

LIVERPOOL CITY REGION COMBINED AUTHORITY

PUBLICATION: 23 FEBRUARY 2023

DEADLINE FOR CALL-IN: 27 JANUARY 2023

FOLLOWING THE CALL-IN PERIOD, DECISIONS INCLUDED IN THESE MINUTES MAY THEN BE IMPLEMENTED WHERE THEY HAVE NOT BEEN SUBJECT TO A CALL-IN.

**** DENOTES KEY DECISION***

At a meeting of the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority held in the Authority Chamber - No.1 Mann Island, Liverpool, L3 1BP on Friday, 20th January, 2023 the following Members were

P r e s e n t:

Metro Mayor Steve Rotheram
Chairperson of the Combined Authority
(in the Chair)

Councillor Janette Williamson, Wirral Council
Councillor David Baines, St Helens Council
Councillor Ian Maher, Sefton Council
Councillor Graham Morgan, Knowsley Council
Councillor Mike Wharton, Halton Council
Councillor Fraser Lake, Liverpool City Council

Emily Spurrell, Merseyside Police and Crime Commissioner and Portfolio Holder: Criminal Justice (Non-Voting Member)

Councillor Angela Ball, Deputy Portfolio Holder: Education, Skills and Equality and Inclusion
Councillor Steve Foulkes, Deputy Portfolio Holder: Transport & Air Quality
Councillor Shelley Powell, Deputy Portfolio Holder: Culture, Tourism and the Visitor Economy
Councillor Carla Thomas, Deputy Portfolio Holder: Policy, Reform and Resources

95 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of:

LCR Combined Authority

Mayor Joanne Anderson, Mayor of Liverpool City Council

Co-opted Members

Asif Hamid MBE, Chair of the Local Enterprise Partnership

Associate Member

Councillor Russ Bowden, Leader of Warrington Council
Councillor Yvonne Gagen, Leader of West Lancashire Council

Deputy Portfolio Holders

Councillor Marion Atkinson

Councillor Kate Groucutt

Councillor Trish Hardy

Councillor Laura Robertson-Collins

96 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

97 MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE LCR COMBINED AUTHORITY HELD ON 16 DECEMBER 2022

RESOLVED – That the Minutes of the meeting of the LCR Combined Authority held on 16 December 2022 were agreed as a correct record.

98 LIVERPOOL CITY REGION METRO MAYOR ANNOUNCEMENTS AND UPDATES

Metro Mayor Steve Rotheram provided Members with an update on his recent activities and key developments since the last meeting of the LCR Combined Authority.

The Metro Mayor highlighted the budget proposals that would be considered later in the meeting, and their significance for the organisation moving into the next financial year. The Metro Mayor stated that despite the significant global and national factors that had made budget-setting uniquely challenging, the Combined Authority remained resolute in the desire to protect local people from the challenges of the cost-of-living crisis and to deliver on the commitment to deliver a London-style integrated transport system, to grow the local economy and to improve the lives of the 1.6m residents of the City Region.

The Metro Mayor referred to the recent announcement of the second round of allocations of the Government's Levelling Up fund and the disappointing outcomes for the Liverpool City Region, particularly in relation to bids for schemes in Bootle, Liscard, West Everton and Huyton, while welcoming funding for Earlestown and Halewood. The Metro Mayor expressed frustrations with the Government's competitive approach, particularly in the context of deep cuts to public spending and the lack of support for areas of significant inequalities, and called on the Government to abandon it in favour of long term sustainable funding to local authorities and regions.

Cllrs Williamson, Morgan and Lake referred to schemes in their own areas that had not been successful, echoing the frustration of the Metro Mayor in relation to the process for bidding for funding and unfairness of the allocations to areas of the country in less need of investment. They also expressed their disappointment and frustration at the lack of courtesy from the Government in releasing information about the allocations to the press, albeit under embargo, before having notified the councils involved.

The Metro Mayor welcomed the agreement reached between Merseyrail and ASLEF (the train drivers union) that would finally see the region's brand-new trains coming into service as soon as the following week, after delays caused by a range of range of factors, some of which were outside of the control of the Combined Authority. It was hoped that the £0.5 billion publicly-owned fleet would serve as an exemplar to Government and others because

- the new rolling stock was amongst the most sophisticated and accessible trains in the UK, with revolutionary battery technology;

- City Region had chosen to buy and retain ownership of its own trains rather than lease them from private operators;
- the Combined Authority had worked with trade unions and train operator to conduct meaningful negotiations, meaning there had not been a single day of strike action on the Merseyrail network during the past five years.

The Metro Mayor emphasised that the new trains as part of a broader agenda to improve transport and connectivity that included taking back control of the bus network, investing in active travel and simplifying and integrate ticketing that would build a transport network that was cheaper, faster, cleaner and more reliable.

The Metro Mayor confirmed that the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities had accepted the full business case for the Liverpool City Region Freeport and which was now operational. The Metro Mayor stressed that he and all members of the Combined Authority were committed to the use of the Freeport to help build a more inclusive economy that attracted Foreign Direct Investment but which protected workers' rights, uphold standards, and supported regeneration and built on the existing strengths of the City Region. It was estimated that the Freeport would add £850m to the local economy, would boost research and development by targeting green technologies, and assist with the target of net zero by 2040.

The Metro Mayor also stressed that contrary to suggestions otherwise, there was no connection of the Freeport to 'Charter Cities' and that that the commitment was for the Freeport to support greater social mobility, inclusion and innovation and support the adoption of the Liverpool City Region Fair Employment Charter.

The Metro Mayor referred to the ongoing pressures being faced by the NHS and the distressing scenes in A&E Departments, caused not by industrial action but which were a regular occurrence for staff in the NHS. The Metro Mayor reported that he had joined hundreds of workers at his local hospital on picket lines including the General Secretary of the Royal College of Nursing, Pat Cullen, and would continue to all NHS workers in their efforts for better terms and conditions but to support and protect the National Health Service.

The Metro Mayor provided an update on a number of significant local initiatives and reported on visits he had undertaken within the City Region, including:-

- a visit with Cllr Baines to SSO international in Haydock, the first Customs Site of the new Freeport;
- a visit to Sandon Global in Halton to see how the £1.7m loaned by the Combined Authority was supporting the expansion of the site and operations;
- a visit to a Brownfield Land Fund redevelopment project at Denford Road that had been derelict since 2004 but was being brought back into use with 105 affordable homes;
- the opening of Enterprise Credit Union in Huyton with Cllr Morgan, reflecting the value of Credit Unions as an important community institution and providing access to financial support that reduced the need for unsustainable financial products and illegal money lenders;
- a visit to the Whitby, Hydrogen Village at Ellesmere Port with one of the partners to the Project, Cadent, to see an important element in the path to net zero;
- a planned visit to Sean's Place in Bootle to witness vital work to support men's mental health.

Finally, the Metro Mayor expressed the gratitude of the Combined Authority to Raph Miller, the Assistant Director for Investment, who had left the organisation the previous week. The

Metro Mayor thanked Mr Miller for his contribution to various significant projects that had secured jobs and growth for the Liverpool City Region and a return on investment for the Combined Authority, and wished him success in his future role.

99 COMBINED AUTHORITY BUDGET 2023/24*

The Metro Mayor presented his 2023/24 budget proposals to the LCR Combined Authority and provided a summary of the key elements contained in the report.

The Metro Mayor highlighted the challenging prevailing conditions in which the budget had been prepared, including high inflation, rising energy and wage costs and supply chain pressures, as well as rising interest rates impact on the delivery of the buses, trains and other infrastructure projects. There were increased costs to reduce the environmental impact of Combined Authority operations, but that there would be no retreating from the commitments to Net Zero, tackling the climate emergency and efforts to improve air quality. Despite these challenges, the proposals for 2023/24 would ensure a balanced budget was set, and contribute to the sustainability of the Combined Authority's finances for future years.

The Metro Mayor confirmed that the proposal was to again freeze the Mayoral Precept at the same level as when it was first introduced, which for most households was between £12 and £14 per year. He highlighted that he would submit proposals in future years on how to use the precept to support plans for bus reform.

It was also confirmed that increases to the Transport Levy, paid by each of the constituent authorities, would be capped at 2.95% – despite inflation being over 10% - in recognition of the ongoing challenge for councils that had been amongst the most impacted after 13 years of austerity.

The Combined Authority had already agreed to increase revenues from the Mersey Tunnels through targeted changes, with charges remaining below the Authorised Rate (of £2.50) for Class one vehicles and discounted for all other classes.

Merseyrail and use of the network had recovered strongly from the pandemic but there were nevertheless operational pressures that the budget would seek to address.

Specifically in relation to buses, the Metro Mayor reported that further decisions on the reform of the bus network would be needed in the future if a London-style public transport system were to be realised through re-regulation, but this budget proposal would support that aspiration. Bus patronage had not yet returned to pre-pandemic levels so the network required subsidies, without which services would be severely impacted. By attracting more paying passengers, the total available to support the network would increase. The decision last year to introduce a cap on adult fares of £2 – (£1 for young people) was proposed to continue through the allocation of a further £46m to support one of the most generous concessionary travel scheme in the country.

The Metro Mayor confirmed that in relation to Halton, which was not part of the 'Merseytravel' footprint on joining the Combined Authority, the previous arrangements for financing of transport functions would continue. He also referred to the ongoing and positive discussions with Halton Council, led by Cllr Wharton, on the integration of transport services and infrastructure.

The Metro Mayor stated that 2023/24 had been designated as the year of delivery to reflect the significant activity planned, that included:

- new trains would soon be in service;
- opening of another new station at Headbolt Lane in Kirkby in the Spring, the second in 5 years;
- work continuing on a new Liverpool Baltic Station; and development of schemes for Car Mill in St Helens and Woodchurch on the Wirral;
- significant improvement of facilities at Lea Green in St Helens and eight further stations would become fully accessible when new lift installations;
- construction to start on a new Mersey Ferry with Cammell Laird, to complement the new Eureka facility at the renovated Wallasey Ferry Terminal;
- investment £50m in new cycling and walking infrastructure, including links between Runcorn Station Quarter and Daresbury Science Park.

The Metro Mayor further highlighted a number of non-transport related proposals within the budget, including

- investment of additional £10m for local business to increase innovation capacity as part of Innovation launchpads status and to realise the ambitions set out in the Innovation Prospectus;
- £60m Brownfield Land Fund investment to develop derelict land for affordable homes that will also boost council tax returns and Council finances
- over £50m investment in Adult Education across the City Region, including £8m for skills Bootcamps to target areas of skills shortage;
- release of £25m to support the Liverpool City Region Freeport Programme and unlock significant investment across the City Region, but in particular at the Freeport Sites in Widnes, Newton-le-Willows and Wirral Waters.

In concluding his presentation of the budget proposals, the Metro Mayor emphasised the challenging economic backdrop and the cost-of-living pressures on families and households across the City Region, and commended the budget to the meeting as providing a robust financial base for the Combined Authority to deliver its vision for the City Region.

RESOLVED – (unanimously) That, in relation to the 2023/23 Combined Authority Budget:

- (i) the Mayoral Budget as presented at Table 2 of the report be agreed;
- (ii) the Mayoral precept for 2023/24 be frozen at its 2022/23 level equivalent to £19 per year for a Band D property and £12.67 per year for a Band A property;
- (iii) the composite Combined Authority budget for 2023/24 as presented at Table 3 be approved;
- (iv) a 2.95% increase in the Transport Levy for 2023/24 from £99.352m to £102.283m be approved;
- (v) the payment of an operational grant of £87.523m to Merseytravel to cover its operational costs and the revenue project costs associated with the Rolling Stock project as detailed at paragraph 5.1.2 of the report be approved;
- (vi) the request for an operational grant of £23.413m in respect of the operation of Mersey Tunnels for 2023/24 as detailed at paragraph 5.1.2 of the report be approved;
- (vii) a temporary variance to the key decision threshold as detailed at 5.1.4 of the report be approved;
- (viii) the capital programme as detailed in Table 6 and Appendix Three of the report be approved.
- (ix) a grant of £101.855m to Merseytravel to support the delivery of capital schemes be approved;

- (x) the differential levy payable by Halton as £3.3m be noted.
- (xi) a corresponding grant from the Combined Authority to Halton of £3.3m be agreed in order that Halton can continue to provide transport services in Halton on behalf of the Combined Authority in 2023/24;
- (xii) the Treasury Management Strategy 2023/24 incorporating the Minimum Revenue Provision and associated Treasury Limits and Prudential Indicators as detailed at Appendix Four of the report be approved, and
- (xiii) the Capital Strategy as detailed at Appendix Five of the report be approved.

100 SOCIAL HOUSING DECARBONISATION FUND - WAVE 2.1*

The Combined Authority considered a report of the Executive Director – Investment and Delivery and the Portfolio Holder for Housing and Spatial Framework seeking approval to accept the funding from the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy for Wave 2.1 of the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund and to allocate funds, subject to funding being received.

The Portfolio Holder highlighted the success of local partners in retrofitting properties and welcomed the opportunity this funding would give to improve a further 4,300 properties that would mean better homes, improve health outcomes and tackle increasing fuel costs for residents.

RESOLVED – That, in relation to the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund Wave 2.1:

- (i) the progress made towards achieving Wave 1 Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund outcomes across the City Region, and the application to BEIS for up to £32million of further grant funding under the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund Wave 2.1 be noted;
- (ii) subject to a positive outcome for the bid, authority be delegated to the Executive Director – Investment and Delivery in consultation with the Combined Authority Treasurer and the Monitoring Officer to accept the funding and approve entry into funding agreements with LCR Registered Providers of social housing to deliver Wave 2.1 outcomes; and
- (iii) authority be delegated to the Executive Director – Investment and Delivery in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Housing and Spatial Planning, the Treasurer and the Monitoring Officer to make such adjustments to funding allocations and agreements, delivery arrangements and programming of works as may be required to deliver Wave 2.1 outcomes in an effective and efficient manner across the Liverpool City Region.

101 ACCOMMODATION FOR EX-OFFENDERS SCHEME*

The Combined Authority considered a report of the Executive Director – Investment & Delivery and the Portfolio Holder for Housing and Spatial Framework seeking approval to undertake procurement to deliver the Accommodation for Ex-Offenders scheme from April 2023 until April 2025.

The Portfolio Holder highlighted the success achieved in providing specialist support to ex-offenders and how this proposal would build on that success.

The Police and Crime Commissioner welcomed the funding and opportunity for partners to work together to keep people out of prison and build stable lives.

RESOLVED – That, in relation to the Accommodation for Ex-Offenders Scheme:

- (i) subject to confirmation and receipt of funding from the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, the allocation of up to £1,040,600 from DLUHC from the Accommodation for Ex-Offenders Fund be approved as follows:
 - a. £143,500 to Sefton and St Helens Councils to fund two Homelessness Prison Leaver Officers working across Liverpool, Sefton, St Helens and Wirral to ensure homelessness assessments are completed;
 - b. £263,500 to Halton and Knowsley Councils to deliver the service in Halton and Knowsley:
 - i. £143,500 to fund two Homelessness Prison Leaver Officers;
 - ii. £120,000 for personalisation budget
 - c. £613,100 to the commissioned service to operate in Liverpool, Sefton, St Helens and Wirral, including personalisation; and
 - d. £20,500 for contract monitoring costs for the Combined Authority.
- (ii) authority be delegated to the Executive Director - Investment and Delivery in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Housing and Spatial Framework and the Combined Authority Treasurer and Monitoring Officer to make such changes to the proposed funding allocations at resolution (i) above as may be necessary to reflect any change to the amount or terms of the funding received from DLUHC or to enable service delivery objectives to be met across the Liverpool City Region, and
- (iii) authority be delegated to the Executive Director - Investment and Delivery in consultation with the Treasurer and Monitoring Officer to finalise the terms of contractual arrangements with the successful bidder and local authorities.

102 FLEXIBLE GROWTH FUND - EXTENSION OF INVESTMENT PERIOD AND FUND MANAGER AGREEMENT*

The Combined Authority considered a report of the Executive Director – Investment & Delivery and the Portfolio Holder for Inclusive Economy and Third Sector proposing the extension of the Flexible Growth Fund’s Investment Period and the existing Fund Manager Agreement with not-for-profit River Capital until the March 2024.

The Portfolio Holder highlighted the success of the Fund since it was launched in 2020 in providing £4.61m in grants to support nine businesses and creating at least 100 new jobs while safeguarding 140 more and leveraging approximately £12m of private investment into the City Region.

RESOLVED – That, in relation to the Flexible Growth Fund:

- (i) the extension of the Fund’s Investment period to the 31st of March 2024 be agreed;
- (ii) the extension of the existing Fund Manager Agreement with River Capital to the 31st of March 2024 be agreed, and
- (iii) authority be delegated to the Executive Director - Investment and Delivery in consultation with the Combined Authority Monitoring Officer and Treasurer to finalise extension arrangements and implement identified improvements to the Flexible Growth Fund.

103 UK SHARED PROSPERITY FUND GOVERNANCE ARRANGEMENTS*

The Combined Authority considered a report of the Executive Director – Investment & Delivery and the Portfolio Holder for Policy, Reform and Resources providing and update on the plans for the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) following approval from the Department for Levelling Up Housing and Communities for the Combined Authority's Investment Plan, and seeking approval for the proposed governance and assurance arrangements for the management of the Fund.

The Metro Mayor emphasised that the proposals would allow the Combined Authority to deliver the Fund at pace and support local authorities and other partners in their ambitions. He also stressed that the resources that would be received would mean the City Region would be significantly worse off under the UKSPF than would have been the case with EU funding.

RESOLVED – That, in relation to the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF):

- (i) confirmation from Central Government of the award of the UKSPF grant funding offer of £44.38m for the Liverpool City Region be noted;
- (ii) the approval of Liverpool City Region UKSP Investment Plan by the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities be noted;
- (iii) the changes that have been made to the Liverpool City Region UKSP Delivery Plan to support efficient and effective delivery of the priorities set out in the Investment Plan be noted;
- (iv) the governance and assurance arrangements for the Liverpool City Region UKSPF Programme as set out in the report be approved, and
- (v) authority be delegated to the Executive Director – Investment and Delivery in consultation with the Combined Authority Treasurer and Monitoring Officer and in accordance with the Liverpool City Region UKSPF Programme governance and assurance arrangements to:
 - a. commission, negotiate, award, enter into and vary such arrangements and legal agreements as may be necessary or appropriate to implement the Delivery Plan; and
 - b. make such changes to the Delivery Plan as may be necessary or appropriate to secure efficient and effective delivery of the Investment Plan priorities within available UKSPF financial resources, provided such changes do not have a major impact on how funding is allocated between different priorities or themes within the Delivery Plan.

104 CHANGES TO PREVIOUSLY APPROVED STRATEGIC INVESTMENT FUND PROJECTS*

The Combined Authority considered a report of the Executive Director – Investment & Delivery and the Portfolio Holder for Inclusive Economy and Third Sector seeking approval for changes to previously agreed Strategic Investment Fund approvals for Transforming Cities Fund Walking and Cycling Schemes in Liverpool and Wirral.

The Portfolio Holder emphasised that the proposals would have no additional financial impact on the Combined Authority but was an extension to the project timetables.

RESOLVED – That in relation to the previously agreed Strategic Investment Fund Projects, approval be given to:

- (i) the material changes to work package 1 of the Transforming Cities Fund Walking and Cycling scheme as requested by Liverpool City Council, indicated in paragraphs 3.1 – 3.10 of the report and the extension of time for completion to June 2023, and
- (ii) the material changes to work package 7 of the Transforming Cities Fund Walking and Cycling scheme as requested by Wirral Borough Council, indicated in paragraphs 3.11 to 3.16 of the report and the extension of time for completion to June 2023.

105 LIVERPOOL CITY REGION ACTIVE TRAVEL WAYFINDING MANUAL*

The Combined Authority considered a report of the Executive Director – Place and the Deputy Portfolio Holder for Air Quality and Transportation seeking adoption of a Active Travel Wayfinding Manual and associated guidelines for the delivery of wayfinding scheme across the Liverpool City Region.

The Deputy Portfolio Holder emphasised the importance of this initiative to encourage and support active travel by making it easier for the traveling public to engage with options other than driving.

RESOLVED – That the Liverpool City Region Active Travel Wayfinding Manual be approved for all new signage on active travel routes, pending authorisation from the Department for Transport, and authority be delegated to the Executive Director for Place to make such changes to the Manual as may be necessary to reflect any feedback received from the Department for Transport, provided such changes do not have a material impact on principles and approach set out in the report.

106 LIVERPOOL CITY REGION CYCLE PARKING GUIDELINES*

The Combined Authority considered a report of the Executive Director – Place and the Deputy Portfolio Holder for Air Quality and Transportation seeking adoption of Cycle Parking Guidelines for the delivery of cycle storage across the Liverpool City Region.

The Deputy Portfolio Holder highlighted how the lack of good quality, secure cycle storage was often a barrier to many in taking up cycling as an alternative to driving, and how these guidelines would help ensure greater priority was given to overcome that barrier.

RESOLVED – That the Liverpool City Region Cycle Parking Guidelines for all new cycle storage on active travel routes be approved.

107 MERSEY DEE ALLIANCE UPDATE

The Combined Authority considered a report of the Executive Director – Policy, Strategy and Government Relations and the Portfolio Holder Policy, Reform and Resources providing an update on the work in the previous 12 months of the Mersey Dee Alliance, a cross-border partnership which recognises the shared economic, social and environmental interests across North-East Wales, West Cheshire and the Wirral.

Cllr Williamson, the LCRCA representative and Chair of the Alliance Board, highlighted the Alliance's development of a £200m cross border recovery deal submitted to the Welsh and UK Government, as the Mersey Dee area had experienced a greater loss of economic value than the UK average. The submission focused on addressing four main areas: Low Carbon,

Transport, Place, and Business, Skills & Digital. The proposed deal would have a wider benefit to the Liverpool City Region as it included complimentary projects such as a Hydrogen Demonstrator scheme and a plan to join up the LCR Connect digital project and Dig Once approach with similar projects in the wider Mersey Dee area.

RESOLVED – That the work of the Mersey Dee Alliance to secure funding and stimulate economic recovery throughout its cross-border region be noted and the Combined Authority's commitment to continue to work in partnership as part of the Alliance to seek to achieve its priorities be confirmed.

108 CHANGES TO OUTSIDE BODY APPOINTMENTS

The Combined Authority considered a report of the Monitoring Officer and the Portfolio Holder for Policy, Reform and Resources seeking approval to make nominations to outside bodies to fill vacancies that had arisen following recent resignations of Members and Officers.

RESOLVED – That the following nominations to Outside Bodies be approved:

- (i) Cllr Steve Foulkes, Deputy Portfolio Holder for Transport & Air Quality as the substitute member to the following Transport for the North bodies:-
 - Board and Partnership Board
 - Rail North Committee
 - General Purposes Committee

- (ii) Councillor Kate Groucutt, Deputy Portfolio Holder for Inclusive Economy and Third Sector, and Dr Aileen Jones as Liverpool City Region Combined Authority Representatives and Board Directors of the Chrysalis Fund Board.

109 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

There were no public questions submitted.

110 PETITIONS AND STATEMENTS

Members of the public were given the opportunity to submit petitions or make statements in accordance with the Meetings Standing Order No. 11.

Two members of the public had indicated they wished to address the meeting.

- (i) The first statement was made by Jaxx Carter who referred to changes to the Merseyrail timetable that meant services only stopped at Bromborough Rake and Green Lane stations once every 30 minutes in an effort to improve the punctuality of the Chester line services. He referred to the fact no other stations on this line were affected and that the rationale used by Merseyrail was because these stations had the lowest footfall. Reference was also made to a constructive public meeting in December between Merseyrail and the local MP and statements made that the changes had been necessary because of directions from the Rail Regulator, although no evidence has been provided. The Combined Authority was asked, as 'franchiser', how Merseyrail were allowed to make this decision.

In response, the Metro Mayor acknowledged the concerns of services users about the changes to the timetables. He referred to the extensive discussion and debate of the matter

at the Transport Committee on 10 November 2022 at which a senior Merseyrail Manager responded to concerns and gave assurances that these changes were only temporary operational necessities. The Metro Mayor stated that Cllr Williamson had made representations on behalf of residents to ensure these changes were as short lived as possible. He further stated that the new trains being introduced would mean that passengers would be able to enjoy improved services by the end of the year.

The Metro Mayor undertook to provide a fuller response in writing within the next 10 days.

- (ii) The second statement was made by Kieran Murphy who referred to the variability in disability access across Merseyrail services, and on the Chester line in particular where only half of the stations were wheelchair accessible, which was suggested was a breach of the Equality Act 2010. It was stated that the decision to reduce services stopping at Bromborough Rake, which was the only accessible station between Hooton and Bebington, was in disregard for disabled passengers in this area of Wirral. He called on the Combined Authority to remove the 'franchise' from Merseyrail for breaching the Equality Act.

In response, the Metro Mayor welcomed the raising of important issues about accessibility and his ambition to improve public transport so that it was a network for all. In this regard, he referred to progress that had been made with new trains that were the most accessible in the country; the programme of platform works that would transform rail travel for people with disabilities; the Access for All programme of new lifts at stations, with recent completions at at Birkenhead Park, Hillside, and Hunts Cross and bids for works at ten further sites, with 70% of the network now being step free and ambition to reach 100%. The Metro Mayor acknowledged that his and the Combined Authority's ambitions were ultimately limited by the lack of government funding although every effort would be made to deliver a network for all.

The Metro Mayor undertook to provide a fuller response in writing within the next 10 days.

The meeting closed at 2.05 pm

Minutes 95 to 110 received as a correct record on the 3rd day of March 2023

Chairperson of the Combined Authority