



# West Midlands Combined Authority

## WMCA Board

Friday 12 January 2024 at 11.00am

### Minutes

#### Constituent Members

Andy Street (Chair)	Mayor of the West Midlands Combined Authority
Councillor Adrian Andrew	Walsall 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 Steve Evans	City of Wolverhampton Council
Councillor Patrick Harley	Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council
Councillor Peter Hughes	Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council
Councillor Abdul Khan	Coventry City Council
Councillor Stephen Simkins	City of Wolverhampton Council
Councillor Bob Sleigh	Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council
Councillor Sharon Thompson	Birmingham City Council

#### Non-Constituent Members

Councillor Matthew Dormer	Redditch Borough Council
Councillor Susan Juned	Stratford-on-Avon District Council
Councillor Derek Poole	Rugby Borough Council
Councillor Izzi Seccombe	Warwickshire County Council
Councillor Kristofer Wilson	Nuneaton & Bedworth Borough Council

#### Co-opted Member

Rob Johnson	Midlands Trades Union Congress
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#### Observer Members

Councillor Greg Brackenridge	West Midlands Fire Authority
Simon Foster	West Midlands Police & Crime Commissioner

#### In Attendance

Councillor John McNicholas	Transport Delivery Overview & Scrutiny Committee
Mark Smith	Audit, Risk & Assurance Committee

#### 83. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Lee Barron (Midlands TUC), Councillor Cathy Bayton (Overview & Scrutiny Committee), Councillor Kerrie Carmichael (Sandwell), Councillor Shaun Davies (Telford & Wrekin) and Councillor Ian Davison (Warwick).

**84. Chair's Remarks**

**(a) Warwick District Council - Application for Non-Constituent Membership**

The Chair reported that Warwick District Council had now formally submitted an application to become a non-constituent member of the WMCA. This application was currently being assessed and would come to a future meeting of the board for formal consideration.

**85. Minutes - 17 November 2023**

The minutes of the meeting held on 17 November 2023 were agreed as a correct record.

**86. Forward Plan**

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

**87. Regional Activity & Delivery Update**

The board received a presentation from the Chief Executive setting out the regional activity in recent months. The Government's Autumn statement had seen Investment Zones announced, which were expected to drive up to £5.5bn of growth and create up to 30,000 new jobs across the region. The West Midlands was to receive £6m to develop net zero solutions that could drive investment in multiple green projects across key sectors such as energy, housing and transport. The region had also secured £10.3m to develop skills to boost the region's economy by enabling colleges to train local people to secure good jobs in new and growing industries.

Resolved:

The update be noted.

**88. WMCA Draft Budget 2024/25**

The board considered a report of the Executive Director for Finance & Business Hub setting out the draft 2024/25 budget for consideration, to allow for feedback to inform the final 2024/25 budget to be approved on 9 February 2024.

Councillor Stephen Simkins noted the medium-term financial pressures on the delivery of transport services and stressed the importance of mitigating these. Councillor Bob Sleight noted that the WMCA's transport functions were funded by the transport levy charged to constituent authorities, and therefore the solutions to this issue needed to be met from within this funding source. Councillor Ian Courts urged the board to remain focused on delivering on its net zero commitments. The Chair requested that the Executive Director for Finance & Business Hub produce a briefing note for non-constituent authorities setting out those funds administered by the WMCA that they were eligible to apply for.

Resolved:

- (1) The draft 2024/25 WMCA consolidated revenue budget be approved for consultation. This included:

- (a) The budget requirement for transport delivery in 2024/25 of £198.3m comprising three elements:
  - (i) £122.9m to be funded from the existing transport levy mechanism.
  - (ii) £70.4m of grant funding.
  - (iii) Use of windfall gains from treasury management of £5.0m.
- (b) The budget requirement for portfolio delivery in 2024/25 of £262.0m comprising of six elements:
  - (i) £142m Adult Education (including level 3) spending to be funded from adult education budget funding devolved by the Department for Education.
  - (ii) £104.4m to be funded from devolution deal grants.
  - (iii) £2.3m to be funded from other income, notably investment income.
  - (iv) £4.6m to be funded from constituent authority fees (fees to remain at the same level as 2023/24).
  - (v) £400,000 to be funded from non-constituent authority and observer fees (fees to remain at the same level as 2023/24).
  - (vi) Use of £8.3m business rates retention income.
- (2) The Mayoral Office budget for 2024/25 of £7.0m, of which £900,000 was to be funded from additional Mayoral Capacity Funding and election costs of £6.1m were to be funded from earmarked reserves, be approved for consultation and scrutiny.
- (3) It be noted that there would be no mayoral precept during 2024/25.
- (4) The Mayor's budget be reviewed by the board and set out in a report to the Mayor whether it was approved in its current form, including any recommendations, before 8 February 2024.
- (5) The draft 2024/25 capital programme of £719.8m be approved for consultation.
- (6) The planned spend on the investment programme over the period be noted.

- (7) The WMCA's ongoing commitment to work with the Mayor and constituent authority leaders to discuss a sustainable funding solution for transport, which would meet the scale of ambition for the network, be noted.
- (8) The matters identified by Overview & Scrutiny Committee/Transport Delivery Overview & Scrutiny Committee that arose out of the Mayoral Q&A on 14 December 2023 be noted.

## **89. 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 financial position based on the information known at the end of November 2023, including capital and revenue financial performance, explanations for variations, an update on the likely outturn for 2023/24 and risks which were being managed by the WMCA.

Councillor Stephen Simkins stressed the value of the WMCA using its funding to help unlock longstanding blighted buildings that needed redeveloping and bringing back into meaningful use. Councillor Ian Courts indicated that, as Chair of the Housing & Land Delivery Board, he wished to maximise the value of all the funding available to it, and this required the WMCA to be approached with innovative solutions to longstanding problems such as disused key buildings.

Resolved:

- (1) The financial position as at 30 November 2023 be noted.
- (2) The latest forecast for 2023/24 be noted.
- (3) The new grant awards to the WMCA, and the arrangements for these grants, be noted.
- (4) The intention to enter into contracts with local authorities for year-three activity following the Department for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities relaxing the carry forward requirements which applied to the UK Shared Prosperity Fund be noted.
- (5) It be noted that under the delegation provided by the WMCA Board on 17 November 2023, the Section 151 Officer recently approved the acceptance of the £100m funding for brownfield regeneration, secured as part of the Trailblazer Devolution Deal.
- (6) The additional funding awarded to the region for highways maintenance works, as part of the Government's Network North plan, be noted and the proposed allocation of this funding be endorsed.
- (7) The treasury and prudential indicators for the period ended 30 November 2023 be noted.

**90. European Athletics Championships 2026**

The board considered a report from the Executive Director for Strategy, Economy & Net Zero seeking to repurpose funding allocated for the Grassroots Sports Programme towards the direct delivery costs, and to note the associated impact on community benefit.

Councillor John Cotton recognised the funding pressures faced by all local authorities, but stressed the importance to the region of hosting this event, estimated to be in the region of £135m and with more than 120,000 spectators attending events. There had been further measures taken to de-risk the cost of hosting the championships and urged the board to support the recommendations within the report.

Councillor Mike Bird acknowledged the financial benefits to region of hosting, but stressed the importance that the region received the appropriate recognition for its role in providing funding to enable the championships to be held. The Chair noted that the report proposed repurposing £3m from the Grassroots Sports Programme towards the delivery costs of the championships, and requested the Executive Director of Finance & Business Hub to explore whether it was possible to bolster the Inclusive Communities Fund by £3m to replace this funding and to report back to the board on the potential for this.

Resolved:

- (1) Support for the continued delivery of the European Athletics Championships 2026 through the Commonwealth Games Legacy Enhancement Fund contribution as agreed by WMCA Board on 17 March 2023 and in light of the subsequent changes to the full business case agreed by the Investment Board on 18 June 2023 be agreed.
- (2) The request from Birmingham City Council to repurpose £3m allocated for the Grassroots Sports Programme towards the European Athletics Championships' direct delivery costs be agreed, and the associated impact on community benefit be noted.
- (3) Support for the re-profiling of £4.5m expenditure from 2023/24 into 2024/25 be agreed, subject to Government approval, noting that all funds were still required to be spent by 31 March 2025 in line with the terms and conditions set out in the funding agreement between the Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport and the WMCA.
- (4) An additional £600,000 of Commonwealth Games Legacy Enhancement Fund funding generated from underspend within the Sandwell Aquatic programme be agreed to be used towards the projected £2.2m shortfall in the current European Athletics Championships direct delivery budget, noting that this was not in line with the prior directions of the WMCA Board or the process for allocation of underspends agreed by the WMCA Board on 17 March 2023 and so was outside of officer delegations.

- (5) It be noted that the proposed joint venture for delivery of the European Athletics Championships would be between Birmingham City Council and UK Athletics with no formal legal role for the WMCA, which included no financial underwrite commitment, recognising however, as a condition, the strong involvement and support of the WMCA and all of its members.
- (6) Final sign-off of the Commonwealth Games Legacy Enhancement Fund funding agreement between Birmingham City Council and the WMCA be delegated to the Executive Director of Strategy, Economy & Net Zero, in consultation with the Monitoring Officer and Section 151 Officer, and any such agreement would reflect the grant conditions imposed on the WMCA by the Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport, together with any additional conditions deemed necessary to safeguard the WMCA's position.
- (7) The Executive Director of Finance & Business Hub be requested to explore whether it was possible to bolster the Inclusive Communities Fund by £3m to replace the Grassroots Sports Programme element of the European Athletics Championships funding packages agreed by the WMCA Board on 17 March 2023.

**91. Amendments to the WMCA Constitution to incorporate Police & Crime Commissioner Functions**

The board considered a report from the Director of Law & Governance on arrangements to allow for the continuity of governance arrangements to enable the Police & Crime Commissioner functions to be carried out effectively without any interruption in service should those functions transfer to the WMCA with effect from 7 May 2024.

Simon Foster noted that the current public consultation on proposals to transfer of Police & Crime Commissioner functions to the Mayor was not due to close until 31 January, and considered it therefore inappropriate to consider this report ahead of the outcome of that public consultation being known. He also reiterated his offer to attend a future meeting of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee to discuss the wider implications of this issue. The Chair noted these comments and stressed that the report had been submitted to the board so that all members were sighted on the work that was being undertaken should the Home Secretary determine that the powers of the Police & Crime Commissioner be exercised by the Mayor following May's local elections.

Resolved:

The report be noted.

**92. West Midlands Digital Roadmap 2024-27**

The board considered a report from the Executive Director of Strategy, Economy & Net Zero providing an update on the wide-ranging regional activity relating to digital inclusion, digital connectivity and the digital economy in the West Midlands.

Councillor Patrick Harley stressed that this was a roadmap and not a strategy, and was intended to help partners and stakeholders to support the West Midlands region to become a forward looking and inclusive digital economy, where data was used to improve public services and the latest technology used to reduce the carbon footprint.

Councillor Izzi Seccombe welcomed the report, particularly the use of 5G vouchers. She noted that Warwickshire had a complex urban and rural make-up and she expected this roadmap to help with this. Councillor Ian Courts noted that the siting of 5G masts had been controversial in some instances and he encouraged developers to be sympathetic to legitimate concerns in this regard.

Resolved:

- (1) The progress made on digital matters in the region since 2021 be noted and the activity highlighted in the updated Digital Roadmap 2024 - 27 be endorsed.
- (2) The aims and objectives of the Digital Roadmap continue to be championed in order to encourage public, private and voluntary sector alignment and investment in its five broad missions.
- (3) The concerns around the withdrawal of Project Gigabit Lot 35 for Birmingham and the Black Country be noted, and
  - (a) the WMCA's request for further information from the Government to clarify this decision and to expedite the identification and evaluation of interim solutions, whilst re-examining the opportunity for the West Midlands to receive targeted funding from Project Gigabit, be supported, and
  - (b) confirmation of the Government's support for Lot 11 covering parts of Coventry and Solihull be sought.

**93. Investment Board - 13 November 2023**

The board considered the minutes of the Investment Board held on 13 November 2023.

Resolved:

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

**94. Economic Growth Board - 16 November 2023**

The board considered the minutes of the Economic Growth Board held on 16 November 2023.

Resolved:

The minutes of the meeting held on 16 November 2023 be noted.

**95. Audit, Risk & Assurance Committee - 4 December 2023**

The board considered the minutes of the Audit, Risk & Assurance Committee held on 4 December 2023.

Resolved:

The minutes of the meeting held on 4 December 2023 be noted.

**96. Investment Board - 11 December 2023**

The board considered the minutes of the Investment Board held on 11 December 2023.

Resolved:

The minutes of the meeting held on 11 December 2023 be noted.

**97. Transport Delivery Overview & Scrutiny Committee - 11 December 2023**

The board considered the minutes of the Transport Delivery Overview & Scrutiny Committee held on 11 December 2023.

Resolved:

The minutes of the meeting held on 11 December 2023 be noted.

**98. Wellbeing Board - 12 December 2023**

The board considered the minutes of the Wellbeing Board held on 12 December 2023.

Resolved:

The minutes of the meeting held on 12 December 2023 be noted.

**99. Joint Overview & Scrutiny Committees - 14 December 2023**

The board considered the minutes of the Joint Overview & Scrutiny Committee held on 14 December 2023.

Resolved:

The minutes of the meeting held on 14 December 2023 be noted.

**100. Environment & Energy Board - 21 December 2023**

The board considered the minutes of the Environment & Energy Board held on 21 December 2023.

Resolved:

The minutes of the meeting held on 21 December 2023 be noted.

**101. Young Combined Authority Update - January 2024**

The board considered a report on the activity of the Young Combined Authority for January 2024.



Resolved:

The report be noted.

- 102. Date of Next Meeting**  
Friday 9 February 2024 at 11.00am.

The meeting ended at 1.00pm.