



West Midlands Combined Authority

Environment & Energy Board

Wednesday 7 December 2022 at 10.00 am

Minutes

Present

Councillor Ian Courts (Chair)	Portfolio Lead for Environment, Energy & HS2
Councillor Rob Clinton	Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council
Councillor Andy Mackiewicz	Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council

In attendance via MS Teams

Councillor Peter Hughes	Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council
Councillor Majid Mahmood	Birmingham City Council

Item No.

10. Inquorate Meeting

The meeting was inquorate and therefore the recommendations contained within the minutes would be submitted to the WMCA Board on 13 January 2023 for formal approval.

11. Welcome and Introduction to the National Brownfield Institute

The Chair welcomed members to the meeting being held at the National Brownfield Institute in Wolverhampton.

The Chair acknowledged receipt of a nine-point action plan document given to attendees at the start of the meeting from a member of the public who was given the opportunity by the Chair to speak of their concern to metro extension programmes in the West Midlands for building new tram routes, who believed was wasteful from an environmental point of view and duplicated existing bus and rail networks.

12. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Kerry Murphy (Walsall), Councillor Jim O'Boyle (Coventry), Matthew Rhodes (Energy Capital West Midlands) and Suzanne Ward (Environment Agency).

13. Minutes - 28 September 2022

The minutes of the meeting held on 28 September 2022 were agreed as a correct record.

14. Matters Arising

(a) Matters Arising – West Midlands Greener Together Forum (Minute no.4)

Councillor Peter Hughes had suggestions for venues in the Sandwell area for consideration to host future meetings that the Head of Environment welcomed and noted would communicate with officers from Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council. The Head of Environment noted that the WMCA would welcome all venues for hosting the West Midlands Greener Together Forum across the Combined Authority area and that hybrid meetings had taken place in Digbeth and Coventry so far.

(b) Community Green Grant Update (Minute no.5)

In response to Councillor Hughes who requested an update on areas of low take-up to the community green grant programme, the Head of Environment noted that the Community Green Grants Officer continued to meet with community groups to encourage applications and for the first time an application had been received from every Constituent Authority area that had progressed to the grant assessment panel.

(c) Net Zero Neighbourhood (Minute no.6)

Councillor Hughes requested clarification of the net zero neighbourhood working group and to receive an update on timescales for establishment, membership, objectives and outputs to achieve an actionable working group. The Executive Director for Strategy, Integration & Net Zero noted the programme was developing at pace and there were written plans from five out of the seven Constituent Authority areas that the WMCA was seeking investment for and that there was a wider working group that involved all Constituent Authority officers for a clear focus on delivery and action that would commence with the first net zero neighbourhood demonstrator in Brockmoor following the award of £1.65m grant funding.

15. Environment Programme Update

The board considered a report where a presentation was also shared from the Head of Environment to provide an update on the progress across the environment work at the WMCA which included a forward look on priorities over the next three years.

Following the presentation, the Chair reflected that there was no easy answer to resolve the issues of climate change, however there were many actions that would be required to support and noted his observations that there were key points within the environment programme to commence and influence at scale, ensure funding was focussed to generate the greatest results and measurement of workstreams to identify global relevance and the significance of action taken within the West Midlands region and from the United Kingdom as a whole to promote green growth and from technological advances.

Councillor Majid Mahmood noted whether the virtual forest tree programme could be promoted further as there was an ambition from Birmingham City Council to plant further trees, particularly as requests had been received from friends of parks community groups for further trees and from residents for fruit trees to support further funding. The Chair noted that every local authority would have their own tree planting targets, however identification of targets and use of registration of trees on the virtual forest or other initiatives such as the Queen's Green Canopy from the seven Constituent Authorities and Non-Constituent Authorities for oversight would prove beneficial to know.

Resolved:

- (1) That the progress across the WMCA environment programme be noted,
- (2) That the suggested areas for future updates at board meetings be agreed.

16. West Midlands Circular Economy Routemap Update

The board considered a report from the Circular Economy Project Delivery Officer to provide an update on the progress of the West Midlands Circular Economy Routemap since it was approved in September 2021 which consisted of three key pieces of work underway of an industrial symbiosis business case, a framework to support repurposing of buildings and a business case to reduce construction waste and overview of priorities for the next year.

The Chair summarised from discussions that there was support from the board to the Circular Economy Routemap, however noted concern the report did not highlight the quick wins for next years priorities and by when, which would be helpful for the board to be sited on and scale of operation on net zero construction work.

Resolved:

- (1) That the progress made in implementing the Circular Economy Routemap be noted.

17. SMART Hub Update

The board considered a verbal update from the SMART Hub Lead to update on three funding bids that had been submitted by the WMCA within the last few weeks.

- i. The Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund to support social landlords across the region in an aim to retrofit 2,000 homes.
- ii. The Home Upgrade Grant to support private sector homes not connected to the gas network.

- iii. Funding through Innovate UK to the Net Zero Living Programme to support development of the business case and the finance model that would underpin the zero neighbourhood to look to provide more evidence around the wider social benefits of retrofit and how those can be monetised to improve the business case to investment.

Resolved:

- (1) That the update be noted.

18. Emergency Tree Fund Update

The Chair agreed to defer consideration of this item to the next meeting of the board on Wednesday 1 March 2023.

19. Trailblazer Devolution Deal Net Zero & Environment

The board considered a verbal update from the Executive Director – Strategy, Integration & Net Zero on the net zero and environment proposals of the Trailblazer Devolution Deal and noted the Secretary of State's intention was to secure a deal by the end of January 2023.

The WMCA was currently awaiting feedback from each government department on the deal proposals put forward, however it was anticipated to receive new deal text shortly that would be shared with local authority leaders and chief executives for discussion early in the new year, as well as shared at the WMCA Board on 13 January to include a number of net zero proposals.

Resolved:

- (1) That the update be noted.

20. Greener Together Forum

The Chair agreed to defer consideration of this item to the next meeting of the board on Wednesday 1 March 2023.

[The meeting ended at 11:30am]