



**Environment & Energy Board**

**Tuesday 26 September 2023 at 1.00 pm**

**Minutes**

**Present**

Councillor Rob Clinton

Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council

**Present via MS Teams**

Councillor Majid Mahmood

Birmingham City Council

Councillor Craig Collinswood

Walsall Metropolitan Borough Council

**Item Title**  
**No.**

**8. Appointment of Chair for Meeting**  
Councillor Majid Mahmood was appointed the Chair for the meeting in the absence of Councillor John Cotton.

**9. Minutes - 12 July 2023**  
The minutes were agreed as a correct record.

**10. Air Quality Framework and Action Plan**  
Jackie Homan presented on the Air Quality Framework and Action Plan. She shared with the committee the framework history and aims before specifying the details of the of the framework implementation plan, covering consultation and the partners of the plan and it's nine work programmes.

She reported that the plan had also been presented at the Transport Delivery Overview & Scrutiny Member Engagement Group who have recommended that a stretch target be put in place. She also shared details of how the plan aligns with WMCA strategically and the governance of the implementation plan through both Transport and WMCA Board. Finally, she shared funding wins and summarised activity to date.

In response to a question from Councillor Rob Clinton, Alex Jones confirmed that the opportunity for handheld measuring devices to be procured to assist in enforcing air quality regulations, as part of the DEFRA grant, was present. As a result of a second question from Councillor Robert Clinton, Jackie Homan confirmed that £9million had been received from DEFRA and £0.5million had been received from DHLUC and stated that she would clarify those costs within the report.

Councillor Majid Mahmood voiced his support and praise of the implementation plan. Councillor Peter Hughes questioned whether focusing on improving air quality in certain areas in the region would result in decreased air quality in other areas of the region. Alex Jones responded to

say that funding had been applied for and allocated based on air quality figures and the region is looked at as a whole.

Councillor Craig Collinswood voiced his support of the implementation plan but highlighted the importance of public engagement, this was supported by comments sent in by Councillor Andrew Mackiewicz, read by Councillor Majid Mahmood.

Resolved:

- a) The draft Air Quality Framework Implementation Plan was endorsed for approval at the November 2023 WMCA Board.
- b) The draft Air Quality Framework Implementation Plan was endorsed for presentation to the WMCA Board in November 2023, subject to updates as a result of comments made by the Environment and Energy Board.

## **11. Energy Capital Programme Update**

Cheryl Hiles presented a PowerPoint on updates from Energy Capital. She shared highlights of the programme including the Energy Capital Partnership Conference and kick start of the regional energy strategy. The local area energy plan and its main priorities which included gathering funding, collecting baseline and up to date data and retrofitting delivery to upgrade homes to improve efficiency. She also stated that 513 projects would receive further funding from the Homes Upgrade Grant.

The committee received an update on net zero neighbourhoods and heard how Dudley were the first in the nation. The committee were also informed that Dudley had made Equans as their delivery partner and community engagement had commenced. Cheryl Hiles also shared that monitoring and evaluation framework was being developed and shared the information on lobbying activities that been planned.

### Devolved Retrofit Funding

George Simms provided context for a presentation on developed retrofit funding. He shared the design aims of the retrofit project which had been agreed with officers.

In response to a question from Councillor Peter Hughes, George Simms provided an update on current communications with restricted social landlords but stated that Local Authorities were best placed to represent their interests where the projects were in their infancy. Cheryl Hiles added that this is further supported by memorandums of understanding (MOUs).

### Strategic partnerships for energy infrastructure

Kate Ashworth updated the committee on strategic partnerships for energy infrastructure. She provided context for the programme before sharing how MOUs had been used to gain expert support, commitment, and collaboration to achieve growth within the region. She stated that there was an MOU with SSE who were open to various technological solutions, provide access to funding and shared the WMCA/Energy Capital ethos for next zero transitions and a realistic vision. She shared the planned next steps which included

scoping solutions, consultation, engagement with partners. She also shared plans of contribution to the Local Area Energy Planning group, the PRIDE programme, and the net zero delivery team.

In response to a question from Matthew Rhodes, Kate Ashworth confirmed that the funds from SSE and National Grid ED would be complimentary and are not of the same source.

In response to comments from Councillor Andrew Mackiewicz, read by Councillor Majid Mahmood, Kate Ashworth confirmed that collaboration was on going in order to remove barriers to access of electrical infrastructure and welcomed all communications on specific areas.

Regional Energy Systems Planner function and Local Area Energy Planning  
Cheryl Hiles shared policy changes and updates. She also reported on the lobbying that had been undertaken to find the best outcome for a specific area. She also shared the open business planning process, information on how decarbonisation could be enabled and how places have been coordinated with the national energy system from a centralised focus. Cheryl Hiles stated a new regional system planner would be in place and a policy announcement was expected in November 2023. She shared the net zero infrastructure plan and it's make up through collaborations.

Councillor Majid Mahmood asked about the lack of representation of water companies on the panel to which Cheryl Hiles responded that the focus was not on water companies however future engagement could be considered.

Councillor Craig Collinswood asked how the rollout would be accelerated to meet net zero targets and asked about what would be done in relation to renewable energy. In response, Cheryl Hiles stated that it would be allocated on the basis of most applicable as low-cost implementation was not possible. Kate Ashworth added that further opportunities were currently being mapped.

Resolved:

- a) The progress across the WMCA energy programme was noted.
- b) Endorse the principles of retrofit devolution that will be used to guide negotiations with Government were endorsed.
- c) The plan to expand WMCA Strategic Partnerships to include partnerships with energy infrastructure providers was endorsed.
- d) Topics for future updates at the Environment and Energy Board meetings were identified.

**12. Date of Next Meeting**  
Thursday 21 December 2023 at 11.00am

The meeting ended at 2.30 pm.