



West Midlands Combined Authority

Housing & Land Delivery Board

Wednesday 20 July 2022 at 10.00 am

Minutes

Present

Councillor Mike Bird (Chair)
Chris Lawes
Councillor Charn Padda
Dawn Ward

Walsall Metropolitan Borough Council
Coventry and Warwickshire LEP
Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council
Greater Birmingham and Solihull Local
Enterprise Partnership

Participating via MS Teams

Councillor Peter Butlin
Jim Davies
Councillor Bhupinder Gakhal
Councillor Daren Pemberton
Jo Nugent
Councillor Sharon Thompson

Warwickshire County Council
Environment Agency
City of Wolverhampton Council
Stratford on Avon District Council
Homes England
Birmingham City Council

Item Title No.

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Fitzgerald, Mackiewicz, Overton, Smith, Sullivan, Welsh and Wright and Sarah Middleton, Kevin Rogers and Suzanne Ward.

2. Nomination of Substitutes

Suzanne Ward (Environment Agency) had nominated Jim Davies to attend on her behalf.

3. Terms of Reference - to note

The terms of reference for the board were submitted for information.

Resolved: That the report be noted.

4. Minutes - 27 April 2022

The minutes of the meeting held on 27 April 2022 were agreed as a true record.

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

The board considered a report of the Executive Director of Housing, Property and Regeneration that provided the end of year report for 2021/22 on progress in delivering the High Level Deliverables for the Housing and Land Portfolio as co-developed with the Housing & Land Delivery Board throughout 2021/22 and agreed by WMCA Board in February 2021.

This report provided a summary of the end of year position and highlighted progress on the portfolio's High Level Deliverables for 2022/3.

Resolved:

1. The positive progress to achieve the Housing & Land portfolio's approved Annual Deliverables in 2021/2022 and the clear plans in place for progressing the agreed High Level Deliverables work programmes during 2022/23 be noted;
2. The key performance highlights set out in Section 3.0 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 the confidential Annex to this report (many of these schemes are now in delivery phase, having progressed through to the end of the process, which shows the role of WMCA in unlocking, accelerating and problem solving on '*difficult to deliver*' schemes) be noted.

6. Levelling Up: Trailblazer Devolution Deal Update

The board considered a report of the Executive Director Housing, Property and Regeneration that provided a further update on the work taking place around the formation of the Housing, Property and Regeneration proposals within the West Midlands Trailblazer Devolution Deal (TDD).

The Head of Strategy and Analysis, Rob Lamond outlined the progress made since the last meeting and reported that positive discussions have been held with Government recently with regards to the headline TDD proposals. He explained that there had been extensive engagement with Delivery Steering Group, WMCA taskforces, including special meetings, and that this had provided valuable insight into how the devolution asks should be shaped.

In relation to a comment from Councillor Padda regarding the need for the WMCA's processes to be made simpler, the Executive Director Housing, Property and Regeneration, Gareth Bradford, reported that he was seeking a single regeneration fund from Government as part of the Trailblazer Devolution Deal that would allow the WMCA more flexibility on deploying housing and land funds.

Resolved:

1. The progress made since the last meeting of Housing & Land Delivery Board on the development of the Housing, Property and Regeneration proposals within the West Midlands Trailblazer Devolution Deal be noted;
2. The current version of these proposals as set out in the report be endorsed;
3. The ongoing extensive internal and external engagement programme supporting development of and testing these proposals be noted;
4. The ongoing engagement and input from Delivery Steering Group members in this process be welcomed and
5. The direction of travel set out for the further development and refinement of the Trailblazer Devolution Deal proposals be noted.

7. Presentation: Affordable Housing

The Head of Strategy and Analysis, Rob Lamond, summarised the WMCA's approach to affordable housing over the last 12 months and explained that the work is seeking to integrate a number of WMCA activities as an enabler e.g. working with Housing Associations, leveraging private sector funding, developing new products (e.g. help To Own), aligning funding with Homes England's National Affordable Housing Programme and aligning with the identified needs of local authorities. He also explained that WMCA's own definition of affordable housing is being applied to WMCAs own investments. He reported that progress has been excellent on the Help to Own Scheme in Wolverhampton and that there is the opportunity to develop other schemes across the region. WMCA has exceeded its target of 20% minimum affordable housing (26% currently) and a Partnership Board will look at how all parties can work together better to address the issues impacting affordability.

The Chair along with Councillors Gakhal and Butlin commented on the great success of the Help to Own Scheme in Wolverhampton and considered the need to implement the scheme/adopt the model in more areas. The Chair also credited Sue Summers (West Midlands Development Capital) who has been instrumental in setting up the Help to Own scheme.

Councillor Thompson noted that the West Midlands could be losing skills and talent where people are forced to move to take-up jobs where housing is more affordable and enquired whether Help to Own could help in this regard.

The Head of Strategy and Analysis reported that there are great variations with regards to affordability across the region but could look at this issue as part of the strategy and would check on the Help to Own figures.

Councillor Thompson added that she would like to see more options on shared ownership and would like more information on the Help to Own scheme.

The Chair asked that the Executive Director Housing, Property and Regeneration provide a one page briefing note on the Help to Own scheme for Councillor Thompson and all board members.

Resolved: That the presentation be noted.

8. Future Homes Strategy: Discussion Paper

The board considered a report of the Executive Director Housing, Property and Regeneration of the work being undertaken to develop a Future Homes Strategy that would integrate workstreams on Advanced Manufacturing in Construction (AMC), Zero Carbon Homes and the Government's proposed Future Homes Standard.

It was noted that the strategy was directly linked to the West Midlands Plan for Growth and West Midlands Investment Prospectus alongside delivering the key components of the Housing & Land Delivery Board's Business Plan and 2018 Housing Deal.

The Head of Policy and Planning, Patricia Willoughby, presented the report that set out the scope of the strategy, progress to date, proposed next steps and invited members to provide a steer on what they would want to see included in the strategy.

The Chair reported that he would like to see more modular build/zero carbon homes manufacturing companies based in the region and for the WMCA to champion this. Councillor Thompson concurred with the Chair and the need to progress this action quickly, particularly on small sites.

In relation to an enquiry from Councillor Gakhal as to whether the work of the Future Homes Taskforce would impact or restrict a local authority's powers, the Head of Policy and Planning advised that the WMCA would help local authorities with their own policies and provide additional support. The Chair confirmed that the WMCA does not have planning powers but would impose grant conditions if these were applicable to the relevant funding streams.

Resolved:

1. The work undertaken to progress a '*Future Homes Strategy*' to drive take up of advanced modular construction techniques, zero carbon homes and the roll out of the Future Homes Standard with the aim of establishing the West Midlands as the leading UK region in terms of future homes policy and delivery be noted;
2. The product of this work will be an integrated strategy that directly supports key policy agendas of WMCA such as the Plan for Growth, WM2041, 2018 Housing Deal and the 2022 Investment Prospectus be noted;
3. The potential contents and remit of a Future Homes Strategy as discussed be noted;

4. The work of the Future Homes Taskforce (previously called the AMC Taskforce) chaired by Mark Farmer to support and drive the work forward be noted and supported and
5. The proposed next steps be endorsed.

9. Brownfield Regeneration Strategy: Discussion and Scope

The board considered a report of the Executive Director Housing, Property and Regeneration that set out the suggested aim, purpose, scope of work and forward work programme for a West Midlands Brownfield Regeneration Strategy for discussion by the Housing & Land Delivery Board.

It was noted that the board had agreed, at its last meeting, that an Integrated Brownfield Regeneration Strategy be produced to bring together the different brownfield, housing and regeneration initiatives, projects and programmes being delivered by the board.

The Head of Policy and Planning, Patricia Willoughby outlined the approach to developing the strategy, including the scope, expected outcomes and next steps and invited members to be put forward their views.

The Chair reported that the implementation of the Cannock Chase Special Area of Conservation (SAC) by Stafford Borough Council for developments within 15km of Cannock Chase has implications for any future housing developments proposed by neighbouring authorities such Walsall and considered the need for this to be discussed.

The Head of Policy and Planning reported that this issue would be discussed as part of the work being undertaken with local authorities.

The Chair also reported on the need to persuade Government of the need for further funding to tackle the issue of contaminated land which is a particular feature of the Black Country due to its industrial heritage.

Resolved:

1. The broad scope of the Brownfield Regeneration Strategy commissioned by the Housing and Land Delivery Board in April 2022 be endorsed;
2. That the purpose of a Brownfield Regeneration Strategy (Delivery and Investment) is similar to the 2022 Investment Prospectus and West Midlands Plan for Growth in providing an enabling strategic framework and robust evidence base to support, underpin and advise future policy, delivery and investment work in the region on brownfield regeneration be noted;
3. That in line with the clear steer of the Board, this strategy is not a planning/land use document: it is a high level strategy supported by an understanding of key projects that will inform and guide delivery and investment in the region on brownfield sites and the case for further funding to the region be noted;

4. That the strategy be discussed at a number of industry-led taskforces including public land taskforce, town centre taskforce and commercial property taskforce be noted and

5. That as with other successful strategies, charters and frameworks produced by WMCA, the brownfield regeneration strategy will be developed by WMCA, and a dedicated local authority officer group nominated by the Delivery Steering Group reporting to the Board be noted.

10. Public Land Charter: Implementation

The board considered a report of the Executive Director Housing, Property and Regeneration that reported on the successful launch of the West Midlands Public Land Charter at the UK's Real Estate Investment and Infrastructure Forum (UKREiif) in May 2022 and asked the board to consider how the principles of the Charter should be implemented and embedded in our region.

The Head of Policy and Planning, Patricia Willoughby, outlined the report and next steps that would build on the successful launch of the Public Land Charter and seek to secure additional funding from Government.

To demonstrate support for the Charter to Government, the Head of Policy and Planning asked that local authority colleagues seek endorsement for the Public Land Charter through their own governance arrangements which would enable a letter of support to be sent to Government.

The Chair noted that reviews of the Single Commissioning Framework (SCF) had been referred to in the previous 3 reports and asked whether a separate report could be submitted on the subject to provide consistency.

The Director of Housing, Property and Regeneration, Gareth Bradford, undertook to submit a report on the Single Commissioning Framework to a future meeting.

Resolved:

1. The successful launch of the Public Land Charter in May 2022 be noted;
2. The outline of the proposed next steps to be taken forward by WMCA with the Public Land Taskforce and other partners to implement and embed the principles of the Charter on work around public land, property and buildings across the West Midlands and influence national policy thinking and investment decisions around public land and buildings be endorsed;
3. The opportunity to inform wider HMG thinking on property strategy and public land through the Trailblazer Devolution Deal, One Public Estate and wider engagement with the Department for Levelling Up, Homes & Communities, HM Treasury and Cabinet Office be noted and

4. The importance of this agenda to the West Midlands Investment Prospectus and unlocking private sector investment and opportunity be noted.

11. WMCA Housing Deal 2018: Local Plans Progress Update

The board considered a report of the Executive Director Housing, Property and Regeneration that provided a further update on the progress of local plans in the region following a request from the Housing & Land Delivery Board at its meeting in April 2022.

The Head of Policy and Planning outlined the report that had been produced in conjunction with local authority colleagues.

Resolved:

1. Progress made on local plans in the region in relation to WMCA's 2018 Housing Deal be noted and
2. Officers are working with local authority colleagues to develop a suitable approach to the regional employment land provision question as requested by the Housing & Land Delivery Board at its last meeting in April 2022 be noted.

12. Strategic Partnership Programme: Update

The board considered a report of the Executive Director Housing, Property and Regeneration that sought endorsement to the Strategic Partnership Programme and provided an update on progress to date.

Graham Russell (Amion Consulting) summarised the report including the background to the Strategic Partnership Programme and the purpose of the Memorandum of Understanding (MoUs) that underpins the four Strategic Partnerships that are currently in place between the WMCA and Lovells/ Morgan Sindall, Urban Splash, St Modwen and Legal and General.

The Chair considered that Strategic Partnerships were beneficial, and he would like the board to receive a six-monthly update report that sets out the progress of the partnerships.

Resolved:

1. The positive progress in establishing and launching new Strategic Partnerships between WMCA and major developers/investors in line with the core deliverables of the Housing & Land Delivery Board for 2022/23 and the steers provided at the meeting of the Board in April 2022 be noted;
2. That the approval and monitoring process for the strategic partnership Memorandum of Understanding (MoUs) follow the standard assurance processes of WMCA be noted;

3. That the WMCA is currently in negotiation with additional potential partners with a view to developing further Strategic Partnership MoUs be noted and
4. The Strategic Partnership Engagement Plan and programme timeline for delivering new Strategic Partnerships for the 2022/23 financial year be endorsed.

13. West Midlands Local Transport Plan: Next Steps

The board considered a report of the Executive Director Housing, Property and Regeneration that provided an update on the development of the new West Midlands Local Transport Plan 5 and the next stages of work which included the preparation of Area Strategies.

The Principal Policy and Strategy Officer (TfWM) outlined the report and reported that work was being undertaken with local authorities to bring together land use and a transport in a better way through the development of more Area Strategies, mini 'Big Move' strategies and utilising the active travel plan more effectively.

The Chair considered that the local transport network was very important and hoped the strategy would include the car.

Councillor Butlin reported that the car was often the only viable transport option in rural areas and considered the need for a holistic approach.

Councillor Gakhil commented that whilst he fully supported public transport, the car was necessary for practical reasons such as supermarket shopping and for transporting heavy retail goods.

Dawn Ward reported that many young people cannot afford a car or, choose not to drive for environmental reasons and the need to take their views into consideration.

The Principal Policy and Strategy Officer outlined the next steps and reported that a final draft Local Transport Plan would be prepared for consideration by the WMCA Board later in the year ahead of further public and stakeholder engagement activity.

Resolved:

1. That progress on the West Midlands Local Transport Plan and the development of wider elements including the proposed Area Strategies be noted and
2. That steps are being taken to better integrate transport and planning workstreams to help deliver against shared regional outcomes be noted.

14. Exclusion of the Press and Public

Resolved: That in accordance with Section 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).

15. Confidential Annexe to Quarterly Report

The board considered an appendix to the Quarterly Housing and Land Portfolio Deliverables report that provided an update on Single Commissioning Framework Schemes. It was noted that the report was also provided to the Investment Board.

The Chair considered that developers receiving investment from the WMCA should state this on their site board.

The Executive Director Housing, Property and Regeneration undertook to follow-up the Chair's proposal.

Resolved: That the report be noted.

The meeting ended at 11.24 am.