



## Housing & Land Delivery Board

<b>Date</b>	27 <sup>th</sup> April 2022
<b>Report title</b>	WMCA Housing & Land Delivery Board Taskforces: Progress Update
<b>Portfolio Lead</b>	Housing & Land - Councillor Mike Bird
<b>Accountable Employees</b>	Gareth Bradford, Director of Housing & Regeneration (Accountable Director) Patricia Willoughby Head of Policy (Housing & Regeneration) (Senior Reporting Officer) Amanda Holland Strategic Delivery Advisor (Report Author)
<b>Previous reports</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>April 2022: Housing &amp; Land Delivery Steering Group</li></ul>

### Recommendation(s) for action or decision:

The Housing & Land Delivery Board is recommended to:

- a) **Note** the positive work and contributions to date of the industry-led taskforces established by WMCA under its Housing & Land Delivery Board;
- b) **Note** the current roles, responsibilities and activities of the industry-led taskforces established by WMCA under its Housing & Land Delivery Board; and
- c) **Endorse** the suggestions for future programmes of activity of the taskforces.

### 1.0 Purpose

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to update the Housing & Land Delivery Board on the activities of the WMCA taskforces which support the Housing and Land Portfolio and provide vital industry insight, challenge and steers across its diverse range of projects and programmes. The taskforces are all industry-chaired and advisory with a wide-ranging mix of experts volunteering their time on each taskforce. The report

also makes a number of suggestions for the future direction of travel for each taskforce which the Housing & Land Delivery Board is asked to consider and discuss.

## 2.0 Background

2.1 Four WMCA taskforces currently operate to support the policy initiatives of the Housing & Land Delivery Board (and, in the case of public land, also support the One Public Estate Board) which focuses on projects initiated by a range of public sector organisations:

- Commercial Property Taskforce
- Town Centre Taskforce
- Public Land Taskforce
- AMC/Zero Carbon Taskforce.

2.2 Taskforce members volunteer their time, free of charge, to provide insight, advice, advocacy, challenge and importantly '*an industry perspective*' on the different work programmes and policy areas of the Housing and Land Portfolio. They provide invaluable steers on WMCA's work, providing not only advice and support but also critical challenge and different perspectives, whilst also acting as advocates and champions for the work in industry circles with Government and national forums.

2.3 The membership of these industry-led taskforces is endorsed by both the Mayor of the West Midlands as well as the Housing & Land Delivery Board or the Chair under delegated authority.

2.4 It is important to note that the taskforces are **advisory bodies** supporting WMCA's policy and delivery activities. They do not have decision-making powers which remain with the formally constituted boards of WMCA, notably the Investment Board and the Housing & Land Delivery Board in the case of most workstreams under the Housing and Land Portfolio.

2.5 Policy work, developed collaboratively by WMCA and local authorities, is 'tested' with experts on the taskforces to obtain a variety of industry perspectives and to identify delivery challenges. This advice is then taken into consideration when working up proposals to be considered by the Housing & Land Delivery Board.

## 3.0 Commercial Property Forum/Taskforce

3.1 The West Midlands Commercial Property Forum was formed in 2020 and, historically, has been managed jointly by the British Property Federation and WMCA, and independently chaired by Andrew Pilsworth of SEGRO plc.

- 3.2 The Forum acts like a taskforce in shaping WMCA’s commercial property work, providing insight into the opportunities and risks associated with commercial property development. Members provide expert opinion on specific matters such as funding bids to HM Government and the Investment Prospectus.
- 3.3 Following the Comprehensive Spending Review, Budget 2021 and launch of the Levelling Up White Paper, the Forum is to be re-named in April 2022 as a ‘taskforce’ rather than a forum and will continue to be chaired by Andrew Pilsworth.
- 3.4 The commercial property forum, now called a ‘taskforce’, has a core group of approximately 10 commercial property experts and professionals. Members have been selected for their ability to represent the property development, real estate investment, construction and real estate management industries. The taskforce meets quarterly.
- 3.5 Going forward, the chair’s intention is that the main deliverables of the Commercial Property Taskforce will be to:
- increase, in volume and breadth, investment into commercial property in the region and wider West Midlands
  - develop and showcase best practice in commercial property partnerships and joint ventures
  - collate a single body of evidence of property market trends and analysis
  - support WMCA on its devolution deal negotiations with Government
  - help WMCA to secure a commercial property funding package from Government.

#### **4.0 Town Centre Taskforce**

- 4.1 The Town Centre Taskforce was established by the Housing & Land Delivery Board in 2020 with an overarching aim to support WMCA and its partners on town centre redevelopment, repurposing and regeneration. Its purpose was to help drive the agenda for our regional town centres and specifically to:
- champion our town centres
  - support town centre living
  - offer insight into the future of town centres including specific more detailed workshops with individual towns
  - advise on how town centres can maintain their role as community and business hubs
  - provide specialist and expert advice on the issues facing our town centres
  - advise how we can facilitate the advancement of town centres of the future, ensuring the prioritisation of community, environmental accessibility and business needs, making town centres a lively, attractive places to visit.

- 4.2 The taskforce is chaired by Rob Groves, Regional Development Director of MEPC. It is currently leading the way in undertaking the first communications campaign for a Housing and Land Portfolio industry-led taskforce. The campaign will comprise posts on LinkedIn which will promote the taskforce and increase awareness of its activities.
- 4.3 Towards the end of 2021, the members of the taskforce and the chair decided that they wanted the group to focus more on delivery than policy and guidance. As a result, local authorities are now being offered the opportunity by the taskforce to undertake workshops with experts from the taskforce. The response has been very positive and several workshops are already planned. These workshops are an opportunity for local authorities to gain insight from industry experts and tend to be focussed on:
- an individual town centre site on which a local authority seeks advice on how best to progress development
  - a group of sites within an area
  - how to best approach a bid for government funding
  - bringing forward specific types of development (e.g. affordable housing)
  - wider master plans and town centre futures.

## **5.0 Public Land Taskforce**

- 5.1 The Public Land Taskforce was launched in February 2021, following the recommendation to the Housing & Land Delivery Board in September 2020, to create an expert public land taskforce to work alongside WMCA to support public sector partners in unlocking the potential of public land.
- 5.2 The taskforce comprises approximately thirty members from a range of industry sectors including real estate, local government, education and environment. It is chaired by Stephen Barter, chairman of Wilton Capital Advisers, who has more than 40 years of real estate experience as an investor, developer and adviser.
- 5.3 The role of the taskforce is to:
- offer insight into the barriers, risks and opportunities in developing and disposing of public land, and on the latest research and trends
  - advise on a collaborative and strategic approach to the asset management of public land
  - support and champion new ways of working between the public and private sectors
  - enable the alignment of public sector objectives facilitating the joining up of ownerships
  - influence national policy and investment case work, and secure decision-making around public land development.

- 5.4 There have been 7 plenary meetings of the taskforce to date. The meetings have involved expert guest speakers from organisations such as the Bartlett Real Estate Institute and the Urban Land Institute, and guided discussions, in addition to smaller, focused workshops outside plenary meetings. The taskforce has provided insight into the barriers, risks and opportunities regarding public land and has supported WMCA officers in identifying how these can be addressed, as well as considering specific sites where there are opportunities for land assembly.
- 5.5 Over recent months, the taskforce has supported WMCA in developing a Public Land Charter for the West Midlands. Members of the taskforce have supported officers in developing the 10 principles and 5 themes included in the Charter, and their advice and championing of the Charter has been invaluable. The Charter was endorsed at the Housing & Land Delivery Board in January 2022 and is now in the final design stages ahead of publication.

## 6.0 **AMC/Zero Carbon Taskforces**

- 6.1 The **AMC/Zero Carbon Taskforces** have played a vital part in driving forward the sustainability policy agenda including the Zero Carbon Homes and AMC Charters and routemaps. It will be meeting again in Q2 2022 to support the Board's ambition for increased use of AMC and zero carbon construction methods in the region.

## 7.0 **Future Direction**

- 7.1 As part of WMCA's ongoing devolution discussions with Government for new powers and funding, the taskforces will be asked to work with and support officers in developing and championing new asks of Government. The industry-led, independent and cross-sector nature of the taskforces provide a unique insight into the needs of the region and will be critical in securing broad support for the asks of Government for new powers and funding to accelerate delivery.
- 7.2 The taskforces each have distinct plans for the future:
- **Commercial Property Taskforce:** The Commercial Property Taskforce will be focused on supporting the deliverables set out in paragraph 3.5.
  - **Town Centre Taskforce:** The Town Centre Taskforce has recently reconfigured itself to ensure a more workshop-based and action-orientated approach. Moving forward, each quarterly meeting will focus on a specific issue relevant to town centres which members will debate and provide their views on how best these issues might be addressed. Through collaborating with local authorities, the taskforce will host workshops in addition to its quarterly meetings to support local authorities with specific sites or local issues in their town centres so that they will be able to access expert advice from recognised industry experts.

- **Public Land Taskforce:** Following the launch of the Public Land Charter (expected to be in May 2022), the intention is for those public sector organisations which will be adopting the Charter to take the document through their organisations' respective governance processes for endorsement. Members of the Taskforce have offered to promote the Charter at industry and Government forums to which they belong. There is also an intention to organise site visits so that members of the Taskforce can help to identify opportunities for land assembly and greater collaboration, applying their skills in a specific location rather than generalising.

## 8.0 Financial Implications

- 8.1 There are no direct finance implications as a result of the recommendations within this taskforces paper. There will be, in future, financial implications associated with both the communications campaigns and work that the taskforces are asked to support, which will be funded from existing Housing and Regeneration budgets.
- 8.2 Any WMCA investment into taskforces would be governed and administered through the WMCA Single Assurance Framework and in line with the accounting and taxation policies of the WMCA and HMRC.

## 9.0 Legal Implications

- 9.1 Section 113A(1)(a) of the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009 gives WMCA a power of competence appropriate for the purposes of carrying-out any of its functions. Part 4 of The West Midlands Combined Authority Order 2016 (2016 No 653) confers that the functions relating to any economic development and regeneration in the constituent councils are exercisable by WMCA. Part 3 of The West Midlands Combined Authority (Functions and Amendment) Order 2017 confers functions corresponding to the functions of the Homes and Communities Agency (now Homes England) has in relation to the combined area. Paragraph 10 (2) (a) of the 2017 Order confers the function of improving the supply and quality of housing to the Combined Authority, 10 (2) (b) to secure the regeneration or development of land or infrastructure in the combined area, 10 (2)(c) to support in other ways the creation, regeneration or development of communities in the combined area or their continued well-being and 10 (2)(d) confers the function of contributing to the achievement of sustainable development and good design.
- 9.2 It is noted that the purpose of this report is to provide an update on the current activities of the taskforces that provide industry led expertise on the work undertaken to deliver the Housing and Regeneration Business Plan and also to provide suggestions for future direction of travel. There are no direct legal implications arising from this report, however the work of the task forces will encourage delivery of new

schemes and legal advice will be sought as and when required. Any co-investments including grant and/or loan funding from WMCA will need to comply with the criteria and governance systems set out in the WMCA Single Commissioning Framework and will need to be considered on a case by case basis.

## **10.0 Equalities Implications**

10.1 There are no direct equalities implications arising from this report.

## **11.0 Inclusive Growth Implications**

11.1 There are no direct inclusive growth implications arising from this report. However, there will be positive inclusive growth outcomes from the work of the taskforces.

## **12.0 Geographical Area of Report's Implications**

12.1 The report covers the whole of the WMCA area.

## **13.0 Other Implications**

13.1 None

## **14.0 Schedule of Background Papers**

14.1 None