



**West Midlands
Combined Authority**

Economic Growth Board

Wednesday 2 February 2022 at 12.00 pm

Minutes

Present

Councillor Ian Brookfield (Chair)	Portfolio Lead for Economy & Innovation
Councillor Adrian Andrew	Walsall Metropolitan Borough Council
Councillor Kerrie Carmichael	Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council
Councillor Karen Grinsell	Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council
Councillor Ian Kettle	Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council
Andy Street	Mayor of the West Midlands
Councillor Ian Ward	Birmingham City Council
Councillor Matthew Dormer	Non-Constituent Authorities
Councillor Bob Sleight OBE	Portfolio Lead for Finance & Investments
Lee Barron	Midlands Trades Union Congress
Stuart Croft	Higher Education Sector
Tom Westley	Black Country Local Enterprise Partnership
Sarah Windrum	Coventry & Warwickshire Local Enterprise Partnership
Corin Crane	Black Country Chambers of Commerce
Matthew Hammond	West Midlands Growth Company
Mike Wright	West Midlands Innovation Board

Item Title No.

1. Welcome

The Chair welcomed everyone to the inaugural meeting of the Economic Growth Board and reported that it would build on the strengths of the former Strategic Economic Development Board and would be the WMCA's lead in driving the economic recovery in the West Midlands which was critical for its communities.

He added that the board would also seek to capitalise on new opportunities through the West Midlands Plan for Growth and referred to the Levelling Up White Paper that would provide a new and joined-up approach to deliver the ambitions of the region.

The Chair invited the Mayor and other members of the board to share their initial reflections on early briefings on the Levelling-Up White Paper, ahead of

the full document being presented to Parliament later that day. Further details would be shared with the board subsequently.

2. Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Duggins and Councillor Courts. Councillor Courts had nominated Councillor Grinsell to attend as his substitute.

3. Nomination of Vice-Chair

In accordance with the terms of reference for this board, the three Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) Chairs put forward their nomination for Tom Westley (Black Country LEP Chair) to be appointed to the position of Vice-Chair.

The appointment was endorsed by the board.

Resolved: That Tom Westley be appointed to the position of Vice-Chair.

4. Economic Growth Board - Governance Arrangements

The board considered a report of the Director of Productivity and Skills that sought adoption of its terms of reference (agreed by the WMCA Board on 19 November 2021) and confirmation of its membership.

The Chair reported that the membership of the board would be kept under review and might need to be expanded to take account of expanding roles identified by the Levelling-Up White Paper and potential devolution processes.

Resolved:

1. That the terms of reference, voting rights and membership as attached to the report be adopted;

2. That it be noted the board has the power to vary (or add) to its membership as needed:

3. That the Innovation Board, Create Central, Cultural Leadership Board and Energy Capital Board are to report to the Economic Growth Board be agreed and

4. That the Economic Growth Board has a role in working with West Midlands Growth Company (WMGC) Board be agreed.

5. Work Programme

The board considered a report of the Director of Productivity and Skills that sought approval for the work programme of the board and arrangements for the Officer Group to manage, refine and deliver the work programme.

The Head of Economy and Local Industrial Strategy, Jonathan Skinner reported that the indicative work programme attached to the report would be

further refined following publication of the Levelling-Up White Paper and confirmation about budgets and decision-making processes. It was noted that the refinement work would be supported by a senior officer group representing partner local authorities who would be responsible for managing, developing and delivering the work programme for the board and ensuring strong cross regional working.

Further to an enquiry from Councillor Grinsell regarding the lack of reference to the Birmingham Commonwealth Games and jobs associated with the games in the work programme, the Director of Productivity and Skills, Julie Nugent, reported that Commonwealth Games was included in the Jobs Plan but could expand the work programme accordingly.

Resolved:

1. That the suggested work programme attached to the report as appendix 1 be agreed and
2. That the work programme be refined after the release of the Levelling-Up White Paper to take account of any decision-making roles for the Economic Growth Board and this be informed by a new senior officer group strengthening the input of local authorities be noted.

6. Economic conditions and forecasts

The board considered a report of the Director of Productivity and Skills that provided an overview of the economic conditions and economic forecasts for the West Midlands including the latest quantitative economic intelligence and feedback and insight from businesses and business groups to inform decision-making.

Rebecca Riley, Head of Research and Office for Data Analytics, outlined headlines from the economic forecasting model of the region to 2040. The report also shared the West Midlands' Economic Dashboard and recent Monitor summaries of current economic conditions.

Matthew Hammond (WMGC) sought a joined-up approach across the various boards that are focusing on economic issues and felt this board should consider the economic challenges/opportunities identified in the EY report.

Councillor Ward enquired as to how intelligence from the new Regional Business Council would be shared more widely with others, in particular with this board, noting there was a need to avoid a duplication of efforts.

The Chair reported that he was happy for everything to be shared with this board. The Mayor reported that the Regional Business Council undertook an advisory role and this board needs to be de-briefed accordingly noting that the WMGC would take the lead for large businesses and LEPs for smaller businesses.

Matthew Hammond asked to formalise the communication channels across different boards/bodies and that WMGC needs to provide updates to this

group.

Resolved:

1. That the current economic conditions, including insight from the region's businesses and long-term economic forecasts be noted and
2. That regular insight from Economic Impact Group and Regional Business Council be reported to the Economic Growth Board to inform its decision-making be noted.

7. West Midlands Plan for Growth

The board considered a report of the Director of Productivity and Skills that sought endorsement for the West Midlands Plan for Growth, setting out how the region could catalyse additional growth above forecasts to boost the economy in output and jobs.

The Chair introduced the report and advised that it was important for the West Midlands to deliver as many opportunities for the region as possible and as quickly as possible to create an inclusive economy with good living standards.

The board received a short presentation from Peter Arnold and Sarah Phillips (EY) that outlined the key findings and recommendations from the West Midlands Plan for Growth. This included a twin-track, cluster based approach, capitalising on existing clusters of scale and strength and a focus on supporting nascent clusters and emerging technologies for activating job creation and accelerating growth by 2030.

The Mayor commented that this was a critical piece of work and consideration needs to be given to the interventions that are needed to make this work and how partners collectively deliver them.

Corin Crane (Black Country Chamber of Commerce) reported on the need to ensure opportunities are provided for local people to create wealth and procurement contracts are awarded locally where possible.

Mike Wright (West Midlands Innovation Board) noted that innovation going forward needs to leverage all sectors in order to bring employment to the region.

In relation to a comment from the Tom Westley (Vice-Chair) regarding the omission of metal and materials industry from the report, the Director of Productivity and Skills, Julie Nugent explained that the clusters prioritisation is based on the capacity for additional growth above forecasted levels and offered to share the full presentation which provides more detail on the matter.

Lee Barron (TUC) reported that the TUC has commissioned a report into a better recovery for the West Midlands that sets out the measures that are

needed to rebuild the economy that he could share with the board *[the report was circulated to EGB following the meeting]*.

It was noted that following endorsement by this board, the report would be discussed with the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and the Young Combined Authority before recommendation to the WMCA Board.

Resolved:

1. That the approach in the West Midlands Plan for Growth to catalyse additional growth in those clusters where the West Midlands has comparative advantage, there is market confidence and a credible path for above forecast growth in good jobs be endorsed;

2. That the report only covers part of the region's economy, and there will be further work to do support wider foundational sectors like retail, administration and hospitality to enable a more prosperous and inclusive economy be noted;

3. That partners focus on delivering the six-cross cutting interventions identified in order to remove barriers and maximise new opportunities for economic growth be agreed;

4. That officers be tasked with bringing forward recommendations to this board that will prioritise interventions to deliver early wins from the opportunities set out in Plan for Growth be agreed and

5. That a task and finish group chaired by Councillor Brookfield to develop recommendations for aligning and streamlining economic development activity across organisations to support effective interventions, deliver better value for money and provide a clear regional response to the Levelling Up White Paper be agreed.

8. West Midlands Jobs Plan

The board considered a report of the Director of Productivity and Skills that set out progress against the West Midlands Jobs Plan and the work being undertaken to support the creation of jobs through leveraging public/private sector investment, connecting residents with good jobs and employers and supporting residents with in-work progression.

The Director of Productivity and Skills, Julie Nugent introduced the report and outlined the challenges facing the West Midlands and how the Jobs Plan seeks to meet its ambition of getting 100,000 people into good quality employment within two years.

Lee Barron (TUC) reported of the need to map out 'what good jobs look like' and to include minimum standards that could be used as a marker to build on.

The Chair concurred with Lee Barron and reported of the need to take this forward across the whole of the West Midlands.

Councillor Grinsell enquired whether the WMCA was looking at the barriers of getting into work noting issues such as childcare and poor literacy levels impacting on people's ability to find employment.

The Chair agreed that basic jobs skills was an issue and DWP could assist in this regard through their skills programme and reported of the need to open/breakdown barriers to employment opportunities.

Resolved:

1. That progress against the West Midlands Jobs Plan and the target of 100,000 people into employment by 2023 be noted and
2. That the potential for further localised training and employment interventions, enabling residents to access good jobs in growth areas be noted;
3. That further investment in skills provision that could equip residents to access available jobs as identified be noted.

9. Date of next meeting - 24 March at 10.00 AM

The meeting ended at 1.18 pm.