



# West Midlands Combined Authority

## Housing & Land Delivery Board

Wednesday 27 April 2022 at 10.00 am

### Minutes

#### Present

Councillor Zahoor Ahmed  
Chris Lawes  
Dawn Ward

Councillor Stephen Simkins  
Jim Davies

Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council  
Coventry and Warwickshire LEP  
Greater Birmingham and Solihull Local  
Enterprise Partnership  
City of Wolverhampton Council  
Environment Agency

#### Participating via Teams

Councillor Mike Bird (Chair)  
Councillor Matthew Dormer  
Councillor Ian Kettle  
Councillor Darren Pemberton  
Councillor Kristofer Wilson

Walsall Metropolitan Borough Council  
Redditch Borough Council  
Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council  
Stratford on Avon District Council  
Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough  
Council

#### Item Title

##### No.

#### 47. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Fitzgerald (Cannock Chase District Council), Councillor Gakhal (City of Wolverhampton Council), Councillor Hussain (Birmingham City Council), Sarah Middleton (Black Country LEP), Councillor Overton (Telford & Wrekin Council), Councillor Potter (Shropshire Council), Suzanne Ward (Environment Agency) and Councillor Welsh (Coventry City Council).

#### 48. Nomination of Substitutes

Councillor Simkins (City of Wolverhampton Council) attended the meeting on behalf of Councillor Gakhal and Jim Davies (Environment Agency) attended the meeting on behalf of Suzanne Ward.

#### 49. Minutes - 2 March 2022

Resolved: The minutes of the meeting held on 2 March 2022 be approved as a correct record.

**50. Quarterly Report on Housing & Land Portfolio Deliverables and Progress on Housing & Land Annual Business Plan**

The board considered a report of the Strategic Planning Manager that provided a regular quarterly update on the progress to date in delivering the High Level Deliverables for the Housing and Land Portfolio and confirmed that considerable progress had been made under each deliverable. In particular, some £153.4m has been made available by Government to the WMCA through the Brownfield Housing Fund announcements, to be deployed through the Single Commissioning Framework.

The Executive Director of Housing, Property and Regeneration, Gareth Bradford briefed the Board on two deliverables around the public land charter and the strategic partnerships. On the first this is due to be launched this month and Gareth committed to share the final version before it went public. On the signing of strategic partnerships and entering into joint ventures good progress was being made. As well as three strategic partnerships already in existence (with St Modwen, Lovell and Urban Splash), a number of national companies have approached the WMCA to express an interest in working in the West Midlands at regional scale with WMCA similar to the other strategic partners i.e. L&G, Keepmoat, M&G, Segro and Aviva. All want to work with WMCA at regional scale, going above and beyond the requirements of the SCF, aligning with the WMCA aims and objectives and committing to major new investment or housing/commercial supply in the region. Currently, these companies are discussing with WMCA their commitments and ambitions for the region and Gareth reminded the Board these were MoUs and thus non-binding statements of intent. It is anticipated that strategic partnership memorandums of understanding (MoUs) will follow this year in due course building on the Housing and Land Delivery Board's track record of signing beneficial strategic partnerships in recent years. Cllr Bird pointed to Urban Splash scheme at Icknield Port Loop and asked to be updated as Portfolio Holder on progress between meetings of the Housing and Land Delivery Board on these important partnerships and endorsed the point made by Cllr Pemberton that the currency of the MoU should not be devalued. Gareth committed to including an update on progress with strategic partnerships at each meeting of the Board.

Councillor Simkins suggested the need to review the Single Commissioning Framework (SCF) so that projects could be delivered quicker for brownfield sites and to ensure that any changes to completion dates were monitored. The Executive Director of Housing, Property & Regeneration confirmed that this information would be provided in the confidential annex to the Quarterly Report in future.

The Executive Director of Housing, Property and Regeneration reported that some schemes require more intervention and need more flexibility than others eg. in relation to intervention rates, outputs, availability of revenue funding, but always in compliance with the SCF. WMCA was working hard to ensure that by blending different funds, and working across the region as a whole, resources could be deployed in the most efficient manner within the conditions laid down by government. He was confident that the SCF has been delivering strongly on its key criteria (e.g. affordable housing, design, etc.) but the property landscape has changed since its inception, particularly in relation to Advanced Manufacturing in Construction and zero carbon. On that basis, he suggested that a targeted review of the SCF around these matters would be beneficial and need not impact on other matters where significant progress is already being achieved. He added that the SCF has been subjected to a review by Internal Audit.

The Chair considered an analysis needs to be undertaken of sites that have stalled, the parties involved and the reasons for the delays so that lessons could be learnt. He asked that the Executive Director of Housing and Regeneration report back to the next meeting on sites that have stalled for 12 months or more.

The board noted and supported the need for more Government money to be secured and flexibility on how funding can be deployed for remediation of brownfield sites to meet housing targets especially in the Black Country due to its industrial heritage. The Director of Housing, Property & Regeneration confirmed that projects can only be funded where they are supported by good business cases so, through the devolution deal, WMCA is asking for additional revenue funding to support this work. In terms of intervention rates, the board supported the approach which took a regional perspective, balancing the need for higher intervention rates in some parts of the region with lower rates elsewhere. Having a regional programme of both large sites (e.g. 500+ homes) and smaller sites helps.

The Executive Director of Housing and Regeneration reported that the WMCA was seeking additional funding and flexibility of funding as part of the devolution deal.

Resolved:

1. The positive progress to achieve the Housing and Land Portfolio's approved Annual Deliverables in 2021/22 and the clear plans in place for progressing the agreed High Level Deliverables work programme during the remainder of 2022 be noted;
2. The key performance highlights set out in section 3 of the report be noted and

3. The positive performance and effective deployment of WMCA's Devolved Housing and Land funds, illustrated by the Single Commissioning Framework Schemes summarised in Annex 1 to this report (many of these schemes are now in delivery phase having progressed through the end to end SCF process which shows the role of the WMCA in unlocking, accelerating and problem solving on 'difficult to deliver' schemes) be noted.

#### **51. Trailblazing Devolution Deal: Discussion Paper**

The board considered a report of the Strategic Planning Manager that provided an update on the implications of the Levelling Up White Paper published by Government in February 2022 and informed the board of potential devolution proposals for discussion between the WMCA and the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) during the Summer of 2022. These potential devolution proposals were being developed with a wide range of stakeholders, across the WMCA, to ensure that all portfolio areas feed into the discussion. In addition to meetings of a 'core team' including Council Leaders and Chief Executives, the Housing & Regeneration team have engaged with the Housing & Land Delivery Steering Group and taskforces, Government and local authorities.

The Strategic Planning Manager, Rob Lamond outlined the report including the proposals (set out in section 4.1) which had been co-developed with the Housing and Land Delivery Steering Group for discussion. He emphasised that the WMCA is not looking to take powers away from local authorities but is seeking to add value by creating greater freedom and flexibilities across local authority areas establishing a regional proposition and thereby delivering a more joined-up approach to delivering additional housing and regeneration in the region.

The board asked that the focus should include securing more affordable housing with powers for the region in line with those in Greater London as well as freedoms and funding for strategic land assembly, support for net zero/future homes standards, town centre regeneration and delivery of the principles in the public land charter, powers relating to the provision of infrastructure (including that provided by utilities providers) and support for addressing the skills gaps in construction and related professions. Dawn Ward highlighted the need to work closely with the West Midlands' colleges group and regional universities on these matters.

The Executive Director of Housing, Property and regeneration explained that the intention was to add value, at a regional scale, to powers that were already held by local authorities. A regional proposition could be brought to a future meeting of the Housing & Land Delivery Board.

The Chair reported on the need for Government to make building on brownfield sites attractive and that the infrastructure needed to bring forward such sites, including utilities and connectivity, needs to be part of devolution proposals.

The Executive Director Housing, Property and Regeneration reported that this could be brought together in a regional brownfield strategy. This could target the key challenges of regeneration of brownfield sites including land remediation, infrastructure provision, utility supplies, site assembly (potentially addressing relocation costs), relationship with skills development, educational establishments, zero carbon (or even negative carbon), retrofit (and avoiding future retrofit needs), improving the investment/development prospects of development sites by making them more attractive, etc. In response to Councillor Simkins' points about protection of the Green Belt, Councillor Bird considered that a brownfield strategy could provide a regional context whereby the development of brownfield sites would be prioritised over development in the Green Belt and would also ensure that brownfield land was facilitated by addressing the key barriers to delivery. Gareth Bradford offered to scope this work and provide updates to a future meeting. In response, to points raised by Councillor Simkins and Ahmed, a brownfield strategy could also include establishing stronger and clearer relationships with transportation (essential infrastructure for key development projects), set out ways in which WMCA could support and help to develop high tech manufacturing skills and suppliers in the region and support health, wellbeing and crime reduction initiatives being put in place by local authorities.

In summing up, the Executive Director of Housing, Property and Regeneration welcomed the steers from the Board and the focus of future work on matters which have a demonstrably regional approach and which support local authorities in their work. He highlighted the following as being key elements (powers and/or funding) shaping discussions on the devolution deal with a wide range of stakeholders:

- securing more affordable housing
- facilitating land acquisition and site assembly
- maximising the regional opportunity for zero carbon and support for manufacturing suppliers
- creating town centre 'zones' (including lobbying around the importance of town centres to the West Midlands)
- securing additional flexibility around revenue funding, in particular, to identify and work up business cases for projects
- delivering a regional approach to public land based on the principles of the Public Land Charter
- greater engagement on the skills agenda across a wide range of educational institutions and skills providers
- delivering utilities provision at a regional scale.

All of these matters could be addressed in a regional brownfield strategy under the Housing and Land Delivery Board which brings together a number of existing initiatives and builds on the existing capacity and track record.

The Chair endorsed this approach.

Further to comments from Councillors Simkins and Ahmed regarding the need for a members group to look at the Devolution Deal, the Chair supported this proposal and asked for a members' working group to be set up.

Resolved:

1. The positive announcements made as part of the Levelling Up White Paper regarding the additional funding for Brownfield Regeneration to be deployed by the WMCA via the Single Commissioning Framework in the West Midlands be noted;
2. The potential for further devolution to the region from national government with the West Midlands and Greater Manchester being the only two areas specifically identified for 'Trailblazer Devolution Deals' in the White Paper be noted;
3. The possible Housing, Regeneration and Land proposals that the board would like to be considered for inclusion in future Trailblazer Devolution as discussed, specifically reflecting the key areas of focus for the Housing and Land Delivery Board including regeneration, public land, affordable housing and town centres be noted and
4. The formation of a 'task and finish' officer sub-group of Housing and Land Delivery Steering Group to inform and develop the proposals be noted.

**52. Advanced Manufacturing in Construction (AMC): Enabling Infrastructure for Delivery for AMC in the West Midlands**

The board considered a report of the Strategic Planning Manager that provided an update on the regional picture for Advanced Manufacturing in Construction (AMC) which also highlighted the scale of the opportunity for the West Midlands.

The Strategic Planning Manager, Rob Lamond outlined the report that was prepared further to a discussion at the board meeting in March. That meeting had highlighted the board's ambition to attract more suppliers to the region, identify existing suppliers, what WMCA could do to enhance take up and supply and re-energise the AMC and Zero Carbon Homes taskforces. The report set out the priorities of the AMC roadmap agreed by the Board in November 2020, the wider context and proposed next steps for taking forward AMC and Future Homes Standard in an integrated way, establishing the West Midlands as an exemplar in this field.

The Chair reported of the need to make the region attractive for companies to be based in the West Midlands and for the WMCA to communicate its successes such the Urban Splash development at Port Loop. The Executive Director for Housing, Property & Regeneration highlighted the continuing need to attract more AMC businesses to the region and explained that the region is in a good position to do this given greater funding and a strong pipeline of development projects. Further support, sought via the Trailblazer Devolution Deal, would provide further impetus and demanding targets identified in Memorandums of Understanding with strategic partners could also help to drive up the demand for AMC suppliers based in the region.

Councillor Simkins noted the Brownfield Institute in Wolverhampton could assist with regards to AMC in the West Midlands. Suppliers based in the West Midlands would also reduce the carbon footprint of new developments.

The Executive Director of Housing and Regeneration reported that a strategy for AMC could be developed to bring together the region's wider housing, land and regeneration objectives that would be submitted to Government to secure more funding as part of the Trailblazer Devolution Deal. As AMC links with several other strands of WMCA's activities, a compelling AMC strategy and business case would support an investment or funding ask from Government. Further updates on the development of the AMC Strategy would be reported to future meetings.

Resolved:

1. The background regarding the WMCA's work to date with partners to develop the AMC Charter and route map (approved by the Housing and Land Delivery Board in November 2020) be noted and
2. The proposed next steps for work led by WMCA around AMC and the Future Homes Standard in the region, as set out in section 4.2 of the report, to establish the West Midlands as a national leader for this agenda be endorsed.

### **53. WMCA Housing Deal 2018: Local Plans Progress Update**

The board considered a report of the Strategic Delivery Advisor that provided an update on the monitoring of local plans in the region which is a formal requirement in the WMCA's 2018 Housing Deal with Government.

The Strategic Delivery Advisor, Amanda Holland outlined the monitoring process, progress on the housing land supply, progress on local plans and how the WMCA can provide support to local authorities based on the agreed deliverables for the Housing and Land Portfolio.

Councillor Simkins welcomed the report and asked for consideration be given to employment land requirements, to support manufacturing activity and jobs in the West Midlands. He reported of the need to ensure land for housing and employment are aligned and the need for collaboration with Shire Authorities.

The Chair reported of the need to consider a strategy for the re-purposing of commercial floorspace in city and town centres, a strategic overview to help bring forward additional land for development.

Councillor Pemberton reported that Stratford Council is preparing a joint plan [with Warwick District] that is housing led; it would be useful to have more of a focus on employment land across the region. He asked for information on local plans across the region to understand what other local authorities are doing in order to provide an overarching view.

The Chair concurred with the views expressed and the need to have an overview of every local authority across the region.

The Executive Director of Housing, Property and Regeneration reported that a status update on each local plan could be included in the next report and the team could look at employment land and studies commissioned by local authorities. He added that he would link in with the employment and skills portfolio to provide a regional overview of employment land alongside key employment trends for the region.

Chris Lawes (Coventry and Warwickshire LEP) considered it would be helpful to consider employment land losses as part of this work and Dawn Ward asked for the views of the Young Combined Authority to be captured in this work. The Executive Director of Housing, Property and Regeneration suggested that the chair of the Young Combined Authority could be invited to attend a future meeting of the board and stated that the Commercial Property Taskforce would also have views on how the use of property is changing.

Councillors Simkins and Kettle also reported of the need to look at industrial land.

Resolved:

1. The WMCA's responsibilities relating to the monitoring of local plans and required assurance reports to Government, how this relates to the 2018 Housing Deal and Brownfield funding packages, progress towards achievement of the 215,000 new homes target in the Housing Deal and progress towards the delivery of local plans be noted and
2. The types of additional support and advice that could be provided by the WMCA which would be beneficial to local authorities seeking to progress local plans, development delivery and related policy development be noted.

**54. WMCA Housing & Land Delivery Board Taskforces: Progress Update**

The board considered a report of the Strategic Delivery Advisor that provided an update on activities of the WMCA taskforces which support the Housing and Land Portfolio which provide vital industry insight, challenges and steers across its diverse range and programmes.

Resolved:

1. The positive work and contributions to date of the industry-led taskforces established by WMCA under its Housing and Land Delivery Board be noted;
2. The current roles, responsibilities and activities of the industry-led taskforces established by the WMCA under its Housing and Land Delivery Board be noted and
3. The suggestions for future programmes of activity of the taskforces be endorsed.



**55. Local Transport Plan Consultation: Opportunities for Housing & Land Portfolio**

The board considered a report of the Strategic Delivery Advisor that provided an update on the development of a new West Midlands Local Transport Plan along with an update on the recent engagement on the new Local Transport Plan Core Strategy.

Resolved:

1. The proposed approach and progress on development of the West Midlands Local Transport Plan (LTP) and the development of Area Strategies in partnership with West Midlands local authorities be noted.

**56. Exclusion of the Press and Public**

Resolved:

That in accordance with Sections 100A4 of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following items of business as they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information relating to the business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information).

**57. Appendix 1 to Quarterly Report - Single Commissioning Framework Schemes**

The board considered an appendix to the Quarterly Housing and Land Portfolio Deliverables report that provided an update on Single Commissioning Framework Schemes.

Resolved: The report be noted.

**58. Appendix 2 to Quarterly Report -Performance on Devolved Housing & Land Funds -Dashboards**

The board considered an appendix to the Quarterly Report on the Housing and Land Portfolio Deliverables that reported on the performance of the Devolved Housing and Land Fund Dashboards.

Resolved: That the report be noted.

The meeting ended at 11.45 am.