



West Midlands Combined Authority

Housing & Land Delivery Board

Monday 2 November 2020 at 10.00 am

Minutes

Present

Councillor Mike Bird (Chair)	Walsall Metropolitan Borough Council
Councillor George Adamson	Cannock Chase District Council
Bill Blincoe	Coventry and Warwickshire LEP
Councillor Peter Butlin	Warwickshire County Council
Councillor Ian Courts	Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council
Councillor Matthew Dormer	Redditch Borough Council
Philip Farrell	Homes England
Councillor Julie Jackson	Nuneaton & Bedworth Borough Council
Councillor Angus Lees	Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council
Sarah Middleton	Black Country Local Enterprise Partnership
Councillor Sharon Thompson	Birmingham City Council

In Attendance

Councillor Cathy Bayton	Overview & Scrutiny Committee
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Item No. Title

16. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Keith Allcock (Sandwell), Marc Lidderth (Environment Agency), Councillor Robert Macey (Shropshire), Councillor Jacqueline Sweetman (Wolverhampton), Councillor David Welsh (Coventry) and Councillor David Wright (Telford & Wrekin).

17. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 7 September 2020 were agreed as a correct record.

18. Single Assurance Framework - Impact on Thematic Boards - Terms of Reference and Role

The board considered a report from the Director Housing & Regeneration, Director of Strategy and 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 Housing & Land Delivery 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. The Director of Housing & Regeneration indicated that there would be an additional non-voting member of the board appointed by Network Rail from the next meeting.

Resolved:

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

19. Zero Carbon Homes: Programme Update

The board considered a report from the Director of Housing & Regeneration on the proposed approach to producing a 2025 zero carbon homes standard and routemap, as agreed by this board as key deliverables in its 2020/21 business plan.

At its meeting on 27 April 2020, this board agreed that the WMCA would adopt the UK Green Building Council's definition 'Net Zero Carbon Buildings: A Framework Definition' to define zero carbon development in the region and guide the development of the 2025 zero carbon homes standard. It also commissioned a comprehensive programme of work to meet the 2025 commitment. This involved developing a baseline gap analysis, a Zero Carbon Homes Charter and a Zero Carbon Homes Routemap. The first part of this work, to develop a baseline gap analysis, had now been completed and was included within the report. Based on the findings of this work, a draft version of the Zero Carbon Homes Charter would be developed and brought to the next meeting of the board on 13 January 2021.

Councillor Ian Courts stressed the importance of ensuring the cost implications of this ambition were kept under control in order that the support of the construction industry could be retained. Councillor Peter Butlin supported this comment and indicated that reducing the costs of zero carbon manufacturing would be the key challenge to overcome.

Resolved:

- (1) The proposed approach to delivering the zero carbon homes ambition in the 2041 Climate Change Action Plan, which included establishing the current level of low/zero carbon building in the region, producing an agreed zero carbon homes standard routemap to 2025 and launching a zero carbon homes charter be noted.
- (2) The findings of the baseline gap analysis report and its implications for meeting the 2025 zero carbon homes target be noted.
- (3) It be noted that the Zero Carbon Homes Taskforce had now been established, had met on 6 October and 22 October 2020, and that it would directly support the development of the Zero Carbon Homes Charter and routemap over the coming months.

20. Advanced Manufacturing in Construction Routemap

The board considered a report from the Director of Housing & Regeneration on the work undertaken by the Advanced Manufacturing in Construction Officer Working Group and Expert Advisory Group in producing a routemap for accelerating Advanced Manufacturing in Construction in the region as previously commissioned by this board.

The board had previously agreed to the development of a comprehensive Advanced Manufacturing in Construction routemap and strategy, to ensure that it delivered housing and job numbers, but also social value, inclusive growth and environmental benefits. To ensure that the routemap was accessible to those less familiar with the Advanced Manufacturing in Construction sector, but robust enough to inform credible actions, a two-part structure was proposed that would see both an executive summary and detailed report produced. It was intended to formally launch the routemap in winter 2020/21 with appropriate comms and publicity.

The Chair welcomed the report and indicated that he wished to see a critical mass of manufacturing being developed within the West Midlands that might, to some extent, mitigate against the loss of other skilled manufacturing jobs.

Resolved:

- (1) The contents of part 2 of the Advanced Manufacturing in Construction routemap be noted.
- (2) The proposal to explore options for implementing the Advanced Manufacturing in Construction routemap's recommendations in collaboration with the Advanced Manufacturing in Construction Officer Working Group and Expert Advisory Group be agreed.
- (3) The intention to formally launch the Advanced Manufacturing in Construction routemap in winter 2020/21 be noted.

- (4) The Director of Housing & Regeneration, in consultation with the Portfolio Lead for Housing & Land, be given delegated authority to agree the final versions of the Advanced Manufacturing in Construction routemap for publication.

21. Planning Reform: Key Messages

The board considered a report from the Director of Housing & Regeneration on discussions held with local planning authority officials to discuss any regional impacts from the proposed planning reforms, and to identify any consistent messages or points of clarification.

The White Paper 'Planning for the Future' proposed extensive changes to the planning system, covering plan making, development management and development contributions, alongside other related policy proposals. This new system had been devised by an expert panel working with the Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government and Treasury officials, and retained local plan making at the heart of the system. The White Paper set out the proposed reforms through three pillars: 'planning for development', 'planning for beautiful and sustainable places' and 'planning for infrastructure and connected places'.

Two workshops were held that identified a number of gaps in the new proposed system, along with a number of unintended consequences. A number of observations were therefore drafted that could have been included within consultation responses to the White Paper.

Councillor Matt Dormer noted that the White Paper proposed the removal of the duty to co-operate, but that this could still happen effectively where planning authorities chose to develop joint local plans with neighbouring councils. Councillor Peter Butlin indicated that he considered the non-delivery of approved planning applications to be a significant problem that needed addressing. He understood that up to a million unbuilt homes had received planning permission, suggesting that planning regulations were not proving to be a hindrance to housing supply. Councillor Ian Courts stressed the importance of properly understanding the economic pressures that influenced developers as this would help improve the supply of housing stock.

Resolved:

- (1) The key issues, messages and points of clarification raised by the Delivery Steering Group to the consultation on the White Paper entitled 'Planning for the Future' which closed on 30 October 2020 be noted.
- (2) It be noted that officials across the region would continue to raise these key messages, issues and points with the Government in different forums, together with the comments made at this meeting.

22. Local Plans: Update on Progress

The board considered a report from the Director of Housing & Regeneration summarising the position on local plans which has been developed with the Local Plans Housing Market Area Group.

The WMCA Housing Deal required the delivery of 215,000 dwellings by 2030/31 in return for up to £350m of investment, including £100m of which would be provided in the form of a Land Fund to accelerate the delivery of new homes. The Housing Deal also required local plans for both constituent and non-constituent local authorities to be progressed in a timely manner and adopted as necessary by 2021 to deliver and accommodate the 215,000 new homes target. To ensure that these targets were met, both local plans and housing land supply were monitored on a regular basis at a regional level.

Although the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown had had an impact on some local plans within the region, particularly where public consultation was needed, it was clear that local authorities had been taking positive steps to make ongoing progress. Those plans which had to be paused were now making their way through the system.

The Chair stressed the importance of the West Midlands region being able to deliver the supply of housing stock that it had agreed to within its Housing Deal.

Resolved:

- (1) The contents of the report that this board commissioned on local plan progression, provided in full collaboration with local authorities, be noted.
- (2) The March 2018 Housing Deal commitment that all reasonable steps were taken to progress local plans to adoption, to keep plans up to date and to ensure the region could demonstrate it was planning for delivery of 215,000 homes to 2031, be noted.

23. Exclusion of the Public & Press

Resolved:

That, in accordance with s100(A) of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following item of business as it involved the likely disclosure of exempt information relating to the business or financial affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information).

24. Affordable Housing Collaborative Delivery Vehicle

The board considered a report from the Director of Housing & Regeneration on the proposals to establish a new Affordable Housing Delivery Vehicle and seeking approval to complete the full business case proposal for a joint venture between the WMCA and six regional housing associations.

In March 2018, the Government's housing deal with the West Midlands agreed that the WMCA would commit to working up a new dedicated partnership proposal to deliver additional affordable homes with the West Midlands Housing Association Partnership. Discussions had been ongoing since between the WMCA, the West Midlands Housing Association Partnership and the National Housing Federation to take forward the proposals for a bespoke affordable housing delivery vehicle that would help secure affordable housing delivery above and beyond those of the housing associations' committed and approved business plans.

The outline business case set out the strategic, commercial, management and financial detail of the proposals. It was now intended to convene a 'shadow board', consisting of representatives from the partners involved, to further develop a full business case for approval. It was expected that the full business case would be submitted for approval during January/February 2021.

The Chair enquired whether other housing associations could join this initiative in the future. The Strategic Delivery Advisor confirmed that this was the case, subject to the WMCA's approval. Councillor Ian Courts enquired whether sufficient sites were available for development under this scheme that had not already been identified for development. The Strategic Delivery Adviser indicated that sites were currently available, and it was expected further sites would come forward over time. The Chair requested that an update report be submitted to a future meeting of this board once it had been up and running for six months.

Resolved:

- (1) The positive progress towards the establishment of a new Affordable Housing Delivery Vehicle by the WMCA with West Midlands Housing Association Partnership, which was agreed in principle by this board in 2019, with a Memorandum of Understanding between the partners agreed by this board in July 2020, be noted.
- (2) It be noted that the next step on the establishment of the vehicle was to complete the outline business case and establish a 'shadow board' to finalise the full business case for board approval in early 2021.

The meeting ended at 10.45 am.