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**West Midlands
Combined Authority**

Overview & Scrutiny Committee

Monday 15 July 2019 at 10.00 am

Minutes

Present

Councillor Cathy Bayton
Councillor Ahmad Bostan
Councillor Richard Brown
Councillor Mike Chalk

Councillor Brian Douglas-Maul
Councillor Peter Fowler
Councillor Lynnette Kelly
Councillor Angus Lees
Councillor Dr. Simon People

Councillor Stephen Simkins
Councillor Lisa Trickett

Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council
Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council
Coventry City Council
Worcestershire Non-Constituent Local Authorities
Walsall Metropolitan Borough Council
Birmingham City Council
Coventry and Solihull Local Authorities
Association of Black Country Authorities
Staffordshire Non-Constituent Local Authorities
Association of Black Country Authorities
Birmingham City Council

In Attendance

Councillor Julian Grubb
Councillor Kath Hartley

Redditch Borough Council
Transport Delivery Committee

Item Title No.

67. Inquorate Meeting

Tim Martin, Head of Governance, Clerk and Monitoring Officer, indicated that this meeting was inquorate and therefore decisions taken at the meeting would be submitted to the WMCA Board on 26 July 2019 for formal approval.

68. Election of Chair for the Meeting

Tim Martin, Head of Governance, Clerk and Monitoring Officer, reported that the WMCA Board had deferred appointing the Chair for this committee until it met on 26 July. It was therefore necessary for a Chair to be appointed by the committee itself for this meeting only.

Resolved:

Councillor Lisa Trickett be appointed Chair of the committee for this meeting.

69. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Lucy Seymour-Smith (Birmingham), Councillor Paul Sweet (Wolverhampton) and Councillor Kate Wild (Solihull).

70. Appointment of Vice-Chairs

Resolved:

Councillor Cathy Bayton and Councillor Lynnette Kelly be appointed Vice-Chairs of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee for the 2019/20 municipal year.

71. Minutes - 12 April 2019

The minutes of the meeting held on 12 April were agreed as a correct record.

72. Matters Arising

(a) Former Committee Members

The Chair expressed her thanks to Councillor Peter Hughes for his stewardship of scrutiny within the WMCA whilst he had been chair of this committee. She also thanked Councillor Stuart Davis, Councillor Alan Dudson, Councillor John Glass, Councillor Josh Jones, Councillor Tariq Khan, Councillor Ian Shires, Councillor Joe Tildesley and Councillor Vera Waters for the contribution they made to the work of the committee during the last year.

(b) Travel Expenses

Councillor Stephen Simkins noted that members of the committee on occasion incurred significant travelling expenses in their capacity as WMCA members and enquired as to the most appropriate way this could be managed. Tim Martin, Head of Governance, Clerk and Monitoring Officer, reminded members that they were entitled to be reimbursed for any travel expenses they incurred in carrying out WMCA activities, but undertook to consider further the suitability of these arrangements.

(c) Meeting Locations

Councillor Stephen Simkins requested that in order to improve public accessibility to meetings of this committee, the locations of where it meets be rotated around the region. The Chair welcomed this suggestion and noted that the next meeting of the committee was scheduled to be held in Wolverhampton. It would be helpful for the committee to better understand the region if relevant site visits could also be linked in to meetings. Councillor Mike Chalk indicated that Redditch Borough Council would be very happy to host a future meeting of the committee.

(d) Member Attendance

The Chair noted that this meeting was again inquorate. She undertook to write to all members reminding them of the importance of attending meetings, recognising that if circumstances meant that they were unable to meet the responsibilities of being a member of the committee they should consider seeking a replacement member from within their authority.

73. Schedule of Meetings 2019/20

The committee noted its schedule of meetings for 2019/20:

- 2 September 2019
- 22 October 2019
- 17 December 2019
- 21 January 2020
- 9 March 2020

Members recognised that further meetings would likely be required during the course of the year. These additional meetings would include dedicated Q&A sessions being arranged for September and November 2019 to debate policy and budgetary issues with the Mayor.

74. Developing Overview & Scrutiny within the WMCA

The committee considered a report from Tim Martin, Head of Governance, Clerk and Monitoring Officer, on the new statutory guidance on Overview & Scrutiny in Local and Combined Authorities that was published by the Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government in May. The report also provided an update on the work being undertaken to develop the scrutiny function within the WMCA, including the findings of a review undertaken by the Centre for Public Scrutiny.

Ian Parry, Centre for Public Scrutiny, gave a presentation to the committee on the review he had undertaken. He had identified that good progress had been made since the WMCA was established in developing its scrutiny function, given the significant differences that existed in undertaking scrutiny within combined authorities compared to local authorities. These structural differences meant that it was essential an effective work programme was developed that focussed the committee's work where it was able to be most effective. The review proposed a series of short and medium term recommendations to help achieve this focus and to embed the scrutiny function more firmly within the governance arrangements of the WMCA.

The Chair thanked Ian Parry for the review work he had undertaken. Once the final report was circulated, she proposed that an action plan be developed for approval at the next meeting that showed how it was intended to take the review's recommendations forward.

Recommended to the WMCA Board:

- (1) The statutory guidance on Overview & Scrutiny in Local and Combined Authorities, published by the Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government be noted.
- (2) The findings and recommendations presented by the Centre for Public Scrutiny on the WMCA's scrutiny function be noted, and a report be submitted to the next meeting of the committee on 2 September setting out an action plan for delivering on these recommendations.

- (3) The Overview & Scrutiny Annual Report 2018/19, which was intended to set out clearly and succinctly the work of the committee over the last 12 months, be noted.
- (4) The WMCA scrutiny protocol be agreed.
- (5) The progress being made in the development of an Overview & Scrutiny guidebook be noted.

75. Potential Areas of Interest for Scrutiny

The Chair indicated that she was keen to understand more clearly the areas of interest and motivation of members of the committee, which would be helpful in determining a focussed work programme for the year. Following a wide ranging discussion, issues relating to transport, housing, skills, wellbeing, environment, 5G and funding were highlighted as having the most importance to members of the committee.

The Chair welcomed these suggestions and considered that they could be grouped within thematic scrutiny workstreams related to:

- Accountability
- Connectivity
- Investment (and whether this was facilitating inclusive growth)

It was agreed that further work would be undertaken in developing these workstreams into outline areas for scrutiny review, and then members of the committee would be encouraged to identify specific lines of enquiry that captured the areas of interest they had indicated.

76. Developing Service User and Citizen Engagement within the WMCA Thrive Programmes

The committee considered a report from Sean Russell, Director of Implementation, on proposals to develop the citizen and service user engagement started by the Mental Health Commission Citizens' Jury.

Feedback from Citizen Jury members had indicated that whilst individual programme strands had developed engagement mechanisms, there had not been a wider engagement strategy across the Thrive Programmes. Citizen and service user engagement across the Thrive Programmes had therefore been co-produced with seven Jury members and other service users who had formed themselves into an interim Independent Advisory Group.

Proposals developed were for up to 40 Thrive Ambassadors to be recruited to raise awareness and encourage individuals and organisations to support the relevant Thrive programmes. It was also proposed to formalise the interim Independent Advisory Group into the Thrive Independent Advisory Panel to have oversight of citizen/service user engagement, along with contributing to the development of policy and best practice across the Thrive programmes.

These proposals were to be considered by the Wellbeing Board at its meeting on 19 July.

Members noted the proposals, but expressed concern regarding the wider Thrive programmes and whether their scale was sufficient to properly address mental health issues across the region, particularly in respect of how pilot programmes could be rolled-out more widely.

Recommended to the WMCA Board:

- (1) The proposals to develop the citizen and service user engagement across the Thrive programmes be noted.
- (2) Further information be circulated to members of the committee on the inputs, outputs and scalability of the Thrive programmes, along with the evaluation work undertaken.

77. Conclusions of the Bus Franchising Task & Finish Review Group

The committee considered a report from Tim Martin, Head of Governance, Clerk and Monitoring Officer, and Pete Bond, Director of Integrated Network Services for Transport for West Midlands, on the conclusions of a scrutiny review of the powers available to the Mayor within the Bus Services Act 2017 in respect of bus franchising.

The review group was chaired by Councillor Angus Lees and comprised Councillor Mike Chalk, Councillor Liz Clements, Councillor Ian Shires and Councillor Stephen Simkins, along with Councillor Kath Hartley as Chair of Transport Delivery Committee. The group considered the current arrangements for bus services within the region, along with the powers contained within the Bus Services Act 2017 and the risks and opportunities these provided.

The group noted that whilst a bus franchising scheme would give a great deal of control over bus services and would address the needs of the passengers, it also carried a significant amount of financial risk. After reviewing the process for setting up a franchise, it was apparent that such a scheme could not be delivered in time for to deliver Sprint services in readiness for the Commonwealth Games in 2022.

Pete Bond indicated that the Vision for Bus strategy report agreed by the WMCA Board on 28 June would enable an outline business case to be undertaken that would evaluate further options for franchising, a Bus Alliance and Enhanced Partnerships and the comparative merits of each of these options.

The Chair thanked members of the Bus Franchising Task & Finish Review Group for the work they had undertaken on this matter.

Recommended to the WMCA Board:

The report and conclusions of the Bus Franchising Task & Finish Review Group be noted.

78. Forward Plan

The committee consider forward plans of items that were to be reported to future meetings of this committee and the WMCA Board. The Chair requested that items on 5G and the WMCA's development of a carbon reduction policy be added to the agenda for the next meeting of this committee on 2 September 2019.

79. Monday 2 September 2019 at 10.00am

The date of the next meeting was noted.

The meeting ended at 1.10 pm.