



West Midlands Combined Authority

WMCA Board

Friday 5 June 2020 at 11.00am

Minutes

Constituent Members

Andy Street (Chair)	Mayor of the West Midlands
Councillor Bob Sleight (Vice-Chair)	Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council
Councillor Mike Bird	Walsall Metropolitan Borough Council
Councillor Ian Brookfield	City of Wolverhampton Council
Councillor Ian Courts	Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council
Councillor Yvonne Davies	Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council
Councillor George Duggins	Coventry City Council
Councillor Patrick Harley	Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council
Councillor Brigid Jones	Birmingham City Council
Councillor Abdul Khan	Coventry City Council
Councillor Ian Ward	Birmingham City Council

Non-Constituent Members

Nick Abell	Coventry & Warwickshire Local Enterprise Partnership
Councillor George Adamson	Cannock Chase District Council
Councillor Matt Dormer	Redditch Borough Council
Councillor Julie Jackson	Nuneaton & Bedworth Borough Council
Councillor Sebastian Lowe	Rugby Borough Council
Councillor Alex Phillips	Shropshire Council
Tim Pile	Greater Birmingham & Solihull Local Enterprise Partnership
Councillor Izzi Seccombe	Warwickshire County Council
Tom Westley	Black Country Local Enterprise Partnership

Observer Members

David Jamieson	West Midlands Police & Crime Commissioner
Mandy Thorn	The Marches Local Enterprise Partnership

In Attendance

Councillor Cathy Bayton	Overview & Scrutiny Committee
Councillor Kath Hartley	Transport Delivery Committee
Kashmire Hawker	Young Combined Authority
David Lane	Audit, Risk & Assurance Committee
Eman Mowatt	Young Combined Authority
Councillor Lisa Trickett	Overview & Scrutiny Committee

This meeting was held in accordance with the Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020. The meeting was conducted using Microsoft Teams video conferencing software and all participants took part in the meeting remotely.

1. Apologies for Absence

An apology for absence was received from Councillor David Hitchiner (Herefordshire).

2. Minutes - 14 February 2020

The minutes of the meeting held on 14 February 2020 were agreed as a correct record.

3. Forward Plan

A forward plan of items to be considered at future meetings of the board was noted.

4. Chair's Remarks

(a) Councillor Peter Bilson

The Chair noted that Councillor Peter Bilson, Deputy Leader of the City of Wolverhampton Council and member of the WMCA Board had sadly died in February. He paid tribute to Councillor Bilson's exemplary public service during his 37 years as a councillor.

5. COVID-19: Actions taken by the WMCA

The board considered a report from the Head of Governance, Clerk and Monitoring Officer and the Director of Finance on how the WMCA had approached decision making processes since the introduction of social distancing measures in response to the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The report set out the action taken since mid-March in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, included staff based at Summer Lane transferring to an almost entirely homebased operation, the WMCA playing its part in the regional emergency resilience arrangements by being a member of the Strategic Co-ordination Group for the Local Resilience Forum areas of the West Midlands and Warwickshire, and the decisions taken by the Chief Executive using emergency powers contained within the constitution.

Resolved:

The actions taken under delegated powers in response to the current public health emergency be noted and endorsed.

6. Annual Planning: Review of 2019/20 Delivery and Update on 2020/21 Planning

The board considered a report from the Director of Strategy presenting the review of the Annual Plan 2019/20 and an update on the development of a plan for 2020/21 in light of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The report provided a comprehensive summary of WMCA delivery and enabling activity in 2019/20 which achieved and supported transport services and improvements, the building of key infrastructure, support to the most vulnerable within communities and growth in the regional economy.

The outbreak of COVID-19 had significant implications for the 2020/21 planning process. The mayoral election was postponed for one year and the WMCA, its local authority partners and other stakeholder organisations had also needed to adjust their immediate priorities to respond to the pandemic. There was consequently a need to reassess the deliverables originally agreed for 2020/21 and to also review WMCA's activity, strategic aims and planning processes in the context of the region's recovery. That work was currently on-going, with a focus on the immediate activity and support required to help the emergency response to the pandemic.

Resolved:

- (1) The review of the WMCA Annual Plan 2019/20 be noted.
- (2) The current position regarding a WMCA Annual Plan for 2020/21 be noted and the need to align WMCA delivery, support and influence to the region's recovery priorities be endorsed.
- (3) The proposed approach to the publication of the annual 'State of the Region' report be noted and endorsed.

7. Application from Warwick District Council to become 'Observer' Members of the WMCA

The board considered a report from the Head of Governance, Clerk and Monitoring Officer on a request from Warwick District Council to become 'Observer' members of the WMCA with immediate effect.

At a meeting in February, Warwick District Council formally resolved to seek Observer status of the WMCA for the remainder of this year, and then to determine whether it should request formal Non-Constituent member status from January 2021. Warwick District Council was currently the only one of Warwickshire's five borough/district councils not to be a Non-Constituent member of the WMCA.

Resolved:

- (1) The request from Warwick District Council to seek WMCA Observer member status with immediate effect be approved.
- (2) It be noted that Warwick District Council intended to review its position by the end of 2020 and either withdraw future participation or request formal Non-Constituent member status.

8. Overview & Scrutiny Committee - Annual Report 2019/20

The board considered a report from the Head of Governance, Clerk and Monitoring Officer highlighting the work programme and key achievements of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee during 2019/20.

Overview & Scrutiny was a statutory requirement for the WMCA to undertake. The committee had the responsibility to review the work of the Mayor and the WMCA, to make recommendations to the WMCA Board and its committees and call-in decisions that had already been made for further scrutiny. This was the second time the Overview & Scrutiny Committee had produced an annual report, which was intended to set out clearly and succinctly the work of the committee over the last 12 months. The annual report helped demonstrate the WMCA's commitment to critical self-assessment and transparency in its decision making.

Councillor Lisa Trickett drew attention to the three key themes that ran through the work of the committee during the last year: accountability, connectivity and investment. The annual report set out the scrutiny work that had been undertaken to constructively challenge and hold the WMCA's political leadership to account as it focused on how it would make a difference to the communities across the region, how investment decisions would improve people's lives and ensuring that aspirational ideas were followed up with identifiable actions. The Chair thanked the members of Overview & Scrutiny Committee for the valuable work they had undertaken during the last 12 months.

Resolved:

The Overview & Scrutiny Committee 2019/20 annual report be noted.

9. Economic Recovery - Emerging Employment and Skills Proposals and Adult Education Budget 2019/20 and 2020/21

The board considered a report from the Director of Productivity & Skills on emerging proposals on employment and skills related activities intended to support and enhance existing local and regional recovery activities.

Proposals had been developed with local authority and local enterprise partnership officers, and set out where further activity and resource was needed to build on existing infrastructure. Any new support would need to deliver what the local economy needed and be targeted at those who would be hardest hit. It should give those without work the ability to maintain their work readiness and gain new skills to get a better job and help to deliver a workforce for the future high-skilled economy.

Councillor George Duggins noted the disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on young people and stressed the importance of Government funding being made available to the WMCA and local authorities to help meet these challenges. David Jamieson supported these comments, noting that his recently published 'A Future Generations Deal' report highlighted the challenges facing younger people and the risks of them being drawn into unemployment and crime. He urged all public authorities to co-ordinate measures, including working closely with small and medium sized enterprises, to provide the employment opportunities that that the region needed for its younger people. Councillor Bob Sleight noted that many smaller business would themselves be struggling with liquidity issues and urged lobbying of the Government to provide support where necessary.

Resolved:

- (1) The ongoing work across the WMCA, local authorities, and local enterprise partnerships to develop clear proposals for enhanced employment and skills activities to support local and regional recovery plans be noted.
- (2) Authority be delegated to the Director of Productivity & Skills, in consultation with the Portfolio Lead for Productivity & Skills, the Director of Finance and the Monitoring Officer, to develop proposals and businesses cases as part of the wider regional recovery work.
- (3) It be noted that, in view of the need to move at pace and in line with delegated authority, a further progress report would be brought at the appropriate time to inform the WMCA Board of activity.

10. Financial Monitoring Report 2019/20

The board considered a report from the Director of Finance providing an update on WMCA finances as at the end of March 2020, subject to external audit.

A summary of the final outturn of both the revenue and capital spend against the approved budget and forecast was set out within the report, as well as a summary of the Investment Programme along with current commitments. The balance sheet and Treasury Management was also reported.

Councillor Bob Sleight confirmed that the 2019/20 annual accounts would be submitted to the meeting of the Audit, Risk & Assurance Committee on 14 July.

Resolved:

The financial outturn position as at the end of March 2020 be noted.

11. Match Funding for the Tourism, Trade and Investment Programme

The board considered a report from the Director of Strategy seeking approval of £2.6m WMCA match funding connected with a funding request to Government for £21.3m supporting a Tourism, Trade and Investment Programme to maximise the opportunities offered by the Commonwealth Games.

In 2019 the WMCA identified an opportunity to secure Government funding for a regional Tourism, Trade and Investment Programme on the back of the 2022 Commonwealth Games. The West Midlands Growth Company developed a bid on behalf of the WMCA and successfully secured a £21.3m commitment from the March budget. To secure Government funding, the region needed to provide £2.6m of match funding, which had been negotiated down from an original 50:50 programme split. Confirmation of match funding had to be provided to the Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport by June, ahead of its Finance Committee meeting on 13 July which was considering the Outline Business Case. This would release around £500,000 of project development funding to WMCA.

The programme was forecast to deliver the following additional outputs for the region beyond what was expected to be achieved by the Commonwealth Games themselves:

- 36 additional Foreign Direct Investment projects
- Over 600 new jobs
- £43m Gross Value Added uplift
- £21m additional leisure tourism expenditure
- £6.5m additional conference and sporting expenditure
- Up to £4m of private sector sponsorship

The Chair thanked the West Midlands Growth Company for the work it had undertaken supporting this programme.

Resolved:

The £2.6m of match funding for the Tourism, Trade and Investment Programme to unlock £21.3m of Government funding be approved.

12. WM2041: A Programme for Implementing an Environmental Recovery

The board considered a report from the Director of Public Service Reform and the Head of Environment on the feedback received from the consultation on the WM2041 plan, as well as the next steps that should be taken.

The responses to the consultation drew attention to several cross-cutting issues around finance, engagement, behaviour change, communications, monitoring and reporting. These issues would be picked up in different ways, such as:

- The WMCA would explore options for financing green infrastructure projects through products like green bonds.
- Engagement and behaviour change considerations would be built into the programmes developed in the five-year plans. There also needed to be consideration of the channels that were used for generic engagement and providing support and advice on what people could do to have a positive impact on climate change. This needed to be a collaborative effort working with local authorities, communities and national government.
- Communications campaigns would be a central part of the delivery of WM2041. This would consider regional-level initiatives as well as how the West Midlands could be represented at national and international events, for example COP26.
- Monitoring and reporting were key for transparency around emissions reduction. The WMCA had committed to disclosing carbon emissions through the Carbon Disclosure Project. This information would be publicly available.

Each of the main actions in the programme would have a working group/ taskforce established that brought together the necessary stakeholders for delivery. The governance proposed for this work was for the Environment Board to receive the updates on programme activity and progress, as well as to make decisions on the work on behalf of the WMCA Board.

Councillor Ian Brookfield supported the proposals contained within the report, recognising it as one of the key work areas for the WMCA in the coming years. Kashmire Hawker reported that the Young Combined Authority was following this matter closely and stressed the importance of keeping younger people engaged with the work being undertaken.

Resolved:

- (1) The summary of the consultation feedback on WM2041 be received.
- (2) It be agreed that the recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic should be one that supported the ambition for a fairer, greener, healthier West Midlands and built on those aspects of the crisis that prefigured a low carbon economy.
- (3) The programme of activity identified in report, including the key priorities to be developed in the coming 12 months alongside the development of a Five-Year #WM2041 Delivery Plan be approved.
- (4) The need for a co-ordinated approach around tackling climate change and an effective approach to governance be approved.

13. Recovering the Transport Network - Towards a New Normal

The board considered a report from the Director of Policy, Strategy & Innovation, Transport for West Midlands, on the action taken to recover the region's transport network following the COVID-19 pandemic.

Working with transport operators, the Local Resilience Forum and Government, Transport for West Midlands co-ordinated service changes to maintain a reduced transport network ensuring a comprehensive network of public transport for critical and key workers such as the NHS, carers, food and distribution workers etc. This network was specifically enhanced for those that needed it most. This was accompanied by a national and regional communication plan to discourage travel, with the key message to stay at home in line with the Government restrictions that were in place at the time.

The lockdown resulted in significant changes to the transport system. Demand for travel reduced significantly and the UK public transport network was currently being publicly funded in its entirety as it could not operate commercially at this time. The significantly reduced demand and capacity of the public transport system meant this financial pressure was likely to remain for an extended period. There were consequent public and private sector risks arising from this and a likely impact of increased transport demand on other modes as a recovery from the pandemic took place.

Councillor Ian Ward expressed his thanks to the staff within Transport for West Midlands for their hard work during the last 12 weeks in managing the region's public transport network. As lockdown restrictions were beginning to be eased, work was now focused on providing reassurance that public transport was safe to use. Councillor Cathy Bayton expressed disappointment that care workers had not been included in the free public transport use offered to NHS workers. Councillor Ian Ward shared this disappointment, but indicated that it had not been possible to reach agreement with all parties to enable free travel to be offered more widely.

Resolved:

- (1) The terms of reference for the multi-agency Local Resilience Forum Transport Cell, established as a temporary and evolving measure to co-ordinate the collective response to managing the transport network through the COVID-19 crisis be approved.
- (2) The outline of the Transport for West Midlands COVID-19 recovery action plan which would remain under development be approved.
- (3) The approach to the co-ordination and administration of the Emergency Active Travel Funding from the Department for Transport, and the delegations set out in the report, be approved.
- (4) The partnership approach and associated delegations for responding to the Department for Transport's proposed call for national e-scooter trials be approved.
- (5) The longer-term impacts and challenges for the West Midlands transport system in responding to the unprecedented nature of the COVID-19 impact, as well as tackling pre-existing strategic issues such as climate change, be noted.
- (6) The potential need for Transport for West Midlands to manage its financial resources to ensure priorities were delivered be noted, subject to Transport for West Midlands gaining the necessary supplementary approvals to do so.

14. Strategic Economic Development Board - 8 January 2020

The board received the minutes of the Strategic Economic Development Board meeting held on 8 January.

Resolved:

The minutes of the meeting held on 8 January 2020 be noted.

15. Transport Delivery Committee - 10 February 2020

The board received the minutes of the Transport Delivery Committee meeting held on 10 February.

Councillor Kath Hartley confirmed that Transport for West Midlands was now meeting bus operators on a weekly basis to help manage developments and implications arising from COVID-19.

Resolved:

The minutes of the meeting held on 10 February 2020 be noted.

16. Mayor's Question Time: Connectivity - 13 February 2020

The board considered a report of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee on the Mayoral question time held on 13 February on 'connectivity' related issues.

Councillor Lisa Trickett noted the seven key conclusions arising out of the Question Time, which would now be subject to a formal response from the Mayor. Members of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee were clear that modern and innovative solutions were required to tackle the structural problems that existed within the public transport network, and encouraged the Mayor and members of the WMCA Board to be bold in their thinking on these matters.

Resolved:

The report be noted, and the Mayor formally respond to the Overview & Scrutiny Committee on this issues it had raised.

17. Investment Board - 17 February 2020

The board received the minutes of the Investment Board meeting held on 17 February.

Resolved:

The minutes of the meeting held on 17 February 2020 be noted.

18. Environment Board - 27 February 2020

The board received the minutes of the Environment Board meeting held on 27 February.

Resolved:

The minutes of the meeting held on 27 February 2020 be noted.

19. Public Service Reform Board - 5 March 2020

The board received the minutes of the Public Service Reform Board meeting held on 5 March.

Resolved:

The minutes of the meeting held on 5 March 2020 be noted.

20. Overview & Scrutiny Committee - 9 March 2020

The board considered the minutes of the inquorate meeting of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 9 March.

Resolved:

The minutes of the meeting held on 9 March 2020 be approved.

21. Transport Delivery Committee - 16 March 2020

The board received the minutes of the Transport Delivery Committee meeting held on 16 March.

Resolved:

The minutes of the meeting held on 16 March 2020 be noted.

22. Investment Board - 20 April 2020

The board received the minutes of the Investment Board meeting held on 20 April.

Resolved:

The minutes of the meeting held on 20 April 2020 be noted.

23. Housing & Land Delivery Board - 27 April 2020

The board received the minutes of the Housing & Land Delivery Board meeting held on 27 April.

In respect of minute no. 45 ('Delivery and Investment Plans: Town Centre and Inclusive Growth Corridors - Progress and Next Steps'), Councillor Mike Bird indicated that he had asked for a report to be considered at the next meeting of the board on town centre living in a post-COVID-19 age.

Resolved:

The minutes of the meeting held on 27 April 2020 be noted.

24. Young Combined Authority

The board considered a report of the Young Combined Authority meetings held during March - June 2020.

Eman Mowatt and Kashmire Hawker summarised the issues being considered by the Young Combined Authority, including the impact of COVID-19 on younger people, activity during Mental Health Awareness Week and engagement in the 'Black Lives Matter' debate, including the lack of diversity amongst the membership of the WMCA Board. Councillor Brigid Jones welcomed the report and stressed the importance of political leadership across the region properly facing up to the challenge of increasing diversity amongst itself.

Resolved:

The report be noted.

25. Date of Next Meeting

Friday 24 July 2020 at 11.00am.

The meeting ended at 12.30pm