



Transport Delivery Overview & Scrutiny Committee

Monday 8 July 2024 at 1.00 pm

Minutes

Present In Person

Councillor Timothy Huxtable (Chair)	Birmingham City Council
Councillor Samantha Gethen (Vice-Chair)	Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council
Councillor Robert Alden	Birmingham City Council
Councillor Pervez Akhtar	Coventry City Council
Councillor Keith Archer	Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council
Councillor Zaker Choudhry	Birmingham City Council
Councillor Amo Hussain	Walsall Metropolitan Borough Council
Councillor Carol Hyatt	City of Wolverhampton Council
Councillor Leslie Kaye	Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council
Councillor Ian Kettle	Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council
Councillor Mary Locke	Birmingham City Council
Councillor John McNicholas	Coventry City Council
Councillor Danny Millard	Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council
Councillor Rinkal Shergill	Birmingham City Council
Councillor Harbinder Singh	City of Wolverhampton Council
Councillor Gurmeet Singh Sohal	Walsall Metropolitan Borough Council
Councillor Ian Ward	Birmingham City Council
Councillor David Wilkes	Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council

Present Virtually

Councillor Liz Clements	Birmingham City Council
Councillor Antony Tucker	Coventry City Council

In Attendance

Pete Bond	Director of Integrated Transport Services
Dan Essex	Governance & Scrutiny Manager
Lyndsey Roberts	Statutory Scrutiny Officer
Jat Sekhon	Lead Solicitor
Anne Shaw	Director of Transport for West Midlands
Sandeep Shingadia	Director of Strategic Partnerships and Integration
Janna Simpson	Governance Services Officer
Kate Taylor	Head of Finance Business Partnering and Strategic Planning

Item Title

No.

88. Appointment of Chair

The Governance and Scrutiny Manager explained that following the election of the Mayor of the West Midlands in May, and in order to comply with legislation relating to combined authorities, the Chair of the Transport Delivery Overview & Scrutiny Committee had to be of a different political party to the Mayor.

At its meeting on 14 June, the WMCA Board agreed that the chairs of the WMCA's committees should be appointed by each of the committees themselves. The Governance and Scrutiny Manager invited nominations for the appointment of Chair. Councillor Timothy Huxtable was nominated by Councillor Robert Alden, which was seconded by Councillor Zaker Choudhry.

Resolved:

Councillor Timothy Huxtable be appointed as Chair of the Transport Delivery Overview & Scrutiny Committee for 2024/25.

89. Appointment of Vice-Chair

The Chair invited nominations for the appointment of Vice-Chair for 2024/25. Councillor Samantha Gethen was nominated by Councillor Timothy Huxtable, which was seconded by Councillor Gurmeet Singh Sohal.

Resolved:

Councillor Samantha Gethen be appointed as Vice-Chair of the WMCA Transport Delivery Overview & Scrutiny Committee for 2024/25.

90. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor David Munro (Worcestershire Non-Constituent Authorities).

91. Terms of Reference

The Chair presented the Terms of Reference to the committee. Councillor Liz Clements asked for clarification with regards to the Members Allowances Scheme for 2024/25. The Governance and Scrutiny Manager confirmed that a basic allowance and special responsibility allowances were in place and confirmed that the information could be accessed on the WMCA website.

Resolved:

(1) The Terms of Reference be noted; and

(2) Members to receive a copy of the Members Allowances Scheme for 2024/25.

92. Schedule of Meetings 2024/25

The schedule of meetings was discussed.

Resolved:

- (1) That the meeting on 2 September 2024 be moved to 9 September.
- (2) That an additional meeting of the Transport Delivery Overview & Scrutiny Committee to be held in May 2025; and
- (3) A change to the format and start time of future meetings be agreed, as discussed.

93. Minutes - 18 March 2024

The minutes of the meeting held on 18 March 2024 were agreed as a correct record, subject to an amendment to minute no. 84 ('Regional Road Safety Annual Review 2023/24') to reflect that the Road Safety Manager was responding to Councillor Pervez Akhtar stressing the importance of using regional data in determining the sites of speed cameras.

94. Matters Arising

(a) Task & Finish Scrutiny Review – 'The Effectiveness of the WMCA's Member Engagement and Development' – Final Report
(minute no. 82. refers)

At the last meeting of the committee, it was reported that the conclusion and recommendations of the task & finish group would be considered by the WMCA Board on 14 June.

It was proposed that in light of the recent governance changes that were agreed by the Mayor and Leaders, and the requested further review of the constitution, the work of the task & finish group should continue with a view to feeding into the governance review.

(b) Work Programme (minute no. 87 refers)

It was agreed that the Head of Network Transformation would liaise with Councillor Carol Hyatt to discuss any concerns that she may have with regard to Ring & Ride prior to the next meeting of the committee.

95. Capital Delivery Programmes

The committee considered a report of the Head of Transport Portfolio that provided an update on the status and recent progress of the transport capital delivery programmes.

The committee received an update on the progress of CRSTS and the Active Travel Fund and confirmed that the summary information, metrics, and RAG statuses were indicative, based on recent updates from projects and that the programmes and criteria would be agreed for the next iteration. The Head of Transport Portfolio reported that a maturing delivery directorate was resulting in better visibility and improved completion on major deliverables. She also confirmed that programme and project management capability and capacity improvements for ATF and TfWM projects continued to be implemented and attention would broaden to include cross-programme activity with local authority projects across CRSTS and the Investment Fund (IP) programme.

The Executive Director of Transport for West Midlands reassured members that there was an intention for them to maintain visibility over all projects that the WMCA was involved in or delivering. She suggested that the appropriate method to do this would be through the Member Engagement Groups (MEGs).

Councillor Liz Clements raised concerns about the risks associated with the funding for CRSTS and asked about the prioritisation process and the role of scrutiny in these decisions. In addition, she also enquired as to the timeline for recruiting the Head of Active Travel. The Executive Director of Transport for West Midlands confirmed that a report would be going to WMCA Board on 19 July that would outline strategies for managing budget pressures. She also confirmed that the recruitment process was ongoing, with the start date for the new recruit being dependent on their notice period.

Councillor Liz Clements enquired as to whether the Single Assurance Framework (SAF) would be revised. The Executive Director of Transport for West Midlands noted that the SAF was a government-agreed process but confirmed efforts were being made to enhance the enabling service offer to aid local authorities in streamlining project submissions.

Councillor Leslie Kaye sought clarification on the RAG ratings within the report, he queried whether they reflected an average or the totality of the programme and highlighted the hidden costs to the public due to project delays. The Head of Transport Portfolio explained that the dashboard was high-level and concurred with the Executive Director for Transport for West Midlands that better visibility will be available through MEGs. This was supported by the Chair.

Councillor Carol Hyatt expressed concerns about Wolverhampton St. George's, questioning non-completion. The Executive Director for Transport for West Midlands assured her that the project was progressing and agreed to liaise directly with Councillor Carol Hyatt with regards to the reopening of the station.

Councillor Pervez Akhtar suggested including a glossary and a road map covering seven quarters, as previously presented, he requested using colours to coincide with the RAG statuses and enlarging the content. He also asked for detailed reasons for projects being off-schedule or over-budget.

The Director of Strategic Partnerships and Integration welcomed the feedback and stated that while iterations were necessary, the aim was to share information transparently. Councillor Robert Alden highlighted risks that had been presented and requested that a mitigation report and a breakdown of the projects be provided for the respective MEGs. The Head of the Transport Portfolio acknowledged that risks on the programme of such size were inherent and required continuous management.

Councillor Liz Clements showed appreciation for the visual updates on the metro project and requested further details around the risks of the project. The Executive Director for Transport for West Midlands provided an update on the delivery of the metro projects and reminded members that further updates would be provided at WMCA Board in July.

Councillor John McNicholas emphasised the importance of the Member Engagement Groups and highlighted how they could report, comment, and influence programme items. This was supported by the Chair.

Resolved:

- (1) The updates and progress on key transport capital schemes progressing across the delivery portfolio were discussed.
- (2) Further progress to develop and mature the monitoring and management of transport capital delivery programmes to support the creation of a single view of the portfolio be noted.
- (3) The scheduling of alternate reports on transport capital and operations progress to the committee in line with the new governance calendar be endorsed.
- (4) The current working version of the dashboard for transport capital delivery programmes and recent progress highlights for Metro schemes be amended as discussed.
- (5) Member engagement groups to receive specific information of projects and programmes respective to their area of scrutiny.

96. Financial Monitoring Report 2023/24

The committee considered a report of the Financial Planning & Co-ordination Manager on the financial position as at 31 March 2024.

The Head of Finance and Business Partnering and Strategic Planning noted a year-end surplus of £3.5 million, attributed to additional advertising income from bus stations, financial commitment releases from the redevelopment of Dudley bus station. She emphasised that the results were subject to external audit, with findings to be reported later in the year. It was noted that budget savings had been moved into reserves, she raised that capital performance was behind budget but aligned with the forecast and reflected the effort to refine it.

Councillor Pervez Akhtar acknowledged the favourable variance and surplus but expressed concern over the state of the budget in previous years. He highlighted the challenges in securing government funding and highlighted the problems with the deregulated transport system, he expressed his concern for potential deficits for the upcoming years, and stressed the need for long-term, sustainable funding solutions. The Director of Integrated Transport Services emphasised ongoing efforts to sustain the existing network and exploring reform options for future bus delivery. He outlined the importance of continued collaboration with the government and other funding

sources to support the bus network. He also mentioned the expiration of the bus fare cap and the imminent spending review and shared that TfWM were waiting for clarity.

Councillor Carol Hyatt raised concerns about the 80% variance in the sustainable travel budget due to inflation and project delays. She questioned the efficiency of project management processes and the time taken to implement projects. In response, the Head of Finance Business Partnering and Strategic Planning explained the provision element linked to the Dudley bus station redevelopment and its financial implications. She discussed significant schemes under sustainable transport and the challenges in site acquisition and procurement, she highlighted the importance of timely project delivery to avoid financial discrepancies.

The Director of Strategic Partnerships and Integration highlighted lessons learned from past metro projects and the need to improve the delivery of future capital projects. He stressed the importance of building capacity to deliver projects effectively within funding windows. Councillor Leslie Kaye enquired about the 20% under-budget figure for child concessions, and questioned whether it was due to lack of demand or provision. The Director of Integrated Transport Services explained the negotiation process with bus operators and the impact of ticket demand on the budget variance.

Councillor John McNicholas asked about the use of the transport risk reserve and its implications for transport funding. The Head of Finance Business Partnering and Strategic Planning clarified the process for using reserves, which were approved by the Board and could be used for various transport activities.

Councillor Liz Clements expressed concerns about the standstill in the transport budget and its implications for transport ambitions. She highlighted the need for stable funding for bus services and criticised the use of improvement funds for private operators. The Chair emphasised the role of the committee in holding the mayor accountable for transport and its funding. The Head of Finance Business Partnering and Strategic Planning noted ongoing discussions with the Mayor and leaders about the long-term funding gap.

Councillor Robert Alden stressed the importance of sustainable revenue funding and questioned whether the budget was sufficient for rescheduled metro works and the re-evaluation of the Coventry Electric bus program. The Director of Integrated Transport Services explained the re-evaluations due to changes in fleet numbers and procurement, ensuring the project remained within budget. Councillor Carol Hyatt enquired about the variance in grants handed over to local authorities. The Head of Finance Business Partnering and Strategic Planning explained the conditional release of funds based on approved business cases and quarterly expenditure reports from local authorities.

Councillor Ian Kettle asked about the total cost of the original regeneration scheme. The Head of Finance Business Partnering and Strategic Planning confirmed that the scheme was managed by Coventry and offered to provide further details. Councillor Liz Clements enquired about the inclusion of Birmingham in the highways maintenance funding and the progress on finding a sponsor for the West Midlands cycle hire scheme. The Director of Transport for West Midlands confirmed that Birmingham would receive full PFI funding for the year from DHLUC and confirmed ongoing discussions with potential sponsors for the cycle hire scheme without any confirmed agreements.

Councillor Pervez Akhtar highlighted the long-term struggle with the revenue budget and emphasised the need for sustainable funding. He questioned the significant variances in the transport investment budget and the need for timely project delivery. The Director of Integrated Transport Services discussed the link between a higher transport levy in Greater Manchester and the region's fares increases, emphasising the need for equitable fare setting with private operators.

Resolved:

- (1) The outturn position as at 31 March 2024 against the TfWM revenue budget which showed a favourable variance of £3.5m be noted.
- (2) The TfWM capital programme outturn position as of 31 March 2024 which showed a favourable variance of £111.6m for WMCA delivered schemes and a favourable variance of £83.3m for externally delivered schemes against budget be noted.
- (3) The progress against the use of CRSTS grant funding be noted.

97. Appointment of Scrutiny Champions and Member Engagement Groups

The committee considered a report of the Governance & Scrutiny Manager on the appointments to the six Scrutiny Champion positions and membership of the six Member Engagement Groups (MEG)

The Chair encouraged members to attend the Member Engagement Group meetings and encouraged Scrutiny Champions to engage with lead officers in order to deliver value-added contributions.

The Governance & Scrutiny Manager highlighted the reporting process and confirmed the membership for each Member Engagement Group and Scrutiny Champion appointments. In response to Councillor John McNicholas, he confirmed that recommendations made by a Member Engagement Group would need to be presented at the Transport Delivery Overview & Scrutiny Committee in order for them to be implemented or recommended to the WMCA Board.

Councillor Liz Clements and Councillor Keith Archer proposed a Member Engagement Group specifically for Bus Reform. Councillor Liz Clements also suggested a review of legacy Member Engagement Groups, the Director of Integrated Transport Services agreed to complete the review with lead officers based on the comments made during the meeting.

Resolved:

- (1) The appointment of six Scrutiny Champions for 2024/25 be approved.
- (2) The appointment of committee members to sit on the six Member Engagement Groups for 2024/25 be approved.
- (3) A review of the Member Engagement Groups and themes be undertaken.

98. Work Programme

The Statutory Scrutiny Officer presented the work programme. Councillor Liz Clements proposed that the transport levy be included in the work programme. Councillor John McNicholas raised the issue of a concessionary veterans' bus pass.

The Chair requested further information from officers in order to confirm whether they should be incorporated into the work programme.

Resolved:

The committee work programme be noted.

99. Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting would be held Monday 9 September 2024 at 11:00am.

The meeting ended at 3.05 pm.