



West Midlands Combined Authority

WMCA Board

Friday 19 March 2021 at 11.00 am

Minutes

Constituent Members

Andy Street (Chair)	Mayor of the West Midlands Combined Authority
Councillor Bob Sleight (Vice-Chair)	Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council
Councillor Mike Bird	Walsall Metropolitan Borough Council
Councillor Ian Brookfield	City of Wolverhampton Council
Councillor Ian Courts	Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council
Councillor George Duggins	Coventry City Council
Councillor Patrick Harley	Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council
Councillor Brigid Jones	Birmingham City Council
Councillor Abdul Khan	Coventry City Council
Councillor Ian Ward	Birmingham City Council

Non-Constituent Members

Nick Abell	Coventry & Warwickshire Local Enterprise Partnership
Councillor George Adamson	Cannock Chase District Council
Councillor Matt Dormer	Redditch Borough Council
Councillor Julie Jackson	Nuneaton & Bedworth Borough Council
Councillor Tony Jefferson	Stratford-on-Avon District Council
Councillor Jeremy Oates	Tamworth Borough Council
Councillor Alex Phillips	Shropshire Council
Tom Westley	Black Country Local Enterprise Partnership

Observer Member Awaiting Membership

Councillor Andrew Day	Warwick District Council
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Co-Opted Member

Lee Barron	Midlands Trades Union Congress
Lilly Eaves	Young Combined Authority
Gina Patel	Young Combined Authority

Observer Members

Councillor Greg Brackenridge	West Midlands Fire Authority
David Jamieson	West Midlands Police & Crime Commissioner

In Attendance

Councillor Cathy Bayton
Councillor Peter Fowler
Councillor Kath Hartley
David Lane
Councillor Lisa Trickett

Overview & Scrutiny Committee
Overview & Scrutiny Committee
Transport Delivery Committee
Audit, Risk & Assurance Committee
Overview & Scrutiny Committee

124. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Adrian Andrew (Walsall), Councillor Maria Crompton (Sandwell), Councillor Shaun Davies (Telford & Wrekin), Councillor Seb Lowe (Rugby), Councillor Peter Nutting (Shropshire), Tim Pile (Greater Birmingham & Solihull LEP) and Councillor Izzi Seccombe (Warwickshire).

125. Chair's Remarks

(a) Graeme Betts, Acting Chief Executive, Birmingham City Council

The Mayor congratulated Graeme Betts on his recent appointment as Acting Chief Executive of Birmingham City Council and thanked Chris Naylor for his support of the WMCA whilst he had been Interim Chief Executive.

(b) Tony McGovern, Managing Director, Cannock Chase District Council

The Mayor reported that Tony McGovern had recently stepped down as Managing Director of Cannock Chase District Council and thanked him for his involvement in the WMCA and the support he had given to its activities. He also welcomed Bob Kean following his appointment as Interim Managing Director.

(c) David Jamieson, West Midlands Police & Crime Commissioner

The Mayor noted that this was the last meeting that David Jamieson would be attending before he stood down as Police & Crime Commissioner in May. He thanked him for his significant contributions to board meetings and his championing of the partnership work between West Midlands Police and the WMCA.

126. Minutes - 12 February 2021

The minutes of the meeting held on 12 February 2021 were agreed as a correct record.

127. Forward Plan

The forward plan of items to be reported to future meetings of the board was noted.

128. Financial Monitoring Report 2021/22

The board considered a report from the Director of Finance on the WMCA's finances as at the end of January 2021 (including the financial implications of COVID-19), and on an update on the forecast outturn for 2020/21.

The overall year to date position at the end of January showed a £2.987m favourable variance from budget, consisting of a favourable variance within the transport budget of £3.437m, largely due to lower concessionary patronage volumes and Regional Transport Co-ordination Centre efficiency savings offsetting the COVID-19 impact on advertising revenue and departure charge income. This was further supplemented by the drawdown of Government grants to support subsidised bus, metro and the wider transport system.

Councillor Lisa Trickett welcomed the funding that had been secured for new rail stations at Hazelwell, Kings Heath and Moseley, but was concerned that there appeared to be no increase in capacity or frequency of services using the Cross City line. Councillor Ian Ward, Portfolio Lead for Transport, indicated that Network Rail was not forecasting a return to pre-pandemic passenger numbers until 2030, and that new rolling stock itself was able to carry 20% more passengers. He considered these factors to justify retaining the current frequency of services on the Cross City line, but had received assurances from Transport for West Midlands that this would be kept under review as actual data became available.

Resolved:

- (1) The financial outturn position as at the end of January 2021 be noted.
- (2) The latest forecast for 2020/21, incorporating the latest view of the impact of COVID-19, be noted.
- (3) Confirmation of 2021/22 Adult Education Budget, as verbally communicated at the WMCA Board on 12 February 2021, be noted.
- (4) The capital block allocations, including Highways and Integrated Transport Block, be approved.
- (5) The increase in Investment Programme affordable limit, from £801m to £871m, along with the provisional distribution of the additional £70m be approved.
- (6) Decisions regarding the £8.9m provided by Government to prepare for the Intra-city Transport Settlement be delegated to the Director of Finance, Managing Director of Transport for West Midlands and the Portfolio Lead for Transport.
- (7) It be noted that the acquisition of Victoria Lane steel works was to be funded from WMCA capital receipts.
- (8) It be noted that the WMCA intended to withdraw from the Passenger Transport Forum pay negotiations and enter into local government pay negotiations when practicably possible.
- (9) It be noted that WMCA was assessing the impact from the Chancellor's budget announcement on 3 March 2021 and would reflect the outcomes in an updated budget to the June 2021 board.

129. WM2041 Five Year Plan: 2021 - 2026

The board considered a report from the Director of Public Service Reform & Inclusive Growth summarising the independent advice commissioned from WSP as to how the WMCA's net zero ambition might be achieved, along with an outline of the next steps for delivery.

The Five Year Plan aimed to indicate how the WMCA could create the right conditions for accelerating delivery and raising ambition to position the West Midlands as a leader in addressing climate change and futureproofing the region. In addition, the plan enabled the WMCA to position itself favourably to respond to, and deliver, ambitions being set out by the UK government in recent (and upcoming) policy initiatives and legislation, all of which carried economic opportunity. The modelling that had taken place to produce the first Five Year Plan had identified the measures that would need to be taken to reach net zero. These took into account the maturity of technology, public acceptance of measures, ensuring a just transition, enabling the creation of jobs, and the transition of the West Midlands economy to a net zero future.

Councillor Ian Courts, Portfolio Lead for Environment, Energy & HS2, indicated that the pilot projects envisaged within the report aimed to identify what could then be achieved at scale, which included encouraging private sector involvement.

Resolved:

- (1) The independent advice given to the WMCA by WSP on the first Five Year Plan be noted.
- (2) The need to adopt the 'Accelerated' scenario to deliver the first Five Year Plan and to set the region on course for net zero carbon by 2041 be agreed.
- (3) The delivery plans to accelerate the WMCA work on net zero be agreed.
- (4) An allocation of £5.1m from the Investment Programme to fund the development of the priority initiatives be approved, subject to the extension of the Investment Programme affordable limit being agreed.

130. Economic Update and Next Steps

The board considered a report from the Director of Strategy summarising the latest economic data, regional implications of the Government's budget on 3 March 2021 and subsequent 'Plan for Growth'.

The first COVID-19 case in the West Midlands was confirmed on 5 March 2020. In the intervening period, 9,738 people had died across the WMCA's constituent and non-constituent authorities, and during 2020 the region's economic output fell by over £10bn because of restrictions to constrain the spread of the pandemic. Nationally, the UK economy contracted by 9.9% in 2020. Moving into 2021, first quarter output had been constrained by national lockdown and trade frictions from the move to the Trade and Co-operation Agreement with the European Union, but the Office for Budgetary Responsibility found that the rapid rollout of effective vaccines offered hope of a swifter and more sustained economic recovery.

Councillor Ian Brookfield, Portfolio Lead for Economy & Innovation noted that the impact of the pandemic had not been evenly spread across all communities, meaning that the need to ensure the region targeted its response was key to recovery. David Jamieson stressed the importance of addressing the social impacts brought about by the pandemic, particularly in respect of the expected large increase in rates of unemployment.

Resolved:

- (1) The latest economic intelligence about how the COVID-19 pandemic and the introduction of the Trade and Co-operation Agreement had affected the region's economy be noted.
- (2) The implications for the West Midlands of the Government's budget on 3 March 2021 and its 'Plan for Growth' be noted.
- (3) The response and recovery planning undertaken to date, including a review of the business support system and development of finance instruments to support growth companies be endorsed, and the further development of recovery plans with partners, linked to five major challenges set out in the report be supported.

131. Coventry Electric Bus City - Full Business Case

The board considered a report from the Managing Director, Transport for West Midlands, seeking approval for the full business case for the Coventry Electric Bus City under the Government's Phase 2 of the All-Electric Bus Town competition.

The Department for Transport launched the All-Electric Bus Town competition in February 2020 with up to £50m in grant funding to be made available to allow one town or city within England to make the transition to a bus network operated fully by electric powered buses. In June 2020, the WMCA submitted two Expressions of Interest at the Phase 1 stage for Coventry and Sandwell, which had themselves been shortlisted from a list across the seven authorities. The Department for Transport set out in January 2021 the details to devolve responsibility for the development and approval of a full business case to the WMCA for Phase 2 of the competition in Coventry. This included a number of assurances to enable the business case development to be devolved solely to the WMCA. The Sandwell bid was not selected by the Department for Transport.

Resolved:

- (1) The full business case for Coventry Electric Bus City under the Government's Phase 2 of the All-Electric Bus Town competition be authorised.
- (2) The estimated cost of the project, which was inclusive of the £50m funding from Government, be noted.
- (3) It be noted that the WMCA was the accountable body for the entirety of the funding package and any costs above the funding from the Department for Transport.

- (4) The allocation of £5m from the Investment Programme to fund the WMCA contributions to infrastructure upgrades be authorised, subject to the extension of the Investment Programme affordable limit being agreed.
- (5) It be noted that the scope and delivery of the project continued to be refined and that the risks to scope and delivery uncertainty were mitigated by the project's risk management strategy.
- (6) The delegation/s to the Monitoring Officer and Director of Finance to enter into the various funding agreements and contracts which would be reasonably required to enable delivery of the project be approved.

132. Adoption of a Revised Code of Conduct for the Mayor and Members of the Combined Authority

The board considered a report from the Head of Governance, Clerk and Monitoring Officer, setting a proposed new Mayor/Members Code of Conduct.

The Committee on Standards in Public Life reviewed the operation of the ethical framework in local government in 2017 and made a number of recommendations. The Local Government Association has consulted with its members and issued a revised model Code of Conduct suitable for adoption by local government bodies which incorporates those points raised by the Committee on Standards in Public Life report which did not require any legislative change. The existing WMCA Code of Conduct is light on detail in a number of areas, and best practice would indicate that it should be reviewed at regular intervals and the publication of the Local Government Association code gives a sensible opportunity to implement a revised document that should be widely understood across the local government spectrum.

Resolved:

The revised Code of Conduct be adopted, following consideration of it at the Audit, Risk & Assurance Committee on 4 March 2021.

133. Housing & Land Delivery Board - 13 January 2021

The board received the minutes of the Housing & Land Delivery Board meeting held on 13 January.

Resolved:

The minutes of the meeting held on 13 January 2021 be noted.

134. Audit, Risk & Assurance Committee - 18 January 2021

The board received the minutes of the Audit, Risk & Assurance Committee meeting held on 18 January.

Resolved:

The minutes of the meeting held on 18 January 2021 be noted.

135. Strategic Economic Development Board - 20 January 2021

The board received the minutes of the Strategic Economic Development Board meeting held on 20 January.

Resolved:

The minutes of the meeting held on 20 January 2021 be noted.

136. Transport Delivery Committee - 8 February 2021

The board received the minutes of the Transport Delivery Committee meeting held on 8 February.

Resolved:

The minutes of the meeting held on 8 February 2021 be noted.

137. Investment Board - 15 February 2021

The board received the minutes of the Investment Board meeting held on 15 February.

Resolved:

The minutes of the meeting held on 15 February 2021 be noted.

138. Housing, Land & Delivery Board - 3 March 2021

The board received the minutes of the Housing & Land Delivery Board meeting held on 3 March.

Resolved:

The minutes of the meeting held on 3 March 2021 be noted.

139. Audit, Risk & Assurance Committee - 4 March 2021

The board received the minutes of the Audit, Risk & Assurance Committee meeting held on 4 March.

Resolved:

The minutes of the meeting held on 4 March 2021 be noted.

140. Public Service Reform Board - 4 March 2021

The board received the minutes of the Public Service Reform Board meeting held on 4 March.

Resolved:

The minutes of the meeting held on 4 March 2021 be noted.

141. Overview & Scrutiny Committee - 4 March 2021

The board received the minutes of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 4 March.

In respect of minute no. 112 (“Economic Needs of the Black Country’ Scrutiny Review - Summary of Findings’), Councillor Lisa Trickett reported that members had recognised the value to the Black Country of there being a shared vision across public authorities to tackle the scale and size of the problems identified. She urged the WMCA Board to look seriously at these issues in the year ahead.

Resolved:

The minutes of the inquorate meeting held on 4 March 2021 be approved.

142. Young Combined Authority - March Update

The board considered a report of the activities of the Young Combined Authority undertaken during March.

The Mayor thanked all those members of the Young Combined Authority for the commitment they had shown during the last year to ensuring the voices of younger people across the region were being heard.

Resolved:

The report be noted.

143. Date of Next Meeting

Friday 11 June 2021 at 11.00am.

The meeting ended at 12.30pm.