



**Item No. Title**

**1. Apologies for Absence (if any)**

Apologies for absence had been received from Sarah Middleton (Black Country Local Enterprise Partnership), Councillor George Adamson (Cannock Chase District Council), Councillor Robert Macey (Shropshire Council) and Councillor Peter Butlin (Warwickshire County Council).

**2. Notification of Substitutes (if any)**

No notification of Substitute Members had been received.

**3. Declarations of Interests (if any)**

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

**4. Minutes of last meeting**

Resolved:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 27 April 2020 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

**5. Housing and Land: Update on Economic Recovery Strategy**

Gareth Bradford introduced a report which updated the Board on progress made by the WMCA Housing and Regeneration Team since the last Board meeting working closely with partners in local authorities, the private sector and a series of expert taskforces, to develop the Portfolio Economic Recovery Strategy and Intervention Plan commissioned by the Board in response to the challenges and opportunities brought about by the Covid-19 pandemic. The Board received a complimentary PowerPoint presentation from Rob Lamond which provided further information on this work and its purpose/remit and how it directly informed the refreshed Portfolio Business Plan.

Councillor Joanne Hadley commented that as the 'lockdown' was lifted, she was concerned as to the likely increase in the number of homeless people and those who could be ejected from temporary Bed and Breakfast accommodation and that this should be considered in this work. Rob Lamond explained that this issue was addressed in the Strategy/Plan and that working with the Homelessness Task Force, bids would be made by WMCA to the capital fund launched by the Government. Rob Lamond identified opportunities for investigating funding regionally for accommodation for that cohort which was to be provided.

Councillor Angus Lees sought clarification as to when the funding would be made available from the Government to support this Portfolio Recovery Strategy and Interventions Plan and the proposed approval mechanisms to enable schemes to be implemented. Rob Lamond advised that the Comprehensive Spending Review was expected in Autumn and that further announcements on funding were anticipated in the coming weeks building on the recent brownfield funding announcement. This would afford an opportunity for appropriate business cases to be developed over the summer period linked to the recovery strategy for submission to HMG with updates on the business cases provided to future meetings of this Board.

Councillor Cathy Bayton raised the issue of the possible conversion of redundant office buildings to residential accommodation under Permitted Development rights, without the benefit of planning permission or any requirement of developers to make appropriate contributions towards the provision of essential infrastructure such as roads or health facilities. She asked that the WMCA make it clear that this permitted development was not its preferred option to address the current housing shortage in the region. The Chair advised that whilst it was not his preferred option, he understood that this change had now become put forward as part of amendments to planning legislation.

The Chair went on to highlight the Government proposed reforms to the planning system and the potential regional impact. He emphasised the importance of a coordinated response. He referred to the commission from the Board for a report on 'Town Centre Living' for consideration at a future meeting of this Board.

Gareth Bradford added that the 'ask' to Government from the Covid-19 recovery work was not expected to be limited to requests for additional finance but also for an opportunity to influence policy, guidance or legislation. Councillor Daren Pemberton enquired whether the WMCA would be lobbying Government in relation to the proposed reforms to the planning system and providing a single regional response rather than separate responses from each local authority. Gareth Bradford sought the Board's steer on this agenda item given the WMCA did not have statutory planning powers and it was a very sensitive topic. The Chair's steer was that the planning reforms and the region's response to it should be considered as part of the Recovery Plan programme of work.

Resolved:

1. That the draft Housing and Land Economic Recovery Plan document, as appended to the report, be approved as a positive way forward in response to the Covid-19 challenges and for framing the Housing and Land Board Business Plan revisions;
2. That the excellent engagement and on-going development of the Portfolio Recovery Strategy and Implementation Plan through strong collaboration with local authorities, LEPs, and expert advisory groups and task forces be noted;
3. That the next steps for this work be noted;

4. That the Government's planning reforms and the region's response to it should be considered as part of the Recovery Plan programme of work.

**6. Advanced Manufacturing in Construction: Update**

By way of an introduction to this matter, Gareth Bradford reported that the WMCA was at the forefront of discussions on Advanced Manufacturing in Construction (AMC) nationally and that positive discussions with the Government had been conducted on a £50 million 'ask' which was referred to in the recent £3.2bn Investment Case Document. Rachel-Ann Atterbury then presented her report and gave a PowerPoint presentation which updated the Board on research which was being undertaken as part of the joint work by the public and private sector partners to develop a comprehensive AMC strategy and roadmap throughout 2020.

The Chair welcomed the information contained in the report and the presentation but asked what steps were being taken to encourage manufacturing companies to locate in the West Midlands. These remarks were echoed by Councillor Ian Courts who advised that he had accompanied the WMCA Mayor on a visit to Hadley's to view the steel components to be used in AMC. He commented on the need to attract those companies which could achieve scale and flexibility of construction. The Chair also requested that, in future, presentations be circulated in advance of meetings in order to afford members an opportunity to consider the detail in advance. Gareth Bradford undertook to ensure that future presentations were circulated wherever possible, in advance of meetings. He advised that Officers were working with the West Midlands Growth Company to support companies to locate / relocate in the region.

Councillor Jacqueline Sweetman supported the comments made previously but sought an assurance that a co-ordinated approach to AMC provision would be taken in order to ensure that the inward investment plans of local authorities were not compromised. She also requested further information on plans for discussions with training providers and the market intelligence information, as requested at the last meeting. Councillor Daren Pemberton asked whether the proposed Housing Delivery Vehicle would have a role in the utilisation of AMC. Gareth Bradford confirmed that the Delivery Vehicle would have a role to play and reminded the Board that the WMCA had the advantage over other regions inasmuch as it had a Single Commissioning Framework with its requirement for use of AMC methods and a pipeline of sites to which AMC could be deployed. The Chair commented that the WMCA had a role to play in promoting AMC including assisting with the provision of financial assistance in locating manufacturing facilities in the region. Gareth Bradford reported this was where the £50m ask of HMG was important as a step in that direction.

Resolved:

1. That the update on the AMC research undertaken to date, which informed the development of a comprehensive AMC routemap and strategy, which would be submitted to the next meeting of the Board, be noted;

2. That the excellent collaboration and support from the AMC Working Group of local authority Officers and the AMC Expert Panel (Chaired by Mark Farmer), on this research and the joint development of the wider regional AMC routemap and strategy, which would be submitted to the next meeting of the Board, be noted;
3. That the 'ask' to Government for £50 million 'enabling funding' to support the development of the AMC Industry in the West Midlands (land, skills, and facilities), as set out in the Investment Case Document submitted to Government by the West Midlands on 23 June 2020, be noted;
4. That a future report include details of discussions with training providers and on market intelligence;
5. That any presentations to be made to future meetings of the Board be circulated, wherever possible. in advance.

## **7. 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).

## **8. Affordable Housing Delivery Vehicle: Update**

Gareth Bradford referred the Board back to the history of the Affordable Housing Delivery Vehicle and that the programme of work remained on schedule for an Autumn 2020 launch, subject to due diligence and business case. Rob Lamond then presented a comprehensive report which sought approval to the proposed Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the WMCA and six regional housing associations as a key stepping-stone to the launch of the Delivery Vehicle. He explained that this formed the next stage of progress in developing the Board's proposal to establish a new Affordable Housing Delivery Vehicle with Registered Providers operating in the West Midlands. Rob Lamond referred the Board back to the purpose of the Vehicle agreed previously by this Board which was to unlock challenging brownfield opportunities in the region which would not come forward through other means and to thus deliver genuinely additional affordable housing supply – providing added value to the work of the WMCA under the Single Commissioning Framework, local housing partnerships, Homes England and local authorities on affordable housing delivery. The proposed MoU set out the rationale, principles and structure of the proposed Vehicle as agreed previously but would not be a legally binding agreement. The Heads of Terms would be finalised and submitted for endorsement to a future meeting of this Board.

The Chair referred to that part of the MoU which referred to the admission of new parties requiring the consent of the WMCA and suggested that the wording needed to be more specific, for example: approval by the WMCA Board or this Board or through delegated authority being granted to the Director of Housing and Regeneration.

Councillor Joanne Hadley expressed concern that the Vehicle could operate in competition with similar Vehicles established by local authorities. Rob Lamond explained that the purpose of this Vehicle was to bring additionality and to assist in delivering those sites which had stalled and would not be delivered without its involvement. He advised that it would not operate in competition with other similar Vehicles. Councillor Daren Pemberton was not convinced and suggested that the Principles of Collaboration needed detailed work to address this issue.

Gareth Bradford assured the Board that the WMCA would continue to work closely with all local housing associations and local authorities so that the vehicle brought genuine additionality. It would concentrate on those matters over and above that which Registered Providers did now, over and above what the WMCA did through its Single Commissioning Framework and over and above what other local housing delivery vehicles would do. He reminded the Board that this was the Memorandum of Understanding stage and that future reports would address how the Vehicle would operate in practice. Kevin Rodgers advised that the Vehicle would secure the construction of housing units which would then be passed on to the most appropriate housing provider to manage.

Resolved:

1. That the proposed Memorandum of Understanding between the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) and the West Midlands Housing Association Partnership Investments (WMHPI), as appended to the report, be approved with a view to establishing a corporate joint venture whose primary objectives would be to develop and build additional new affordable housing in the West Midlands subject to a further report addressing the matters now referred to i.e. wording relating to admission of new parties and details ensuring that the Vehicle would not operate in competition with other local authority housing Vehicles;
2. That the legal basis of the MoU as a statement of intent and not a legally binding agreement be noted.

**9. Brownfield Land Funding**

Gareth Bradford reported on the award to the WMCA by the Government of £84 million, to be administered through WMCA's Single Commissioning Framework, for the remediation of brownfield land and on the intention to submit a further bid for the remaining £40 million in the Fund. WMCA was been leading the charge nationally for this funding for over a year so it was encouraging to see it coming forward. In response to a question from Councillor Angus Lees, Gareth Bradford confirmed that the monies had been allocated to the WMCA to deploy through its Single Commissioning Framework. The Chair commented that the award of new brownfield funding once again demonstrated the Government's confidence in the WMCA's delivery record, ability to deliver on land remediation, its commission framework and the use of such land for housing provision. The Chair also emphasised this should be viewed as a key success story for this Board.

The meeting ended at 11.05 am.