

Questions of the Mayor

The Mayor gave an introduction stating that the Combined Authority had produced a balanced budget. There had been a £11M deficit that was covered by transport grants and government support and a one-off use of reserves. He was adamant that front line services had been protected.

A question was asked about the use of Brownfield sites. The answer was that a sum of £625M had been spent to subsidise the use of these sites. When discussion developed that it was the wrong use of the money the Mayor was resolute that many of the sites were not commercially viable and had been left derelict for many years in some cases over 20 years and only with the intervention of the Combined Authority would they ever be developed.

There was a question about the development of Hydrogen fuels. The WMCA would and was helping with this.

Pressure was put on the transport budget trying to ensure that people on low incomes still received concessions. The Mayor expected to maintain or even improve the existing arrangements.

In his introduction the Mayor had mentioned an inspection of the investment board, on being questioned he was able to explain that the board had been given a good grade in some 6/7 reports. The investment board deal with a budget of £2B.

Covid-19 could have an impact on both capital and revenue budgets giving rise to a range of risks however the Mayor intends to proceed with existing plans.

Further debate was had in respect of the potential problems with the cost of transport for those on low incomes, this led to a question on the relief for coach companies. The Mayor replied that they were part of all companies that were getting funds from HMG. Train travel had regained 21% and bus travel 40% of their pre-Covid numbers.

Finally, he supported alternative use of funds for social transport.