief Executive, in consultation with the Mayor and the Chair of the Economy Board, in accordance with the assurance pathway and approval route set out in the report. This was subject to the scheme remaining within the tolerances outlined in the report.

Regarding Skills Connect, subject to conditions, the Combined Authority further resolved that:

(ii) Approved the increase in the scheme's scope as detailed in the report.

(iii) Approved the extension to delivery timeframes by 12 months from 31 March 2026 to 31 March 2027.

(v) Agreed that future approvals were made in accordance with the assurance pathway and approval route outlined in the report. This was subject to the scheme remaining within the tolerances outlined in the report.

## **10. Business Growth**

The Combined Authority discussed progress on the Local Growth Plan's business growth ambitions, focusing on key initiatives such as the Early-Stage Investment Fund and the Research Courses with Industry scheme.

Members highlighted the progress on business growth initiatives, noting the importance of partnership working and cluster development to support local businesses. Concerns were raised about the decline in start-ups and the impact of national issues like recent tax changes, with calls for government action to address these challenges.

The discussion also focused on retaining businesses and talent within the region, recognising the mobility of companies and the role of universities in developing skills. Members acknowledged the need to balance economic growth with infrastructure and public service demands while promoting the region to attract investment and support a healthy workforce.

**Resolved:** That the Combined Authority:

(i) The Combined Authority considered the progress being made to deliver the business growth ambitions set out in the Local Growth Plan and provided any steer it deemed necessary.

### **Investment Zone Revenue – Early-Stage Fund**

The Combined Authority, subject to conditions:

(ii) Approved that the Early-Stage Investment Fund proceed through decision points 2–4 (business justification case) and that work commence on activity 5 (delivery).

(iii) Approved Combined Authority funding of up to £5,000,000, noting that the total scheme cost was £15,000,000.

(iv) Approved that the Combined Authority enter into a Funding Agreement with an institutional investor for funding of up to £5,000,000.

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

### **Investment Zone Revenue – Research Related Courses with Industry**

The Combined Authority, subject to conditions:

(vi) Approved that the Investment Zone Revenue – Research Courses with Industry scheme proceed through decision point 4 (full business case) and that work commence on activity 5 (delivery).

(vii) Approved Combined Authority funding of up to £2,200,000, noting that the total scheme cost was £3,900,000.

(viii) Approved that the Combined Authority enter into a Funding Agreement with the University of Huddersfield for funding of up to £2,200,000.

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

(x) Noted that £117,000 of the total scheme cost was allocated for risk and contingency allowances.

## **11. English Devolution & Community Empowerment Bill & Integrated Settlement**

The Chair introduced the item and thanked officers for their persistent efforts in working with government to progress the proposals.

A member sought clarification on the provision for Mayors to appoint up to seven commissioners and whether this would be in addition to the existing directorate. In response, officers confirmed this was the case, noting that further guidance was expected and that commissioners would not have decision-making powers over areas such as the Local Growth Plan. The Chair clarified that these appointments were not mandatory and reiterated thanks to officers for their work.

**Resolved:** That the Combined Authority:

(i) Noted the content of the report and planned work, including the timeline.

(ii) Provided a mandate for further work on Devolution and Integrated Settlement to progress as a new policy and programme area for the organisation, as outlined in the report.

## 12. Annual Governance Statement

The Chair introduced the item, highlighting that the Annual Governance Statement provided an opportunity to reflect on governance over the past year and to consider future challenges and opportunities. The Chair acknowledged the Internal Audit Opinion, noting disappointment with the outcome but expressed confidence that recent improvements — including enhanced decision-making frameworks, stronger internal controls, and a revised compliance dashboard — would support better outcomes in future. Thanks were extended to the Governance and Audit Committee for their continued support.

The Interim Assistant Director, Legal, Governance and Compliance presented the report, drawing members' attention to the revised statement and outlining the key changes, including those set out in paragraph 3.

**Resolved:** The Combined Authority considered and approved the revised Annual Governance Statement (AGS), which was included at Appendix 1 to the report. The AGS had been revised since the draft presented at the Combined Authority meeting held on 19 June 2025. The updated AGS incorporated the Annual Internal Audit Opinion, and the wording in Section 8: Conclusion, was amended to reflect that Opinion.

## 13. Governance Arrangements

The Chair introduced the item and invited a verbal update from the Interim Assistant Director, Legal, Governance and Compliance, who presented the report. A correction was noted to Appendix 1, clarifying that Emma Stakes' business organisation should be listed as Production Park rather than Tileyard North under appointments to the Culture Committee.

Members were informed of several appointments made under delegated powers by the Director: Hannah Bithell was nominated to fill the Leeds Labour vacancy on the Scrutiny Committee; Jason Rose was nominated to replace Cllr Conrad Whitcroft as York's substitute on the Scrutiny Committee; and Alun Griffiths was nominated to fill the Liberal Democrat substitute vacancy on the Governance and Audit Committee.

The Chair thanked all members who had stepped up to serve on the committees.

**Resolved:** That the Combined Authority:

(i) Appointed the private sector members to committees as set out in Appendix 1.

(ii) Appoints Councillor John Lawson as the Liberal Democrat Member from Kirklees on the Scrutiny Committee in place of Councillor Andrew Marchington.

(iii) Appoints Councillor Andrew Marchington as a Liberal Democrat Deputy Member from Kirklees on the Scrutiny Committee in place of Councillor John Lawson.

(iv) Noted the correction to Emma Stake's business organisation, which was amended from Tileyard North to Production Park.

The Combined Authority noted the following appointments made by the Interim Assistant Director, Legal, Governance and Compliance, under delegated powers:

(v) Councillor Hannah Bithell to fill the Leeds Labour vacancy on the Scrutiny Committee.

(vi) Councillor Jason Rose to replace Councillor Conrad Whitcroft as York's substitute on the Scrutiny Committee.

(vii) Councillor Alun Griffiths to fill the Liberal Democrat substitute vacancy on the Governance and Audit Committee.

#### **14. Scrutiny Recommendations**

The Chair introduced the item. The Chair of the Scrutiny Committee, Councillor Barry Anderson, recommended the Scrutiny Committee's recent recommendations to the Combined Authority. The Combined Authority noted the report and the expectation that a response would be provided within two months.

**Resolved:** The Mayor and Combined Authority noted the recommendations from the Scrutiny Committee circulated to members and presented by the Chair and agreed to respond in writing within two months.

#### **15. Project Approvals**

##### **Investment Priority 4 – Tackling the Climate Emergency**

##### **Farnley Wood Beck Natural Flood Management Scheme**

**Resolved:** The Combined Authority, subject to conditions:

(i) Approved that the Farnley Wood Beck Natural Flood Management 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 up to £816,917. The total scheme value was £936,217.

(iii) Approved that the Combined Authority enter into a funding agreement with Leeds City Council for expenditure of up to £816,917.

(iv) Delegated to the Combined Authority's Chief Executive the approval of annual delivery plans confirming outputs for years two and three of the scheme and associated funding allocations to deliver each year's outputs.

(v) Approved that future approvals be made in accordance with the assurance pathway set out in this report, subject to the scheme remaining within the tolerances outlined.

(vi) Noted that £71,537 was allocated for risk and contingency.

### **Delegated Decisions – Chellow Dene Urban Wetland, Bradford**

**Resolved:** Since the Combined Authority meeting on 19 June 2025, the following delegated decision was approved by the Director of Policing, Environment and Place:

(i) Approved the project closure report for the Chellow Dene Urban Wetland project, allowing the scheme to proceed through Decision Points 5 and 6 (Delivery and Financial Closure) and work to continue on Monitoring and Evaluation.

(ii) Noted that no additional funding was approved.

(iii) Noted that the estimated total scheme cost was £77,561.

(iv) Noted that total Combined Authority funding approved was £40,981, with an underspend of £854.24 returned to the Combined Authority.

### **Investment Priority 5 – Sustainable, Integrated Transport**

#### **Consolidated Active Travel Fund (CATF) Programme – Funding Increase and Scheme Progression**

**Resolved:** The Combined Authority, subject to conditions:

(i) Approved the change request to increase funding by £12,858,634, raising the total Active Travel Programme cost from £57,578,653 to £70,437,287, and, subject to confirmation by ATE:

- Approved that the schemes proceed as stated in Table 1, column G, of the business case summary.
- Approved the CATF funding allocations as set out in Table 1, column C, of the business case summary.
- Approved the release of CATF development or delivery costs as detailed in Table 1, column E, of the business case summary.

- Approved the release of CATF development or delivery costs as detailed in Table 1, column F, of the business case summary, subject to conditions.

(ii) Approved that the Combined Authority enter into funding agreements with the West Yorkshire partner councils as set out in Table 1 of the business case summary.

(iii) Approved the revised completion dates for existing ATF schemes as detailed in Table 2 of the business case summary.

(iv) Approved delegation to the Chief Executive to amend allocated CATF funding amounts and to enter into or amend grant funding agreements or addendums accordingly.

(v) Noted that future approvals will be made in accordance with the assurance pathway and approval route outlined in this report, subject to remaining within tolerances.

### **Pellon Route to Schools**

**Resolved:** The Combined Authority, subject to conditions and subject to approval of the Consolidated Active Travel Fund via the Active Travel Programme Change Request:

(i) Approved that the ATF4E Pellon Routes to Schools scheme proceed through decision points 2 to 4 (business justification case) and work commence on activity 5 (delivery).

(ii) Approved the Combined Authority's contribution of £906,470. The total scheme cost was £906,470.

(iii) Approved that the Combined Authority enter into an addendum to the existing funding agreement with Calderdale Council for funding of up to £906,470.

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

(v) Noted that £138,007 of the total scheme cost was for risk and contingency allowances.

### **Huddersfield Rail Station Connections – Delegated Decision**

**Resolved:** Under delegated authority, the Chief Executive or Transport Capital Programme Director approved, subject to conditions:

(i) That the Huddersfield Rail Station Connections scheme proceed through full business case and work commence on delivery.

(ii) The Combined Authority's funding of £9,280,406. The estimated total scheme cost was £11,280,406.

(iii) That the total Combined Authority funding approved was £9,280,406.

## 16. Portfolio Summary

The Combined Authority considered a report on the impact of recent project approvals and delegated decisions on available funding across capital programmes.

Officers introduced the report, outlining the current funding positions, overprogramming, spend rates, and risks within transport, active travel, gainshare, investment zones, and other capital funds. The Chief Executive noted that the report was for information only and confirmed that no issues had emerged.

**Resolved:** That the Combined Authority noted the portfolio summary information outlined in the report.

## 17. Bus Franchising Update

The Combined Authority received an update on the bus franchising transition programme. The Director of Bus Franchising introduced the report.

Before discussing Appendix 1 to Agenda Item 15 (referred to in the minutes as Agenda Item 17), the Chair, in accordance with the resolution at Agenda Item 3 (referencing paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972), requested that the public leave the room and the livestream be suspended. The meeting then continued in private session. Following this, the Combined Authority returned to public session to consider the report resolutions.

The Chair thanked officers for their work on the programme and emphasised the valuable learning gained from visits to depots where franchising is underway. The Chair also noted that new branding for the West Yorkshire transport network, named the Weaver Network, would be introduced shortly.

**Resolved:** That in relation to Bus Franchising contract procurement, the Combined Authority:

(i) Approved the content of the Appendix.

(ii) Delegated to the Chief Executive Officer, in consultation with the Mayor, the authority to approve amendments to the Appendix, provided that such amendments did not materially alter the overall approach set out in the Procurement Strategy or its impact on the Combined Authority.

(iii) Delegated authority to the Chief Executive Officer, in consultation with the Mayor, to approve the Procurement Strategy (which included the Statement of Requirements) for franchising.

(iv) Delegated to the Chief Executive Officer, in consultation with the Mayor, the authority to commence and undertake the procurement process (up to the conclusion of the Evaluation stage) for Round One, subject to final sign-off of the Procurement Strategy, substantially in accordance with the proposed timeline as set out within the Appendix.

That in relation to depots required for Bus Franchising, the Combined Authority:

(i) Approved a dual approach to the acquisition of the depots detailed within the Depot Strategy, allowing negotiation by private treaty/agreement and the making of a Compulsory Purchase Order pursuant to section 10 of the Transport Act 1968 to secure necessary interests and/or assets.

(ii) Delegated authority to the Chief Executive Officer, in consultation with the Mayor, to:

(a) Approve a final Statement of Reasons, Compulsory Purchase Order and Map for submission to the Secretary of State for Transport.

(b) Take all necessary and relevant steps to secure the making, confirmation and implementation of the Compulsory Purchase Order(s), including the preparation for and conduct of a Public Inquiry (if required).

(c) Take all necessary steps to agree the quantum of and settle compensation in accordance with relevant legislation and the compensation code applicable to Compulsory Purchase Orders.

## **18. Minutes for Information**

**Resolved:** That the Combined Authority noted the minutes, notes and agendas of the committee meetings published on its website, along with the matters deliberated within the committees, as summarised in the report since the last Combined Authority meeting.

## **19. Date of the Next Meeting**

The next meeting of the Combined Authority was scheduled to take place on Thursday 18 September 2025.