



Housing & Land Delivery Board

Thursday 20 December 2018 at 10.00 am

Minutes

Present

Councillor Mike Bird (Chair)
Sarah Middleton

Councillor George Adamson
Councillor Peter Bilson
Bill Blincoe
Roy Stokes
Councillor Matthew Dormer
Councillor Paul Moore
Councillor Ian Courts
Councillor Daren Pemberton

Walsall Metropolitan Borough Council
Black Country Local Enterprise
Partnership
Cannock Chase District Council
City of Wolverhampton Council
Coventry and Warwickshire LEP
Environment Agency
Redditch Borough Council
Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council
Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council
Stratford on Avon District Council

In Attendance

Simon Tranter
Gareth Bradford
David Harris
Dr Henry Kippin
Tim Martin
David Warburton
Patricia Willoughby
Carl Craney

Walsall Metropolitan Borough Council
West Midlands Combined Authority
Transport for West Midlands
West Midlands Combined Authority
West Midlands Combined Authority
Homes England
West Midlands Combined Authority
West Midlands Combined Authority

27. Apologies for Absence (if any)

Apologies for absence had been received from Councillor Gaye Partridge (Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council), Simon Marks (Greater Birmingham and Solihull LEP), Karl Tupling (Homes England), Councillor Peter Nutting (Shropshire Council), Councillor Steven Claymore (Tamworth Borough Council), Councillor Richard Overton (Telford and Wrekin Council), Councillor Peter Butlin (Warwickshire County Council) and Kevin Rodgers (West Midlands Housing Association Partnership).

28. Nomination of Substitutes (if any)

Gavin Ashford had been nominated as a substitute for Councillor Richard Overton and James Prestwich had been nominated as a substitute for Kevin Rodgers.

29. Declarations of Interests (if any)

No declarations of interest were made relative to items under consideration at the meeting.

30. Minutes of the last meeting

Resolved:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 25 October 2018 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

31. Update on Housing and Land Portfolio

Gareth Bradford presented a report which updated the Board on the various strands of work which had been initiated under the WMCA Housing and Land Portfolio in 2018 led by the WMCA Housing and Regeneration Team. The report also identified a number of strands of work which were now in train and which would reach critical moments in 2019.

The Chair welcomed the report and commented that he looked forward to seeing evidence of delivery during the forthcoming year. Councillor Peter Bilson echoed these remarks. He advised that with regard the proposals to review governance arrangements for the work and with particular regard to the Walsall to Wolverhampton Corridor both Officers and Elected Members should be involved in the development of the work. Gareth Bradford advised that it was essential that all partners were involved and content with the proposals.

Councillor Ian Courts referred to the proposed Affordable and Social Housing Proposition with HM Government and suggested that shared ownership should be more actively considered in certain locations. He also commented on the need for a pipeline of schemes at various stages of development in order to take advantage of any new funding sources as and when they were launched by HM Government. Gareth Bradford advised the Board that a pipeline of schemes was being developed for such opportunities.

An evidence base was being collated on why HM Government should provide further funding to the West Midlands through a new Affordable and Social Housing Proposition and to enable expeditious delivery of housing units. He suggested that the establishment of a 'Top Up Fund' as part of this proposition was worthy of consideration to respond to certain development sites which otherwise would not be able to deliver appropriate quantities of affordable housing to be policy compliant. In return for such funding the WMCA would require higher quality of specification and design and a faster build out rate. A report should be provided to the next meeting on the position with the Affordable and Social Housing Proposition.

Sarah Middleton commented that the report set out the successes achieved in 2018 and suggested that future iterations include:

- i) A position statement on the timing of when funding would be available and how long it would be available;
- ii) A position statement reflecting the leverage
- iii) Achieved from the private sector on the back of public sector investment.

Councillor Daren Pemberton enquired whether the proposed 'Top Up Fund' would be used in cases where no affordable housing was to be provided or when the amount of affordable housing was not to the agreed policy level. Gareth Bradford responded that this would need to be decided by this Board on a case by case basis with a view to obtaining best value for money.

The Chair suggested that it would be helpful for a similar report to be provided to the Board on a quarterly basis in order that progress could be monitored. Gareth Bradford noted the request for quarterly reports and in line with the steers of previous meetings, that Dashboards were being developed which would be helpful in monitoring progress against delivery. The Chair commented on the need for Elected Members to identify which particular sites within their own local authority areas should be brought forward.

Councillor Daren Pemberton queried whether or not housing numbers provided by Non-Constituent Authorities counted towards meeting the 215k target. Gareth Bradford reported that the housing target in the Housing Deal was a regional ambition. Any housing units included within relevant Local Plans could be counted towards the regional target but it would be for individual local authorities to plan for the distribution of such homes and oversee delivery of such units. He referred the Board to their decision that the housing target in the housing deal had not been broken down on an authority by authority basis but positioned at a regional level. He offered to circulate the relevant extract from the Housing Deal to clarify the position raised in the original question. Councillor Ian Courts commented on the difficulties faced when dealing with three separate Housing Market Areas.

Resolved:

1. That the positive progress in work under the Housing and Land Portfolio in 2018 and some of the key work programmes coming to fruition in 2019 be noted;
2. That a further iteration of the report be submitted to the Board on a quarterly basis;
3. That the relevant extract from the Housing Deal be circulated related to the regional housing unit target.

32. Growth Corridors and Strategic Development Opportunities

Gareth Bradford presented a report which sought approval for the continued delivery of a programme of work within the Housing and Land Portfolio focussed on 'Corridors and Strategic Development Opportunities, informed the Board on the positive work undertaken by the WMCA with local councils and LEAs in the Walsall to Wolverhampton and Sandwell to Dudley corridors and gave suggestions for how to build on the excellent start to work in the region on inclusive growth corridors and strategic development opportunities. He explained that this programme of work was a joint activity with Transport for West Midlands (TfWM) and the Public Sector Reform team at the WMCA.

The Chair welcomed the report and the approach proposed. He emphasised that efforts should be concentrated in this work on real delivery and attracting new investment, especially towards bringing forward the more difficult to develop sites that would not otherwise come forward by the market alone. Councillor Peter Bilson commented on the evidence base being collated on the Walsall to Wolverhampton corridor and on the excellent working relationship between Officers and Elected Members involved in this particular workstream. He commented that whilst valuable lessons would be learnt, it would not necessarily be possible for these to be transferred to other similar workstreams as a one size fits all approach would not be appropriate. He requested the preparation of a report or data base indicating timelines and priorities. Councillor Ian Courts commented that the proposed Dashboards would be helpful in monitoring progress.

Gareth Bradford commented on the need to strengthen the 'why' in business cases especially why a proposal was required whether that be in terms of the wider impact on communities, unlocking brownfield sites for development which had not been possible previously or improving connectivity, in order to demonstrate the broader case for public sector financial investment. The Chair supported this view and commented that the 'why' was often more important than the figures in a traditional Business Case. Gareth Bradford added that his Team and the Public Sector Reform team would work closely with Transport for West Midlands on these matters.

Resolved:

1. That the proposal for the continued development of a programme of work unlocking the untapped potential of inclusive growth and delivering in Corridors and Strategic Development Opportunities be endorsed;
2. That the positive work on two growth corridors in the region i.e. Walsall to Wolverhampton and Sandwell to Dudley be welcomed.

33. Exclusion of the Public and Press

Resolved:

That in accordance with Section 100A4 of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public be excluded from the meeting during the consideration of the following items of business as they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information relating to the business affairs of any particular person (Including the authority holding that information).

34. Funding and Finance Update

Gareth Bradford and David Warburton presented a report which provided an update on recent funding bids, existing funds and sought, in principle, agreement to two new funds required to deliver the ambitious housing and regeneration plans for the region. The report informed the Board of the need to utilise the available devolved funding in new and different ways in order that the housing and regeneration goals agreed by the Board and HM Government could be delivered. It also invited comments on the draft emerging criteria for the Single Commissioning Framework.

The Chair sought an assurance that the proposals for new funding streams would not duplicate those currently available through Homes England. David Warburton confirmed that although they were similar the proposed funds would enable the Board to be proactive rather than reactive. He advised that the WMCA was working closely with Homes England to ensure a co-ordinated approach to the provision of funds. Councillor Ian Courts supported the proposals in the report which he believed would assist in delivering those sites in the pipeline and allow the Board to determine which sites received funding.

With regard to the draft emerging criteria for the Single Commissioning Framework, David Warburton invited comments which could be incorporated into a report to the February 2019 meeting of the Board. Various suggestions and comments on the draft emerging criteria were made.

Resolved:

1. That the progress on the Housing Infrastructure Fund, Collective Investment Fund and Single Commissioning Framework be noted;
2. That the WMCA Board be recommended to rename the Collective Investment Fund and its commitment limit be extended to £140 million, subject to the submission of a satisfactory Business Case;
3. That the WMCA Board be recommended to establish a new investment fund for housing with a commitment limit of £70 million, subject to the submission of a satisfactory Business Case;
4. That the draft emerging criteria for the Single Commissioning Framework be amended as follows and that further consideration be given to this matter at the February 2019 meeting:
 - Inclusion of reference to high quality of housing to be provided both in terms of design and specification;
 - The use of modular buildings wherever possible;
 - The use of local companies, where possible;
 - A concentration on sites that would not normally have been brought forward without public sector intervention;
 - The inclusion of appropriate links to the Local Industrial Strategy;
 - An indication of what was and was not covered by existing commissioning frameworks;

- A reference to the emerging work from Public Health England and local Public Health Directors with regard to 'Wellbeing by Design';
- The inclusion of reference to any stalled retail developments in town centres which could be converted to residential use;
- The amendment of the term 'above average density' to 'appropriate density'.

35. Chair's Closing Remarks

The Chair advised the Board that development on the Phoenix 10 site in Walsall, probably the most contaminated site in Europe, was about to commence following herculean work by the Black Country Consortium Limited, Walsall Metropolitan Borough Council and the WMCA. He offered his thanks to Sarah Middleton, the Black Country Local Enterprise Partnership, Simon Tranter and Officers at Walsall Metropolitan Borough Council and the WMCA. He advised that the development of this site would not have been possible without the dedicated work of the three organisations. Gareth Bradford commented that it showcased what could be achieved when partner organisations worked together.

The meeting ended at 10.55 am.