



Environment & Energy Board

Wednesday 9 December 2020 at 10.00am

Minutes

Present

Councillor Ian Courts (Chair)
Councillor Ian Kettle
Marc Lidderth
Councillor Andy Mackiewicz
Councillor Barbara McGarrity
Matthew Rhodes

Portfolio Lead for Environment, Energy & HS2
Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council
Environment Agency
Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council
City of Wolverhampton Council
Energy Capital

In attendance

Lily Eaves
Councillor Peter Fowler

Young Combined Authority
Overview & Scrutiny Committee

26. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Oliver Butler (Walsall), Councillor Maria Crompton (Sandwell), Councillor Jim O'Boyle (Coventry) and Councillor Waseem Zaffar (Birmingham).

27. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 15 October 2020 were agreed as a correct record.

28. Ten Point Plan for a Green Industrial Revolution

The board considered a report from the Director of Public Service Reform providing an introduction to the Government's Ten Point Plan for a Green Industrial Revolution, along with some of the key opportunities for the WMCA and partners.

On 18 November, the Government set out a ten-point plan for a green industrial revolution, which could create and support up to 250,000 British jobs and mobilise £12bn of government investment, with over three times as much private sector investment, by 2030. The ten areas identified in the plan were:

- Advancing offshore wind
- Driving the growth of low carbon hydrogen
- Delivering new and advanced nuclear power
- Accelerating the shift to zero emission vehicles
- Green public transport, cycling and walking
- Jet zero and green ships
- Greener buildings
- Investing in carbon capture, usage and storage
- Protecting our natural environment

- Green finance and innovation

The WMCA intended to work with the Government, as well as with local and regional stakeholders, to maximise the opportunities coming from the plan. This would be given even more urgency through the Climate Change Committee's announcement on the UK's 6th carbon budget, due for announcement on 9 December.

Matthew Rhodes noted that many significant investment decisions would take decades to maximise their impacts, and the West Midlands was particularly well placed to take advantage of projects with quicker returns, especially in sectors such as building refurbishments and transport. The Chair noted the value of messaging in changing mindsets. He stressed the importance of timescales being placed on initiatives, along with measurements of success.

Resolved:

That the report be noted.

29. Young Combined Authority Update

The board considered a report from the Director of Public Service Reform providing an update to the environment work of the Young Combined Authority and outlining the areas of work that the YCA would be focusing on, along with its response to the Ten Point Plan for a Green Industrial Revolution.

The YCA was currently focusing on re-purposing its 'manifesto', which it drafted in March 2020, to create a post-COVID-19 vision document for the region. This would be structured around the YCA's priority areas and the intention was to bring this to the WMCA Board in January 2021 and use it as a springboard for future discussions and collaboration with the region's decision makers.

Lily Eaves from the Young Combined Authority drew attention to the five key manifesto points that were of interest to younger people:

- Campaign for low carbon and carbon neutral charging points
- Education
- Direct access to careers in the green sector
- The Young Combined Authority green pledge
- Greater biodiversity in less affluent areas

The Chair welcomed the views of the Young Combined Authority and committed to working with its representatives on the items coming before future meetings of this board.

Resolved:

- (1) The report on the environment work from the Young Combined Authority be noted.
- (2) The shaping and delivery of outcomes with the YCA's Environment Co-Leads be supported.

30. WM2041 - Five Year Plans

The board considered a report from the Director of Public Service Reform on the progress in preparing 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.

Following the approval of 'WM2041: A Programme for Implementing an Environmental Recovery' in June, the WMCA and stakeholders needed to produce five-year delivery plans (four in total) with interim carbon budgets and other metrics in support of delivering the net zero carbon target for the West Midlands by 2041. The aim of the Five Year Plans would be to provide clear guidance on the types of measures that would need to be implemented to reach net zero by 2041.

The first Five Year Plan would set the pace and tone of the WMCA engagement with constituent local authorities and wider stakeholders. The aim was for the Five Year Plan to be signed off by the WMCA Board at its meeting on 12 February 2021, and therefore to hold a special meeting of this board before then to endorse the plan prior to its approval.

Matthew Rhodes stressed the importance of being realistic as to how difficult it would be to implement many of the changes envisaged. Detailed plans on 'how' to deliver and embed the objectives contained within the Five Year Plans would be the key to their eventual success.

Resolved:

- (1) The progress on the Five Year Plan work to date be noted.
- (2) An additional meeting of the board be held in January 2021 to approve the first Five Year Plan prior to its submission to the WMCA Board on 12 February 2021.

31. WM2041 - Net Zero Business Pledge

The board considered a report from the Director of Public Service Reform on the WM2041 Net Zero Business Pledge, including how the WMCA was working with businesses and the timetable for the next steps.

Achieving net zero by 2041 would require significant collaboration between a wide range of stakeholders and the business pledge was one of the ways that the WMCA was working to build relationships with the private sector. The concept came from discussions on the economic recovery from COVID-19 at the Economic Impact Group chaired by the Mayor. A number of businesses/ business organisations came forward and offered to work with the WMCA's Environment team in developing the pledge.

The pledge would be hosted on the WMCA website and would provide information on the actions that business could take to work towards being carbon light and, ultimately, move towards net zero. These actions would enable both small and large businesses to be able to demonstrate a commitment to achieving net zero by 2041.

Councillor Andy Mackiewicz welcomed the report and urged for more focus to be given the benefits of a local supply chain in achieving greater sustainability.

Resolved:

- (1) The development of the WM2041 Net Zero Business Pledge be supported.
- (2) The board actively engage in its promotion (once it had gone live) to local businesses.

32. Natural Capital: Update on Solutions

The board considered a report from the Director of Public Service Reform outlining the next steps that could be implemented to address some of the challenges emerging from the presentations given to the board at its last meeting on the virtual forest, West Midlands National Park and access to green space natural capital projects.

The Virtual Forest work had been progressing well, with the new site formally launching on 4 December as part of National Tree Planting Week. The West Midlands National Park engagement continued, with the first Foundation Board planned for December. The Environment team was continuing to work with Birmingham City University and other partners involved with the national park on the delivery plan and project accreditation criteria. The New Economics Foundation report on access to green spaces had identified a number of areas on which an action plan would focus.

It was intended for a fully developed action plan to be submitted to the meeting of this board on 10 March 2021 for approval.

Councillor Andy Mackiewicz welcomed the report and highlighted the significant benefits that could be achieved by green rooms and green walls. He wished to see local authorities more ambitious in the introduction of green infrastructure.

Resolved:

- (1) The next steps for the work on natural capital be approved.
- (2) The work on developing a clear action plan on solutions to be agreed at the meeting of the board on 10 March 2021 be supported.
- (3) The collaboration around project implementation that would be concurrent with development of the action plan be supported.

33. WM2041 - Programme Update

The board considered a report from the Director of Public Service Reform on a high-level overview of those projects within the WM2041 programme which would come to future Environment & Energy Board meetings.

The delivery of the WM2041 programme relied on working closely with the local authorities and their climate change action plans. The WMCA's Environment team worked closely 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) The areas of particular interest where there could be potential for specific collaboration with other work and stakeholders be noted.
- (3) The scope for members would to be engaged or informed on specific areas as the programme developed, outside of any board meetings, be noted.

34. Date of Next Meeting

The next scheduled meeting of the board be held on Wednesday 10 March 2021 at 10.00am, and an additional meeting of the board be held in January 2021 to approve the first Five Year Plan prior to its submission to the WMCA Board on 12 February 2021.

The meeting ended at 12.00pm.