



West Midlands Combined Authority

Overview & Scrutiny Committee

Monday 11 January 2021 at 2.00 pm

Minutes

Present

Councillor Lisa Trickett (Chair)
Councillor Ahmad Bostan
Paul Brown

Councillor Peter Fowler
Councillor Robert Grinsell
Councillor Angus Lees
Councillor Lucy Seymour-Smith
Councillor Stephen Simkins
Sarah Windrum

Birmingham City Council
Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council
Black Country Local Enterprise
Partnership
Birmingham City Council
Joint Coventry/Solihull Representative
Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council
Birmingham City Council
Association of Black Country Authorities
Coventry & Warwickshire Local
Enterprise Partnership

In Attendance

Mubasshir Ajaz
Gareth Bradford
Deborah Cadman
Ed Cox
Dan Essex
Linda Horne
Tim Martin
Aisha Masood
Lyndsey Roberts

West Midlands Combined Authority
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Young Combined Authority
West Midlands Combined Authority

Item Title No.

93. Inquorate Meeting

The meeting was inquorate and therefore decisions taken at the meeting would be submitted to the WMCA Board on 12 February 2021 for formal approval.

94. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Cathy Bayton (Association of Black Country Authorities), Councillor Naeem Akhtar (Coventry City Council), Councillor Chris Cade (Warwickshire Non-Constituent Authorities), Councillor Dean Carroll (Shropshire Non-Constituent Local Authorities), Councillor Suky Samra (Walsall Metropolitan Borough Council) and Councillor Diane Todd (Staffordshire Non-Constituent Local Authorities).

95. Declarations of Interests

Councillor Stephen Simkins declared that he was the City of Wolverhampton Council's Cabinet Member for City Economy.

96. Minutes

The minutes of the meetings held on 2 November 2020, 23 November 2020 and 11 December 2020 were agreed as a correct record.

97. Matters Arising

The committee expressed their disappointment in not being able to achieve the level of quoracy for the majority of committees taken place this municipal year. The Chair requested that the Monitoring Officer, Scrutiny Officer and Governance Services Manager report back at the next meeting any new potential mechanisms in order to achieve quoracy going forward.

98. Mayoral Question Time: Policy - Response from the Mayor to Recommendations presented to the WMCA Board on 13 November 2020

The committee noted the response received from the Mayor in respect of the issues it had identified following the Policy Q&A on 16 October 2020.

The Chair expressed her concern as to whether the response reflected the reality of the lived experience of the neediest within the communities of the region and highlighted a concern of the region having to continue to bid for funds from Government. She sought clarity as to how the Adult Education Budget were targeted towards the benefit of the BAME community and how that fund was closing inequalities within the region.

Councillor Stephen Simkins felt that the COVID-19 pandemic had exposed weaknesses across the region but felt that should be taken forward in a positive light to progress and make changes. He felt that the Mayor's response had not included on how best scrutiny could add value to future schemes / policies. He indicated that all future policies should address the inequalities across the region whilst tackling deprivation.

Councillor Ahmad Bostan felt that greater understanding of the WMCA work in respect of the skills agenda targeting BAME communities was required as he felt that this area was often neglected. Councillor Angus Lees felt that all both the WMCA and local authorities needed to work in partnership to address the future regeneration of the region as he felt this was currently done in isolation. Councillor Stephen Simkins wanted to see the WMCA plan and deliver initiatives targeted at education and skills to ensure providers achieved targets and ensured those within the region had opportunities to access formal education. Councillor Angus Lees noted that level of non-school ready children was high in the region and suggested that the education process from start to finish was looked at further.

The Chief Executive reported that the Senior Leadership Team had focused on the key deliverables for each portfolio and expressed commitment to deliver on each of those in joint partnership with local authorities, acknowledging and accepting the challenges arising from the COVID-19 pandemic and highlighting that a youth employment taskforce had been implemented to tackle and address some of the challenges young people faced. The Chief Executive stressed that the Recovery Co-ordination Group continued to look at the community recovery prospectus and have committed to continue the recovery work and push forward with the economic recovery asks to Government.

99. The Health of the Region 2020 - Regional Health Impact COVID-19

The committee received a presentation from the Director of Inclusive Growth & Public Service Reform on the health and wellbeing inequalities and impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic in the West Midlands. Information was provided on the regional health impact of COVID-19 which was concluded by a task and finish group formed of representatives from WMCA, Public Health England, local authorities, NHS, universities and the voluntary and community sector. The report highlighted a higher likeliness of death from COVID-19 in BAME communities compared to white population.

Councillor Ahmad Bostan welcomed the report and requested that the committee had oversight on the various streams being set up to address and improve outcomes for the BAME communities. He felt that the report lacked comments on adequate housing as this impacted on health inequalities and provided an example of those families with gardens and being able to go out and exercise and other families not being any to have access. He also suggested a link between physical health and mental health as well as further work to address the meaning of BAME and which communities were included as not all communities shared all commonalities.

Councillor Lucy Seymour-Smith sought information on initiatives for 'invisible' illnesses and those infants missing out of baby classes and socialization and the effects that may have, also highlighting the need for consideration of families in temporary housing and those younger children who experienced family bereavement.

The Director of Inclusive Growth & Public Service Reform highlighted the progress in engaging with partners and integrated care systems to target health inequalities and achieve key outputs. He also felt that housing was a key contributing factor to health inequalities and felt that the commitments outlined in the report sought to address this.

Recommended to the WMCA Board that:

(1) The presentation be noted.

(2) The comments made by the committee be noted.

100. Housing & Land Portfolio Update

The committee received a presentation from the Director of Housing & Regeneration on the role of the Housing & Land Delivery Board, terms of referenced for the board, the deliverables of the board, the progress of funds the board had received and information relating to the COVID-19 recovery plan.

The Chair expressed her concern on the number of families in temporary housing and overcrowded hostels and bed & breakfast accommodation across the region. She understood from previous discussions that this was not the responsibility of the WMCA but felt it should be playing a strategic part in housing in terms of responding to the needs of the region and playing an enabling and supportive role. She also felt that homelessness and adequate living conditions should be items for consideration of policies being brought forward.

Councillor Stephen Simkins expressed his disappointment that full allocations had not been received with his local authority from Government on applications made for future development on high streets / town centres and therefore would look to the WMCA to develop those worthy schemes. He hoped that future applications to Government would not consist of bidding but move towards more a strategic assessment of need. Councillor Stephen Simkins suggested that future scrutiny work focused on future housing proposals being taken forward by the WMCA to enable the committee to add value to those proposals.

The Director of Housing & Regeneration commented that the team had already been approach be a number of local authorities in regard to future high street / town centre funds and sought to support them in addressing their funding gaps and bring forward future schemes. He also stressed that himself and other relevant officers within the organisation continued to push Government on the flexibility of funding deployment and had seen some flexibility in criteria of new funds.

Recommended to the WMCA that:

- (1) The presentation be noted.
- (2) The comment made by the committee be noted.

101. Transport Scrutiny Sub-Committee Minutes

The committee consider the minutes of the Transport Scrutiny Sub-Committee held on the 30 November 2020.

Councillor Peter Fowler referenced the minutes and sought further information on the use of average speed cameras within communities and what initiatives were taking place to address pavement parking.

Recommended to the WMCA Board:

The minutes of the meeting held on 30 November 2020 be approved.

102. 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.

103. Date of the next meeting

Monday 8 March 2021 at 10.00am.

The meeting ended at 4.15 pm.