



# West Midlands Combined Authority

## Environment Board

Thursday 24 October 2019 at 10.00 am

### Minutes

#### Present

Councillor Ian Courts (Chair)

Councillor Maria Crompton

Councillor Ian Kettle

Councillor Andy Mackiewicz

Portfolio Lead for Environment, Energy & HS2

Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council

Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council

Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council

#### In Attendance

Councillor Peter Fowler

Councillor Steve Jones

Overview & Scrutiny Committee

Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council

#### Item Title No.

#### 16. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Oliver Butler (Walsall), Councillor Jim O'Boyle (Coventry) and Councillor Waseem Zaffar (Birmingham).

#### 17. Chair's Remarks

##### (a) Henry Kippin, Director of Public Service Reform

The Chair reported that this was the last meeting before Henry Kippin took up a new post of Director of Economic Growth at the North of Tyne Combined Authority. He thanked Henry for all the work he had done in supporting the Environment portfolio at the WMCA, particularly in respect of its decision to declare a climate emergency and pledge to transition to net zero levels of CO<sub>2</sub> by 2041. On behalf of the board he wished him success in his new role.

#### 18. Minutes - 8 February 2019

The minutes of the meeting held on 8 February 2019 were agreed as a correct record.

#### 19. Zero Carbon Challenge / Climate Action Plan

The board received a presentation from Claire Spencer, Acting Head of Inclusive Growth & Public Sector Reform, on the development of a climate green paper that was to be considered by the WMCA Board on 8 November. The green paper was in response to a decision taken by the WMCA Board on 26 July to transition to net zero levels of CO<sub>2</sub> by no later than 2041.

Claire Spencer explained that the report would identify five underlying principles that would shape the actions required, namely:

- The need to make the journey to 2041 without leaving anyone behind.
- The need to boost our resilience to 'locked in' climate breakdown.
- The need to reconcile our past with our future.
- The need to build more places, and more connectivity between places.
- The need to reduce demand for energy and resources without impacting on shared prosperity.

Because this was a green paper, it was meant as a starting point, containing proposals and propositions, rather than pre-determined activities and outcomes. It was intended as the beginning of a #WM2041 campaign to flesh out the ways in which the region delivered against its ambition, and the way in which a social and system movement was built around this.

The Chair stressed the pivotal role that new technology would play in assisting in delivering on these ambitions, and the WMCA had a key role in this. Councillor Andy Mackiewicz suggested that a new industrial revolution based on zero carbon technology would drive progress to towards the 2041 targets. Henry Kippin, Director of Public Service Reform, considered that the region was well placed to drive technological answers through partnership working between public, private and the university sectors. The WMCA was able to provide leadership in this work.

Councillor Peter Fowler expressed particular interest in the development of photovoltaic tiles, which were solar panels designed to look like and function as conventional roofing tiles whilst also producing electricity. The Chair request a presentation be given to a future meeting on this developing technology.

Resolved:

- (1) the board note the progress being made in the preparation of a report for the WMCA Board on 8 November on the programme of collaboration, engagement and policy development required to address the climate challenge in the West Midlands.
- (2) A copy of the report be circulated to board members once it was complete.

**20. Transition of the WMCA HS2 Growth Strategy Environment & Landscape Workstream into the Strategic Remit of the Environment Board**

The board considered a report from Henry Kippin, Director of Public Service Reform, seeking support to transition and mainstream the HS2 environment and landscape workstream into the Environment portfolio.

The HS2 Environment & Landscape Board met six times a year with a remit to maximise mitigation measures related to the construction of HS2. To date, whilst it had established strong partnerships, it had had limited success in influencing actual decisions and projects. It was therefore considered appropriate to review the scope and remit of the HS2 Environment & Landscape Board and its associated workstream, and it was considered that the Environment portfolio was a better fit for it given the close alignment with the clean growth and natural gain priority areas of the Environment portfolio.

Councillor Maria Crompton noted the environmental value of hedgerows, which was often overlooked in comparison to the value placed on trees. The Chair supported these comments and suggested that the significance of hedgerows impacted by the construction of HS2 should be given its proper consideration.

William Martin, HS2 Project Manager, indicated that a further report would be submitted to a future meeting of the board seeking agreement to a plan to transition the HS2 environment and landscape workstream into the Environment portfolio.

Resolved:

- (1) The principle of seeking to transition the environment and landscape workstream into the Environment portfolio be endorsed in principle.
- (2) The principle of aligning the operational remit of the environment and landscape workstream to existing design groups for HS2 construction and other HS2 growth strategy programmes be supported.

## **21. Low Emissions and ULEV Strategy**

The board considered a report from Mike Waters, Director of Policy, Strategy & Innovation at Transport for West Midlands, on proposals to progress a key plank of the region's ambitious agenda around clean transport and industrial strategy.

The report set out the current position relating to the development of ultra-low emission vehicle infrastructure provision for the West Midlands, provided an analysis of potential scenarios for scaling up electric vehicle charging, and assessed this within the region's ambitions to accelerate its transition to a net-zero carbon economy.

The report identified three different scenarios for delivering charging infrastructure required to meet projected future demand within the West Midlands. Option 1 was to pursue a largely market-led approach, option 2 identified up to four delivery clusters that would engage with companies to deliver infrastructure within each cluster area, and option 3 would pursue a region wide approach that enabled delivery at scale.

The Chair considered that the WMCA had a key role in mapping charging infrastructure to expected demand and to lobby on the need for universal access to charging points. Councillor Andy Mackiewicz highlighted the opportunity for building regulations to be updated to require the need for charging points to be made mandatory for all new housing construction.

Resolved:

- (1) The scenarios presented within the report for the acceleration of electric charging and enabling energy infrastructure in the West Midlands, including the strategic importance of the issue to the WMCA's Local Industrial Strategy, Strategic Economic Plan and climate change ambitions, be noted.
- (2) Option 3 within the report (a collaborative, at-scale model which gave local authorities maximum control and leverage over the way in which electric vehicle infrastructure was rolled out across the whole region) be recommended in a report to be submitted to a future meeting of the WMCA Board.
- (3) It be noted that work had been commissioned within the WMCA/Transport for West Midlands to create a more detailed evidence base to existing provision and future demand that would be needed in order to progress the options set out in the report.

## **22. Environment Board Future Items of Business**

The board discussed a range of items that it wished to consider at its future meetings. The Chair thought that a number of these could be best addressed through presentation/discussion items that would help inform members and give context to the role of the board. Items for consideration could include:

- Carbon Reduction Implementation Plan
- Evolving technological developments, including photovoltaic tiles
- UK Green Building Council
- Development of 'green gas' technology within the West Midlands
- Environmental developments within constituent and non-constituent authorities

## **23. Date of Next Meeting**

Thursday 27 February 2020 at 10.00am.

The meeting ended at 11.50 am.