



Environment & Energy Board

Thursday 1 July 2021 at 10.00am

Minutes

Present

Councillor Ian Courts	Portfolio Lead for Environment, Energy & HS2
Councillor Oliver Butler	Walsall Metropolitan Borough Council
Councillor Andy Mackiewicz	Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council
Matthew Rhodes	Energy Capital
Suzanne Ward	Environment Agency

In attendance

Councillor Peter Fowler	Overview & Scrutiny Committee
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1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Maria Crompton (Sandwell), Councillor Jim O'Boyle (Coventry), Councillor Simon Phipps (Dudley) and Councillor Waseem Zaffar (Birmingham).

2. Net Zero Neighbourhood

The board considered an update from the Head of Environment on the allocation of £2m to help to explore opportunities for achieving net zero living through technology shift. In addition, financial models and community appetite for net zero living would also be explored.

The Chair emphasised that the selection of neighbourhoods would be key to the success of any project, and stressed the importance of ensuring a broad range of difference localities were selected. He suggested that this work be undertaken with local authorities. In terms of the selection of neighbourhoods, the chair asked that the WMCA worked with local authorities to help to identify potential areas. It was noted that additional work needed to be undertaken on the financial model and timescales.

The Chair undertook to meet with Cheryl Hiles from Energy Capital to discuss these ideas further.

Resolved that the update be noted.

3. WM2041 Behaviour Change

The board considered a report from the Director of Public Service Reform and the Head of Environment that provided an update on the behaviour change work that would support the WM2041 programme. The WMCA was currently working with the Behavioural Insights Team on initial priorities for action and campaigns.

The board received a presentation from Lourdes Valencia from the Cabinet Office's Behavioural Insights Team that considered the role of behaviour change in achieving a reduction in carbon emissions.

Councillor Andy Mackiewicz welcomed the presentation, noting how the COVID-19 pandemic had resulted in a shift in public behaviour motivated by a desire to achieve a positive outcome, and wondered what lessons could be learnt from this to help achieve carbon reduction targets. The Chair stressed the importance of clear and specific messaging that the public could understand and buy in to. He particularly thought that messaging that had a local resonance was more likely to capture people's attention and prompt behaviour change.

Resolved:

- (1) The work being undertaken on behaviour change by the Behavioural Insights Team be noted.
- (2) The comments made by the board on the progress and focus of the work be fed back to the Behavioural Insights Team.
- (3) It be noted that the WMCA was in the process of recruiting an Environment Behaviour Change Project Officer.

4. Update on WM Circular Economy Routemap

The board considered a report from the Director of Public Service Reform and the Head of Environment that provided an update on the progress of the West Midlands' Circular Economy Routemap.

In June 2020, the WMCA Board approved 'WM2041: A Programme for Implementing an Environmental Recovery' that included a recommendation to establish a Circular Economy Taskforce to support the production of a Routemap for the region. Following a stakeholder workshop and public survey to develop understanding of the regional circular economy activity and stakeholders, a Circular Economy Taskforce was formed in November 2020, made up of public, private, academic and third sector partners in the region. The taskforce provided input to a specification which was used to publish a WMCA tender for consultancy support to produce the Routemap. Useful Projects were appointed in January 2021.

Dan Epstein and Laetitia Pancrazi from Useful Projects provided further information on how a circular economy model could scale up across the region. The next steps in this process were to finalise and launch routemap and then prioritise projects to take forward. The Chair noted that much of this work linked in the behaviour change workstream and similarly needed to emphasise the 'local' benefits that could be achieved. He also considered that the financial benefits of transitioning to a circular economy needed to be emphasised in order to bring local businesses onboard.

Resolved:

- (1) The progress on the West Midlands' Circular Economy Routemap be noted.

- (2) The comments made by board to help inform the competition of the Routemap and next steps be noted.

5. Briefing on WMCA-UK100 Summit & Conference and COP26

The board considered a report from the Director of Public Service Reform and the Head of Environment that outlined the work that the WMCA had been leading on, in conjunction with other local, regional and national stakeholders, to favourably position the West Midlands in the run-up to COP26, as well as at the event itself in November. It also provided an update on the UK100 local leaders' summit and conference that was being delivered in partnership with the WMCA.

There are three objectives for the WMCA's engagement with COP26 and the associated local leaders' summit and conference planned by UK100: to shine a spotlight on the West Midlands' economy for trade and investment opportunities; to create a 'buzz' around net zero among local residents and businesses; and to work with central government in a new partnership to deliver net zero.

Resolved:

- (1) The activities planned for the UK100 summit and conference and COP26 be noted.
- (2) The details on how to register for the UK100 Conference be noted.

6. Environment & Energy Programme Update

The board considered a report from the Director of Public Services Reform and the Head of Environment that provided an overview of the Environment and Energy programme, including work on the net zero natural capital and circular economy. It also updated members on the enabling activity being put in place to ensure successful delivery, including behaviour change, business and community engagement, data and financing.

Resolved:

The Environment and Energy programme update be noted.

The meeting ended at 12.00pm