



WEST MIDLANDS COMBINED AUTHORITY

Overview & Scrutiny Committee

Monday 16 April 2018 at 2.00 pm

Minutes

Present

Councillor Peter Hughes (Chair)	Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council
Councillor Richard Brown	Joint Coventry / Solihull Representative
Councillor Peter Douglas Osborn	Birmingham City Council
Councillor John Glass	Nuneaton & Bedworth Borough Council
Councillor Rachel Harris	Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council
Councillor Angus Lees	Dudley, Sandwell, Walsall and Wolverhampton Councils
Councillor John O'Shea	Dudley, Sandwell, Walsall and Wolverhampton Councils
Councillor Simon People	Staffordshire Non-Constituent Authorities
Councillor Ian Shires (Vice-Chair)	Dudley, Sandwell, Walsall and Wolverhampton Councils
Councillor Claire Spencer (Vice-Chair)	Birmingham City Council

In Attendance

Councillor John McNicholas	Coventry City Council
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Item Title No.

24. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Paul Brown, Councillor Dean Carroll, Mike Lyons, Councillor Yvonne Mosquito and Sarah Windrum.

25. Minutes - 20 March 2018

The minutes were agreed as a correct record.

26. Local Enterprise Partnerships

The Chair noted that Sarah Windrum from Coventry & Warwickshire Local Enterprise Partnership had submitted her apologies to this meeting because she was attending another WMCA meeting regarding the potential relocation of Channel 4 Television to the region. He therefore requested that this item be deferred until the next meeting.

The Chair noted that there was a wider issue as to the degree of public scrutiny that was appropriate for LEPs and where this scrutiny should take place. Members of the committee recognised that the nature of the WMCA allowed a more joined-up approach to be taken to scrutiny across the region. Councillor Claire Spencer noted that the Centre for Public Scrutiny had produced a number of reports on this subject and should be engaged in the discussions. The Chair requested that members submit their thoughts to him ahead of a more detailed discussion at a future meeting of the committee.

27. WMCA Annual Plan 2018/19

The committee considered a report from Sean Pearce, Director of Finance, seeking approval to a draft of the WMCA Annual Plan 2018/19. The overarching ambition for the WMCA for the forthcoming year was to embed the outcomes that were delivered last year, to deliver on the targets set out in the Mayoral Renewal Plan and Strategic Economic Plan, and to drive forward devolution.

Members of the committee raised a number of issues relating to the draft plan, including the need for a greater emphasis on the role of scrutiny, the benefits that scrutiny brought to decision making and delivery within the WMCA, and the need to give greater clarity on spending within a given year and the budgetary consequences of policy objectives.

The Chair requested that further consideration be given to the role the committee might have in respect of budget monitoring and Annual Plan delivery, and Sean Pearce undertook to do this. The Chair also suggested that the committee could be supported through a graduate placement in order that it was properly resourced to carry out its role.

Resolved:

That the WMCA Annual Plan 2018/19 be noted, and the Director of Finance consider, as part of the further drafting of the plan prior to its submission to the WMCA Board for approval, the comments made at this meeting and any further comments submitted by members to the Scrutiny Officer by 20 April.

28. WMCA Budget - Feedback on the recommendations Overview and Scrutiny submitted to the WMCA Board on 9 February 2018

The committee considered a report from Sarah Sprung, Scrutiny Officer, on the formal response of the Mayor and the Portfolio Lead for Finance & Investments to the points raised by this committee in its feedback on the Mayor's 2018/19 draft budget.

The committee made seven key recommendations following its 'Question & Answer' session with the Mayor on 24 January and its consideration of his draft budget at the meeting held on 30 January. These recommendations were then submitted to the WMCA Board when it met on 9 February.

In respect of the impact of Brexit and the loss of European Union funding, the Director of Finance reported that the Director of Strategy currently chaired the CIPFA Brexit Panel, and was also working closely with constituent and non-constituent authorities to formulate strategies that would address the impacts of Brexit as they evolved. He suggested that it would be appropriate for a quarterly update report on this issue to be considered by the committee. Councillor Simon People noted that the Mayor had requested the committee to be sighted as to the development of the Government's Shared Prosperity Fund. The Chair requested that the Director of Strategy submit a report on this to a future meeting.

Resolved:

That the report be noted.

29. Governance Task & Finish Group - Recommendations

The committee considered a report from the Governance Task & Finish Group on the recommendations arising out of its review into governance and scrutiny matters within the WMCA.

The Governance Task & Finish Group had undertaken a review of the governance and scrutiny of transport functions of the WMCA and, as part of that review, identified a number of structural models that could be adopted to improve the oversight that was given to transport policy and delivery. However, the task & finish group recognised as it was conducting the review that there needed to be wider consideration of these matters within the overall governance structures of the WMCA, which extended beyond the remit the group had been given. It was recommended that this wider review should be led by the Overview & Scrutiny Committee.

In respect of the proposed transition of the West Midlands Fire & Rescue Authority into the WMCA, the Chair expressed concern that the views made by Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council during the recent consultation exercise had not appeared to have been fully captured by the fire authority. The Head of Governance indicated that he was overseeing a Joint Delivery Team to manage the process of transition and the scrutiny arrangements that were eventually adopted would be a matter that would require further detailed discussion with the Home Office. He undertook to keep the Chair informed of developments as they occurred.

Resolved:

- (1) The progress made by the Governance Task & Finish Group be noted;
- (2) The Overview & Scrutiny Committee work with the Monitoring Officer on his current review of the governance arrangements of the WMCA;
- (3) The WMCA Board be recommended to support a review of the scrutiny structures operated by the WMCA;

- (4) The proposed alternative structures for the governance and scrutiny of transport be considered as part of the review identified in resolution (2) above; and
- (5) The Governance Task & Finish Group continue its work into 2018/19.

30. Scrutiny 2018/19

The committee considered a report of Sarah Sprung, Scrutiny Officer, on the proposed governance arrangements for overview & scrutiny in 2018/19. The current structure had been adopted at the start of 2017/18 and it was considered appropriate to continue with this for a further year as the roles and responsibilities of the WMCA evolved. Significant changes in responsibility would occur in 2019/20 which might necessitate a change in structures, but this would be informed by the on-going work of the Governance Task & Finish Group.

Resolved:

That the structure for overview & scrutiny for 2018/19 be noted.

31. Any Other Business

The Chair reported that this was the last meeting that Councillor Claire Spencer would be attending before she stepped down as a Birmingham city councillor on 3 May and he thanked her for the contribution she had made to the work of the committee. He also took the opportunity to thank the members of the committee and officers who had supported its work during the year.

The meeting ended at 4.20 pm.