



WEST MIDLANDS COMBINED AUTHORITY

WMCA Housing and Land Delivery Board

Wednesday 15 November 2017 at 10.00 am

Minutes

Present

Councillor Sean Coughlan (Chair)
Councillor Peter Bilson
Councillor Steven Claymore
David Cockroft
Councillor Majid Mahmood
Councillor Paul Moore
Kevin Rodgers

Councillor Mark Shurmer
Karl Tupling
Councillor Peter Butlin
Councillor David Humphreys
Councillor Nic Laurens

Walsall Metropolitan Borough Council
City of Wolverhampton Council
Tamworth Borough Council
Coventry City Council
Birmingham City Council
Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council
West Midlands Housing Association
Partnership
Redditch Borough Council
Housing and Communities Agency
Warwickshire County Council
North Warwickshire Borough Council
Shropshire Council

In Attendance

Carl Craney
Nick Glover
Tim Johnson
Steve Maxey
Patrick White

West Midlands Combined Authority
Greater Birmingham & Solihull LEP
City of Wolverhampton Council
North Warwickshire Borough Council
West Midlands Combined Authority

Item Title No.

1. Chair's Announcement

The Chair welcomed those present at the inaugural meeting of the Board and introduced himself as Chair. He explained the purpose of the Board as being to drive the delivery of the housing and employment land needed to deliver the ambitions detailed in the Economic Strategy. The Board would be supported by an Officers' Group that had made good progress on developing the pipeline of schemes which would underpin delivery. He commented on the need to accelerate house building to drive the economy forward and acknowledged the different challenges, problems and priorities in the region which could be addressed better by collaborative working.

2. Apologies for Absence (if any)

Apologies for absence had been received from Bill Blincoe (Coventry and Warwickshire Local Enterprise Partnership), Councillor Ian Courts (Solihull MBC), Councillor Dennis Harvey (Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough Council), Simon Marks (Greater Birmingham and Solihull Local Enterprise Partnership), Sarah Middleton (Black Country Local Enterprise Partnership), Councillor Richard Overton (Telford and Wrekin Council) and Councillor Chris Saint (Stratford on Avon District Council).

At the request of the Chair, Carl Craney updated the Board on changes to and additions in membership of the Board namely:

Councillor Nic Laurens – Shropshire Council;
Councillor Peter Butlin – Warwickshire County Council;
Councillor David Humphreys – North Warwickshire Borough Council; and
Sarah Middleton – Black Country Local Enterprise Partnership.

3. Declarations of Interests (if any)

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

4. Draft Forward Work Programme

Patrick White presented a report which detailed the Terms of Reference of the Board and which proposed a structured work plan. He explained that the aim was to deliver the increase in housing and employment land needed across the West Midlands, with a focus on implementing the priority actions agreed in the Housing Delivery Plan. He outlined the work which had been undertaken to date and the Work Streams which needed to be commissioned to develop the priorities outlined in the Land Delivery Action Plan.

The Chair referred to the use of the term 'Spatial Expression / Integrated Investment Plan' and advised that the Government was of the view that a 'Spatial Plan' for the West Midlands was required. This view was not shared currently by the WMCA Mayor or the WMCA Leaders. The Land Delivery Plan had proposed a delivery focussed plan which was what Officers would work up for consideration by the Board.

Councillor Majid Mahmood suggested that the Board should consider its role in overseeing the 3,000 housing units at Perry Barr which would be used as the 'Athletes Village' if Birmingham's bid to host the Commonwealth Games in 2022 was successful and other major projects. In any event these units would be constructed and utilised as general purpose housing. He suggested that the Terms of Reference should also make reference to working with Housing Associations to achieve its aims. The Chair advised that whilst the WMCA supported Birmingham's bid to host the Commonwealth Games it was for Birmingham City Council to oversee the construction of these particular housing units. Kevin Rodgers advised that he represented the various Housing Associations operating in the West Midlands.

Councillor Mark Shurmer queried whether the housing needs of the West Midlands metropolitan area could be delivered within that area or whether it would be necessary to seek assistance from adjoining District and Borough Councils. The Chair advised that this issue was of great importance but took the opportunity to remind the Board that the housing need to be provided was not confined to the metropolitan area but to the Greater Birmingham Housing Market Area. He also referred to the existing working arrangements, for example, between the City of Wolverhampton Council and Telford and Wrekin Council and South Staffordshire District Council. This matter would form part of the on-going discussions.

Steve Maxey commented that he supported the proposals detailed in the Work Plan. Councillor Peter Bilson commented on the need to look across the region and to acknowledge the different challenges faced by the respective Councils. He also referred to the importance of land remediation and the funds which were available to make land deliverable economically. With regard to the various pieces of work to be commissioned, he suggested that the various Project Briefs for the next stages of delivery be circulated to members of the Board for information.

The Chair informed the Board of a recent meeting in the Black Country with H M Treasury Officials which had also been attended by the Chamber of Commerce and the Black Country Local Enterprise Partnership where the latter two organisations had been very supportive of the current work.

Resolved:

1. That the Terms of Reference for the Board, as agreed by the WMCA Board, and detailed at Appendix 1 to the report be noted;
2. That the forward work plan of the Board as detailed at Appendix 2 to the report be approved;
3. That the following priorities from the Land Delivery Action Plan be developed and commissioned through the WMCA working through the Housing and Land Steering Group:
 - I. Integrated Pipeline (underway);
 - II. Spatial Expression / Integrated investment Plan;
 - III. Investment Prospectus; and
 - IV. Market Ready Site Business Plans;
4. That the various outline Project Briefs be circulated to members of the Board.

5. **Update on Housing Deal**

Patrick White reported on early discussions with Government in relation to a potential 'Housing Deal' and on the opportunity to work with the Government, especially the Department for Communities and Local Government, to increase delivery, address land remediation and market failure. He advised that following preliminary discussions with the Government and the Homes and Community Agency a brief reference to a potential 'Housing Deal' was anticipated in the forthcoming Budget linked to the Housing Investment Fund. He outlined the negotiating position adopted by the WMCA i.e. that a Spatial Plan was not necessary but that significant investment in housing, land remediation and associated transport infrastructure was necessary over a long term period. He noted that the Housing Market Area requirements and supply issues differed between partners across the region and advised that over the next three / four months a number of options would be worked through. The common goal was to build homes and sustainable communities to underpin inclusive growth.

The Chair noted the WMCA Mayoral aspirations for housing. He advised that the Mayor and he would be lobbying all local MPs and relevant Ministers to garner support on housing and also making the related to other issues such as Skills and Employment.

Councillor David Humphreys advised that two thirds of the area of North Warwickshire Borough Council was situate within the Green Belt. He referred to a recent decision made by the WMCA's Investment Board to grant £3.690 million to Telford and Wrekin Council to assist in bringing forward approximately 540 housing units across that area. He enquired whether similar support would be made available to bring forward smaller development sites where existing housing units had come to the end of their lifespan. The Chair commented that such funds might be made available on a case by case basis. He added that the original name of the Land Remediation Fund had been amended to the Brownfield Land and Property Development Fund to cater for such instances.

Karl Tupling reported on the progress being made to investigate the portfolio of land coming forward and noted the aggregate effect of the development of a number of smaller development sites. These sites were also likely to be more attractive to small and medium sized developers.

The Chair commented on the maturity of partnership working in the West Midlands and on the founding principle intention that each community would benefit from its creation albeit not necessarily in the same way or at the same time.

Councillor Paul Moore enquired whether the Brownfield Technology Institute and a Modular Housing Manufacturing plant would form part of the 'Housing Deal' discussions. Patrick White confirmed this to be the case. The Chair referred to the very successful Modular Housing Manufacturing plant operated by Accord Housing in Walsall and that an indication of this success was the need to identify a larger site.

Councillor Majid Mahmood referred to the difficulties arising upon the practice of some developers to 'land bank' and on the difficulties this caused with developable land, often with the benefit of planning permission, remaining undeveloped. He suggested action to prevent this practice was required and that the WMCA Mayor should be encouraged to use his influence with regard to this issue. He also suggested that any land identified for development needed to be matched by appropriate proposals for transport infrastructure. He also commented on the need to address social deprivation through the provision of social housing units and partnership working.

In summing up, the Chair noted the various points and commented that it would be important to retain the involvement of all sectors of the housing and development industry, given that the West Midlands needed a broad mixture of tenures. Councillor Peter Butlin commented on the length of time that could be involved in the various planning permission stages from the initial grant of Outline Consent, through negotiations on Section 106 Agreements, approval of Reserved Matters before construction need commence. The Chair reported that these issues had been raised with Government and that the WMCA Mayor and he would continue to press for positive action.

Patrick White advised that these issues could be discussed with Government as part of the negotiations on a 'Housing Deal' and assured the Board that the pipeline schemes were integrated with proposed infrastructure developments. The development priorities would be determined through the pipeline. The Chair reminded the Board that the West Midlands had a 30 year history of developing an integrated transport infrastructure and was in a better position than other Combined Authorities as such.

The meeting ended at 10.50 am.