



West Midlands Combined Authority

Overview & Scrutiny Committee

Monday 2 November 2020 at 2.00 pm

Minutes

Present

Councillor Lisa Trickett (Chair)
Councillor Cathy Bayton (Vice-Chair)
Councillor Ahmad Bostan
Councillor Richard Brown
Paul Brown

Councillor Chris Cade

Councillor Mike Chalk

Councillor Peter Fowler
Councillor Robert Grinsell
Councillor Angus Lees
Councillor Stephen Simkins
Councillor Diane Todd
Councillor Kate Wild

Birmingham City Council
Association of Black Country Authorities
Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council
Coventry City Council
Black Country Local Enterprise
Partnership
Warwickshire Non-Constituent Local
Authorities
Worcestershire Non-Constituent Local
Authorities
Birmingham City Council
Joint Coventry/Solihull Representative
Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council
Association of Black Country Authorities
Staffordshire Non-Constituent Authorities
Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council

In Attendance

Michael-Akolade Ayodeji
Councillor Mike Bird

Gareth Bradford
Deborah Cadman
Louise Cowen
Dan Essex
Julia Goldsworthy
Linda Horne
Tim Martin
Aisha Masood
Lyndsey Roberts
Jonathan Skinner
Stephen Weir
Andy Williams
Martin Yardley

Young Combined Authority
Portfolio Lead for Housing &
Regeneration
West Midlands Combined Authority
West Midlands Combined Authority
West Midlands Combined Authority
West Midlands Combined Authority
West Midlands Combined Authority
West Midlands Combined Authority
West Midlands Combined Authority
West Midlands Combined Authority
Young Combined Authority
West Midlands Combined Authority
West Midlands Combined Authority
Coventry City Council
Coventry City Council
Coventry & Warwickshire LEP

- | Item No. | Title |
|-----------------|--|
| 75. | <p>Inquorate Meeting</p> <p>The committee was inquorate for the majority of the meeting and therefore the decisions taken would be submitted to the WMCA board on 13 November 2020 for formal approval.</p> |
| 76. | <p>Apologies for Absence</p> <p>Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Dean Carroll (Shropshire Non-Constituent Authorities), Mike Lyons (Greater Birmingham & Solihull LEP) and Councillor Lucy Seymour-Smith (Birmingham City Council).</p> |
| 77. | <p>Declarations of Interests</p> <p>Councillor Stephen Simkins declared that he was the City of Wolverhampton Council's Cabinet Member for City Economy.</p> |
| 78. | <p>Minutes</p> <p>The minutes of the meetings held on the 7 September 2020 and 16 October 2020 were agreed as a correct record, subject to the following amendments in respect of minute no. 74 ('Questions to the Mayor'):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Councillor Robert Grinsell requested that his comment and the Mayor's response relating to the benefits of HS2 & UK Central be included, Councillor Peter Fowler's comments relating to the Community Recovery Prospectus be included, along with further details on Councillor Stephen Simkins question regarding joblessness, skills and training. |
| 79. | <p>Chair's Remarks</p> <p>(a) Councillor Richard Brown</p> <p>The Chair noted that this would be Councillor Richard Brown's last meeting due to him being appointed Coventry City Council's Cabinet Member for Strategic Finance and Resources. The new representative for Coventry City Council would be Councillor Naeem Akhtar.</p> <p>(b) Economic Funding Tracker</p> <p>The Chair noted that the committee had received a copy of the Economic Funding Tracker report being submitted to the WMCA Board on the 13 November and requested that any comments were feedback to her ahead of her meeting with the Director of Strategy.</p> <p>(c) Annual Delivery 2020/21 Mid-Year Update</p> <p>The Chair noted that the committee had received a copy of the Annual Delivery 2020/21 Mid-Year Update report. Upon reviewing the document, Councillor Stephen Simkin and Councillor Peter Fowler requested that future updates included spend broken down across the seven constituent authorities which would help identify a clearer picture of the allocations across the region in term of investment and resources.</p> |

80. Q&A with the WMCA Portfolio Lead for Housing & Regeneration Councillor Mike Bird

The Chair welcomed the Portfolio Lead for Housing & Regeneration Councillor Mike Bird, members of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee and representatives from the Young Combined Authority to the question time that was focussing on housing and regeneration-related matters.

Councillor Mike Bird provided an opening statement to members of the committee. He informed them on the Government's Housing Deal with the WMCA sought to deliver at least 215,000 homes by 2031, with current evidence and assessments being undertaken confirming that the region would be on track to achieve that target. A number of funds had been secured to support brownfield remediation, including a £100m Housing Deal Land Fund, a £50m Brownfield Land & Property Development Fund and an £84m Brownfield Housing Fund, alongside residential and commercial loan funds.

Members in attendance, along with Aisha Masood and Michael-Akolade Ayodeji then questioned the Portfolio Lead for Housing & Regeneration on a range of housing and regeneration related topics. The Chair sought further information on the brownfield land funding, totality and the spend verses the number of housing units delivered to date. She was also keen to understand the context in which the WMCA was operating in terms of supporting the housing needs of the region. Councillor Mike Bird informed the committee that 4,466 housing units on brownfield sites had been developed, but was unable to confirm on what proportion of these were currently occupied. The Director of Housing & Regeneration informed the committee that the funding associated to the Housing Deal Land Fund would be paid in tranches and was issued based on performance. To date, £53m had been received with another payment due shortly. He also noted that the WMCA had set a target requirement of 20% affordable housing.

Further to the Chair's question relating to social housing, Councillor Mike Bird stated that the direct provision of social housing was not within the Housing & Land Delivery Board's remit and that this sat with housing associations and local Housing Authorities. The committee expressed concern that consideration had not been given to developing housing co-operatives in partnership with local authorities. Councillor Stephen Simkins enquired as to whether there was an opportunity to explore joint partnership with local authorities to develop their brownfield lands.

Following the committee's concern on addressing affordable housing and the importance of sufficient levels of social housing availability, the Director of Housing & Regeneration informed the committee that a regional affordable housing definition had been agreed, and work continued with the housing associations to achieve significant affordable housing on development sites within the region.

Councillor Richard Brown queried the future for housing in response to the Government's recent planning White Paper. Councillor Mike Bird informed the committee that the Housing & Land Delivery Board had received a report on the implications arising within the White Paper, which could be shared with the committee.

Recommended:

The Portfolio Lead for Housing & Regeneration be thanked for his participation in this question and answer session with the committee and that the committee consider what further work it would like to do in the important area of housing and regeneration at its meeting on 11 January 2020.

81. Recharge West Midlands - Investment Case to Government - Battery Gigafactory

The committee received a presentation from the Chief Executive of Coventry and Warwickshire Local Enterprise Partnership and the Director of Business, Investment & Culture for Coventry City Council on the Gigafactory proposition. The information presented to the committee related to the importance of the automotive industry for the region, what a Gigafactory was, further information on the UK Battery Industrialisation Centre, the opportunities proposed for the region on creating green manufacturing jobs and the role the WMCA would play in this.

The Chair was keen to understand the readiness of the WMCA in terms of re-skilling and re-training, particularly in respect of those individuals who may have lost their jobs during the pandemic. She also sought assurance on the WMCA's efforts to support the Gigafactory bid going forward. The Director of Business, Investment & Culture highlighted that majority of employment would be within the supply chain and discussions had highlighted the support needed to have a mixture of capital and revenue support to enable businesses to become more innovative. He also highlighted that UK Battery Industrialisation Centre were in the process of developing battery manufacturing apprenticeships to help engage and bring in those new skills, but recognised the need to further support businesses in retraining their workforces. The Chief Executive for Coventry & Warwickshire LEP indicated that an electrification taskforce had been created as well as the training and automotive skills taskforce, and that the bid made to Government should not only focus on the building options but should also seek to address the training need.

Councillor Stephen Simkins expressed his concern on how the Gigafactory would have a beneficial impact for the Black Country, with a strategic outlook on how the West Midlands moves into a greener future. He understood the benefits this programme brought to both Coventry and Solihull, but looked for a more strategic approach across the WMCA to address issues such as deprivation, educational attainment and poor health. The Director of Strategy highlighted that key taskforces had been explicitly looking at the cross-regional geography to better understand the supply chain across the whole region to ensure all parts fitted together.

The committee were keen to ensure that the correct skill set for employment in this sector started in the West Midlands with the right training opportunities being provided. In terms of supporting the bid going forward, the committee would be provided with a copy of the script being provided to MPs on the Gigafactory.

Recommendation to the WMCA Board:

- (1) The presentation be noted.
- (2) The comments made by members of the committee on this item be noted.

82. Transport Scrutiny Sub-Committee Minutes

The committee consider the minutes of the Transport Scrutiny Sub-Committee held on 14 September 2020 and 19 October 2020.

Councillor Peter Fowler sought assurances that concerns around face coverings being correctly worn on public transportation had been raised during the question and answer session with the Portfolio Lead for Transport. Councillor Cathy Bayton confirmed this had been the case. It was also noted that a 'deep dive' look at the concessionary fares schemes would be undertaken.

Recommended to the WMCA Board:

The minutes of the meetings held on 14 September 2020 and 19 October 2020 be approved.

83. Forward Plan

The committee noted a forward plan of items that were to be reported to future meetings of the committee and the WMCA Board.

The committee were also made aware of a budget workshop being held on 27 November from 1.30pm in preparation for the Mayoral question time being held in December 2020.

84. Date of the Next Meeting

Friday 11 December 2020 at 11.00am.

The meeting ended at 4.20 pm.