



Environment & Energy Board

Thursday 15 October 2020 at 10.00am

Minutes

Present

Councillor Ian Courts (Chair)
Councillor Oliver Butler
Councillor Maria Crompton
Councillor Ian Kettle
Marc Liddeth
Councillor Andy Mackiewicz
Councillor Waseem Zaffar

Portfolio Lead for Environment, Energy & HS2
Walsall Metropolitan Borough Council
Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council
Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council
Environment Agency
Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council
Birmingham City Council

In Attendance

Alan Bowley
Alex Chapman
Jim Coleman
Ross Cook
Ed Cox
Barry Evans
Robin Daniels
Maria Dunn
Councillor Peter Fowler
David Harris
Jackie Homan
Nicola Jones
Jo Miskin
Kathryn Moore
Eve Peverley
Richard Rees
Callum Ringer
Aqeel Rizvi
Sabbir Sidat
Coral Tilling
Jodie Townsend
Bret Willers

Walsall Metropolitan Borough Council
New Economics Foundation
WSP
City of Wolverhampton Council
West Midlands Combined Authority
WSP
Redpill Group
Birmingham City Council
Overview & Scrutiny Committee
Transport for West Midlands
West Midlands Combined Authority
West Midlands Combined Authority
Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council
Birmingham City University
WSP
West Midlands Combined Authority
West Midlands Combined Authority
West Midlands Combined Authority
WSP
City of Wolverhampton Council
West Midlands Combined Authority
Coventry City Council

19. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Barbara McGarrity (Wolverhampton), Councillor Jim O'Boyle (Coventry) and Matthew Rhodes (Energy Capital).

20. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 25 June 2020 were agreed as a correct record.

21. WM2041: Five Year Plans

The board considered a report from the Director of Public Service Reform on an overview of the first Five Year Plan that was currently being produced to outline the priority activity for 2021-26 to set the region on course to deliver on the net zero carbon ambitions for the West Midlands by 2041. The board also received a presentation from Barny Evans on the principles underpinning the WM2041 programme, the aims of the Five Year Plan and the key priority areas for delivery.

Councillor Waseem Zaffar welcomed the report but stressed the importance of working in partnership with constituent authorities and making best use of expertise where it was available. The Head of Environment supported these comments and undertook to meet with Councillor Waseem Zaffar and the Chair to discuss further how the WMCA could work more closely with local authority partners and other key stakeholders.

The Chair stressed the importance of ensuring messaging was communicated effectively to maintain public support for initiatives. The Head of Environment confirmed that there was a regional communications group overseeing the messaging linked to this work.

Resolved:

- (1) The preferred approach to engagement as the Five Year Plan project progressed be noted.
- (2) The appropriate engagement with key local authority contacts be noted.

22. WM2041: Natural Capital Projects and Programmes

The board considered a report from the Director of Public Service Reform on three proposals designed to help improve public access to natural capital resources, which were recognised as having an important role in physical and emotional wellbeing, as well as mitigating and adapting to the effects of climate change. These proposals related to a study on access to green space undertaken by the New Economics Foundation, the West Midlands National Park and the Virtual Forest.

The board received presentations from Alex Chapman on the work that had been undertaken to study the access to green space within the region, from Kathryn Moore on the proposals for a urban national park across the West Midlands, and from Callum Ringer the online platform that was logging all of the new trees that were being planted across the region.

In respect of the study into green space accessibility, Councillor Andy Mackiewicz noted the degree of biodiversity that existed within 'rough' open space and cautioned against automatically seeking to over-manage these spaces. The Chair welcomed the initiative and requested that a report be submitted to the next meeting of the board with a list of actions to take this initiative forward.

In respect of the West Midlands National Park, Councillor Waseem Zaffar welcomed the proposals and indicated that it would be something Birmingham City Council would be keen to engage with. He was particularly keen to explore how the region's 'blue' and 'green' open spaces could be better linked together. Councillor Maria Crompton noted that each local authority was undertaking environmental projects within its own area, and that this project could help map those and look to build on the work already being done locally. The Chair requested a further update to a future meeting of the board that suggested how these proposals could be progressed.

In respect of the Virtual Forest, the Chair stressed the importance of ensuring that every new tree was logged. He also encouraged engagement with landowners, who were often significant planters of trees.

Resolved:

- (1) The draft access to green space report produced by New Economics Foundation be noted.
- (2) The search for funding for community green grants and their implementation be supported.
- (3) Engagement be undertaken with local authorities on the proposed West Midlands National Park.
- (4) Links to key programmes of activity/ influential stakeholders that should be engaged with the West Midlands National Park programme be provided.
- (5) The Virtual Forest website be promoted and members of the board engage with the project.
- (6) Members engage colleagues within their organisations to retrospectively add any tree planting to the total from January 2020.
- (7) Tree planting plans for the 2020/21 season be shared so they could be supported through the Virtual Forest platform.
- (8) A target for tree planting up until the end of 2021 be identified for each local authority.

23. Single Assurance Framework - Impact on Thematic Board Terms of Reference and Role

The board considered a report from the Director of Public Service Reform, the Director of Strategy and the Head of Governance & Monitoring Officer on how the new Single Assurance Framework would ensure the WMCA would use public money responsibly, both openly and transparently, and achieve best value for money.

The Single Assurance Framework required each thematic board, including the Environment & Energy Board, to undertake a set of core roles to ensure that they were applying the appropriate oversight, support and portfolio development roles required to support the key principles and application of the framework. In addition, the Single Assurance Framework project had been tasked with developing proposals for a consistent role, purpose and approach to each thematic board 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. An updated terms of reference for this board were therefore proposed that took account of this work.

Resolved:

- (1) The Single Assurance Framework requirements for thematic boards be noted.
- (2) The proposed portfolio improvements for the Environment & Energy Board be noted.
- (3) The amended terms of reference for the Environment & Energy Board be endorsed.

24. WM2041: Programme Update

The board considered a report from the Director of Public Service Reform on an overview of the WM2041 programme, approved by the WMCA Board on 5 June 2020, to help the region achieve net zero carbon emissions by 2041. The projects that comprised this programme were at different stages of maturity, although ultimately there would need to be delivery across all of them to achieve the system changes required to address climate change.

The report outlined the progress that the WMCA was making across these priority areas that included mobility (including active travel and electric mobility), the circular economy, energy transition, the built environment (both new build and retrofit) and natural capital. The delivery of the WM2041 programme relied on working closely with the local authorities and their climate change action plans. The WMCA was working with the officers supporting climate change and carbon reduction in each of the constituent local authorities, through a Low Carbon Officers Group, to maximise the potential for collaboration and shared learning around the work being undertaken.

Resolved:

- (1) The WM2041 programme update be noted.
- (2) Areas of particular interest where there could be potential for specific collaboration with other work and stakeholders be noted.
- (3) The scope of work, which would form the work programme for the Environment & Energy Board, be agreed.

- (4) Members of the board remain engaged and informed on specific areas as the programme develops, outside of any board meetings.

25. Forward Plan

The board noted items of business that would be considered at its future meetings.

The meeting ended at 12.00pm.