



Transport Delivery Overview & Scrutiny Committee

Monday 3 July 2023 at 1.00 pm

Minutes

Present

Councillor John McNicholas (Chair)
Councillor Pervez Akhtar
Councillor Robert Alden
Councillor Aqeela Choudhry
Councillor Amo Hussain
Councillor Timothy Huxtable
Councillor Carol Hyatt
Councillor Mary Locke
Councillor Emma Marshall

Councillor Martin McCarthy
Councillor Barbara McGarrity
Councillor Steve Melia
Councillor Saddak Miah
Councillor Josh O'Nyons
Councillor Gurmeet Singh Sohal
Councillor David Stanley
Councillor Alan Taylor
Councillor Ian Ward

Coventry City Council
Coventry City Council
Birmingham City Council
Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council
Walsall Metropolitan Borough Council
Birmingham City Council
City of Wolverhampton Council
Birmingham City Council
Worcestershire Non-Constituent Local
Authorities
Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council
City of Wolverhampton Council
Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council
Birmingham City Council
Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council
Walsall Metropolitan Borough Council
Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council
Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council
Birmingham City Council

In Attendance

Pete Bond
Dan Essex
Lyndsey Roberts
Anne Shaw

Sandeep Shingadia

Kate Taylor

Director of Integrated Transport Services
Governance Services Manager
Statutory Scrutiny Officer
Executive Director for Transport for West
Midlands
Director of Strategic Partnerships &
Integration
Head of Finance Business Partnering &
Strategic Planning

Item Title
No.

1. Election of Chair

The Governance Services Manager reported that the WMCA Board had appointed Councillor John McNicholas as chair of this committee for 2023/24.

2. Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Zaker Choudhry (Birmingham), Councillor Narinder Kaur Kooner (Birmingham) and Councillor Antony Tucker (Coventry).

3. Councillor Ian Brookfield, City of Wolverhampton Council

The Chair reported the news that Councillor Ian Brookfield, Leader of the City of Wolverhampton Council, had sadly died on 2 July. Members paid tribute to Councillor Ian Brookfield's long career of public service, along with his strong advocacy for the importance of public transport. A minute's silence was observed in his memory.

4. Terms of Reference

The Governance Services Manager provided a verbal update on the terms of reference for the committee and he indicated that the terms of reference had been agreed by the WMCA Board, but that these were subject to change over the course of the year, as the committee become more established, to reflect its evolution.

Resolved:

The terms of reference for the committee be noted.

5. Transport for West Midlands Overview

The Director of Integrated Services reported that new members had received a presentation from the Executive Director of Transport for West Midlands at the recent members induction session which covered TfWM activity, including Swift and ticketing, safety and security, rail and metro programmes, bus delivery options, the Regional Transport Co-ordination Centre and network resilience programmes. He indicated that a similar presentation would be arranged for all members of the committee ahead of the next meeting.

Resolved:

The update be noted.

6. Transport for West Midlands Reimagined

The Director of Transport for West Midlands provided an update on the reorganisation of the delivery functions within TfWM. The reorganisation had been undertaken following a maturity assessment review and sought to achieve improved performance and budget management and reduce silo working. This new structure would help improve the capital programme delivery that was reported to the committee, enabling members to provide meaningful oversight and scrutiny. A consultation within the directorate had been conducted and the structure went live on 3 July.

In response to questions from Councillor David Stanley and Councillor Saddak Miah, the Statutory Scrutiny Officer confirmed that scrutiny training would be provided for members and would be delivered both internally and externally, throughout the year. The Chair asked members to confirm with the Governance Service Officer those areas they were particularly keen to receive training on.

Resolved:

The update on Transport for West Midlands' recent restructure be noted.

7. Scrutiny within the WMCA

The Governance Services Manager and the Statutory Scrutiny Officer provided a presentation on the overview and scrutiny function within the WMCA. The presentation stressed that scrutiny was a statutory function of the WMCA, and set out examples of how it was conducted within the WMCA, as well as differences between local authority scrutiny and combined authority scrutiny.

The Chair enquired as to how social media could be used to engage with the public better. The Executive Director of Transport for West Midlands outlined the different social media channels used by the WMCA and TfWM, stating that they were used to share information on different projects and initiatives being undertaken. She confirmed that a social media plan was in place for the production and release of content, and that she would seek to build on this plan to include the committee and its activities.

In response to a question from Councillor David Stanley, the Governance Services Manager provided a summary of how decisions of the WMCA Board could be 'called in' by this committee, along with the role the committee Chair played in the WMCA's processes for determining urgent items of business.

Councillor Carol Hyatt requested that performance data be included within reports submitted to the committee. The Executive Director of Transport for West Midlands noted this and undertook to ensure that performance data was produced in a way that was useful to the committee. Councillor Carol Hyatt also requested a carbon footprint dashboard in respect of the WMCA's net zero targets. Councillor Timothy Huxtable suggested that this suggestion be considered at the Air Quality, Congestion & Environmental Impact Member Engagement Group.

Resolved:

The presentation on scrutiny within the WMCA be noted.

8. Financial Monitoring Report

The Head of Finance Business Partnering & Strategic Planning updated the committee on the financial monitoring report. She stated that the information provided was the position as at the end of May 2023, and provided an update of both the TfWM revenue budget, which showed a favourable variance of £0.6m, and the capital programme budget, which showed a favourable variance of £0.7m.

Resolved:

(1) The position as at 31 May 2023 against the TfWM revenue budget, which showed a favourable variance of £0.6m, be noted.

(2) The TfWM capital programme position as at 31 May 2023, which showed a favourable variance of £0.7m for WMCA delivered schemes and an adverse variance of £0.1m for externally delivered schemes, be noted.

9. Bus Funding Update

The Director of Integrated Transport Services provided a verbal update on bus funding within the region, giving an overview of the latest position. He indicated that Government support had been in place since 2020 by way of grant funding. Operators were currently running 90% of services compared to pre-Covid numbers and that this figure was favourable compared to other regions. He stressed that as much as possible had been done to preserve the bus network across the region, before sharing other activities being undertaken relating to policing and ticketing.

Councillor David Stanley noted recent passenger experiences that had been reported to him relating to the fares being charged and the lack of reliability in the timetable. The Director of Integrated Transport Services confirmed that fare capping existed on most, but not all, service routes. He also stated that reliability was now being monitored on a route-by-route basis, to identify where improvements and mitigation could be made.

Councillor Ian Ward noted that while the single fare was capped, all other fares were rising. Councillor Barbara McGarrity noted that the increase in bus fares had resulted in an increase in the combined tram/bus ticket, but felt that this had not been adequately communicated to passengers. The Executive Director of Transport for West Midlands reported that the recent fares rises had been communicated to the public, but it was clear that not all passengers had seen this and therefore consideration would be given to improving this in future similar circumstances.

Councillor Pervez Akhtar highlighted the commercial nature of bus operators within the region, noting that other combined authority areas operated different models that he considered gave greater priority to passenger needs.

Resolved:

The report be noted.

10. Refreshed Regional Road Safety Strategy Launch

The Regional Road Safety Manager presented the launch of the refreshed Regional Road Safety Strategy. He asked the committee to consider the refreshed strategy, which included more information on the Vision Zero initiative which was a targeted reduction in the number of those killed and seriously injured on the network. He indicated that the strategy also included a broader evidence base for performance and revised societal costs. He reported that the launch was intended for July, but it was planned to be delayed until September to apply the appropriate response to the most recent incidents of those killed and seriously injured within the region.

Councillor Carol Hyatt asked for road safety information to be shared with local authorities and councillors for them to be able to distribute information to their constituents in the future. The Regional Road Safety Manager confirmed that the link was shared with local authority communications teams, and assured the committee that he would continue to engage with them as part of that suggested dissemination of information. He also shared lessons on how to engage the right demographics in specific online spaces.

Councillor Steve Melia noted the concerns expressed by many regarding the safety of e-scooters. The Regional Road Safety Manager reported that new Government regulations were due to be released shortly, which was expected to take into account the results of all the trial schemes being monitored. Councillor Carol Hyatt asked if the new e-scooters would use geofencing, the technology that sets boundaries within which the e-scooters can operate. The Executive Director of Transport for West Midlands indicated that the pilot scheme had geofencing and speed restrictions in certain locations, and she assured the committee that the new operator of the next pilot scheme was just as robust. She reminded the members that the measures only applied to the e-scooters for hire and TfWM did not have control over the use of privately owned e-scooters.

Resolved:

The refreshed Regional Road Safety Strategy be endorsed for approval at the WMCA Board meeting on 21 July 2023.

11. Appointment of Scrutiny Champions and Member Engagement Groups

The Chair reported that nominations had been received from members to sit on the respective Member Engagement Groups. Councillor Timothy Huxtable suggested renaming the Passenger Safety MEG to become Passenger & Road Safety MEG, which was supported. The Chair asked that all MEGs consider their terms of reference to ensure their remit was appropriate. The Governance Services Manager indicated that he would circulate the list of the membership of each MEG, scrutiny champions and lead officers.

Resolved:

(1) The membership of the six Member Engagement Groups and the six Scrutiny Champions be approved.

12. Draft Work Programme

The Statutory Scrutiny Officer presented the draft work programme. She reminded members that this was a rolling programme, and should members wish to suggest items for the programme they should contact Governance Services. She also stated that the Chair and Vice-Chair would work together with scrutiny champions to develop the work plan.

Councillor Timothy Huxtable enquired whether member briefing sessions would be held in the morning of committee meetings. The Statutory Scrutiny Officer confirmed that these would be arranged on future meeting dates.

13. Date of Next Meeting

Monday 4 September 2023 at 1.00pm.

The meeting ended at 3.10 pm.