

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE
WEST YORKSHIRE COMBINED AUTHORITY
HELD ON THURSDAY 4 DECEMBER 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 Jane Scullion	Calderdale Council
Councillor Carole Pattison	Kirklees Council
Councillor James Lewis	Leeds City Council
Councillor Matthew Morley (Substitute)	Wakefield Council
Councillor Peter Kilbane (Substitute)	City of York Council
Mandy Ridyard	West Yorkshire Business Board
Councillor Sue Holdsworth	Calderdale Council
Councillor Alan Lamb	Leeds City Council

In attendance:

Councillor Barry Anderson	Leeds City Council
Ben Still	West Yorkshire Combined Authority
Sarah Eaton	West Yorkshire Combined Authority
Simon Pope	West Yorkshire Combined Authority
Kate Taylor	West Yorkshire Combined Authority
Nikki Deol	West Yorkshire Combined Authority
Helen Ellerton	West Yorkshire Combined Authority
Rachel Jones	West Yorkshire Combined Authority
Melissa Liburd	West Yorkshire Combined Authority
Myles Larrington	West Yorkshire Combined Authority

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Denise Jeffrey (Wakefield Council), Councillor Claire Douglas (York Council), and Councillor Martin Love (Bradford Council).

Councillor Matthew Morley (Wakefield Council) and Councillor Peter Kilbane (York Council) attended as their respective substitutes.

2. Declarations of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests

There were no declarations of interests given at the meeting.

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

There were no agenda items that required the exclusion of either the public or the press.

4. Minutes of the Meeting of the Combined Authority held on 16 October 2025

A member asked for an update on the White Rose Rail scheme, as it had been indicated at the previous meeting that one would be provided. The Chair explained that progress was delayed due to complex agreements between the relevant parties, noted this was not the usual approach, and confirmed efforts were ongoing to reach a conclusion. The Chair hoped for site activity in the new year and acknowledged frustrations. A private briefing to members was offered, and a report would be brought to the next meeting in January.

RESOLVED: – That the minutes of the meeting of the Combined Authority held on 16 October 2025 were approved as a correct record.

5. Mayor's Update

The Chair reported attending the Global Mayors Summit at COP30 and the Regional Investment Summit in Birmingham, alongside ministerial engagements to advocate for the region ahead of the Autumn Budget. The Chair highlighted significant budget announcements for West Yorkshire, including new devolution measures and funding opportunities. A paper on the budget impact would be considered later in the meeting, with the budget to be set at the next meeting in January.

6. Weaver Network - Fares, Ticketing and Retail Strategy

The Combined Authority considered a report on the draft Weaver Network Fares, Ticketing and Retail Strategy.

Members discussed the draft bus strategy, raising concerns about risks, financial constraints, and accessibility for disabled people. Officers explained the strategy set overall ambitions, with detailed risks and funding to follow. Members also queried how adjustments to service usage relate to pricing and reliability; officers confirmed these factors, along with equity and accessibility, would all inform future planning.

RESOLVED: - That the Combined Authority:

1. Endorsed the initial draft Weaver Network Fares, Ticketing and Retail Strategy as the basis for further development of the strategy and delivery plan through 2026.

7. Mayor's Fares Update

The Combined Authority considered a report on the Mayor's Fares Scheme seeking approval for its extension and related funding changes.

Members queried patronage targets for this year, fare elasticity, and use of Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) funding. Officers confirmed modelling work for the current year was ongoing and noted outcomes depend on fares, reliability, and network capacity. Members also raised risks of potential service changes by operators; officers acknowledged these and confirmed further detail would follow.

RESOLVED: - That the Combined Authority:

1. Approved the Mayor's Fares Scheme extension until 31 March 2026, with agreement for a further extension until 31 March 2027 following confirmation of Department for Transport funding settlement for 2026/27.
2. Approved the reallocation of Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) funding of £4m from Network Enhancements to Mayor's Fares to cover the cost of extension to 31 March 2026.
3. Delegated the final decision on changes to pricing and the extension to 31 March 2027 of the Mayor's Fares Scheme to the Chief Executive in consultation with the Mayor and Chair of Transport Committee following confirmation of Department for Transport funding settlement for 2026/27.

8. Consultation on Proposed Withdrawal of Six School Bus Services

The Combined Authority considered a report on the consultation outcome regarding six school bus services and proposed changes from September 2026.

Members raised concerns about accessibility, affordability, and environmental impacts of proposed school bus service changes, particularly in rural areas. They stressed the importance of consultation and scrutiny in shaping decisions and asked what lessons had been learned. Officers noted that scrutiny had contributed to clarifying policies and confirmed commercial alternatives had been provided for withdrawn services.

RESOLVED: - That the Combined Authority:

1. Approved, effective from 1 September 2026, the retention of Service S62 (Cockburn School and Laurence Calvert Academy, Leeds) based on there being no suitable active travel or public transport alternatives for students.
2. Approved the withdrawal of Service B99 (Appleton Academy, Bradford) based on there being a suitable public transport alternative already available to students.
3. Approved the withdrawal of Service B50 (Beckfoot School, Bradford) based on it not meeting the Combined Authority's value for money criteria and that it introduces a revised timetable for Service 615 that will meet the needs of students.

4. Approved the withdrawal of Service C6 (Crossley Heath Grammar School, Halifax) on the basis of it falling outside of the scope of the Combined Authority's Travel to School Policy, it not meeting the Combined Authority's value for money criteria and there will be an alternative commercial school bus service provided by Coach Travel Services.
5. Approved the withdrawal of Service SM25 (St. Mary's Menston Catholic Voluntary Academy, Leeds) based on it not meeting the Combined Authority's value for money criteria and there being suitable public transport alternatives for students.
6. Approved the withdrawal of Services S64 and S66 (Titus Salt School, Bradford) and their replacement with one service (S69) based on S64 not meeting the Combined Authority's value for money criteria and there already being suitable public transport alternatives for most students who use Service S64 and sufficient capacity on Service S69 for the remainder of students.
7. Noted that the Combined Authority Education Transport team work with local councils, schools, internal partners, and parents/carers to ensure that the proposed changes meet the needs of students with Special Educational Needs or Disabilities (SEND) who have Education, Health, and Care Plans (EHCP) or EHCP's pending.
8. Noted that the Combined Authority will work with district partners to ensure that where active travel is expected to form part of journeys undertaken for those schools where services are removed, that appropriate active travel training is made available in advance of 1 September 2026.

9. Healthy Working Life Plan

The Combined Authority considered a report on the final draft of the Healthy Working Life Plan.

The Committee emphasised the need to make support more accessible and relevant for small businesses, improve awareness of available programmes, and strengthen collaboration with local partners. Members highlighted the importance of practical, tailored initiatives that address health and employment challenges and the need to scale up successful approaches.

RESOLVED: - That the Combined Authority:

1. Approved the Healthy Working Life Plan.

10. Region of Learning and Creativity Strategy and Adult Skills Plan

The Combined Authority considered a report on the Region of Learning and Creativity Strategy, focusing on the Adult Skills Plan.

The Committee discussed the importance of embedding lifelong learning in the strategy to help people adapt to rapid technological change and economic shifts. Members stressed creating a culture where continuous learning is seen as positive, with investment in both entry-level and higher-level skills to support progression and resilience in the labour market. The region's leadership in innovative learning initiatives was noted.

RESOLVED: - That the Combined Authority:

1. Approved the Adult Skills Plan.

11. Business Planning & Budgets

The Combined Authority considered a report on the integrated business and budget planning process for 2026/27 and the proposed Mayoral budget.

RESOLVED: - That the Combined Authority:

1. Noted the approach and work to date on the 2026/27 budget which consolidated agreed key priority activity, current information about funding from April 2026, updated assumptions and emerging risks and opportunities.
2. Approved for consultation and scrutiny the proposed draft Mayoral budget for 2026/27 prior to approval in January 2026.
3. Noted that the 2026/27 budget would incorporate a 2% increase on the transport levy to support bus franchising as previously set out in the 2025/26 budget paper and the franchising business case.
4. Noted the work that would continue over December to develop the 2026/27 balanced budget for approval in January 2026.

12. Governance Arrangements

The Combined Authority considered a report on changes to Leeds City Council nominations for Combined Authority committees.

RESOLVED: - That the Combined Authority:

1. Appointed Councillor Pauleen Grahame of Leeds City Council to the Scrutiny Committee as Deputy Member to Councillor Kate Haigh.
2. Appointed Councillor Mary Harland of Leeds City Council to the Place, Regeneration & Housing Committee replacing the current member, Councillor Jessica Lennox.

13. Devolution

The Combined Authority considered a report on preparations for implementing the English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill and the Integrated Settlement.

RESOLVED: - That the Combined Authority:

1. Noted the progress made to prepare for the implementation of the English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill and the updated Programme Plan attached at Appendix 1.
2. Noted the submissions made to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government for further devolution under the Right to Request process.
3. Noted the work underway to prepare for the receipt and delivery of the Integrated Settlement from April 2026.
4. Noted the work underway to develop an Integrated Settlement Outcomes Framework and broader Outcomes Framework for the Combined Authority.

14. Project Approvals

(a) Project Approvals – Investment Priority 5 – Delivering Sustainable, Integrated, Inclusive and Affordable Transport

The Combined Authority considered a report relating to a change request for the Harrogate Railway Station Gateway scheme to extend delivery timescales to 30 August 2027, with future approvals subject to assurance pathway tolerances.

Officers reported a legal challenge against North Yorkshire Council regarding traffic enforcement orders. Members noted that the Combined Authority's funding approval was historical and that the Board was asked only to agree a limited extension of timescales for the promoter to discharge conditions. Officers confirmed that all liabilities and risks rest with North Yorkshire Council and assured members that any funding would only be released after full due diligence checks to ensure a robust case, notwithstanding the ongoing legal issues.

RESOLVED: – That the Combined Authority, subject to conditions:

1. **Approved** the change request for the Harrogate Railway Station Gateway – Active Travel Improvement scheme to extend the timescale for delivery to 30 August 2027 to enable completion of activity 5 (delivery).
2. **Approved** that future approvals be made in accordance with the assurance pathway and approval route outlined in this report, subject to the scheme remaining within the tolerances outlined.

15. Minutes for Information and Summaries of Committee Meetings

RESOLVED: – That the Combined Authority:

1. Noted the minutes, notes, and agendas of committee meetings published on its website, along with the matters deliberated within the committees, as summarised in the submitted report since the previous Combined Authority meeting.

16. Date of the Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Combined Authority was scheduled to take place on Thursday 22 January 2026.