

HOUSING & LAND DELIVERY BOARD

Date	2 November 2020
Report title	Single Assurance Framework - Impact on Thematic Board Terms of Reference and Role
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Recommendation(s) for action or decision:

The Housing & Land Delivery Board is recommended to:

- (1) Consider the Single Assurance Framework requirements for Thematic boards
- (2) Consider proposed Portfolio improvements for Housing, Land & Delivery Board
- (3) Endorse the amended Terms of Reference as set out in Appendix A

1. Purpose

- 1.1 On 24 July 2020 the WMCA Board adopted a revised 'Single' Assurance Framework following an internal review. The Assurance Framework sets out how the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) will use public money responsibly, both openly and transparently, and achieve best value for money. The intent of the review undertaken was to streamline and improve decision-making, driving best practice and consistency.
- 1.2 The purpose of the Single Assurance Framework is to deliver the following:
 - Deliver consistency and accountability within decision-making
 - Ensure ability to develop projects at speed whilst maintaining required development standards
 - Provide WMCA with Financial and Governance Protections for stewardship of public funds
 - Improve standards of project initiation, development, delivery and oversight
 - Ensure that there is alignment between organisational objectives and outputs - "the Golden Thread"

2. Single Assurance Framework – Implications for Thematic Boards

- 2.1 The Single Assurance Framework (SAF) has implications for Thematic Boards, it requires each Thematic Board to undertake a set of core roles. The intention of the core roles is to ensure that Thematic Boards are applying the appropriate oversight, support and portfolio development roles required to support the key principles and application of the SAF.
- 2.2 The proposed core roles for each Thematic Board are as follows:
 - i. **Play a key role in developing and approving the Portfolio Annual Business Plan** - ensuring that it demonstrates a clear 'golden thread' to the WMCA Annual Plan and strategic

objectives, highlighting prioritisation considerations where appropriate and then supporting and challenging delivery.

- ii. **Provide oversight of the Portfolio Project Pipeline** - taking ownership of supporting and challenging the Lead Member on the pipeline and monitoring its content, providing feedback to Business Areas (but not instruction) and performance managing bids and project development to ensure delivery of the golden thread.
- iii. **Advise on major policy change within Portfolio** - Consider and advise upon major policy change within their thematic area, delivering expert stakeholder engagement, ensuring ownership and accountability, and where necessary recommend policy matters to WMCA Board for approval.
- iv. **Performance manage Portfolio project delivery** - at thematic level (below strategic), ensuring effective and appropriate challenge to the delivery of projects and programmes, ensuring the continued delivery of the golden thread

2.3 In order to support delivery of these core roles each Portfolio will be required to produce a Project Pipeline that sets out all bids, developing projects and projects in delivery within that Portfolio. The Pipeline will be expected to include key details about the project, the stage that it is at and be open for review, challenge and support through the relevant Thematic board.

2.4 Each Project Pipeline will be regularly updated and will be available to view by its Thematic Board. Each Project Pipeline will also feed into the WMCA Activity Register which is a new central register of all WMCA activity.

3. Thematic Board – Portfolio Improvements

3.1 As part of the work undertaken through the Single Assurance Framework Project, further review of Thematic Boards took place as part of the response to the Internal Project Governance Review which had highlighted inconsistent practices and approaches being taken by Thematic Boards and the negative impact this inconsistency has, alongside consensus opinion at a senior officer level that Thematic Boards were not contributing to the delivery of outputs and strategic objectives.

3.2 As a result the Senior Leadership Team tasked the Single Assurance Framework Project with developing proposals for a consistent role, purpose and approach to Thematic Boards to help drive effective, clear and accountable decision-making, ensure appropriate political oversight and support for Portfolio Leads and to support the intent to deliver a 'Golden Thread' from strategic objective through initiation, development, delivery and evaluation within the WMCA.

3.3 This work was in addition to the developing SAF core roles that would be required to be delivered at each Thematic Board.

3.4 This work has led to the drafting of a standardised Terms of Reference for Thematic Boards that is intended to deliver a consistent approach to Thematic Boards across the WMCA as well as support the Single Assurance Framework core role requirements.

3.5 The work undertaken to provide a more consistent approach across Thematic Boards and therefore deliver consistent application of standards recommends the following:

- Each Thematic Board to play a key role in the oversight and management of the development and delivery of Portfolio projects, ensuring that they are contributing to the delivery of WMCA Strategic Objectives.
- Relevant Portfolio Lead to chair each Thematic Board
- Membership to consist of 7 Constituent Council representatives, preferably the relevant Cabinet Member for each Constituent Authority
- Membership to consist of 1 non-con council representative per county area (Warwickshire, Shropshire, Worcestershire, Staffordshire) and for the representative to be a relevant Cabinet Member where possible
- Membership to consist of representative from each LEP (3 members)
- Membership to consist of additional portfolio specific membership dependent on each Thematic area
- Minimum of 4 Thematic Board meetings per year in order to ensure consistent quarterly review of Portfolio Project Pipeline
- Quorum of Portfolio Lead + a third of voting members

- 3.6 As stated above the intention of the proposed consistencies and the SAF core roles is to provide a consistent role, purpose and approach across all the Thematic Boards to help drive effective, clear and accountable decision-making, ensure appropriate political oversight and support for Portfolio Leads and to support the intent to deliver a 'Golden Thread' from strategic objective through initiation, development, delivery and evaluation within the WMCA.
- 3.7 Engagement has taken place with the Executive Director of Housing & Regeneration in developing the SAF and the Thematic Board consistency approach as set out above. In addition, this engagement has covered Portfolio specific opportunities to improve the application of the Housing & Land Delivery Board and its role. This engagement has led to a recommendation that the Non-Voting Membership of the Board be extended to include Network rail.
- 3.8 A key role for each Thematic board is to provide support to the Portfolio Lead, engagement with the Executive Director of Housing & Regeneration has help develop an amended list of functions for inclusion in the Terms of Reference to provide this support. This for example includes monitoring of the Local Plans Monitoring Dashboard.
- 3.9 All of the requirements set out in this report, the SAF core roles, the consistency improvements and the developments to better support Portfolio Leads have resulted in an amended terms of reference for the Housing & Land Delivery Board being proposed for endorsement. These Terms of Reference are detailed in **APPENDIX A**.
- 3.10 The Housing & Land Delivery Board is asked to consider the content of this report and endorse the Terms of Reference proposed in Appendix A.

4. Financial Implications

- 4.1 There are no direct spend or budgetary implications as a result of the recommendations within this report. The assurance frameworks and delegated approval structures detailed within this report are considered to be appropriately designed to ensure WMCA deliver value for money against all its investments and that the financial controls and checks required to deliver those investments are robust.

5. Legal Implications

- 5.1 It is a statutory requirement that the Combined Authority has an assurance framework in place. There are also statutory duties on the Authority in relation to best value and securing the best use of public money in terms of projects and spending. Failure to have a robust assurance framework in place would result in action by the Authority's internal and external auditors and would affect the value for money judgement provided on an annual basis. It could also result in action being taken by the WMCA Statutory Officers

6. Equalities Implications

- 6.1 There are no specific equalities implications arising out of this report.

7. Inclusive Growth Implications

- 7.1 The WMCA has developed its own standards that it wishes to drive through its projects and programmes, one of which is consideration and development of Inclusive Growth. Continued regional inequalities and the impact of Covid-19 on some groups reinforces the need for the WMCA to continue to develop processes and initiatives to drive inclusive growth.

8. Geographical Area of Report's Implications

- 8.1 The Assurance Framework applies to any relevant activity across both Constituent and Non-constituent areas.

9. Other Implications

9.1 None.

10. Schedule of Background Papers

- 10.1 ARAC September 2019
- 10.2 ARAC November 2019
- 10.3 ARAC July 2020
- 10.4 WMCA Board July 2020

11. Appendices

- 11.1 Appendix A – Proposed Terms of Reference for Housing & Land Delivery Board



APPENDIX A

West Midlands
Combined Authority

HOUSING & LAND DELIVERY BOARD

Terms of Reference

Purpose:	The Board will play a key role in the oversight and management of the development and delivery of Portfolio programmes and projects, ensuring that they are contributing to the delivery of WMCA Strategic Objectives and the Annual Business Plan.
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	<p>The Board will be responsible for the oversight of delivery of the Housing and Land Business Plan, contributing to its development and monitoring its delivery.</p> <p>The Board will assist in the accelerated delivery of housing and employment space across the West Midlands region, delivering nationally leading policy initiatives.</p>
Accountable to:	WMCA Board
Membership:	<p><u>Voting Members:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Chaired by WMCA Portfolio Holder ○ Constituent Members – Relevant Cabinet Member as determined by each Constituent Council ○ Non-Constituent Members – 1 Representative per county area (Warwickshire, Shropshire, Worcestershire, Staffordshire) Representative to be a relevant Cabinet Member where possible ○ LEPs – Representative from each LEP Area <p><u>Non-Voting Members:</u> The following subject specific guests will be invited to Board meetings as appropriate:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Environment Agency ○ Homes England ○ West Midlands Housing Association Partnership ○ Network Rail
Chair:	The Chair will be the Portfolio Lead for Housing & Land
Functions:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To review, monitor and approve the Housing & Regeneration Annual Business Plan, ensuring that it demonstrates a clear golden thread to the WMCA Strategic Objectives, highlighting prioritisation considerations where appropriate and supporting and challenging delivery of the Plan. • Consider the Housing & Regeneration Portfolio Project Pipeline in order to monitor its content, providing feedback to the Business Area and performance managing project development • To consider and advise upon major policy change within the Housing & Regeneration Portfolio • To performance manage the delivery of projects detailed within the Housing & Regeneration Portfolio Project Pipeline at Portfolio level, ensuring effective and appropriate challenge to the Business Area and stakeholders • To provide co-ordination and direction on strategic matters relating to the portfolio needs of the region. • To provide the forum for facilitating strategic conversations between the local authorities, stakeholders and WMCA • To provide oversight of the Local Plans Monitoring Dashboard <p>Support Housing & Land Portfolio Holder by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing advice and support to WMCA activity • Helping engage with wider stakeholder networks and activity • Identify and scale up existing good practice within the WMCA area • Identify and secure resources to deliver new opportunities • To provide co-ordination and direction on strategic policy and delivery matters relating to the housing and employment development needs of the region. • To agree to review of the Single Commissioning Framework • To provide the forum for facilitating strategic conversations between the WMCA and local authorities around the supply of the right land, in

	<p>the right places, to deliver the homes and jobs the population and the economy needs to grow in a sustainable way.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To develop and implement a strategy for accelerating housing growth and employment across the region. • To ensure alignment with other WMCA-led strategies and programmes e.g. transport, skills, One Public Estate and the West Midlands Growth Company. • To recommend and endorse bids for government funding to the WMCA Board. • To collaborate with those external organisations that also have responsibility for housing delivery and policy. • On behalf of the WMCA, to lead dialogue with the Government on the West Midlands housing devolution/housing deal agenda, and as part of devolution negotiations with Government, to lead on developing propositions and asks that relate to Housing, Land and Regeneration policy and delivery. • To commission and publish research on housing and employment land to inform decisions made by the WMCA Board.
Voting:	<p>All Members will have one vote each.</p> <p>The Chair will have a casting vote if required.</p>
Quorum:	WMCA Portfolio Lead + Third of Voting Members
Frequency:	Minimum of 4 times a year or more frequently as required to discharge its responsibilities