



Overview & Scrutiny Committee

Monday 10 January 2022 at 2.00pm

Minutes

Present:

Councillor Cathy Bayton (Chair)	- Association of Black Country Authorities
Councillor Naeem Akhtar	- Coventry City Council
Councillor Maya Ali	- Coventry City Council
Councillor Kate Booth	- Birmingham City Council
Councillor Mike Chalk	- Worcestershire Non-Constituent Local Authorities
Councillor Liz Clements	- Transport Scrutiny Sub-Committee
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 Paul Sweet	- City of Wolverhampton Council
Councillor Vera Waters	- Walsall Metropolitan Borough Council

In Attendance:

Joe Acton	- University of Birmingham
William Bloss	- University of Birmingham
Councillor Ian Courts	- Portfolio Lead for Environment, Energy & HS2
Dan Essex	- Governance Services Manager
Jackie Homan	- Head of Environment
Philip Plowden	- Birmingham & Solihull LEP
Lyndsey Roberts	- Scrutiny Officer
Laura Shoaf	- Chief Executive
Mark Smith	- Chair of Audit, Risk and Assurance Committee

39. Apologies for Absence

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Lisa Trickett (Birmingham).

40. Chair's Remarks

The Chair welcomed Philp Plowden from the Birmingham & Solihull Local Enterprise Partnership and Councillor Ian Courts, Portfolio Lead for Environment, Energy & HS2.

41. Minutes - 8 November and 15 December 2021

The minutes of the meeting held on 8 November and 15 December were agreed as a correct record.

42. Matters Arising

(a) **Response from Interim Chief Executive to the Recommendations Arising from the 'Economic Needs of the Black Country' Scrutiny Review** (minute no. 25)

The Chair was in dialogue with the Vice-Chair to explore the possibility of revisiting and updating the deep dive undertaken on the delivery of local skills. The committee would be updated accordingly.

(b) **Governance Review - Progress Update** (minute no. 26)

At its last meeting, the committee was advised that a report seeking the approval to establish an Independent Remuneration Panel to review the WMCA's Members Allowances Scheme would be submitted to the WMCA Board in January 2022. However, the matter had not progressed to the timescale that was originally reported to the Overview & Scrutiny Committee in November, and the Director of Law & Governance had agreed to speak to the Chair prior to the WMCA Board meeting on 18 January to provide a further update.

(c) **WMCA's Aims and Objectives** (minute no. 28 refers)

In relation to the One Public Estate Programme, the Chair reported that she had received a copy of the Public Land Charter and enquired as to whether public consultation had been undertaken to help shape the document. The Housing & Land Scrutiny Champion added that the charter did not consider the differing needs of the different public bodies and there was no commitment in terms of what the developer would be required to deliver. He undertook to raise these concerns at the next meeting of the Housing & Land Delivery Board and report back to the Chair accordingly.

43. **Mayoral Question Time: Policy - Response from the Mayor to Recommendations Presented to the WMCA Board on 19 November 2021**

The committee noted the response received from the Mayor in respect of the observations it had identified following the Policy Q&A session on 14 October 2021.

Resolved:

The report be noted.

44. **WMCA Air Quality Options**

The committee considered a report of the Head of Environment that outlined two different approaches that were likely to be available to the WMCA and its constituent local authorities to improve air quality across the West Midlands Combined Authority area. This was important given the recent Environment Act and the anticipated additional targets on addressing particulates.

The Portfolio Lead for Environment, Energy & HS2 added that the Environment Act had an increased focus on air pollution caused by particulates that were emitted from non-tail pipe emissions from vehicles, including tyre and break wear, domestic and industrial combustion sources. The Act also introduced new powers, including the ability for local authorities to co-opt air quality partners.

The Air Quality Options Paper outlined some of the work that had already been delivered across the region, including the activity that constituent local authorities were taking through their own air quality action plans. The Head of Environment added that the West Midlands Air Quality Framework should be considered as an enabler which would not have a negative impact the ambitions of local authorities.

Members discussed and shared comments on the Air Quality Framework and costings, the lack of and the importance of air quality data that was needed to identify hotspot areas and to quantify the impact of air quality measures within the region, officer engagement with constituent authorities and the need for better engagement with non-constituent authorities on the air quality agenda. To avoid displacement activity, the committee emphasised and supported a combined approach to address air quality and supported the development of an area-wide strategy to tackle the problem of air pollution in many areas.

In addition, members welcomed the design guide that had been developed by the University of Birmingham which provided information for planners on air quality. Members also shared their concerns on the effects of wood burners, and would welcome a combined approach to a behaviour change campaign.

With regards to working with non-constituent authorities, the WMCA had engaged on the natural environment and would welcome dialogue with non-constituent colleagues on the air quality agenda. In addition, it would also be important to understand which interventions lent themselves to working across which geographies.

In terms of monitoring hotspots, it was reported that a common approach to measuring particulates in different local authorities was important but also to have a collective approach to using the new low-cost sensors that private sectors were developing and promoting to individual local authorities.

Resolved:

- (1) A more proactive working arrangement with local authorities in developing air quality plans within a wider West Midlands Air Quality Framework, which clarified roles for different parties and identified a number of shared working practices, be supported.
- (2) The WMCA to oversee the collation of air quality data, storage and its availability be supported.
- (3) A shared approach to the use of low-cost sensors by local authorities be supported.
- (4) Consistent messaging relating to behavioural change factors necessary to improve area quality standards be supported.
- (5) The important role on non-constituent authorities on the air quality agenda and inclusion on air quality matters be supported.

45. Grant Register

The committee considered a report of the Director of Finance that provided an update on the grant register which contained all current 'live' grants where the WMCA was the accountable body and captured a comprehensive total of grants, awarding body, time period for delivery and a description of what the grant delivered.

The Community Renewal Fund of £5.2m was a new grant that had been added to the register since the last meeting of the committee. The Chair enquired as to whether there was any further detail available on the eight successful bids for this fund. The Head of Finance Business Partnering agreed to share a list on those projects and lead bidder.

Resolved:

The report and comments be noted.

46. Scrutiny Champions Update

The committee noted the updates received from the Housing & Land and Environment & Energy Scrutiny Champions on the latest activities being undertaken within their respective areas.

Resolved:

The update be noted.

47. Minutes - Transport Scrutiny Sub-Committee - 24 November 2021

The committee received the minutes of the Transport Scrutiny Sub-Committee meeting on 24 November 2021.

Resolved:

The minutes of 24 November 2021 be agreed.

48. Work Programme

The committee noted a work programme of items that were to be reported to future meetings of the committee and WMCA Board.

49. Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting of the committee would be held on Monday 7 March 2022 at 10.00am.

[The meeting ended at 4.10pm]