



Overview & Scrutiny Committee

Monday 4 March 2024 at 10.30 am

Minutes

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Present In Person

Councillor Cathy Bayton (Chair)	Association of Black Country Authorities
Councillor Naeem Akhtar (Vice-Chair)	Coventry City Council
Councillor Philip Bateman	City of Wolverhampton Council
Councillor Andrew Burrow	Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council
Councillor Ian Kettle	Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council
Councillor Nigel Lumby	Shropshire Non-Constituent Local Authorities
Councillor Paul Moore	Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council
Councillor Jamie Tennant	Birmingham City Council
Amanda Tomlinson	Business Representative

Present Virtually

Councillor Emma Marshall	Worcestershire Non-Constituent Local Authorities
Councillor Adrian Warwick	Warwickshire Non-Constituent Local Authorities

In Attendance

Ed Cox	Director of Strategy, Economy and Net Zero
Dan Essex	Governance & Scrutiny Manager
Helen Edwards	Director of Law & Governance
Cat Orchard	Head of Commonwealth Games Legacy Enhancement Fund
Lyndsey Roberts	Statutory Scrutiny Officer

Item No.

182. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Ewan Mackey (Birmingham), Councillor Luran Rainbow (Birmingham) and Councillor Vera Waters (Walsall). The Chair noted that Councillor Vera Waters had recently been unwell, and the committee wished her well for a swift recovery.

183. Chair's Remarks

The Chair noted that this was the last meeting of the committee for this mayoral term and thanked members their contribution which resulted in positive outcomes throughout the year. She noted that the comments and recommendations of this committee were increasingly being reflected in reports to the WMCA Board, and she welcomed the importance the board was placing on the work this committee undertook. She also thanked the Statutory Scrutiny Officer, Governance Services Officer and Governance & Scrutiny Manager for the support and advice they had given to members throughout the year.

184. Minutes - 29 January 2024

The minutes of the meeting held on 29 January 2024 were agreed as a correct record.

185. Matters Arising

(a) WMCA Air Quality Framework and Implementation Plan (minute no. 172(b) refers)

The Statutory Scrutiny Officer confirmed that the plan had been sent to local authority lead officers following its approval by the WMCA Board in November 2023.

(b) Joint Overview & Scrutiny Committee – Mayoral Q&A on the Proposed Draft Budget 2024/25 (minute no. 172(c) refers)

The Statutory Scrutiny Officer reported on the progress of the task & finish group that had been established by Transport Delivery Overview & Scrutiny Committee to look into the effectiveness of the WMCA's member engagement and development. A copy of the final report would be shared with the Overview & Scrutiny Committee once it was completed.

(c) Employment & Skills Strategy for Deeper Devolution (minute no. 176 refers)

Councillor Andrew Burrow reported that he had been invited to visit a construction training programme with the Interim Director of for Employment, Skills, Health & Communities and noted that while this programme was in Solihull it was attended by constituents from all across the WMCA region. He considered that it would be helpful for the committee to gain an understanding of other skills offerings across the region. The Chair noted that the skills programme was on the work programme for July and the Statutory Scrutiny Officer agreed to work with the Skills Officer to ensure the committee receive an appropriate report.

(d) Governments Scrutiny Protocol (minute no. 178 refers)

The Chair noted that the Scrutiny Protocol Working Group was set to meet on 13 March.

186. Brownfield Land Remediation Fund - Scrutiny Review Update

Councillor Naeem Akhtar provided an update on the Brownfield Land Remediation Fund scrutiny review. He reported that the review group had met three times, in addition to collaborating with independent experts to assist in the review. He shared the three key main themes emerging for the report in respect of an enhanced brownfield land register covering all sites in the region, the integration of biodiversity (eco off-setting) in new developments and the approvals and application process including regular engagement and communication. He then stated that due to timescales, the final report would be represented at the next committee meeting in July. The Chair confirmed this, and stated that due diligence needed to be done on the report complete with fact checking and the inclusion of robust recommendations.

Resolved:

The update be noted.

187. Commonwealth Games Legacy Enhancement Fund Update

The committee considered a report of the Executive Director of Strategy, Economy & Net Zero on a further, more comprehensive update on the initiatives that would be delivered through Commonwealth Games Legacy Enhancement Fund monies, following a previous update to the committee on 13 March 2023.

The Head of the Commonwealth Games Legacy Enhancement Fund delivered a presentation of the achievements of the programme. She covered the Inclusive Communities Pillar, the Economy Pillar, the Culture programme, and the Community Environment Fund.

One of the prominent aspects discussed was the Inclusive Communities Pillar, which garnered significant attention with over 1,400 applications received, amounting to £72m in requests for a fund of £9m.

Councillor Philip Bateman expressed concerns about the demand issue, questioning how those who did not receive funding would manage. Whilst commending the team for its fair application process, he also emphasised the need for additional funds. In response, the Head of the Commonwealth Games Legacy Enhancement Fund assured the committee that all applicants would receive valuable feedback to improve future applications. She also confirmed that unsuccessful applicants would be signposted towards other funding opportunities available.

In response to Councillor Jamie Tennant, the Head of the Commonwealth Games Legacy Enhancement Fund confirmed that Birmingham Skills contract was approved in February. She also confirmed that funds were allocated equally to each local authority, despite their varying sizes and needs.

The Chair raised questions regarding funding, particularly regarding concerns about funds being spent before the grant period closed in March

2025. In response, the Head of the Commonwealth Games Legacy Enhancement Fund reiterated that monitoring was in place to ensure timely spending, with provisions for reallocation if necessary. Underspend would prompt a review to redirect funds accordingly, and a minimal 2% administrative charge was in place across the programme, reflecting the WMCA's standard practice.

Amanda Tomlinson highlighted impact within the report due to the programme timelines. She requested a deeper understanding of the collective impact of the program on the region. The Head of the Commonwealth Games Legacy Enhancement Fund assured that each fund and program would undergo both internal and independent evaluations, with a commitment to providing a comprehensive report to the committee after March.

Councillor Ian Kettle suggested the potential value a highlight video showcasing the physical evidence of project impacts. The Head of the Commonwealth Games Legacy Enhancement Fund confirmed ongoing efforts with the communications team to develop this aspect as part of the evaluation process.

Resolved:

- (1) The update on progress and impact in relation to the Commonwealth Games Legacy Enhancement Fund, as requested by the committee, be noted.
- (2) Areas of specific interest to the committee to inform a future report in March 2025, or as part of the committee's work programme for 2024-2025, be noted.

[NB. Amanda Tomlinson declared an interest in this item in respect of her chairing Active Black Country.]

188. Grant Register

The committee considered a report of the Executive Director of Finance & Business Hub provided an update on the Grant Register. The report stated that since the last meeting, the WMCA had had confirmation of £133.7m from the Department for Education for the Adult Skills Fund (formerly the Adult Education Budget) for the 2024/25 academic year and £9.4m from the Department for Education to fund Level 3 Free Courses for Jobs for the 2024/25 academic year.

The Chair also requested that future reports being presented at this committee as a result of incoming grants be supported with financial information. In response to a question from Councillor Phillip Bateman, it was confirmed that the committee would receive a briefing note from the Head of Environment to confirm the usage of the Biodiversity Net Fund from the Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs.

Resolved:

The grant register be noted.

189. Work Programme

The committee considered its current work programme and the WMCA 's forward plan.

Resolved:

The committee work plan, as updated, be noted.

The meeting ended at 11:40