



West Midlands Combined Authority

WMCA Board

Friday 24 July 2020 at 11.00am

Minutes

Constituent Members

Andy Street (Chair)	Mayor of the West Midlands
Councillor Bob Sleigh (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 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

Councillor Matt Dormer	Redditch Borough Council
Councillor Julie Jackson	Nuneaton & Bedworth Borough Council
Councillor Tony Jefferson	Stratford-on-Avon District Council
Councillor Sebastian Lowe	Rugby Borough Council
Councillor Jeremy Oates	Tamworth Borough Council
Tim Pile	Greater Birmingham & Solihull Local Enterprise Partnership
Councillor Izzi Seccombe	Warwickshire County Council

Observer Members Awaiting Membership

Councillor Andrew Day	Warwick District Council
Councillor Tony Johnson	Herefordshire Council

Observer Members

Olivia Agbe	Young Combined Authority
Councillor Greg Brackenridge	West Midlands Fire Authority
David Jamieson	West Midlands Police & Crime Commissioner
Eman Mowatt	Young Combined Authority

In Attendance

Councillor Cathy Bayton	Overview & Scrutiny Committee
Councillor Kath Hartley	Transport Delivery Committee
Waheed Saleem	Deputy Police & Crime Commissioner

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.

26. Apologies for Absence

An apology for absence was received from Councillor George Adamson (Cannock Chase), Councillor Shaun Davies (Telford & Wrekin) and Councillor David Hitchiner (Herefordshire).

27. Minutes - 5 June 2020

The minutes of the meeting held on 5 June 2020 were agreed as a correct record.

28. Forward Plan

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

29. Chair's Remarks

(a) Councillor Yvonne Davies - Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council

The Chair reported that Councillor Yvonne Davies had stepped down as a member of this board and as Portfolio Lead for Public Service Reform & Social Economy. He thanked her for her contribution to the work of the WMCA and wished her well for the future.

(b) Adam Norburn - Executive Director, Rugby Borough Council

The Chair reported that this was the last meeting that Adam Norburn would be attending before he stood down as Executive Director at Rugby Borough Council. He thanked him for the support he had given to non-constituent authorities and wished him well for the future.

(c) Approval of 2019/20 Annual Accounts

The Chair reported that, at its meeting on 14 July 2020, the Audit, Risk & Assurance Committee had approved the WMCA's 2019/20 Annual Governance Statement, the annual accounts and the audit findings report presented by Grant Thornton. It had also noted the unqualified audit opinion from Grant Thornton in respect of the 2019/20 accounts. He thanked the members of the committee for their work in undertaking this key responsibility.

30. Economic Recovery in the West Midlands

The board considered a report from the Director of Strategy on an overview of the 'state of the region', action taken by civic and business leaders to secure emergency economic support and to ensure businesses had been able to restart safely and effectively after lockdown, along with the region's proposition to kickstart the local economy.

The 'State of the Region' report provided a thorough analysis of the region's economic strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. In the past 12 months, the West Midlands region broke through the £100bn GVA barrier and had been bucking the national trend on a host of economic indicators, such as enterprise and employment growth. Since the turn of the year however, the economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic had been severe. Sectors that had previously seen growth and expansion were now hardest hit, such as construction and the expanding higher education sector, making Birmingham, Coventry and Wolverhampton vulnerable. The report set out the national and local activity undertaken to mitigate this vulnerability.

David Jamieson noted the significant economic impact of COVID-19 on the region, and stressed the benefit of targeted interventions to support those sectors and areas more susceptible. He particularly noted the effect on younger members of society and the impact there had been on their education, with the potential for this to influence subsequent employment opportunities. Councillor Izzi Seccombe expressed her concern regarding the impact on the automatic sector, and the Wellbeing Board was currently undertaking work looking at the mental health impacts on the region.

Resolved:

- (1) The executive summary of the 'State of the Region' report and the principal challenges identified for the region be noted.
- (2) The role of the mayoral combined authorities in leading the regional approach to economic recovery, in line with correspondence from the Minister for Regional Growth & Local Government, be endorsed.
- (3) The proposed regional approach to economic recovery, and the mission to help recharge the West Midlands economy and forge a greener and more inclusive region, be adopted.
- (4) 'Recharge the West Midlands', the investment case developed at pace by partners across the region to support rapid economic recovery and submitted to Government on 22 June 2020 using the Chief Executive's delegated authority, following discussion by the Recovery Forum and partners, be endorsed.
- (5) The implications for the West Midlands of announcements by the Prime Minister and Chancellor of the Exchequer and the approach to the 'shovel ready' local fund be noted.
- (6) The elements of the economic recovery roadmap which helped the region deliver the 'Recharge' projects and set the basis for local authorities, local enterprise partnerships, the WMCA, universities and other partners to refresh the region's policy framework be agreed.
- (7) The importance of public, private and community sectors working together, guided by the ten priority outcomes agreed in early May, be reaffirmed.

31. Financial Monitoring Report 2020/21

The board considered a report from the Director of Finance on WMCA finances as at the end of May 2020, an assessment of the financial impact of COVID-19 on the authority's finances in the 2020/21 financial year, and on an update on the impact of COVID-19 on the latest Medium-Term Financial Plan along with proposed actions to mitigate the medium-term position.

The report set out the overall consolidated revenue position for the WMCA. The overall year to date position at the end of May showed a £155,000 adverse variance from budget. This consisted of an adverse variance within the transport budget of £132,000 largely due to the impact of COVID-19, driving lower advertising revenue and departure charge income. The report also set out the impact on the WMCA's finances of the COVID-19 pandemic, including the immediate cost of responding to the crisis, the longer term costs of supporting the region as it moved into recovery phase and the significant loss of revenue streams which would have otherwise helped to sustain local delivery of essential core services.

Councillor Bob Sleight indicated that an updated budget was expected to be submitted to this board on 18 September and stressed that the budget would be managed within available resources. Work continued with the Director of Finance meeting with district finance colleagues to get a clear sense of where the pressures were most acute. Councillor Ian Ward highlighted that constituent authorities were often subject to financial pressures more acute than those of the WMCA and sought assurances that any review of constituent and non-constituent member contributions to the WMCA's funding mechanisms would engage fully with council leaders. Councillor Bob Sleight confirmed that any change in member contributions would be for leaders to determine.

Councillor Mike Bird sought assurances that there was a current freeze on recruitment. The Chief Executive confirmed that this was the case for posts funded from constituent and non-constituent authority contributions, although stressed many new posts were aligned to funding received directly from the Government for specific projects and where the need for additional capacity had been identified as part of the award of that funding.

Resolved:

- (1) The financial outturn position as at the end of May 2020 be noted.
- (2) The latest high-level forecast for 2020/21, incorporating the estimated impact of COVID-19, be noted.
- (3) The key actions to mitigate the impact of COVID-19 in 2020/21, and that the forecast position would be brought within budget by September 2020, be noted.
- (4) The updated Medium-Term Financial Planning position for the period 2021/22 to 2025/26 be noted.
- (5) The key actions to mitigate the Medium-Term position be noted.

- (6) The potential impact on the availability of capital resources to fund the existing approved transport capital programme be noted.

32. Adoption of a Revised Single Assurance Framework

The board considered a report from the Director of Strategy on an updated and enhanced Assurance Framework document that responded to the National Local Growth Assurance Framework, which was a requirement for all mayoral combined authorities and reflected a 'single' Assurance Framework approach to apply to all funding sources.

The WMCA's existing Assurance Framework was agreed in 2016 prior to the election of the Mayor. In 2019, the Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government issued an updated National Local Growth Assurance Framework that the WMCA was required to comply with. It had been working on a Single Assurance Framework Project to develop and deliver several key improvements in how the WMCA operated, considering its experience to date. This work would also ensure the Assurance Framework met the requirements of the National Local Growth Assurance Framework which applied to all mayoral combined authorities. The National Local Growth Assurance Framework applied to all funding and investment decisions of the WMCA and would be utilised to inform the five-year gateway review.

Councillor Bob Sleight reported that the Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government had signed off this new framework, which was intended to streamline governance processes rather than to add an additional layer of bureaucracy. The Chair thanked all those officers who had been involved in preparing this new assurance framework.

Resolved:

- (1) The amended Assurance Framework be approved.
- (2) The amended Officer Scheme of Delegations be approved.
- (3) The amended terms of reference for Investment Board be approved.

33. Equalities Update

The board considered a report from the Equalities & Diversity Manager on the WMCA's obligations under the Modern Slavery Act 2015, the adoption of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance's Working Definition of Antisemitism, and on other equality related activity and future plans, including recent actions taken in light of the Black Lives Matter movement.

The Government introduced a provision in the Modern Slavery Act 2015 which required organisations with turnover over £36m to produce an annual statement setting out the steps it had taken to ensure there was no modern slavery in their own business and their supply chains. The International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance's working definition of antisemitism stated:

‘Antisemitism is a certain perception of Jews, which may be expressed as hatred toward Jews. Rhetorical and physical manifestations of antisemitism are directed toward Jewish or non-Jewish individuals and/or their property, toward Jewish community institutions and religious facilities.’

Councillor Brigid Jones welcomed this report, and stressed the need for the WMCA to do more to achieve a broader representation of the region’s communities within its boards and committees, particularly in respect of women and those from black, Asian and other minority ethnic backgrounds. She welcomed the re-launching of the Leadership Commission and challenged the WMCA Board to ensure that there was a greater diversity of voices heard amongst its membership.

Olivia Agbe and Eman Mowatt read out a letter from the Young Combined Authority to the Chief Executive in response to the Black Lives Matter movement, challenging the region to undertake a number of steps to affect positive change, namely:

- Public bodies taking positive action to build a more representative leadership for the West Midlands.
- Current political and civic leaders undertaking bias training.
- Decision makers speaking to local black people to better understand the impacts and root causes of racial disadvantage.
- Civic leaders building trust through accountability.
- Reviewing and, where necessary, refocusing all policy, funding and delivery to ensure that regional inequalities were being tackled.
- Making sure that all new policies explicitly referenced inequality and all new activity designed to be accessible and address disadvantage.
- Addressing structural inequalities within the education system, making education part of the solution rather than part of the problem.
- Addressing the disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on black and other minority ethnic communities.

The Chief Executive thanked Olivia Agbe and Eman Mowatt for sharing the views of the Young Combined Authority with members of the WMCA Board. She accepted that more systematic, proactive and visible action was necessary to eradicate institutional racism and address structural disadvantage. The Senior Leadership Team was due to consider a set of activities and measures, partly in response to the Black Lives Matter movement, at its meeting on 29 July, including introducing positive action to encourage diverse recruitment within the WMCA, creating development opportunities that were targeted towards employees in underrepresented groups, and further embedding unconscious bias training for managers and staff.

Councillor Izzi Seccombe welcomed the comments from Olivia Agbe and Eman Mowatt. At the most recent meeting of the Wellbeing Board, members expressed a strong wish to better understand impacts from COVID-19 on the black, Asian and minority ethnic communities. She hoped that the Young Combined Authority would work with the Wellbeing Board on this work to ensure their voices were being heard.

Resolved:

- (1) The introduction of a new WMCA Modern Slavery Policy be approved and the annual statement published in line with legislative requirements be endorsed.
- (2) The adoption of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance's Working Definition of Antisemitism be approved.
- (3) Progress on the delivery of the equality agenda within the WMCA, including its response to Black Lives Matter movement, be noted.

34. A Transport System Fit to Tackle Climate Change? – Reviewing the West Midlands Local Transport Plan to Support a Greener, Fairer, Healthier Recovery

The board considered a report from the Managing Director, Transport for West Midlands, setting out the duties to produce and review the statutory Local Transport Plan and confirming the work being undertaken to review it, including how the COVID-19 pandemic and climate emergency affected the policy context for the review.

Under the Transport Act 2000, local transport authorities had a statutory duty to produce and review a local transport plan. The plan needed to set out policies for the promotion and encouragement of safe, integrated, efficient and economic transport to, from and within the local transport area, as well as proposals for the implementation of those policies. The WMCA and the seven metropolitan authorities of the West Midlands must carry out their functions so as to implement these policies.

It was proposed to develop an interim transport plan for the region setting out the short and medium-term actions the region was taking and could take to support a low carbon, green recovery from the pandemic. This would include setting out where potential actions could be brought forward to address the challenges and opportunities already identified. This would build on the recovery plans developed by Transport for West Midlands and action plans adopted by local authority partners, such as the Emergency Birmingham Transport Plan and Wolverhampton's A Step in the Right Direction.

Councillor Ian Courts highlighted the importance of modal shift to help achieve carbon reduction targets. Research had highlighted that even if all new cars were ultra-low emission vehicles by 2035, a 58% reduction in UK car mileage between 2016 and 2035 would still be needed for car CO² emissions to fall to an extent consistent with the Paris Agreement.

Resolved:

- (1) The approach and timescale to update the statutory local transport plan for the West Midlands in order to reflect the objectives of #WM2041 and the regional economic recovery strategy be approved.
- (2) The development and publication for consultation of a transport green paper, which would form part of an on-going dialogue to explore how the transport system could continue to be developed towards an inclusive, de-carbonised and integrated system, connecting lives and livelihoods cleanly and safely be approved.
- (3) The development and execution of a programme of market research and engagement to establish the appetite for travel behaviour change, new transport technology adoption, flexible working and uptake of consumer, freight and logistics behaviours in the West Midlands in a post COVID-19 world be approved.
- (4) The development of a short-term interim transport recovery action plan, to be published later in the summer, which reflected the collective activity of all constituent authorities and sought to maximise the opportunities for positive behaviour change arising from the COVID-19 disruptions and recovery be approved.
- (5) The steering and governance arrangements for the work outlined in the report be noted, and the Strategic Transport Board be delegated the authority to set the direction and approve the development and publication of the interim transport recovery plan and the transport green paper.

35. West Midlands Bike Share Scheme

The board considered a report from the Managing Director, Transport for West Midlands, on the progression of the West Midlands Bike Share Scheme and seeking approval for the contract award.

The bikeshare scheme supported the transition from lockdown and laid foundations for long term change as the region entered the COVID-19 recovery phase. There was a new demand for active travel, including key workers, disabled people and those in low socio-economic groups. The appetite and need for an inclusive recovery was supported by pre COVID-19 data, including 10% of West Midlands citizens cycling at least once per week, and 30% of residents not currently cycling agreeing that they would like to start. Across the West Midlands, there had been an observed increase in the number of people cycling on routes across the region before and after lockdown. The West Midlands Bike Share scheme would assist in overcoming bike ownership as a key barrier preventing people from making journeys via bicycle.

Resolved:

- (1) The progress made with regards to the Bike Share procurement exercise be noted and it be approved that the WMCA could enter into a detailed dialogue with the preferred supplier.

- (2) The potential delay due to unprecedented demands on the supply chain supplying bikes and parts that had arisen due to the COVID-19 lockdown be noted.
- (3) The current central case financial deficit which the WMCA would look to manage down once it was able to enter into a dialogue with the preferred supplier be noted.
- (4) The anticipated five year budget of £15.9m to commission the scheme be approved.
- (5) Authorisation for the award of the contract for the service and maintenance of the Bike Share scheme be delegated to the Monitoring Officer.
- (6) Approval be delegated to the Managing Director, Transport for West Midlands, Monitoring Officer and Director of Finance to enter into any other funding agreements or contracts which would be reasonably required for the Bike Share scheme.

36. University Station Full Business Case - Revised Submission

The board considered a report from the Managing Director, Transport for West Midlands, seeking approval of the full business case for the redevelopment of the University station.

University station was built in 1978 to accommodate half a million passengers per year, between the University of Birmingham to the east and Queen Elizabeth Hospital and Medical School site to the west. Latest figures released in January 2020 indicated that it was currently being used by four million passengers per year. Provision of a larger, sustainably designed station for the long-term capacity requirements would encourage more staff, students, hospital patients and visitors to arrive by train, benefitting traffic congestion and the local environment.

The station scheme would comprise a new station building and bridge providing access to both platforms, wider platforms, a small car park area and access point as well as a direct link with the university campus with a new footbridge over the Worcester canal. There would also be enhanced public realm which would provide a new pedestrian route from the hospital site to the new station building.

Resolved:

- (1) The Full Business Case be authorised for the redevelopment of University Station.
- (2) The £56.0m budget to complete the scheme be authorised.
- (3) Authorisation of the award of contracts to the successful tenderer for the design and build stage be delegated, subject to:
 - (i) The contract being within the approved budget;

- (ii) All funding agreements being signed and sealed to the satisfaction of the Director of Finance and the Monitoring Officer;
 - (iii) The operating costs of the station being fully quantified and affordable.
- (4) Delegations be approved to the Monitoring Officer and Director of Finance to enter into the various funding agreements and contracts which would be reasonably required to enable delivery of the station improvements, including (if necessary) the issuing of a Letter of Intent to ensure the project schedule was maintained whilst funding agreements were being finalised, subject to the risks of doing so being acceptable to the s151 Officer and the Monitoring Officer.

37. Strategic Economic Development Board - 20 May 2020

The board received the minutes of the Strategic Economic Development Board meeting held on 20 May.

Resolved:

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

38. Transport Delivery Committee - 8 June 2020

The board received the minutes of the Transport Delivery Committee meeting held on 8 June.

Councillor Kath Hartley reported that the committee had called for national railcard holders to have the validity of their railcards extended to reflect the period of enforced non-use as a result of COVID-19 travel restrictions. The Department for Transport had confirmed that it was working with the Rail Delivery Group, as the owning body for railcards, to consider options for customers but that no decision had yet been made.

Resolved:

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

39. Investment Board - 15 June 2020

The board received the minutes of the Investment Board meeting held on 15 June.

Resolved:

The minutes of the meeting held on 15 June 2020 be noted.

40. Overview & Scrutiny Committee - 15 June 2020

The board received the minutes of the inquorate Overview & Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 15 June.

Councillor Cathy Bayton indicated that a theme running through the meeting had been the importance of social recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic as well as economic

recovery, and she hoped that this would remain a key consideration in the work of the WMCA in the coming months.

Resolved:

The minutes of the meeting held on 15 June 2020 be approved.

41. Strategic Economic Development Board - 17 June 2020

The board received the minutes of the Strategic Economic Development Board meeting held on 17 June.

Resolved:

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

42. Environment Board - 25 June 2020

The board received the minutes of the Environment Board meeting held on 25 June.

Resolved:

The minutes of the meeting held on 25 June 2020 be noted.

43. Housing & Land Delivery Board - 6 July 2020

The board received the minutes of the Housing & Land Delivery Board meeting held on 6 July.

In respect of minute no. 9 ('Brownfield Land Funding'), Councillor Mike Bird reported that the first tranche of the Government's £84m award of funding for the remediation of brownfield land within the region was expected in September.

Resolved:

The minutes of the meeting held on 6 July 2020 be noted.

44. Overview & Scrutiny Committee - 13 July 2020

The board received the minutes of the inquorate Overview & Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 13 July.

Resolved:

The minutes of the meeting held on 13 July 2020 be approved.

45. Young Combined Authority

The board considered a report of the Young Combined Authority activity during held in June and July.

Eman Mowatt reported that the Mayor and Portfolio Lead for Inclusive Communities had met with the Young Combined Authority to discuss the impacts that COVID-19

had on young people. Members of the YCA had also met with the Recovery Co-ordination Group to talk about its priorities for recovery in the West Midlands.

Resolved:

The report be noted.

- 46. Date of Next Meeting**
Friday 24 July 2020 at 11.00am.

The meeting ended at 12.40pm