



**Housing & Land Delivery Board**

**Monday 15 July 2019 at 10.00 am**

**Minutes**

**Present**

Councillor Mike Bird (Chair)	Walsall Metropolitan Borough Council
Councillor Sharon Thompson	Birmingham City Council
Councillor Tariq Khan	Coventry City Council
Bill Blincoe	Coventry and Warwickshire LEP
Marc Lidderth	Environment Agency
Simon Marks	Greater Birmingham and Solihull LEP
Councillor Joanne Hadley	Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council
Councillor Robert Macey	Shropshire Council
Councillor David Wright	Telford and Wrekin Council
Councillor Peter Butlin	Warwickshire County Council

**In Attendance**

Kate Martin	City of Wolverhampton Council
Gareth Bradford	West Midlands Combined Authority
Carl Craney	West Midlands Combined Authority
Rob Lamond	West Midlands Combined Authority
Patricia Willoughby	West Midlands Combined Authority
David Warburton	West Midlands Combined Authority

**Item Title  
No.**

**1. Apologies for Absence (if any)**

Apologies had been received from Sarah Middleton (Black Country Local Enterprise Partnership), Councillor George Adamson (Cannock Chase District Council), Councillor Peter Bilson (City of Wolverhampton Council), Councillor Angus Lees (Dudley MBC), Karl Tupling (Homes England), Councillor David Humphreys (North Warwickshire Borough Council), Councillor Sebastian Lowe (Rugby Borough Council), Councillor Ian Courts (Solihull MBC), Councillor Daren Pemberton (Stratford on Avon District Council) and Kevin Rodgers (West Midlands Housing Association Partnership).

Carl Craney reported on changes in membership of the Board as follows:  
Councillor Joanne Hadley – Sandwell MBC;  
Councillor Robert Macey – Shropshire Council

**2. Notification of Substitutes (if any)**

Councillor Andy Mackiewicz had been nominated as a substitute for

Councillor Ian Courts (Solihull MBC).

**3. Declarations of Interests (if any)**

No declarations of interest were made relative to items under consideration at the meeting.

**4. Minutes of last meeting**

Resolved:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 10 April 2019 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

**5. Housing Affordability: Regional Definition**

Gareth Bradford, Rob Lamond and David Warburton presented a report which updated the Board on the work which the WMCA and the Homelessness Taskforce had been doing since early 2019 on a new Regional Affordable Housing Definition. This was a commitment identified in the Housing and Land Business Plan for the WMCA to progress during 2019/20 and had been agreed at previous meetings of the Board. The report also sought endorsement for the recommended approach to an affordable definition (i.e. how it was to be calculated) such that the affordable definition more closely reflected the bespoke range of housing needs and ambitions in different parts of the region when applied. A key test of this work had been to ensure compliance and complementarity with policies in statutory local plans prepared by local councils and to provide investor and developer certainty. The WMCA thanked the local councils, the private sector and housing associations across the West Midlands which had shaped this work to ensure that this was the case.

The report outlined also the broader work on affordable housing and homelessness being undertaken in the region. It set out the emerging evidence being gathered, for example, housing affordability in the West Midlands, to inform this work and a potential future Spending Review bid to Government. The report sought agreement to a proposal to trial a new regional definition, initially only across the WMCA land/investments being taken forward through the recently agreed Single Commissioning Framework. The trial would demonstrate the regions' ambitious approach to affordable housing and being at the forefront of the housing affordability agenda whilst gathering further evidence of impacts.

The Chair commented on the difficulties which could be encountered in requiring developers to designate a percentage of a development for affordable housing if it compromised the viability of the development and that this could often lead to assertions that other requirements of Section 106 Agreements for the provision of essential infrastructure could not be met. David Warburton set out clearly that the definition would apply only to those developments where the WMCA was intervening or investing under the new Single Commissioning Framework. Gareth Bradford clarified that the paper encouraged the use of the affordable housing definition beyond the WMCA in other organisations in the region but housing policies in local plans were a matter for local planning authorities. He reported on the positive partnerships being formed with developers, investors and associations who were embracing the principles and inclusive growth objectives of the Single

Commissioning Framework including the minimum affordable housing standards.

Councillor Joanne Hadley welcomed the assistance of the WMCA in providing funding for the reclamation of contaminated land. She also referred to the issue of high levels of rent in private sector accommodation which often led to rent arrears and homelessness.

The Chair commented on the need to keep considering the wider regeneration aspects of developments and broader benefits of developments. He referred also to the need to assess continually viability as developments were built out and values changed. Gareth Bradford reminded the Board that looking at issues like clawback and overage had been a key part of the Housing Infrastructure Funding bid for Perry Barr and in the Single Commissioning Framework was a key part of the funding agreement with project sponsors.

Councillor Peter Butlin referred to the affordability issues in the Stratford on Avon District Council area where many residents were from outside the area but local residents were often in low paid occupations.

Resolved:

That the West Midlands Combined Authority Board be recommended as follows:

1. To agree the approach, as detailed in the report, to a new regional definition of housing affordability through a pilot programme, based on application of the new definition through the Combined Authority's Single Commissioning Framework (SCF). All investments made through the SCF process would go through the WMCA approvals and assurance process with final sign off by the Investment Board;
2. For schemes not in the scope of the SCF where the WMCA has a brokering or influencing role, it would encourage councils and other partners to adopt Option B as detailed in the report, with local criteria being applied in a flexible, non-prescribed way to compliment local plan policy and build confidence in the approach and evidence success for further development.

## **6. Housing and Land Portfolio: Quarterly Update**

Pat Willoughby presented a report which updated the Board on the progress within the various workstreams and projects agreed previously by this Board as priorities for the WMCA and contained also within the recently published 2019 WMCA Annual Plan. Gareth Bradford also reassured the Board that the WMCA Team brought in, as necessary, specialist additional capacity to ensure work programmes (e.g. town centres, affordable housing, brownfield regeneration) could be delivered.

Marc Liddeth referred to the declaration of a 'Climate Emergency' at the meeting of the WMCA Board held on 28 June 2019 and queried whether the Design Charter would make provision for 'Resilience'. Pat Willoughby confirmed that this matter would be addressed within the wording of the emerging draft document which was being developed jointly by an expert

group of local councils, design bodies and the WMCA. The Chair commented on the superb energy efficiency associated with a scheme he sighted that used advanced methods of construction. Gareth Bradford advised that the Team were considering how best to respond to the declaration in all of its work, highlighting specifically the Single Commissioning Framework and Design Charter as examples that would need to be looked at.

Mark Liddeth referred to paragraph 3.24 of the report and queried whether the draft Regional Design Charter would be presented to the September 2019 meeting rather than September 2020, as stated in the report. Gareth Bradford confirmed this to be the case.

Given the importance of statutory local plans to the achievement of overall housing numbers in the region and that positive progress on local plan production was an important part of the agreement with Government on the Housing Deal the Chair requested that reports on the progress of the various plans be submitted to the Board at least every quarter and a regular item on local plans was included on the Agenda for each future meeting of the Board.

Resolved:

1. That the following items be considered at the September 2019 meeting of the Board:
  - Regional Design Charter;
  - Pipeline of Intervention Opportunities and update on the implementation of the Single Commissioning Framework (Commercially Sensitive);
  - MMC Strategy and Routemap;
  - Affordable Housing Delivery Vehicle;
  - Town Centre toolkit;
2. That the positive progress in work under the Housing and Land Portfolio in quarter 2 and some of the key work programmes being progressed during the remainder of 2019 be noted;
3. That discussions be continued with the Housing and Land Steering Group and supported working groups on how existing arrangements on engagement, project based governance and working arrangements could be enhanced further between the WMCA, local authorities, the private sector and other organisations;
4. That reports on the progress of the various statutory local plans be submitted to the Board quarterly.

## **7. National Policy Issues and Items**

Gareth Bradford reported that the WMCA was working on its business cases for in preparation for the Comprehensive Spending Review as discussed at previous meetings of this Board. He advised that the WMCA was working closely with Homes England in seeking additional funding from the Government for the provision of affordable housing units in the West Midlands.

He informed the Board that the WMCA was offering support and assistance to local authorities where specifically requested to do so, as part of developing the evidence base for updating or reviewing Local Plans: this was welcomed.

Resolved:

1. That the position be noted;
2. That a report on progress with updating or reviewing Local Plans be submitted to the next meeting.

The meeting ended at 10.40 am.