



West Midlands
Combined Authority

Overview & Scrutiny Committee

Wednesday 21 July 2021 at 2.00pm

Minutes

Present:

Councillor Cathy Bayton (Chair)	Association of Black Country Authorities
Councillor Lisa Trickett (Vice-Chair)	Birmingham City Council
Councillor Naeem Akhtar	Coventry City Council
Councillor Maya Ali	Joint Coventry/Solihull Representative
Councillor Mike Chalk	Worcestershire Non-Constituent Local Authorities
Councillor Tony Diccico	Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council
Councillor Peter Fowler	Birmingham City Council
Councillor Ian Kettle	Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council
Councillor Nigel Lumby	Shropshire Non-Constituent Local Authorities
Councillor Charn Padda	Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council
Councillor Simon People	Staffordshire Non-Constituent Local Authorities
Councillor Vera Waters	Walsall Metropolitan Borough Council

In Attendance:

Councillor Liz Clements	Transport Scrutiny Sub-Committee
Dan Essex	Governance Services Manager
Satish Mistry	Interim Director Law & Governance
Lyndsey Roberts	Scrutiny Officer
Kate Taylor	Head of Finance Business Partnering

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Paul Brown (Black Country LEP) and Councillor Shabrana Hussain (Birmingham City Council).

2. Appointment of Chair

The committee noted that at the WMCA Board meeting held on 25 June 2021, Councillor Cathy Bayton had been appointed as the Chair of this committee for 2021/22.

3. Appointment of Vice-Chair

The appointment of the Vice-Chair was the responsibility of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee and had to be a member from a different political group to the Mayor. The Chair proposed that Councillor Trickett be appointed as Vice-Chair of this committee, as she had chaired the committee for the last two years and therefore brought considerable experience to the role as well as being able to steer the transition of the work of the committee from last year into this year.

Resolved:

Councillor Lisa Trickett be appointed as Vice-Chair of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee for 2021/22.

4. Appointment of Chair of the Transport Scrutiny Sub-Committee

The appointment of the Chair of Transport Scrutiny Sub-Committee was the responsibility of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee and had to be a member from a different political group to the Mayor.

The Chair reported that as Councillor Liz Clements was an active member of the sub-committee last year and had considerable experience chairing Birmingham City Council's Sustainability & Transport Overview & Scrutiny Committee. She therefore proposed that Councillor Liz Clements be appointed as Chair of the Transport Scrutiny Sub-Committee. In order to maintain the close link between transport scrutiny and the main Overview & Scrutiny Committee, it was also proposed that Councillor Liz Clements be co-opted as a non-voting member of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee.

Resolved:

- (1) Councillor Liz Clements be appointed as Chair of the Transport Scrutiny Sub-Committee for 2021/22.
- (2) Councillor Liz Clements be co-opted as a non-voting member of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee for 2021/22.

5. Chair's Remarks

(a) Welcome and Introductions

The Chair welcomed members to the first meeting of the year and invited everyone to introduce themselves and give an indication as to how they thought they may be able to contribute to the work of the committee during the year.

(b) Process for Appointment of Chair

Given the unexpected manner in which the nomination for Chair of this committee took place at the WMCA Board AGM in June, the Chair requested that the Interim Director of Law & Governance formulate a more structured and transparent process for appointing the Chair of the committee in future years.

(c) Appointments to Overview & Scrutiny Committee

The Chair reported that the committee was currently awaiting a nomination from the Greater Birmingham & Solihull LEP, Coventry & Warwickshire LEP, Warwickshire Non-Constituent Local Authorities and a second representative from the Association of Black Country Authorities.

(d) Eid al-Adha

The Chair noted that this meeting was being held on the same day as the festival of Eid al-Adha and apologised for the fact that this had meant some members were unable to attend. The Chair assured that future meetings would not coincide with religious festivals.

6. Minutes - 8 March 2021

The minutes of the meeting held on 8 March 2021 were agreed as a correct record.

Matters Arising

(a) Economic Funding Tracker (minute no. 109)

At the last meeting concern was expressed over the content of the funding tracker as it did not clearly show the actual money received to date against the asks and delivery of schemes. Members noted that this information would provide greater transparency, accountability and confidence.

The Chair and Vice-Chair would be meeting with the Director of Finance and the Director of Strategy on 11 August to discuss the economic funding tracker in further detail. The tracker would be presented to future meetings of the committee.

(b) Economic Needs of the Black Country Scrutiny Review - Summary of Findings (minute no. 112)

At its last meeting, the committee considered a draft report outlining the findings of the scrutiny review undertaken to understand whether the region's economic recovery proposals were meeting the needs that had been identified within the Black Country sub-region.

The findings of the review were reported to a meeting of the WMCA Board held on 19 March through the minutes of this committee. It was expected that a response from the Mayor to the findings of the review would be received prior to the next meeting of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee.

(c) Scrutiny Review on the Effectiveness of the WMCA's Governance Structures in Delivering the Policy Objectives of the WMCA- Update on Recommendations (minute no. 114)

During 2019/20 the committee undertook a scrutiny review that looked at the effectiveness of the WMCA's governance structures in delivering the policy objectives of the WMCA. The Interim Director of Law & Governance informed members of the committee that the WMCA Board would be undertaking a separate review of governance that had emanated from a meeting with the Mayor and constituent authority leaders. The terms of reference for the review included a focus on the decision-making arrangements particularly around advisory bodies, the process of report writing and engagement with constituent authorities.

In terms of timescales, the Interim Director of Law & Governance reported that a mapping exercise would be completed in September and the comparative work would be completed in October.

The Chair sought clarification as to whether the allowances scheme that included a payment of basic and special responsibility allowances to members of the Transport Delivery Committee, an arrangement that was not replicated within any other WMCA Board or committee, would be reviewed as part of the governance review. Given that these allowances were last reviewed more than five years ago, the Chair emphasised the need for a review so that the WMCA Board may confidently adopt a scheme of allowances that appropriately recognised the requirements of membership of the WMCA Board and its committees.

The Interim Director of Law & Governance noted that following the comments made at the WMCA Board meeting held on 25 June, he had liaised with the Deputy Mayor who had confirmed that a review of the allowances scheme may emerge from the evidence as part of the wider governance review. He also assured the committee that findings of the scrutiny review on the effectiveness of the WMCA's Governance structures in delivering the policy objectives of the WMCA would be reviewed and considered as part of the governance review.

7. Schedule of Future Meetings

The schedule of meetings was agreed as follows:

- 6 September 2021
- 14 October 2021 (Mayoral Q&A Policy)
- 8 November 2021
- 15 December 2021 (Mayoral Q&A - Draft WMCA Budget2022/23)
- 10 January 2022
- 7 March 2022

8. Arrangements for Future Meetings

The committee discussed the arrangements for future meetings and agreed that face-to-face meetings were preferred, however meetings would be held over Microsoft Teams where required.

9. Potential Committee Work Plan and Scrutiny Review Topics

(a) Draft Committee Work Programme

With regards to air quality, there was an opportunity for members of the committee to work with the Head of Environment on the role of the WMCA and how this was balanced with the work of local authorities in addressing air quality issues. It was reported that there would be additional requirements as a result of the outcome of the Environment Bill that was expected in the autumn.

In terms of the re-introduction of scrutiny champions, it was agreed that a further discussion would be held at the next meeting.

(b) WMCA Board Forward Plan

The committee noted a forward plan of items that were to be reported to future meetings of the WMCA Board.

(c) Proposed Scrutiny Review 2021/22

The committee considered a report of the Interim Director of Law & Governance that provided an overview of a draft scoping document for a scrutiny review that looked at the remit and use of housing and land powers available to the WMCA.

The Chair proposed that a review be undertaken to examine the role and remit of the WMCA to deliver affordable housing within the West Midlands through the use of the Brownfield Land & Property Investment Fund, and to consider how this supported and added value to the responsibilities of the constituent authorities in respect of affordable housing provision.

Resolved:

- (1) The draft scoping document for the proposed scrutiny review on the remit and use of housing and land powers available to the WMCA be agreed.
- (2) Councillor Naeem Akhtar, Councillor Simon People, Councillor Lisa Trickett and Councillor Vera Waters be appointed as members of the scrutiny review.

10. Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting of the committee would be held on Monday 6 September 2021 at 10.00am.