



Overview & Scrutiny Committee

Thursday 12 January 2023 at 10.00 am

Minutes

Present

Councillor Cathy Bayton (Chair)	Association of Black Country Authorities
Councillor Naeem Akhtar (Vice-Chair)	Coventry City Council
Councillor Samantha Gethen	Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council
Councillor Ian Kettle	Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council
Councillor Nigel Lumby	Shropshire Non-Constituent Local Authorities
Councillor Martin McCarthy	Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council
Councillor Mike Sutherland	Staffordshire Non-Constituent Local Authorities
Councillor Paul Sweet	City of Wolverhampton Council
Councillor Jamie Tennant	Birmingham City Council
Councillor Vera Waters	Walsall Metropolitan Borough Council

In Attendance

Councillor Mike Bird	Portfolio Lead Member for Housing & Land
Dan Essex	Governance Services Manager
Linda Horne	Executive Director of Finance and Business Hub
Rob Lamond	Head of Strategy & Analysis
Dr Julie Nugent	Executive Director of Economic Delivery, Skills & Communities
Lyndsey Roberts	Scrutiny Officer
Laura Shoaf	Chief Executive

**Item Title
No.**

105. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Andrew Burrow (Solihull), Councillor Lauren Rainbow (Birmingham), Councillor Karen Simms (Sandwell) and Amanda Tomlinson (Black Country LEP).

106. Inquorate Meeting

The meeting was inquorate and therefore decisions taken at the meeting would be submitted to the WMCA Board on 10 February 2023 for formal approval.

107. Minutes - 17 October, 20 October and 15 December 2022

The minutes of the meetings held on 17 October, 20 October and 15 December 2022 were agreed as a correct record.

108. Matters Arising

(a) Trailblazer Devolution Deal (minute no. 92)

At its meeting on 17 October 2022, members considered the findings of the scrutiny working groups that considered each of the trailblazer devolution proposals.

The Chief Executive provided an update on the negotiations with the Government to finalise the trailblazer devolution deal and noted that productive meetings continued to be held with them, with conversations mostly focussing on fiscal devolution and the WMCA's priorities for levelling up zones.

109. Mayoral Question Time: Policy - Response to Observations Presented to the WMCA Board on 16 December 2022

The committee received a response in respect of the observations it had identified following the Mayoral Q&A session on 20 October 2022, based on WMCA policy related matters. The Chair advised that an updated response from the Mayor would be shared in due course.

Recommended to the WMCA Board:

A response from the Mayor to the observations identified by the Overview & Scrutiny Committee following the Mayoral Q&A on 20 October 2022 be shared with the committee.

110. Future Homes Strategy

The committee considered a report of the Head of Strategy & Analysis on the progress in developing a Future Homes Strategy and an aligned technical standard commissioned by the Housing & Land Delivery Board.

It was proposed that once approved, the technical standard would be embedded as an investment criterion for the WMCA's devolved housing & land funds which would enable implementation of the strategy through the WMCA's investment decisions, site acquisitions, disposals and strategic partnerships.

The committee discussed and shared comments in relation to the effectiveness of modern methods of construction and the need for more local manufacturers within the West Midlands, the success of Green Square Accord, the number of modular builds delivered within the region, links between the automotive industry, local supply chain, the level of technical standards, diversity in the design of homes and the need to consider water recycling and retention within new builds.

The Chair sought clarity as to how the relationship between the WMCA and local authorities encouraged local authorities to utilise the opportunities available to enable the speedy delivery of good quality, affordable, carbon

neutral housing. It was proposed that, as part of the development of the Future Homes Strategy, a wider session with members and local authority officers to encourage the utilisation of the opportunities available for new developments would be beneficial.

Recommended to the WMCA Board:

- (1) The work to date to develop a Future Homes Strategy, as commissioned by the Housing & Land Delivery Board, including specialist support and input from the Future Homes Taskforce and local authority partners across the region be noted.
- (2) The next steps and basis for future performance measurement set out within the report be noted.
- (3) A site visit to Green Square Accord be arranged for members of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee.
- (4) As part of the development of the Future Homes Strategy, the proposal to hold a wider session with members and local authority officers to encourage the proactive utilisation of the opportunities available to deliver speedy, affordable and carbon neutral housing be supported.
- (5) The increase in the local supply chain and an aim to drive a locally produced percentage of components be encouraged.

111. Affordable Housing Supply Strategy

The committee considered a report of the Head of Strategy & Analysis on the work to date on the preparation of an Affordable Homes Supply Strategy following the steers of the Housing & Land Delivery Board.

The strategy would contribute directly to WMCA policy objectives and would also be informed by, and aligned with, the recommendations of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee's 2021/22 'Helping to Deliver Affordable and Social Housing' scrutiny review.

The provision of additional social housing in the region was important, and although social rents were prescribed by the Government, it was key for the WMCA to lobby for a change in the legislation. Also, whilst it was important for homes to be affordable to buy, it was equally important for them to be affordable in terms of location and running costs. Members considered that new housing developments had created an increase in car ownership and stressed that the local infrastructure and the WMCA's Local Transport Plan needed to recognise this.

In terms of the number of affordable homes being delivered in the region, members expressed their disappointment where development sites had not produced a mix of available tenure for occupation.

Recommended to the WMCA Board:

- (1) Progress with developing an 'Affordable Homes Supply Strategy', as commissioned by the Housing & Land Delivery Board, to help drive the increased provision of a range of affordable homes within the region to meet local needs and establish the West Midlands as the leading region in terms of affordable homes policy and delivery be noted.
- (2) It be noted that the product of this work would be an integrated strategy, co-developed with partners, that directly supported key policy agendas of the WMCA and local authorities through enabling affordable housing delivery and driving delivery of Future Homes and design quality and the Trailblazer Devolution Deal proposals to the Government.
- (3) The observations of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee regarding the need for genuine affordable housing, an improvement in the relationship between the WMCA, local authorities and developers to secure the delivery of a mix of tenure and the importance of local infrastructure to support the increase in car ownership be noted.
- (4) The next steps as set out within the report be supported.

112. Affordable Housing Delivery Pilot

The committee considered a report of the Head of Strategy & Analysis on the progress being made on the ongoing work of the WMCA and housing association partners to establish a more comprehensive joined up and collective approach to the delivery of additional affordable housing across the region.

In order to deliver the significant additional affordable homes required in the region, the WMCA was focussing on providing added value to the affordable housing supply. The WMCA had been engaging with housing associations with a view to finding collaborative methods that could support the provision of additional social housing within the region. The Affordable Housing Pilot proposed a collaborative partnership with five regional registered providers including, Bromford, Citizen, Green Square Accord, Midland Heart and WHG.

The committee commended the pilot and the ambition to deliver 100% affordable homes. In addition, members questioned and shared comments on a 'brownfield first' approach, the five registered providers, disposal of public assets, the governance process and the consideration of the wider impacts of the pilot including, the impact on local schools and local GP surgeries.

The committee thanked Councillor Mike Bird, Portfolio Lead for Housing & Land for attending the meeting and for his valuable contribution.

Recommended to the WMCA Board:

- (1) The progress with the work taking place under the Housing & Land Delivery Board to improve the collaboration and co-investment in the region between housing associations, public sector bodies and the WMCA to secure more social and affordable housing, a key

recommendation of the Scrutiny Review and a key deliverable for the Housing & Land Delivery Board, be welcomed.

- (2) The progress of work on a pilot which was an innovative joint approach with a group of housing associations in the region to deliver additional affordable housing and wider socio-economic outcomes on specific WMCA-owned sites be welcomed.
- (3) The Overview & Scrutiny Committee receive a future update on the progress being made with the delivery of the Affordable Housing Delivery Pilot and an outline of the governance process.

113. Grant Register

The committee considered a report of the Executive Director of Finance & Business Hub that provided an update on the grant register which contained all current 'live' grants where the WMCA was the accountable body and captured a comprehensive total of grants, awarding body, time period for delivery and a description of what the grant delivered.

In relation to the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund Wave 1 grant, the end date had been extended from 31 March to 31 August 2023 to allow funds to be fully utilised. The committee requested a further report to a future meeting on the utilisation of this fund.

Recommended to the WMCA Board:

- (1) The report be noted.
- (2) A report on the utilisation of the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund Wave 1 including, which local authorities had utilised the fund, be submitted to a future meeting of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee.

114. Minutes - Transport Scrutiny Sub-Committee - 24 November 2022

The committee received the minutes of the Transport Scrutiny Sub-Committee held on 24 November 2022.

Recommended to the WMCA Board:

The minutes of the meeting held on 24 November 2022 be agreed.

115. Work Programme

The committee received a work programme of items that were to be reported to future meetings.

Recommended to the WMCA Board:

The work programme of items to be reported to future meetings be noted.

116. Exclusion of the Public and Press

Resolved:

The public and press be excluded from the meeting in accordance with s100(A) of the Local Government Act 1972, for the following item of business as it was likely to involve the disclosure of exempt information as specified in the paragraphs of the Act.

117. Pre-Decision Scrutiny: LEP Integration: Submission of West Midlands LEP Integration Plan

The committee considered a report of the Executive Director of Economic Delivery, Skills & Communities on the integration of the local enterprise partnership roles and functions into the WMCA.

Members discussed and shared comments on the draft LEP Integration Plan, including the transparency of the process, key risks and the importance of the continuation of the 'business voice' on WMCA committees and boards to help strengthen decision making.

Recommended to the WMCA Board:

The Overview & Scrutiny Committee support the approval of the recommendations contained within the report and being considered by the WMCA Board at its meeting on 13 January 2023.

118. Date of Next Meeting

Monday 13 March 2023 at 10:00am.

The meeting ended at 12.00 pm.