



**West Midlands
Combined Authority**

Housing & Land Delivery Board

Wednesday 15 January 2020 at 10.00 am

Minutes

Present

Councillor Mike Bird (Chair)
Sarah Middleton

Councillor Peter Bilson
Marc Lidderth
Karl Tupling
Councillor David Humphreys
Councillor Joanne Hadley
Councillor Ian Courts
Councillor Andy Mackiewicz
Councillor Daren Pemberton
Councillor David Wright
Kevin Rodgers

Walsall Metropolitan Borough Council
Black Country Local Enterprise
Partnership
City of Wolverhampton Council
Environment Agency
Homes England
North Warwickshire Borough Council
Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council
Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council
Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council
Stratford on Avon District Council
Telford and Wrekin Council
West Midlands Housing Association
Partnership

In Attendance

Richard Lawrence
Deborah Ward
Simon Tranter
Rachel-Ann Atterbury
Gareth Bradford
Colin Clinton
Carl Craney
Rob Lamond
Patricia Willoughby

City of Wolverhampton Council
Homes England
Walsall Metropolitan Borough Council
West Midlands Combined Authority
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Item Title No.

27. Apologies for Absence (if any)

Apologies for absence had been received from Councillor Sharon Thompson (Birmingham City Council), Councillor George Adamson (Cannock Chase District Council), Councillor Tariq Khan (Coventry City Council), Councillor Angus Lees (Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council), Simon Marks (Greater Birmingham and Solihull Local Enterprise Partnership), Councillor Julie Jackson (Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough Council) and Councillor Robert Macey (Shropshire Council).

28. Chair's Remarks

The Chair referred to a number of incidents Members of the Board had encountered in gaining access to the car park at the building despite reservations having been made. He asked the Officers to look into this matter and to seek to ensure that the difficulties were addressed.

He also referred to the absence of Councillor Robert Macey, the representative from Shropshire Council as he had hoped to speak with him regarding recent press reports on the proposed development at Tong.

29. Notification of Substitutes (if any)

No notification of Substitute Members had been received. Councillor Ian Courts reported that he had invited his Substitute, Councillor Andy Mackiewicz to join him at this meeting.

30. Declarations of Interests (if any)

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

31. Minutes of last meeting

Resolved:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 4 November 2019 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

32. Affordable Housing Policy

Gareth Bradford and Rob Lamond presented a report which provided an update on the implementation of the regional approach to housing affordability and which sought the agreement of the Board to the principles of the proposed definition as set out in Section 5 of the report and its application through the Single Commissioning Framework (SCF).

The Chair highlighted that the house price to earnings ratio in 2018 for the Redditch Borough Council and Stratford on Avon District Council areas were considerably higher than other areas in the region and, indeed, above the England average. He also referred to the difficulties faced by those who could afford to rent private properties but struggled to raise the initial deposit required. Gareth Bradford advised that there were a number of initiatives to assist those encountering such difficulties including 'Rent to Own'. He reminded the Board that under the SCF, any developers seeking financial support were required to provide a minimum of 20% of affordable houses on any development above 200 units. To date, this had been successful in delivering an increase in the number of affordable units and was having an impact on the market.

Councillor Peter Bilson queried whether other funding partners, especially Homes England, supported this approach. Gareth Bradford confirmed this to be the case. Councillor Joanne Hadley commented that an increase in the number of social housing units as well as affordable units were required. Rob Lamond explained that provision for such units were included within the definition of 'Affordable Housing'.

The Chair referred to the need for appropriate accommodation to be provided for 'Key Workers' in areas close to, for example, hospitals. He referred to a concept where additional car parking could be provided at such sites with residential accommodation provided by it. He suggested that such a concept would work easily as well adjacent to railway stations and transport hubs and requested the Officers to investigate this matter further. Gareth Bradford reported on an approach from a local NHS Trust for such an initiative and this was being investigated currently by the One Public Estate Board. He offered to arrange for a report on this matter to be submitted to a future meeting. He advised that the WMCA was also considering the suitability of its assets (car parks, bus stations etc.) for such initiatives.

Councillor Daren Pemberton commented that this was far from a new idea as a similar principle had been used for the development of Bourneville. He acknowledged the issue with affordability in the Stratford on Avon District and advised that the Council had a policy requiring 35% of affordable units to be provided on all developments. This was challenged consistently by potential developers who referred to the 20% requirement under the SCF. He requested the assistance of the WMCA in challenging arguments on the viability of developments. Councillor Ian Courts commented that there was no easy answer to the problem but that local authorities needed to adopt a consistent approach.

In response to a further comment by Councillor Ian Courts, Gareth Bradford assured the Board that the suggested definition had been confirmed by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government to be in compliance with Planning Policy Guidance and the National Planning Policy Framework.

Karl Tupling reported that Homes England financial support was not available for developments funded through Section 106 Agreements other than in exceptional circumstances. He offered to make Homes England viability model available to Gareth Bradford.

Councillor Peter Bilson reminded the Board that other development models, including the establishment of 'Local Housing Companies' were available. He acknowledged that this particular option would not be suitable for some local authorities but commended its consideration.

Gareth Bradford offered to circulate a list of examples and case studies where the WMCA had been successful in acquiring land at a significantly lower level than the initial valuation. He invited Homes England to provide examples of interventions it had been involved in. Karl Tupling agreed to make such examples available but advised that these would need to be anonymised in order to protect commercial confidentiality.

Gareth Bradford reported that an approach had been made to H M Government in July 2019 for grant funding of £300 million for affordable housing shovel ready schemes. He suggested that a similar request be made to the 'new' Government.

Resolved:

1. That the proposed regional definition of housing affordability to secure an increase in the delivery and accessibility of genuinely affordable homes in the region that meet local needs be endorsed;
2. That the application of the proposed regional approach through the Single Commissioning Framework process, in order for the WMCA's housing and land investments and acquisitions to drive a more bespoke and locally informed approach that enabled increased supply of affordable homes be approved;
3. That the excellent support and engagement received by the WMCA from a number of local authorities across the region in developing the above approach be noted;
4. That the One Public Estate Board be requested to submit a report to a future meeting of this Board on the provision of housing / car parking schemes adjacent to hospitals / transport hubs etc.;
5. That a list of examples and case studies where the WMCA had had been successful in acquiring land at a significantly lower level than the initial valuation be circulated to the Board;
6. That Homes England be requested to provide a list of anonymised examples of interventions it had been involved in for circulation to the Board;
7. That a further request be made to H M Government for £300 million of funding for affordable housing shovel ready schemes;
8. That a report on the current position with the Local Housing Companies established by Birmingham City Council and the City of Wolverhampton Council be submitted to a future meeting.

33. Inclusive Growth Corridors - Update on Delivery and Investment Plans

Pat Willoughby presented a report which advised on the work undertaken by the WMCA in collaboration with its local authority partners, had embarked upon regarding a programme of development and investment opportunities focussed on a number of inclusive growth corridors across the West Midlands. For two of these corridors, this Board was managing a programme of preparing a Delivery and Investment Plan. It was anticipated that these Plans would be finalised in Quarter 1 of 2020. The report explained the background to and progress with the preparation of the Delivery and Investment Plans and a PowerPoint presentation was given to provide additional information.

Resolved:

1. That the current progress on the emerging Delivery and Investment Plans being prepared for the Walsall to Wolverhampton and West Bromwich to Dudley Corridors be noted;
2. That the programme for Delivery and Investment plans in 2020 – namely key milestones and timescales to ensure that the plans were approved and published in final form before the end of Quarter 1 in 2020 be noted;
3. That the final iterations of the Delivery and Investment Plans be submitted to the next meeting for consideration and approval.

34. Town Centres - Update on Delivery and Investment Plans

Pat Willoughby presented a report which advised on the work undertaken by the WMCA in collaboration with its local authority and business partners in relation to town centre regeneration and revitalisation. For an identified set of pilot town centres (Wave 1), this Board was managing a programme of preparing Delivery and Investment Plans. It was anticipated that each Plan would be finalised during Quarter 1 of 2020. The report explained the background to and progress on the preparation of the Delivery and Investment Plans. The Board received a PowerPoint presentation which provided additional information.

Councillor Joanne Hadley reminded the Board that H M Government had identified West Bromwich High Street for attention and questioned whether the work proposed would link to these initiatives. Pat Willoughby reminded the Board that the WMCA Town Centre Programme had commenced in October 2019 with H M Government's Task Force starting subsequently. The latter was focussed on the theory behind the difficulties experienced but the former was concentrating upon delivery. She confirmed that the work of the Government Task Force would be aligned with work of the West Midlands Regional Town Centres Task Force. Councillor Joanne Hadley commented that whilst all town centres had experienced similar and different problems a common concern related to public safety. Pat Willoughby advised that the West Midlands Police was an active Member of the Regional Task Force.

Councillor Peter Bilson commented that the fear of crime was often greater than actual crime. He asked whether local businesses were involved with the Task Forces and suggested that Community Groups could be established to consider issues of community safety. He opined that improved street lighting and public transport would also assist in addressing a number of concerns. Furthermore, the impact of media reporting of incidents, however isolated, could not be ignored.

Gareth Bradford reported that the Officers had been asked by the Regional Town Centres Task Force to prepare a formal briefing paper on all offers of support and funding opportunities. Once the Delivery and Investment Plans were approved a strong communications campaign would commence. He gave an example of an intervention in Bull Street, West Bromwich as an indication of the work supported by the Task Force. He also assured the Board that Wave 2 of the Town Centres Programme would be led by 'Lessons Learnt' from Phase 1.

Councillor Daren Pemberton commended the work undertaken to date but suggested that each town centre required a 'Unique Selling Point'. Councillor Ian Courts queried what interventions were possible and advised that he would be unable to support any initiatives to support failing businesses. He supported the suggestion that Wave 2 schemes would benefit from identifying which interventions had been successful in Wave 1 of the programme. He supported the suggestion of 'Unique Selling Points' but was of the view that it was unlikely that the respective town centres actually competed against one another.

Councillor David Wright asked as to information mapping as he understood that Government funding was available for such an exercise. He suggested that the Board should concentrate on the main transport corridors in selecting the town centres for Phase 2 of the programme. He requested additional information on the type of interventions made to date and any others which were available. Gareth Bradford advised that a corridor mapping exercise was underway as part of the programme. The wider benefits of investment needed to be considered including measures relating to community safety. He explained that some interventions would need to be above market value and stressed the need to deliver on the agreed proposals.

Resolved:

1. That the current progress on the emerging Delivery and Investment Plans which were being prepared for the 'Wave 1' town centres be noted;
2. That the programme for Delivery and Investment Plans in 2020 – namely the key milestones and timescales to ensure that the plans were approved in final form before the end of Quarter 1 of 2020 be noted;
3. That the final iterations of the Delivery and Investment Plans be submitted to the next meeting for consideration and approval.

35. Advanced Methods of Construction (AMC) Strategy

Gareth Bradford presented a report which updated the Board on progress in implementing its decisions made on 30 September 2019 to secure additional expert Modern Methods of Construction (MMC) resource and to move towards mainstreaming MMC on sites coming through the Single Commissioning Framework (SCF). The report also proposed a series of principles intended to guide the development of a future MMC strategy. He commented that the proposed move to MMC was also linked closely to energy efficiency measures and that the preferred reference to MMC was now AMC (Advanced Manufacturing in Construction).

Councillor Ian Courts welcomed the report but reminded the Board that the issue was not solely confined to the reduction of carbon emissions but also, inter alia, with the reduction of waste. This comment was supported by the Chair who gave an example of an MMC/AMC development site in the Walsall area where only one skip had been required in the duration of the works. Marc Lidderth reminded the Board of the need to consider recycling, water use and re-use and the wider environmental considerations which should be included in any final strategy. He also referred to the need to aim for zero carbon emissions and to aspire to sustainability and legacy considerations in developments associated with hosting the Commonwealth Games.

Councillor Andy Mackiewicz advised that innovative measures could be expensive if they were introduced hastily and advised that the construction industry needed sufficient lead-in time to prepare and adapt.

Gareth Bradford stressed to the Board that without the use of MMC / AMC the target housing numbers would not be met and that delays in supply should not be contemplated.

Sarah Middleton commented on the need to link this workstream with the Industrial Strategy and the work of the Innovation Board.

Resolved:

1. That the progress to date in delivering the WMCA's vision, route map and strategy for a Modern Methods of Construction Programme (MMC) to be implemented across the region, including key milestones and decision points be noted;
2. That the proposed incremental approach to developing the MMC Strategy, to be prepared using a process of wide-ranging engagement with industry experts and practitioners to enable the final strategy to benefit from such input be noted;
3. That the adoption of 'Advanced Manufacturing in Construction' (AMC) as the term used to describe the WMCA's strategy and desired products be approved;
4. That the principles detailed in the report be approved as the basis of the WMCA's future AMC strategy

36. Housing Delivery Numbers - Update

The Board considered a report which provided an update on the latest housing delivery data as published by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government.

Resolved:

That the report be received and noted.

The meeting ended at 11.35 am.