

# An introduction to Overview & Scrutiny within the WMCA

**10 July 2023**

# What is WMCA Overview & Scrutiny?

Overview & Scrutiny are statutory functions of the West Midlands Combined Authority

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The WMCA's two scrutiny committees provide important challenge and oversight of the work of the Mayor, WMCA boards/committees, Portfolio Lead Members and officers.

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The committees perform two distinct functions under the remit of 'Overview' and 'Scrutiny':

**Overview** - focusing on the development of policy. This form of scrutiny is carried out in the earlier stages of policy development.

**Scrutiny** - looking at decisions that have been made or are about to be made. This form of scrutiny is often carried out in the immediate weeks leading up to a decision being made.

# What We Do & How We Do it

Identifying matters of concern or interest - Being informed of the relevant issues - Shaping policy decisions - Making recommendations for action or change.

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**Pre-Development Scrutiny:** Considering potential strategies, policies and proposals to inform their shaping and drafting earlier in their development.

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**Pre-Decision Scrutiny:** Looking at topics/reports immediately before decisions are made by the WMCA Board.

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Undertaking **deep dives and topic-based reviews** and making reports and recommendations to be considered by the WMCA Board and or its boards/committees.

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Exercising the power of **Call-In** of decisions.

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Monitoring the **implementation, performance** and **impact** of policies and decisions of the WMCA

# The difference between local and combined authority scrutiny?

## Local authority scrutiny

Focus on strategic matters but with operational delivery influencing and informing where scrutiny's priorities lie.

Partnership is important to delivery but scrutiny is often about the council, as an institution, doing things.

Involves oversight of a very wide range of service, safeguarding and community issues.

## Combined authority scrutiny

Highly strategic - long-term strategies to deliver change in 10+ years time, mixed with operational oversight of transport.

Partnership is fundamental to the delivery of its priorities - everything the CA does is about partners and partnership.

Driven by devolution deals - primary focus on economy and growth. Also oversight on operational matters such as transport.

# Characteristics of scrutiny

Scrutiny is a fundamental part of the WMCA's governance and decision making processes. Scrutiny is at the heart of good decision making, as made clear by the Government in its recent devolution deal with the region. Within the WMCA, good scrutiny is being built on four key characteristics:

## **CONSTRUCTIVE SCRUTINY**

'Providing a critical friend challenge to decision makers'

## **COLLABORATIVE SCRUTINY**

'To work in collaboration with the WMCA to support the development of strategies, policies and proposals to help improve the region'

## **EVIDENCED-BASED SCRUTINY**

'To pursue lines of enquiry that will challenge decision makers to explain, provide the evidence and justify their reasoning'

## **PRODUCTIVE SCRUTINY**

'To ensure that scrutiny activity is focused on where it will have the biggest impact'

# Work Planning & Programming

Cannot scrutinise and monitor *everything*, so choosing what you do is a key determinant of good scrutiny:

- Do we understand the benefits scrutiny would bring to this issue?
- How could we best carry out work on this subject?
- What would be the best outcome of this work?
- How would this work engage with the activity of the WMCA and other decision-makers, including partners?

# Different ways to undertake scrutiny

- Regular scheduled agenda items at committee meetings.
- Special overview & scrutiny committees to consider single items.
- Q&A sessions with politicians, officers, partners.
- An informal briefing session to better understand an issue.
- Scrutiny Champions charged with carrying out a review to report back to the committee.
- ‘Deep Dives’.
- Public engagement.
- Inviting external experts/witnesses to meetings.

# Questions?