



WEST MIDLANDS
COMBINED AUTHORITY

Overview & Scrutiny Committee Briefing Note

Date:	16 April 2018
Title:	Scrutiny 2018/19
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Recommendation for noting:

- (1) That the committee note the structure for overview & scrutiny for 2018/19 and provide comments and suggestions on how the work of the committee may be strengthened.

1.0 Purpose

To update members on the proposed governance arrangements for overview and scrutiny in 2018/19 and to explore how the committee's activity may be enhanced and improved.

2.0 Background

2.1 The current structure adopted by overview and scrutiny at WMCA commenced in 2017/18. It consists of one committee made up of 19 members. The committee has currently formed five task and finish groups with varying membership:-

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It is not proposed to make any changes to this structure in 2018/19 for a number of reasons:

- (i) The structure has only been in place for one year and further time is required to allow the task and finish groups to deliver on the expertise that they have developed, and to conclude work that has already commenced.
- (ii) Significant changes in responsibility for the WMCA will commence in 2019/20, particularly in relation to the Fire Authority and police & crime. Whilst the structure of Overview & Scrutiny doesn't yet need to be altered to reflect these changes it is important that in-depth consideration is given over the course of 2018/19 as to how the scrutiny function may best hold these new areas of responsibility to account. In order to deliver this work, it is paramount that the activity of the Governance Task & Finish Group continues.
- (iii) Continuation of governance-related work would allow for results to be fed into the review that the WMCA is undertaking in relation to its constitution. This review is anticipated to conclude in September 2018.

2.3 Although the WMCA is in the process of appointing a full time Scrutiny Officer, this structure is also reliant on constituent authorities providing a level of support to the member leading the task & finish group. This support offer would be required going forward to ensure that overview & scrutiny at the combined authority is able to deliver work which adds value to the WMCA.

2.4 As a scrutiny function, and one that has undertaken Mayoral scrutiny for the first time in 2018/19, it is felt that the committee has risen to the challenge well. However, that is not to say that there are no lessons to be learned, or improvements to be made to how the committee (and its task & finish groups) deliver scrutiny at the WMCA. The following points represent some ways in which WMCA scrutiny can be improved and strengthened:

- (i) The first Mayor's Question Time worked well; agreeing dates earlier in 2018/19, together with more diarised preparation sessions, would enable the Committee to build on its existing success. It is proposed to build two Mayor's Question Times into the annual work programme; one in September on policy and one in January on budget. Preparation meetings for these sessions should also be diarised to maximise the committee's effectiveness in holding to account.
- (ii) Holding to account sessions to be built into the committee's work programme with each of the WMCA Portfolio Leads, again to strengthen the committee's approach to how it holds the WMCA Board, and the Portfolio Leads, to account.
- (iii) The Chair of the Transport Delivery Committee also be held to account to ensure that the TDC fulfils the requirements of its terms of reference.
- (iv) Consider the appointment of an expert witness/es to the Budget Task & Finish Group to strengthen scrutiny of the budget process.
- (v) Exploration of academic support for undertaking specific pieces of work (to be established during the work programming process).
- (vi) The first meeting of the 2018/19 year be a combination training/workprogramming/governance meeting. This year to also include training on the role of LEPs.

2.5 Whilst the points in this report are not exhaustive it is hoped that through discussion and debate at the meeting, further suggestions can be incorporated into how we deliver an improved scrutiny function in 2018/19.