



Housing & Land Delivery Board

Date	5 October 2022
Report title	WMCA Taskforces: Progress Update
Portfolio Lead	Housing and Land - Councillor Mike Bird
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Previous reports	<ul style="list-style-type: none">April 2022: Housing & Land Delivery Board

Recommendation(s) for action or decision:

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; and
- b) **Note** the recent activity that has taken place around each of the four taskforces in operation.

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 report provides an update on the work of these taskforces and follows an initial report (April 2022) which set out the purpose, function and operation of each taskforce and its perceived future direction of travel. This background information is attached as Appendix 1 to this report.

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 supports the One Public Estate Board):
- Commercial Property Taskforce
 - Future Homes Taskforce
 - Public Land Taskforce
 - Town Centre Taskforce
- 2.2 Taskforce members volunteer their time, 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. They also act as advocates and champions for the work in industry circles and with Government and national forums.
- 2.3 The taskforces are endorsed by both the Mayor of the West Midlands and the Housing & Land Delivery Board.
- 2.4 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 Housing & Land Delivery Board and the Investment Board in the case of most workstreams in the Housing and Land Portfolio.

3.0 Commercial Property Taskforce

- 3.1 The Commercial Property Taskforce is a product of the relaunch and refresh of the West Midlands Commercial Property Forum in response to the Comprehensive Spending Review, Budget 2021 and the launch of the Levelling Up White Paper.
- 3.2 Since the initial report in April 2022, the inaugural launch meeting (April 2022) and a second plenary meeting (July 2022) have taken place. Several bespoke deep dive sessions have been convened, where required, to support WMCA's work.
- 3.3 In these sessions, the Commercial Property Taskforce has been an invaluable advisor, steer and critical friend, most notably on work to develop WMCA's emerging Trailblazer Devolution Deal providing excellent advice, recommendations and endorsements, derived from their commercial and business perspective, on a number of proposals including the proposed Levelling Up Investment Zones, public land and land assembly, and procurement.
- 3.4 The Commercial Property Taskforce will continue to operate as a vital resource and advisor with continued engagement around Levelling up and Devolution. The third plenary session of the Taskforce is planned to take place on 30 September 2022.

4.0 Future Homes Taskforce

- 4.1 The Future Homes Taskforce was established to support the development of WMCA's Future Homes Strategy, combining the work of two former taskforces,

namely the Advanced Manufacturing in Construction and Zero Carbon Homes taskforces.

- 4.2 Since the initial paper to the Housing & Land Delivery Board in April 2022, the inaugural meeting of the new taskforce has taken place (July 2022), and several bespoke deep dive sessions have been convened, as required, to support WMCA's work.
- 4.3 Consultants have been commissioned to provide specialist expertise on this highly technical work. Work to date has focused on a review of WMCA's Advanced Manufacturing in Construction Routemap and Charter, and the Zero-Carbon Homes Routemap. The objective has been to identify some 'early wins' and other key opportunities so that next steps can be clearly focused on delivery and early impact. A summary of this work was presented to the Taskforce at its last meeting, to seek their industry expertise and advice on how WMCA and partner organisations can best implement these requirements and raise the standard of new homes across the region. A separate report on the emerging Future Homes Strategy paper is also submitted to this Board for consideration.
- 4.4 The Future Homes Taskforce will continue to operate as a vital resource and advisor, with the future work programme focused on providing support and guidance on WMCA's development of the Future Homes Strategy and supporting the devolution deal asks around brownfield regeneration.

5.0 Public Land Task Force

- 5.1 The establishment of the Public Land Taskforce was part of WMCA's wider Public Land programme and emerged from the WMCA's COVID-19 Recovery Plan. The workstream was also a response to the findings of a previous report which has suggested that productive utilisation of the 5,713 hectares of public sector land in the West Midlands could help to drive economic recovery and make a significant contribution to the projected housing and employment needs of the region.
- 5.2 Since its establishment, the Taskforce has acted as a valuable advisor and critical friend, most notably around its support for the publication and endorsement of the Public Land Charter, priority steps to secure delivery of key projects and programmes and supporting the devolution deal asks around public land.

6.0 Town Centre Task Force

- 6.1 For the past year, the Town Centre Taskforce has taken an active role in advising, supporting and engaging with local authorities. It has hosted several advisory workshops for local authorities, supporting them directly with expert industry knowledge and helping them to progress potential development sites and town centre regeneration overall, and to provide support on master plans. To date, the Taskforce has engaged with the Stratford-on-Avon District Council, Telford & Wrekin Council, Warwick District Council and Warwickshire County Council in multiple workshops.

- 6.2 The Taskforce has proven to be a vital resource in advising, critiquing and querying local authority master plans, enabling local authorities to access external expertise and seek reassurance. The workshops have enabled the Taskforce to extend its expertise directly to local authorities and have created a forum within which a number of matters can be explored, capturing the specific opportunities and challenges facing the West Midlands.
- 6.3 The Town Centre Taskforce will continue to operate as a vital resource and key advisor through its continued engagement with, and support of, local authorities through its workshops and future discussions around brownfield land, vacant and underused properties in and around town centres.

7.0 Financial Implications

- 7.1 There are no direct financial implications from this paper, however, there are some budgetary costs associated with the communications campaigns described above which are absorbed into the Housing and Regeneration overall budget. In addition, the work that the taskforces are asked to support has potential budgetary implications for the Housing, Property & Regeneration Directorate.
- 7.2 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.

8.0 Legal Implications

- 8.1 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.
- 8.2 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 taskforces 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.

9.0 Equalities Implications

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

10.0 Inclusive Growth Implications

10.1 There are no direct inclusive growth implications arising from this report. However, it is likely that there will be positive inclusive growth outcomes from the work of the Taskforces.

11.0 Geographical Area of Report's Implications

11.1 The report covers the whole of the WMCA area.

12.0 Other Implications

12.1 None

13.0 Schedule of Background Papers

13.1 None

APPENDIX 1: Background information

A: Commercial Property Taskforce

- A.1 The West Midlands Commercial Property Forum was formed in 2020 and, historically, was managed jointly by the British Property Federation and WMCA, and independently chaired by Andrew Pilsworth of SEGRO plc. The Forum acted as a taskforce in shaping WMCA's commercial property work, providing insight into the opportunities and risks associated with commercial property development. Members provided expert opinion on specific matters such as funding bids to HM Government and the Investment Prospectus.
- A.2 Following the Comprehensive Spending Review, Budget 2021 and launch of the Levelling Up White Paper, the Forum was re-cast in April 2022 as a 'taskforce' rather than a forum and continued to be chaired by Andrew Pilsworth. The Commercial Property Taskforce has a core group of approximately 12 commercial property experts and professionals. Members were selected for their ability to represent the property development, real estate investment, construction and real estate management industries. The taskforce meets quarterly.
- A.3 The main deliverables of the Commercial Property Taskforce are 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.

B: Future Homes Taskforce

- B.1 The Future Homes Taskforce was established to support the development of WMCA's Future Homes Strategy, combining the work of two former taskforces, namely the Advanced Manufacturing in Construction and Zero Carbon Homes taskforces.
- B.2 The Future Homes Taskforce is chaired by Mark Farmer of Cast Consultancy and has a core group of 10 commercial experts and professionals. Members are selected for their ability to represent the zero-carbon, Advanced Manufacturing in Construction/Modern Methods of Construction, circular economy and construction industries. The taskforce meets quarterly.
- B.3 The role of the taskforce is to:
- Offer insight into the barriers, risks and opportunities in relation to Future Homes, and on the latest research and trends around Future Homes
 - Advise on a collaborative and strategic approach to the implementation of the Future Homes Standard
 - Support and champion the adoption of Future Homes building methods
 - 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 Future Homes development.

B.4 The key objectives of the taskforce are to:

- See public sector partners brought together promoting greater consistency in the development of future homes through strong collaboration and networking
- Act as a sounding board for the identification of opportunities for collaborative working between different public sector partners and between private sector organisations and the public sector.
- Provide insight and experience to facilitate the establishment of a programme of research and analysis to better understand the nature of the challenge and bring about opportunities
- Present a clear agreement on and supports the development of 'asks' of HMG for future homes.

C: Public Land Taskforce

C.1 The Public Land Taskforce is chaired by Stephen Barter of Wilton Capital Advisers and has a core group of 30 public land experts and professionals. The taskforce meets quarterly.

C.2 The creation of the Public Land Taskforce was part of a wider Public Land programme at WMCA which was formed as part of the WMCA's COVID-19 Recovery Plan. The programme is focused on maximising the potential of collective assets by integrating existing uses, identifying surplus land for housing or commercial use and finding opportunities to save costs and/or generate income.

C.3 The main 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 around public land
- 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

C.4 The main objectives of the taskforce are to:

- See public sector partners brought together, promoting greater consistency in the development and disposal of public land through strong collaboration and networking
- Act as a sounding board for the identification of opportunities for collaborative working between different public sector partners and between private sector organisations and the public sector.
- Provide insight and experience to facilitate the establishment of a programme of research and analysis to better understand the nature of the challenge and bring about opportunities

- Consider and discuss potential 'asks' of HMG for public land.

D: Town Centre Taskforce

- D.1 The Town Centre Taskforce is chaired by Rob Groves of MEPC and has a core group of 18 commercial property experts and professionals. Members are selected for their ability to represent cultural heritage, town centre planning, architectural and construction industries. The taskforce meets quarterly.
- D.2 The main deliverables of the Town Centre Taskforce are to:
- Provide joint business, government, community and academic leadership on the development of a regional Town Centres programme
 - Advise on accessing, interpreting and understanding evidence relating to town centres
 - Identify actions which will enable our high streets and town centres to adapt and compete in the face of changing consumer and social trends in
 - Support the work of the regional Town Centres Working Group, providing a forum within which proposed delivery plans can be tested through critical review, mentoring and information sharing
 - Advise on how town centres can best recover from COVID-19 • advise on the formation and delivery of projects to support high streets and town centres with COVID recovery, in the short, medium and longer terms
 - Convene, as necessary, smaller, more specialist, working groups to examine specific issues
 - Convene and attend workshops with local authorities to support and advise on the progression of identified sites.