



West Midlands  
Combined Authority

## Environment & Energy Board

<b>Date</b>	12 July 2023
<b>Report title</b>	Community engagement update: Greener Together Citizens' Panel and Greener Together Forum
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### **Recommendation(s) for action or decision:**

#### **The Environment and Energy Board is recommended to:**

- a) Note the work of the Greener Together Citizens' Panel (the Panel) and consider their recommendations and concerns to inform our energy and environment programme.
- b) Provide feedback on how members would like to be engaged or informed by the Panel and Greener Together Forum (the Forum) going forward.

## **1. Purpose**

To provide a progress update on delivery of the Greener Together Citizens' Panel and the Greener Together Forum. This item will also provide opportunity to hear from two members of the Panel on the work that they have undertaken to date and their experience of being involved.

## **2. Background**

- 2.1 An important part of the work undertaken by the WMCA Environment Team and Energy Capital is to include people and communities and support ways they can provide input into our programme. We are doing this in two ways – through a Citizens' Panel and a Greener Together Forum.
- 2.2 These two approaches are distinct, but complimentary. This paper outlines recent developments with both approaches, although the focus of the Board discussion will be on the Panel. We will be joined by two representatives from the Panel who will share their experiences of being involved in this work and how they hope it will influence the energy and environment programme at the WMCA.

### **Greener Together Citizens' Panel**

- 2.3 With the approval of the WMCA's Five Year Plan, funding was allocated from the Investment Programme to support the establishment of a Citizens' Panel. The aim of this was to bring ideas and input from a representative group of citizens, through a process of 'deliberative democracy', into the work of the Environment Team and Energy Capital. This could be through influencing policy, delivery or taking decisions on where budget might be allocated within the remit of the programme.
- 2.4 In order to support the establishment of the Panel, the WMCA Environment Team commissioned Involve UK, a leader in deliberative democracy, to support the work. This will take place over an initial two-year period and will include a combination of in-person and online meetings, drawing on Involve's experience of how to maximise the time the Panel has together to provide input into the policy area under discussion. The aim will be to find continuation funding for the Panel beyond this initial two years, potentially broadening the scope beyond environment and energy.
- 2.5 The Panel was recruited by the Sortition Foundation to ensure that it is representative of people who live within the West Midlands. Using the process of sortition, 9,000 letters were sent to a random selection of households in the West Midlands. From those who responded to the invitation to join the panel, a stratified selection process took place to ensure the final Panel composition is a significantly representative sample of people based on their demographics, geography, and attitude towards climate change. There are at least two panel members from each of the 7 local authorities in the WMCA. The target Panel composition, response to the invitation and final composition is reflected here:

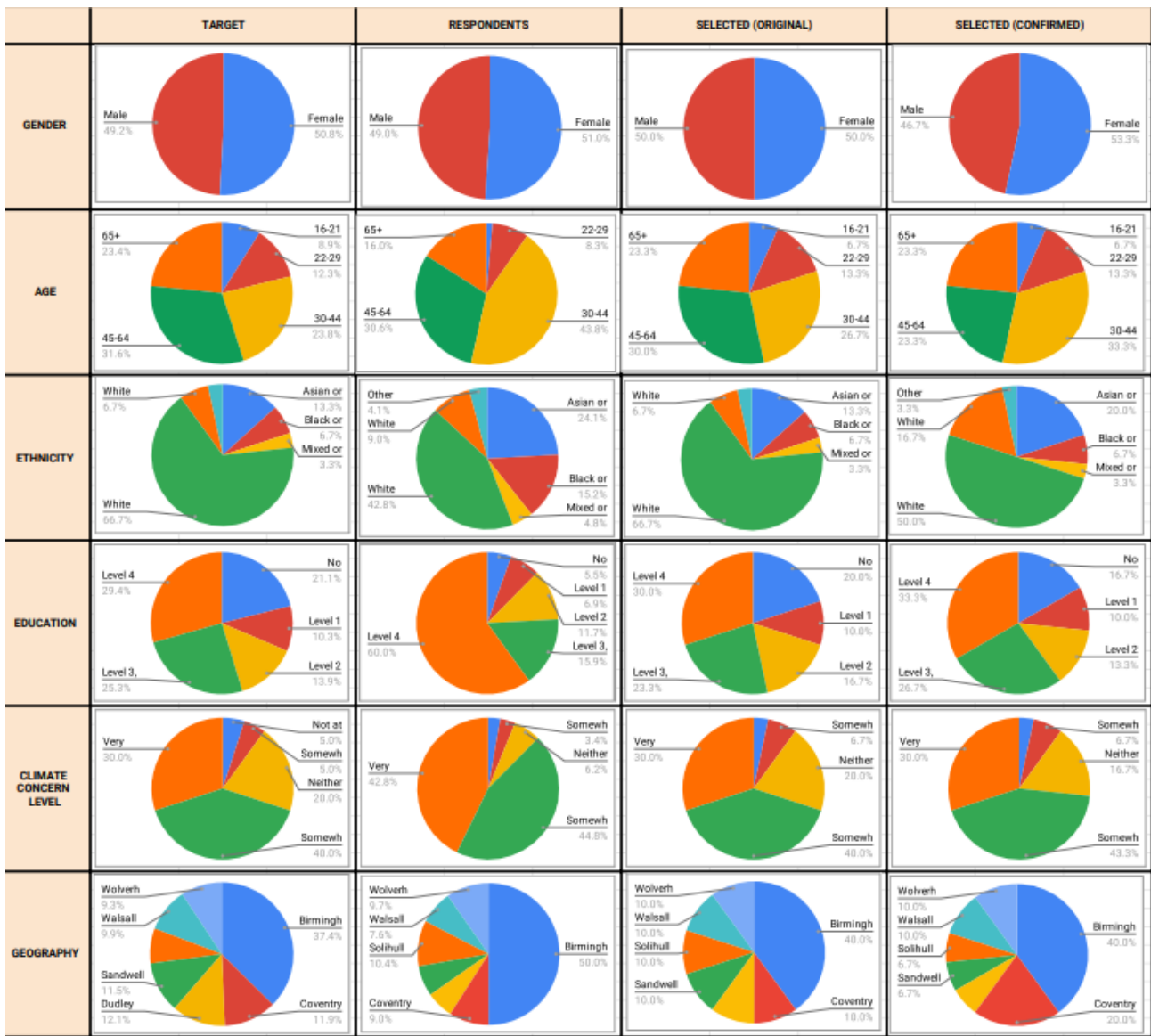


Figure 1: Sortition Foundation pie charts showing the demographic, geographical and attitudinal mix of the confirmed panel participants.

- 2.6 The Panel met in-person in Birmingham for the first time on the 13th May 2023 for an all-day session. The purpose of this was for people to get to know one another and learn the fundamentals of the climate and ecological crisis – people came to this initial meeting from different starting points in their knowledge and awareness. There was opportunity for informal conversation, group work and plenary discussion. The facilitation provided by Involve is designed so that all voices are heard throughout the process.
- 2.7 Following on from this initial ‘kick-off’ meeting, the current plan is for the Panel to meet 4 more times over the next 22 months on different topics of interest. These are currently planned as online sessions and each topic involves two Saturday morning sessions. Participants are being reimbursed for the time they are contributing to the Panel. For the remainder of 2023, the two topics that will be discussed are:

- Air quality (on 13<sup>th</sup> June and 8<sup>th</sup> July). This has been the first topic given the timing of the WMCA's Air Quality Framework. The Panel members attending the Board will reflect on this area of work.
- Retrofit (in Sept and Oct), especially how we accelerate energy efficiency measures in homes across the West Midlands.

2.8 The two different blocks for each topic allow time for the Panel to hear from people working in a particular area, that have specialist knowledge, and to ask questions and build their understanding. For the air quality session, Professor William Bloss (University of Birmingham WM-Air project) and Maddy Dawe (Regional Campaigns and Policy Officer, Asthma and Lung UK) came to speak about what air pollution is, as well as its impacts on health. The second session is where the Panel will deliberate and share their recommendations for the WMCA to incorporate in ways appropriate to the topic. For the Air Quality Framework, this will be on developing a set of principles that should be considered when implementing the suggested measures.

2.9 To help decide on the initial topics to take to the Panel, we invited local authority officers, WMCA and Transport for West Midlands officers, and other interested stakeholders to a workshop with Involve UK. For subsequent sessions, topics may be brought forward in discussion with the Panel – several ideas were suggested at the plenary session on 13 May.

2.10 To ensure that the Panel is impactful, an Advisory Board has been established to support Involve UK and the WMCA with delivery. The membership has been shaped around the topics for discussion in 2023 and will therefore be refreshed for 2024. Current Advisory Board members include;

- Professor William Bloss, Head of Atmospheric Sciences, University of Birmingham
- Elizabeth Goodchild, Strategic Partnership Manager, BVSC
- Rachel Jones, Chief Executive, Act on Energy
- Amelie Pollet, Participatory Democracy Coordinator, London Borough of Newham
- George Simms, SMART Hub Lead, WMCA

2.11 All presentations and notes captured at each Panel meeting are shared on the WMCA's website to ensure transparency in terms of topic the Panel is discussing and their recommendations for the WMCA. Any questions asked within the Panel will be captured and uploaded to the website with answers.

### **Greener Together Quarterly Forum**

2.12 In November 2021, the West Midlands Climate Coalition, formerly known as the COP26 Coalition, handed a petition to the Mayor at the WMCA Board meeting, calling on the WMCA to establish a forum to engage with NGOs and campaign groups. The Greener Together Forum was established in March 2022 by the WMCA.

- 2.13 The Forum aims to meet four times a year to discuss important topics relating to our energy and environment work. Topics already discussed include tree planting, retrofit projects, fuel poverty, public transport and food poverty. Topics are chosen through polls sent to Forum members to allow them to pick what is of most interest to them.
- 2.14 The aim of the Forum is to create a space for environmental NGOs, climate activities, community groups, the public and others from across the region to collaborate on topics related to regional energy and environment concerns (as distinct from the WMCA environment and energy programme). The Forum provides an open and inclusive platform for the sharing of information as well as providing a space for the WMCA and other organisations to update one another and the wider community on the work being undertaken to achieve targets. Terms of reference for the Forum can be found on the WMCA's environment and energy pages.
- 2.15 The Forum has met five times since February 2022 discussing topics relevant to our energy and environment work, attracting 40+ people to each meeting. The Forum hears from topical speakers and breaks into smaller groups to discuss what was presented. Each Forum ends with a plenary discussion and a briefing note is shared following each session summarising key discussions and action points.
- 2.16 We have agreed that all Greener Together Forum briefing notes will be shared with the Environment and Energy Board to ensure the opportunities, challenges and opinions of the Forum members are heard by the Board and actions, which are in the remit of the WMCA, can be taken.
- 2.17 The Forum meetings are held in the evenings to maximise the opportunity for people to attend. They move around the region but will always be hybrid to enable everyone that wants to be able to join the discussions. We try and host them in community venues to provide opportunity for different community groups to also showcase their work to those attending in-person.
- 2.18 In February 2023, an Advisory Board was formed to help shape the direction and breadth of the panel. The Board meets four times a year and members include;
- David Evans – Principal Behavioural Change and Engagement Officer at Birmingham City Council
  - Perminder Balu – Head of Greener Cities and Circular Economy at City of Wolverhampton Council
  - Tahir Parvaz – Engagement Manager at the Canal and River Trust
  - Kamran Shezad – Sustainability Lead for the BAHU Trust
  - Danielle Parker – West Midlands Climate Coalition member
- 2.19 The briefing note summarising the discussions and actions to be taken can be found in Appendix 1.

### **3. Financial Implications**

There are no financial implications as a result of this update paper, and all activity outlined is already budgeted for.

#### **4. Legal Implications**

There are no legal implications as a result of this paper. Any legal implications will be considered on a project-by-project basis.

#### **5. Equalities Implications**

Ensuring that we have strong deliberative routes to engage the public will provide the opportunity for them to directly influence policies and programmes which will affect their lives and the region. Working with the Sortition Foundation has ensured that the Citizens' Panel is demographically representative of the WMCA region and these citizens are able to bring their lived experiences when deliberating policy areas. The work that we will be taking forward to address these issues will be driven by behaviour change principles and data available to us, ensuring interventions consider equalities issues in their design and therefore constructed and targeted appropriately and equitably.

#### **6. Inclusive Growth Implications**

Delivering the Panel and the Forum will support many of the outcomes of the Inclusive Growth Framework. The main ones are:

- supporting the principle of powerful communities through engaging in deliberative democracy to help citizens feel influential;
- Improving education and learning around the climate emergency; and
- reduction of health inequalities.

#### **7. Geographical Area of Report's Implications**

WMCA constituent local authorities.

#### **8. Other Implications**

None.

#### **9. Schedule of Background Papers**

Appendix 1 – Briefing note from 6 June 2023 Forum meeting