



West Midlands Combined Authority

Housing & Land Delivery Board

Wednesday 22 March 2023 at 10.00 am

Minutes

Present

Councillor Mike Bird (Chair)
Councillor Bhupinder Gakhal
Councillor Andy Mackiewicz
Councillor Charn Padda
Councillor Richard Smith

Walsall Metropolitan Borough Council
City of Wolverhampton Council
Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council
Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council
Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough
Council
Environment Agency

Suzanne Ward

In Attendance via MS Teams

Councillor Matthew Dormer
John Mather
Councillor Daren Pemberton

Redditch Borough Council
Homes England
Stratford on Avon District Council

Item Title No.

48. Inquorate meeting

It was noted that the meeting was inquorate and therefore the recommendations contained within the minutes would be submitted to the WMCA Board for formal approval and adoption.

49. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Butlin (Warwickshire), Councillor Fitzgerald (Cannock), Jo Nugent (Homes England), Councillor Overton (Telford & Wrekin), Kevin Rodgers (West Midlands Housing Association Partnership), Councillor Thompson (Birmingham) Dawn Ward (Greater Birmingham & Solihull Local Enterprise Partnership) and Councillor Welsh (Coventry City Council).

50. Notification of Substitutes

John Mather (Homes England) was nominated as a substitute for Jo Nugent.

51. Minutes - 23 January 2023

It be recommended to the WMCA Board that:

The minutes of the meeting held on 23 January 2023 be agreed as a true record.

52. Trailblazer Devolution Deal Update

The board received a presentation from the Head of Strategy & Analysis, Rob Lamond, that provided an update on the Trailblazing Devolution Deal for the West Midlands that was recently announced by Government.

The presentation outlined regeneration funding (£100m Single Regeneration Fund), the land reform and public land partnership with Government, the new approach to the Affordable Homes Programme being piloted with the WMCA and how the WMCA would be responsible for adopting a strategic role in undertaking key decisions over local investment and spend of Affordable Homes Programme (£200m -£400m) in line with its strategic framework.

The Head of Strategy & Analysis also reported on the Strategic Place Partnership with Government and the 6 Levelling Up Zones across the West Midlands that included the East Birmingham- North Solihull corridor; Wolverhampton corridor; Walsall Growth corridor; Dudley Metro corridors (including the Wednesbury to Brierley Hill link) and the Coventry and Warwickshire gigafactory zone.

The Chair reported that the board should be very proud of what has been delivered to date and conveyed his thanks and appreciation to the Mayor of the West Midlands for securing additional funding for the region ahead of the announcement.

The Executive Director of Housing, Property and Regeneration, Gareth Bradford reported that the West Midlands has proven its ability to deliver and has earned the trust of Government with the Trailblazer Devolution Deal (TDD) that represented a significant transfer of power to the region. He added that the new funds would enable mixed use schemes to be taken forward and the development of town centres, whilst this board, and local authorities would have a key role in taking forward projects.

Councillor Gakhal (Wolverhampton) reported that he welcomed the announcements and in particular the £100m Single Regeneration Fund that enables the development of difficult to deliver sites like Parkfields.

In relation to enquiry from Councillor Mackiewicz (Solihull) regarding the controls and audits by Government for the funding, the Executive Director of Housing, Property and Regeneration advised of the WMCA's obligations to Government with regards to the outputs/outcomes of the various funds and where there was a local designation such as the Levelling Up Zones. He highlighted that the main change with the TDD was the way in which decisions were determined.

The board commented on how the Devolution Deal could provide the funding opportunities to roll-out the Help to Own scheme, to retain and re-purpose heritage buildings for housing, and to further develop St. Basil's 'Live and Work' model of supporting young people into employment and securing an affordable home.

In relation to the affordable housing that is split into two phases, the Chair reported that he wanted to see details of the housing schemes identified in the pipeline along with delivery dates in future reports so the board could ensure delivery dates were being met.

The Executive Director of Housing, Property and Regeneration, Gareth Bradford undertook to provide the information and reported that it was very encouraging that expressions of interest with regards to grant funding applications have significantly increased in recent months.

The presentation was noted and circulated to the board for information.

53. Quarterly Report on 2022/23 Housing & Land Portfolio Deliverables, and Progress on Housing & Land Annual Business Plan

The board considered a report of the Executive Director of Housing, Property and Regeneration that provided a regular quarterly update on progress in delivering the High- Level Deliverables for the Housing and Land Portfolio.

The Head of Strategy & Analysis, Rob Lamond reported that meetings are continuing with local authority colleagues on 4-6 weekly basis to continue to build the pipeline of schemes.

It be recommended to the WMCA Board that:

1. The positive progress in achieving the Housing and Land Portfolio's approved Annual Deliverables in Q4 2022/23 to date be noted;
2. The key performance highlights set out in Section 3.0 of the report be noted and
3. The positive performance and effective deployment of the WMCA's Devolved Housing and Land Funds illustrated by the schemes summarised in the confidential annex to the report (many of these schemes are now in delivery phase, having progressed through to the end of the process which shows the role of the WMCA in unlocking, accelerating and problem solving on 'difficult to deliver' schemes be noted.

54. Place Pilots Programme: Introduction

The board considered a report of the Executive Director of Housing, Property and Regeneration that provided an overview of the Place Pilots programme led by the Cabinet Office and its initial launch in the West Midlands.

The Head of Policy & Planning, Pat Willoughby reported that the Place Pilots programme is an is a Cabinet Office initiative delivered through the One Public Estate programme which brings together public sector landowners to deliver a more a collaborative and strategic approach to future public estate demand and supply.

The Head of Policy & Planning reported on the success of two workshops held in November 2022 and January 2023 which have identified several opportunities for potential joint ventures across the region between partners and have provided a deeper insight into estate strategies and requirements within the West Midlands.

It was noted that with regards to the next steps, the Housing, Property and Regeneration Team would continue to engage with local authorities, Government, and public sector organisations to develop an implementation plan for potential projects and initiatives on the themes identified for increased strategic asset management planning across the wider public sector.

Councillor Mackiewicz reported that he welcomed the initiative and enquired as to whether there would be engagement with private landowners and whether the programme would deal with land that has no owner.

The Chair advised that in the case of unknown land ownership, land would revert to the Crown and reported that all necessary steps are taken to identify landowners. He also reported that town centres need to be reinvented as leisure destinations.

Suzanne Ward (Environment Agency) considered this was a great opportunity to use land for resilience purposes such as flood prevention.

It be recommended to the WMCA Board that:

1. That work undertaken to date in collaboration with the Office of Government Property and the Local Government Association around HM Government's Place Pilots Programme be noted;
2. The selection of the West Midlands Combined Authority area as one of the five geographical areas for testing the Place Pilots concept be noted;
3. The potential of the programme to support the regional ambitions for public land in line with the WMCA's Public Land Charter be noted and
4. The continued engagement with the Office of the Government Property and Local Government Association in the Place Pilots programme be noted.

55. Exclusion of the Public and Press

Resolved:

That in accordance with Section 100A4 of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following items of business as they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information relating to the business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information).

56. Quarterly Report on 2022/23 Housing and Land Portfolio Deliverables, and Progress on Housing and Land Annual Business Plan - Appendix

The board considered the Housing and Land dashboards on the Brownfield Housing Fund, National Competitive Fund and Land Fund that provided an update on performance since the last meeting.

The Head of Strategy & Analysis, Rob Lamond reported that he would include the additional funds referred to as part of the Trailblazer Devolution Deal update in future dashboard reports.

The Executive Director of Housing, Property and Regeneration, Gareth Bradford reported on 4 schemes that are being delayed due to planning issues and advised the board that these would be closely monitored.

It be recommended to the WMCA Board that:

The report be noted.

57. Monday 24 April 2023 at 10.00am

The meeting ended at 11.00 am.