



West Midlands
Combined Authority

Overview & Scrutiny Committee

Date	8 March 2021
Report title	WMCA Scrutiny Review on the Effectiveness of the WMCA's Governance Structures in Delivering the Policy Objectives of the WMCA - Update on Recommendations
Overview & Scrutiny Committee Leads	Councillor Lisa Trickett (Chair), Councillor Ahmad Bostan, Councillor Peter Fowler, Councillor Stephen Simkins and Aisha Masood
Accountable Employee	Tim Martin, Head of Governance, Clerk and Monitoring Officer email: tim.martin@wmca.org.uk tel: (0121) 214 7435

Recommendation(s) for action or decision:

The Overview & Scrutiny Committee is recommended to:

- (1) Note and comment on the current position and progress made on the observations and conclusions arising from the Governance Review presented to the Strategic Leadership Team in October 2020.

1. Purpose

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to inform the committee of the progress made with the observations and conclusions arising from the Governance Review undertaken last year.

2. Background

- 2.1 During 2019/20, the Overview & Scrutiny Committee undertook a high-level review assessing the current governance arrangements of the West Midlands Combined Authority and whether they were appropriate to deliver its aims and policy objectives, given the growth of its remit and influence in recent years. The WMCA's Strategic Leadership Team considered the findings of the scrutiny review at its meeting on 7 October 2020, which Councillor Lisa Trickett attended to present the report and answer any questions.
- 2.2 The review group was chaired by Councillor Lisa Trickett and comprised of Councillor Ahmad Bostan, Councillor Peter Fowler, Councillor Stephen Simkins, Councillor Simon Peale (former member of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee) and Aisha Masood (representing the Young Combined Authority). The review was undertaken during February 2020 and was supported by supported by Dan Essex (Governance Services Manager) and Lyndsey Roberts (Scrutiny Officer)

3. Emerging Themes and Considerations

- 3.1 The issues and considerations undertaken by the review group, given the broad remit covered by 'governance', meant that rather than narrow and specific recommendations for implementation, members wished to provoke a more thoughtful debate amongst the Mayor, Constituent Authority Leaders and the Strategic Leadership Team as to how that governance might better evolve in the coming years. At the time the panel was gathering evidence, the expectation was that a new four-year Mayoral would commence following elections in May 2020, and that this could provide a window whereby these matters were able to be debated openly and thoughtfully, and supporting an evolution of the WMCA's governance arrangements. Whilst the deferral of Mayoral elections until May this year, and the wider considerations prompted by the continuing COVID-19 pandemic meant that this window of reflection did not happen, the conclusions reached during the scrutiny review still hold true and deserve consideration.

4. Observations and Findings

- 4.1 The conclusions of the scrutiny review were grouped into a number of thematic strands:
 - General Governance Observations
 - Cultures and Behaviours
 - Political Leadership
 - Place Shaping
 - Investment and Funding Strategies
 - Outcome-Based Reporting
 - Audit Oversight
 - Political Challenge and Oversight within the WMCA
 - Consultation & Engagement
 - Young Combined Authority

5. Progress Update

- 5.1 Following the presentation of the scrutiny panel's findings to the Strategic Leadership Team, it was acknowledged that the many of the observations were matters that required consideration and reflection at a political, rather than operational, level. This would involve discussions between the Mayor and the leaders of the WMCA's constituent authorities.
- 5.2 The wider response required from the WMCA and local authorities to the Covid pandemic during the last year has inevitably meant that the capacity of the Mayor and council leaders to give time to reflect on these matters has understandably been limited. The postponement of the Mayoral and local elections to May this year has also meant that the scope for introducing wider political reform during the year was limited.
- 5.3 However, given the importance of the issues raised by the scrutiny panel, it would now seem timely to re-start these considerations immediately after the local elections when the Mayor would be beginning a three-year mandate and the political complexion of the wider region would be clearer. To support this, the Head of Governance was tasked by the Strategic Leadership Team to facilitate this engagement with the Mayor and Leaders to ensure that the important work undertaken by the scrutiny panel fed into wider governance considerations. It is expected that this engagement would begin in May immediately following the local elections. Updates will be provided to this committee as they progressed through 2021/22.

6. Financial Implications

- 6.1 There are no direct financial implications arising out of the recommendations contained within this report.

7. Legal Implications

- 7.1 There are no direct legal implications arising out of the recommendations contained within this report.

8. Equalities Implications

- 8.1 There are no direct equality implications arising out of the recommendations contained within this report.

9. Inclusive Growth Implications

- 9.1 There are no direct inclusive growth implications arising out of the recommendations contained within this report.

10. Geographical Area of Report's Implications

- 10.1 The WMCA exercises transport powers overwhelmingly in respect of the area covered by its constituent authority members.

11. Other Implications

- 11.1 There are no further specific implications arising out of the recommendations contained within the report.