



WMCA Board

Friday 21 July 2023 at 11.00 am

Minutes

Constituent Members

Andy Street (Chair)	Mayor of the West Midlands Combined Authority
Councillor Bob Sleight (Vice-Chair)	Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council
Councillor Mike Bird	Walsall Metropolitan Borough Council
Councillor Paul Bradley	Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council
Councillor John Cotton	Birmingham City Council
Councillor Ian Courts	Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council
Councillor George Duggins	Coventry City Council
Councillor Patrick Harley	Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council
Councillor Stephen Simkins	City of Wolverhampton Council
Councillor Sharon Thompson	Birmingham City Council

Non-Constituent Members

Councillor Andy Crump	Warwickshire County Council
Councillor Matthew Dormer	Redditch Borough Council
Councillor Tony Johnson	Cannock Chase District Council
Councillor Kristofer Wilson	Nuneaton & Bedworth Borough Council

Co-opted Member

Lee Barron	Midlands Trades Union Congress
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Observer Member

Councillor Greg Brackenridge	West Midlands Fire Authority
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In Attendance

Richard Barlow	Young Combined Authority
Councillor Cathy Bayton	Overview & Scrutiny Committee
Hamaam Shire	Young Combined Authority
Mark Smith	Audit, Risk & Assurance Committee

20. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Adrian Andrew (Walsall), Councillor Kerrie Carmichael (Sandwell), Councillor Shaun Davies (Telford & Wrekin), Councillor Abdul Khan (Coventry), Councillor Susan Juned (Stratford-on-Avon), Councillor Lezley Picton (Shropshire), Councillor Bob Piper (Sandwell), Councillor Derek Poole (Rugby), Councillor Izzi Seccombe (Warwickshire), Councillor Paul Turner (Tamworth) and Councillor David Wright (North Warwickshire).

21. Chair's Remarks

(a) Councillor Ian Brookfield, City of Wolverhampton Council

The Chair noted the recent sad death of Councillor Ian Brookfield, Leader of the City of Wolverhampton Council and the WMCA's Portfolio Lead for Economy & Innovation. He paid tribute to his public service across the region and the significant contribution he had made to the WMCA during his time on the authority. Councillor Stephen Simkins highlighted his strong sense of fairness and an unwavering desire to help people. Members of the board echoed these comments and observed a minute's silence in his memory.

(b) Paul Johnson, Chief Executive, Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council

The Chair congratulated Paul Johnson on his recent appointment as the new Chief Executive of Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council.

22. Minutes - 9 June 2023

The minutes of the meeting held on 9 June 2023 were agreed as a correct record. In respect of minute no. 138 ('Appointment of WMCA Boards and Committees 2023/24'), it was agreed that Councillor John McNicholas be appointed Chair of the Transport Delivery Overview & Scrutiny Committee, and Councillor Matthew Dormer be appointed as the non-constituent authorities' representative on the Investment Board.

23. Forward Plan

The forward plan of items to be reported to future meetings of the board was noted.

24. Regional Activity & Delivery Update

The board received a presentation from the Director of Communications setting out the regional activity in recent months. The WMCA's 2023 Investment Prospectus had been launched, setting out £20bn worth of opportunities to invest in a diverse range of housing, commercial, regeneration and infrastructure projects, a £12.6m boost for the West Midlands' growing cycle network, and a commitment from SEGRO to invest £2bn over the coming decade to deliver next generation, net-zero warehouse facilities. The presentation also highlighted regional trends in respect of business activity, the labour market and employment.

Councillor Mike Bird requested that a future presentation also provide details on the activity of Birmingham Airport so that the board could get a clearer picture of its current operations.

Resolved:

The update be noted.

25. Financial Monitoring Report 2023/24

The board considered a report of the Executive Director of Finance & Business Hub providing an update on the WMCA's finances as at 31 May 2023, an update on the medium-term financial strategy and the risks facing the organisation. The report provided details of the 2022/23 treasury activities and highlighted compliance with policy and strategy previously approved in relation to treasury management.

Within transport, there was a surplus of £900,000 which represented a favourable variance from budget of £600,000. Apart from the savings arising from vacancies, the most notable variances related to concessions where savings to date due to lower patronage and fare levels had been transferred to a reserve to protect against future risks in relation to the transport network. The main risk in relation to the network related to the commercial viability of the sector and the increasing requirement for significant on-going public funding if access standards were to be maintained.

Councillor Mike Bird noted the importance of the WMCA agreeing a plan to stabilise transport funding, including determining future levels of the transport levy. Councillor Patrick Harley noted the importance of identifying trends in passenger usage when identifying new transport schemes to ensure that there was a proactive development of the region's transport network.

Resolved:

- (1) The financial position as at 31 May 2023 be noted.
- (2) The continuing policy of transferring in-year savings on concessions budgets to an earmarked reserve to mitigate network risks be approved.
- (3) Authority be delegated to the s151 Officer and appropriate portfolio leads to accept funds awarded to the WMCA ahead of the next WMCA Board meeting on 15 September 2023.
- (4) The update on the WMCA's Medium Term Financial Plan be noted.
- (5) The update on bus recovery funding be noted.
- (6) The intention to utilise a funding package comprised of £40m re-purposed Bus Service Improvement Plan monies, £19m of transport risk reserves and Bus Service Operators Grant+ funding to secure a commitment from operators to maintain the network to December 2024 and to engage with other key commitments in the Enhanced Partnership be noted.
- (7) The update on the Commonwealth Games Enhancement Legacy Fund be noted.
- (8) The Treasury Management Outturn 2022/23 be noted.

26. Levelling Up Zones and Investment Zones

The board considered a report of the Executive Director of Strategy, Integration & Net Zero providing an update on recent discussions with Government and seeking endorsement of the proposed direction of travel on the West Midlands Levelling Up Zones and Investment Zone propositions.

Investment Zones and Levelling Up Zones had slightly different policy objectives and tools available to them. The approach the WMCA had taken was to ensure that it applied the tools available in the most effective way to meet the different spatial and economic priorities in each zone, whilst seeking to get as close to meeting Government guidance as possible. The WMCA had continued to be clear that for the West Midlands, Investment Zones and Levelling Up Zones had to be developed and announced in parallel. The Government had said that it welcomed and supported this approach.

Councillor John Cotton welcomed the report and stressed the importance of a life sciences site to bring new jobs into the region. The Executive Director of Strategy, Integration & Net Zero undertook to look at whether this could be included within the proposals currently being developed. Councillor Stephen Simkins stressed the importance of these proposals in the region determining for itself what was needed to help drive its levelling up ambitions.

Resolved:

- (1) The emerging proposition on the West Midlands Investment Zone be agreed as the basis for negotiation with Government.
- (2) The emerging proposition for Levelling Up Zones be endorsed as the basis for negotiations with Government.
- (3) That further work be carried out between local authority and combined authority teams to develop a proposal for the WMCA Board on an integrated approach to financing and funding of Levelling Up and Investment Zones.

27. Environment & Energy Board - 1 March 2023

The board considered the minutes of the Environment & Energy Board held on 1 March 2023.

Resolved:

The minutes of the meeting held on 1 March 2023 be noted.

28. Overview & Scrutiny Committee - 13 March 2023

The board considered the minutes of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee held on 13 March 2023.

In respect of minute no. 124 ('Mayoral Question Time: Budget - Response from the Mayor to the Observations Presented to the WMCA Board on 13 January 2023'), Councillor Cathy Bayton reported that the Director of Law & Governance was due to submit a report on the oversight of the WMCA's arm's length companies to a future meeting of the Audit, Risk & Assurance Committee.

Resolved:

The minutes of the meeting held on 13 March 2023 be noted.

29. Investment Board - 17 April 2023

The board considered the minutes of the Investment Board held on 17 April 2023.

Resolved:

The minutes of the meeting held on 17 April 2023 be noted.

30. Audit, Risk & Assurance Committee - 18 April 2023

The board considered the minutes of the Audit, Risk & Assurance Committee held on 18 April 2023.

Resolved:

The minutes of the meeting held on 18 April 2023 be noted.

31. Housing & Land Delivery Board - 24 April 2023

The board considered the minutes of the Housing & Land Delivery Board held on 24 April 2023.

Resolved:

The minutes of the meeting held on 24 April 2023 be noted.

32. Young Combined Authority - July 2023 Update

The board considered a report of the Young Combined Authority setting out its recent activity over the last few months. A mental health youth summit had been held, which had discussed a number of inter-related cross-cutting issues that impacted on the mental health of younger people. Councillor Mike Bird noted the importance of younger people having a good understanding of finance and budgeting. Richard Barlow welcomed these comments and suggested a better understanding of the importance of budgeting had a role to play for people suffering from cost of living challenges.

Resolved:

The report be noted.

- 33. Date of Next Meeting**
Friday 15 September 2023 at 11.00am.

The meeting ended at 12.35 pm.