



West Midlands Combined Authority

Housing & Land Delivery Board

Wednesday 2 March 2022 at 10.00 am

Minutes

Present

Councillor Mike Bird (Chair)	Walsall Metropolitan Borough Council
Councillor Zahoor Ahmed	Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council
Councillor Shabrana Hussain	Birmingham City Council
Councillor Ian Kettle	Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council
Councillor Andy Mackiewicz	Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council
Councillor David Welsh	Coventry City Council

In Attendance via MS Teams

Item No.	Title
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40.	Apologies for Absence
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Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Gakhal (City of Wolverhampton Council), Jo Nugent (Homes England) and Dawn Ward (Greater Birmingham & Solihull LEP).

41.	Nomination of substitutes
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Councillor Simkins (City of Wolverhampton) participated in the meeting via MS Teams on behalf of Councillor Gakhal.

42.	Minutes -19 January 2022
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Resolved: That the minutes of the meeting held on 19 January 2022 be approved as a correct record.

43.	Affordable Housing Delivery with Housing Associations : Progress Update
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The board considered a report of the Director of Housing and Regeneration that provided an update and clear direction of travel on the ongoing work of the WMCA and housing association partners to establish a more comprehensive collective approach to the delivery of affordable housing across the region- a key deliverable for the Housing and Land Delivery Board in 2022/23.

The report also sought endorsement for the work underway to develop an innovative pilot approach with a small group of Housing Associations based on packaged land disposal. It was noted that affordable housing was part of the set of deliverables for the Housing and Land Board.

A report outlining the WMCA definition of affordable housing (currently under

review) which was endorsed by this board in January 2020 was circulated with the papers for information.

Councillor Mackiewicz considered the affordable housing definition was difficult to determine from the documents circulated and asked for it to be made clearer if possible. He also advised that Solihull Officers thought the Help to Own Scheme does not meet certain national affordability criteria and would like WMCA Officers to check this.

The Director of Housing and Regeneration, Gareth Bradford reported that he understood the Help to Own Scheme in Wolverhampton, meets the WMCA definition of affordable and the NPPF definition but would check on this and confirm the position with the board.

The board received a presentation from the Strategic Planning Manager, Rob Lamond that provided an update on work being undertaken to update the affordable housing definition for the WMCA, progress made with housing associations on affordable housing delivery, the objectives of the pilot package and next steps.

Councillor Simkins reported that Wolverhampton has established a housing forum and would like the Combined Authority to work with the forum. He considered that the WMCA should work with ALMOs/local authorities to improve housing and make it affordable so as to allow people to remain in their local area, noting that Birmingham City Council has the biggest local authority housing stock in the country.

Gareth Bradford reported that the WMCA was engaging with Wolverhampton Living in Wolverhampton, Birmingham Municipal Trust amongst other organisations and some non-constituent authorities. Rob Lamond advised that he would look to analyse the NPP and WMCA's affordable housing definition with regards to people staying within their locality.

In relation to the proposed pilot package, Councillor Welsh enquired whether the sites for affordable housing have already been determined as he noted the report referred to new homes being located adjacent to a Metro station and a new hospital which did not apply to Coventry. He asked that officers be open and honest with regards to any sites identified.

The Chair reported that the sites could be revealed if they were in the public domain.

The Director of Housing and Regeneration advised that the sites have not yet been confirmed; the report set out the criteria for the proposed pilot package that was based on a couple of likely sites which was an error, as the criteria should determine the sites.

Councillor Welsh confirmed he was satisfied with this approach and asked for the revised criteria be re-submitted to the board.

Councillor Mackiewicz asked that consideration be given to a strict definition of key workers with regards to housing support and noted the WMCA needs to press on with Net Zero given the current situation with Russia and

Ukraine.

The Chair concurred with the need for a wider definition of key workers that was not restricted to NHS workers.

The Director of Housing and Regeneration reported that it is up to each local authority to determine its definition of key workers, but he was happy for the WMCA to look at setting the principles for a definition.

The board discussed the role of council housing in affordable housing and the need for local authorities to be provided with funding to enable them to renew housing stock. The issue of viability with regards to housing associations that requires them to keep taking on more housing stock over time was also noted.

The Director of Housing and Regeneration advised that estate renewal is not an output identified by Government although he was hoping that the Levelling Up Fund would support wider place making. He added that a new officer group had been set up with regards to Levelling Up that could look at estate renewal.

In relation to viability with regards to the NPPF clause, the Director of Housing and Regeneration advised that he would look to put together some points on this issue for the next meeting.

Resolved:

1. The positive progress with the work taking place under the Housing and Land Board to improve the collaboration and co-investment in the region between housing associations and the WMCA to secure more social and affordable housing to meet local needs be welcomed and endorsed;
2. This collaboration is part of a broad package of affordable housing measures and initiatives being progressed under the Housing and Land Portfolio be noted and
3. The specific work taking place on the new innovative joint approach with a group of housing associations in the region to deliver additional affordable housing and wider socio-economic outcomes on WMCA land be welcomed and endorsed.

44. WMCA Housing & Land Devolved Funds : Progress Update

The board considered a report of the Director of Housing and Regeneration that provided an update on the funding which the WMCA has secured to date from Government on the housing and regeneration matters which it administers via the Single Commissioning Framework across the West Midlands. The report also provides an update on ongoing discussions with Government to secure further housing and regeneration funding for the region.

The Strategic Planning Manager, Rob Lamond reported that the WMCA has secured a further £28m from the Brownfield Housing Fund that was included

in the Levelling Up announcements, the largest of any Mayoral Combined Authority. Additionally, the WMCA has also secured a further £17.4m through direct negotiations with Government to be administered through the Single Commissioning Framework. He advised that there was also further opportunities to deliver more housing and infrastructure for the region through the Levelling Up agenda.

In relation to an enquiry from Councillor Simkins regarding intervention rates that are prohibitive due to economic viability and whether these could be flexed going forward, the Director of Housing and Regeneration advised that the WMCA does not impose intervention rates on schemes but specifies what is needed to deliver the housing outputs based on Government requirements/targets. He added that it was cheaper to deliver housing on less contaminated land but the programme could flex according to needs and reminded the board that the outputs on every scheme are specified in the Quarterly Report on Housing and Land Portfolio Deliverables.

Councillor Welsh reported that Coventry was in the process of identifying its brownfield sites and was looking forward to working with the WMCA on how these could be utilised.

The Director of Housing and Regeneration, Gareth Bradford invited local authority colleagues to contact him or Rob Lamond to discuss how the WMCA could assist with regards to taking forward brownfield and or other potential sites or would like further information presented to Cabinet or Chief Executive meetings.

Resolved:

1. The success of the WMCA Housing and Land Portfolio in securing devolved housing and land funds from Government and the strong performance to date against targets set out in these funds be welcomed and endorsed and
2. The business case work being undertaken by the WMCA Housing and Land Portfolio to secure further funding from Government to support the objectives set by the Housing and Land Delivery Board including jobs, commercial development and brownfield land remediation and innovative new proposals like modular construction and zero carbon homes be noted and endorsed.

45. Housing & Land Portfolio Deliverables 2022/23 : Update Report

The board considered a report of the Director of Housing and Regeneration that sought endorsement of the draft Housing and Land Portfolio Deliverables prior to approval by the WMCA Board on 18 March 2022. The deliverables would directly support the implementation of the WMCA's Strategic Aims and Objectives approved by the WMCA Board in November 2021.

The board discussed the role of AMC and in particular modular housing in delivering cheaper and more energy efficient homes and the need to attract AMC manufacturers to the region.

The Director of Housing and Regeneration proposed a site visit be arranged to look at how the WMCA has help support the delivery of AMC, Net Zero and affordable homes in the region (Help to Own) if members were interested in this.

The Chair reported that he would like the above visit to be arranged for board members and for it to be scheduled during the summer. He indicated that he would like to know the location of AMC manufacturing sites as he would like to encourage businesses to come to the West Midlands.

The Director of Housing and Regeneration advised that he would ask AMC Officers/AMC Taskforce to look at how the WMCA could support the AMC industry with regards to WMCA land/infrastructure loans and would submit a report to the next meeting on the matter.

Resolved: The Housing and Land Portfolio High Level Deliverables for 2022/23 be endorsed prior to the approval by the WMCA Board on 18 March 2022.

46. Date of next meeting - 27 April 2022 at 10.00am

The meeting ended at 11.25 am.