

Housing & Land Delivery Board

Date	13 March 2024
Report title	WMCA Housing, Property & Regeneration Taskforces Review
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Report has been considered by	February 2024 - Housing & Land Delivery Steering Group

Recommendation(s) for action or decision:

Housing & Land Delivery Board is recommended to:

- (1) **Note** the summary of the four taskforces convened by the WMCA Housing, Property & Regeneration Directorate.
- (2) **Note** the taskforces' plans for 2024, and ongoing efforts to improve representation and diversity of backgrounds and skillsets.

1.0 Purpose

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to update Housing & Land Delivery Board on the progress to date of the four industry taskforces convened by the Housing, Property & Regeneration Directorate, and to share the proposed next steps for each taskforce.

2.0 Background

- 2.1 The four Taskforces function as a strategic advisory and influencing group: a critical friend, adviser, guide and champion for WMCA's programmes and workstreams.
- 2.2 Going forwards, WMCA are exploring expanding taskforce memberships, so they reflect a more diverse stakeholder mix, industry representation and demographic composition

3.0 Commercial Property Taskforce

Membership and Context

- 3.1 The Commercial Property Taskforce previously existed as the West Midlands Commercial Property Forum. The Forum provided insight into the opportunities and risks associated with commercial property development.
- 3.2 Following the Comprehensive Spending Review, Budget 2021 and the launch of the Levelling Up White Paper, the Forum was renamed the Commercial Property Taskforce in April 2022.
- 3.3 The Commercial Property Taskforce is chaired by Andrew Pilsworth, Chief of Staff at SEGRO, one of WMCA's Strategic Partners.
- 3.4 The Taskforce convenes on a quarterly basis, and last met in December 2023 – with the Mayor in attendance. It is next scheduled to meet in March 2024.
- 3.5 The Commercial Property Taskforce has a core group of approximately 15 commercial property experts and professionals. Members represent the property development, real estate investment and construction industries.

Objectives

- 3.6 The **objectives** of the Taskforce are:
 - 3.6.1 Increase, in volume and breadth, investment into commercial property in the West Midlands
 - 3.6.2 Develop and showcase best practice in commercial property partnerships and joint ventures
 - 3.6.3 Collate a single body of evidence of property market trends and analysis.

Outputs and Outcomes

- 3.7 In 2023, the Taskforce focussed on the implications of the Deeper Devolution Deal for Commercial Property, with a particular focus on the implications of the Levelling Up Zones. The Taskforce also received 'State of the Market Updates'.

4.0 Public Land Taskforce

Membership & Context

- 4.1 The Public Land Taskforce was established in September 2020, and is chaired by Stephen Barter, Chair of Wilton Capital Advisers.

- 4.2 The Taskforce is comprised of roughly around 30 industry experts who support, challenge, champion, advise and lobby for public land and policy matters. Attendees are mostly from the private sector, but there is representation from Local Authorities, the Local Government Association and the Office for Government Property.

Objectives

- 4.3 The **objectives** for the Taskforce moving forward are:
- 4.3.1 Offer insight into the barriers, risks and opportunities in developing and disposing of public land, and on the latest research and trends around public land
 - 4.3.2 Advise on a collaborative and strategic approach to the asset management of public land
 - 4.3.3 Support and champion new ways of working between the public and private sectors
 - 4.3.4 Enable the alignment of public sector objectives facilitating the joining up of ownerships
 - 4.3.5 Influence national policy and investment case work, and secure decision-making around public land development

Outputs and Outcomes

- 4.4 The Taskforce has engaged on the development of the Place Pilots Programme, and its direction of travel as well as the development of the One Public Estate Board.

5.0 Future Homes Taskforce

Membership & Context

- 5.1 The Future Homes Taskforce was formed in April 2022 to co-develop a new Future Homes Strategy and to “help the region be the national frontrunner in AMC and Future Homes Standards – ahead of the national timetable.”
- 5.2 The Taskforce was chaired by Mark Farmer, CEO and Founder of Cast. He has indicated he would like to step down as Taskforce Chair as it evolves into the strategy implementation phase.
- 5.3 The Taskforce convened on a regular basis in 2023, with regular input from members on the draft Homes for the Future Strategy, and broader net zero housing themes.
- 5.4 The taskforce consists of circa 15 members from a variety of sectors and industries.

Objectives

- 5.5 There are four key **objectives** for the Taskforce moving forward:
- 5.5.1 Coordinate and collaborate on the implementation of the Homes for the Future Strategy
 - 5.5.2 Act as a sounding board for the identification of opportunities for collaborative working between different public sector partners and private sector organisations
 - 5.5.3 Share honest insights from implementation approaches and feedback on best practice in relation to adoption of the standard

5.5.4 Oversee and analyse the outcomes of projects that meet the standard to support research and best practice

Outputs and Outcomes

- 5.6 During the strategy development phase, the Taskforce's role was to support the joining-up and enhancement of WMCA's existing zero-carbon and AMC programmes under a coherent Future Homes Strategy, acting as a strategic advisory and influencing group.
- 5.7 The Taskforce has previously discussed broader issues animating the development of the Homes for the Future Strategy, including supply chains, employment & skills in the housebuilding sector, HMG's Future Homes Strategy consultation and market conditions.

Plans for 2024

- 5.8 During the strategy's implementation phase, the purpose of the Future Homes Taskforce will change accordingly. The taskforce's role will now be to share strategy implementation experiences: knowledge pooling, sharing best practice and potential solutions to implementation challenge. A new Taskforce Chair to succeed Mark Farmer will be appointed in due course.
- 5.9 The Future Homes Taskforce will be restructured to reflect its 2024 objectives. WMCA is exploring adding further representation from industry to the group, and as such Taskforce members have been asked by WMCA to suggest individuals who could join the group.
- 5.10 Going forward, the taskforce meetings will be supplemented by 'working groups', which will convene to discuss specific themes/areas which sit within the Taskforce. Taskforce members will join working groups aligned to where they have experience. These groups are:
- 5.10.1 **Development & Delivery** - supporting the sharing of knowledge and best practice with support to be provided for developers to adopt the standard.
 - 5.10.2 **Employment & Skills** – supporting skills development within the sector as the standard progresses, including supporting information collection and research development.
 - 5.10.3 **Supply Chains & Manufacturing** – this group would discuss how advanced / modern methods of construction would impact supply chain structures and the manufacturing process.
- 5.11 These working groups would convene independently and would then feedback to the full Taskforce group on a regular basis. An event is being planned for the Summer to bring stakeholders from all groups and wider networks together.

6.0 Town Centres Taskforce

Membership and Context

- 6.1 The Taskforce was set up by Mayor Andy Street, with the approval of Housing & Land Delivery Board. It was designed to help guide changes and support new investment

plans in each centre and across the region and was regularly attended by the Mayor in its early meetings.

- 6.2 The membership is comprised of circa 25 individuals, from a variety of backgrounds: consultancy firms, research institutions, housebuilding groups and organisations with expertise in placemaking.

Objectives

- 6.3 The Taskforce has four key **objectives**:
- 6.3.1 Provide joint business, government, community and academic leadership
 - 6.3.2 Support WMCA's lobbying asks of HMG
 - 6.3.3 Offer insight into the future of town centres
 - 6.3.4 Advise on how town centres will maintain their role as community and business hubs

Outputs and Outcomes

- 6.4 The Taskforce offered insight to support WMCA's development of the 2023 Investment Prospectus and the Place Pilots Programme.
- 6.5 Working groups gave previously convened on three key themes: Engagement & Lobbying; the Future of Town Centres and Public Land & Town Centres. These were attended by select members of the taskforce and have their own Terms of Reference.
- 6.6 The Taskforce also influenced lobbying asks of WMCA during the Deeper Devolution Deal, inputting to the OPE development. The Taskforce has also considered the implications of the Devolution Deal for Town Centre Regeneration.

Plans for 2024

- 6.7 WMCA have submitted a paper to Housing & Land Delivery Board, summarising investments in the region to date, and putting forward baselining and options for how the CA can best position itself to add value in town centres and high streets based on taskforce feedback, best practice working arrangements with local authorities and BIDs, and learning from other regional bodies.

7.0 Financial Implications

- 7.1 It is noted that the purpose of this report is:
- To update Housing & Land Delivery Board on the progress of the four industry taskforces convened by the Housing, Property & Regeneration Directorate; and
 - To update on next steps for each taskforce
- 7.2 Four taskforces have been set up to cover the following areas:
- Commercial Property
 - Public Land
 - Future Homes
 - Town Centres

7.3 Proposed activity for 2024 has been outlined for the Future Homes and Town Centres Taskforces. The work undertaken with these taskforces will be covered by existing funds. If there are any further cost implications from these taskforces or from the Commercial Property and / or Public Land taskforces, these will be brought to a future Housing & Land Delivery Board meeting.

8.0 Legal Implications

8.1 There are no immediate legal implications from this paper.

9.0 Equalities Implications

9.1 Whilst there are no immediate equalities implications of this report, it should be noted that WMCA has convened a Race Equalities Taskforce.

9.2. The Race Equalities Taskforce has members from a range of backgrounds, including public services, businesses and communities. In 2023, the Taskforce launched Race Forward, its independent strategy setting out proposed changes in policy areas where WMCA and its partners can make an impact – including jobs, skills & education, transport, housing and health & wellbeing.

10.0 Inclusive Growth Implications

10.1 Each Taskforce has a relationship with some of the WMCA Inclusive Growth Framework's **fundamentals**.

10.1.1 The Future Homes Taskforce seeks to grow the AMC sector, zero carbon homes and develop new energy standards in an equitable way, contributing to the **Climate Resilience** Fundamental

10.1.2 The Town Centres Taskforce offers insight on the role of these spaces as community hubs, connecting well to the Affordable & **Safe** Places and Power & **Participation** fundamentals.

11.0 Geographical Area of Report's Implications

11.1 The recommendations of this report apply to the whole of the WMCA area.

12.0 Other implications

12.1 N/A