

Birmingham City Council

City Council

2 November 2021



Subject: West Midlands Combined Authority - Overview & Scrutiny Committee

Report of: Vice-Chair of the WMCA's Overview & Scrutiny Committee

Report author: Councillor Lisa Trickett

Does the report contain confidential or exempt information? ☐ Yes ☒ No

If relevant, state which appendix is exempt, and provide exempt information paragraph number or reason if confidential:

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 This report provides a summary of the work of the West Midland Combined Authority's Overview & Scrutiny Committee (Vice-Chair, Councillor Lisa Trickett) and Transport Scrutiny Sub-Committee (Chair, Councillor Liz Clements).

2 Recommendation

- 2.1 That the report be noted.

3 Background

- 3.1 Overview & Scrutiny is a statutory requirement for the West Midlands Combined Authority to undertake. The committee has the responsibility to review the work of the elected Mayor of the West Midlands, the WMCA Board and its committees, to make recommendations to the WMCA Board and its committees and call-in decisions for further scrutiny.
- 3.2 The committee performs two functions: 'overview' focusses on the development of future policy and 'scrutiny' looks at decisions that have been made or are about to be made.
- 3.3 The Overview & Scrutiny produces an annual report that sets out its work over the last year. The latest report attached as appendix 1 for information.

- 3.4 During this current year 2021/22, the work of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee has had a strong focus on the WMCA's developing Corporate Strategy, Environment Bill and its potential impacts on combined authorities, and Brownfield Land Remediation Fund.

4 Pre-Development Scrutiny: WMCA's Corporate Strategy

- 4.1 Following the Mayoral election, the WMCA has worked with the Mayor and Leaders to agree a set of aims and objectives to guide the activity of the authority. These aims and objectives will help inform the WMCA's Medium-Term Financial Plan, as well as its annual budgets and deliverables.
- 4.2 The committee has worked closely with the Head of Policy & Programme Development on the development of the Corporate Strategy. The latest draft version of the strategy will be presented to the Overview & Scrutiny Committee on 8 November prior to its submission to the WMCA Board for approval on 19 November.

5. Pre-Development Scrutiny: Environment Bill

- 5.1 The committee has been working with the Inclusive Growth & Public Service Reform directorate on the likely implications of the Environment Bill and on the development of an Air Quality Options paper that will be presented to a forthcoming WMCA Board. The report will provide an overview of the impacts of air pollution across the West Midlands, summarise the existing work that is currently taking place to address air quality issues and the scope for further measures to tackle air quality across the region.
- 5.2 The timing of this report will be significant given the anticipated Environment Bill, which will update national legislation and governance around all aspects relating to the natural environment, including air quality. It is likely that changes will primarily relate to strengthening regulations on air quality (including new standards on particulates) as well as outlining expectations on new ways of working to reduce emissions.

6. Scrutiny Review: Brownfield Land Remediation Fund

- 6.1 Overview & Scrutiny Committee have endorsed a review to examine the role and remit of the WMCA to deliver affordable housing within the West Midlands through the use of Brownfield Land & Property Investment Fund and to consider how this supported and added value to the responsibilities of constituent authorities in respect of affordable housing provision.
- 6.2 The objectives of the review include;
- How was the region's affordable housing needs determined and what account was taken for sub-regional socio-economic differences in the calculation of regional need?

- What was the role of the WMCA in the supply of affordable housing in the West Midlands? How did the Brownfield Land & Property Investment Fund help support this role, and how clearly was this role understood across the region and amongst partners?
- How did this role support and contribute to the constituent authorities' responsibility for the delivery of affordable housing within their area?
- To understand the number of sites funded through the Brownfield Land & Property Investment Fund to date, the number of housing units delivered on these sites, and the percentage of these units that had been designated as affordable.
- Did the Brownfield Land & Property Investment Fund adequately use its commissioning and contracting influence to maximise the delivery of affordable housing units within the individual schemes it funds?
- What were the impacts and implications on the Brownfield Land & Property Investment Fund of the differential cost of land remediation across the region?

6.3 It is envisaged that the review will be undertaken between October and December with a final report presented to Overview & Scrutiny Committee in January 2022 for consideration.

7. Mayoral Q&A Sessions

- 7.1 As part of its role in holding the Mayor of the West Midlands and WMCA Board to account, the committee held a Q&A session with the Mayor and questioned him on policy related matters including mayoral powers, manufacturing, skills, employment, economic development, energy innovation zones, infrastructure and connectivity, public transport investment, bus franchising, rail electrification, affordable housing delivery vehicle, housing need within the region and air quality.
- 7.2 The observations and conclusions arising from the Q&A session will be presented to the WMCA Board on 19 November 2021. The recording of the Q&A session can be viewed here >> [Mayoral Q&A 14 October 2021](#)
- 7.3 The committee will hold its second Q&A of the year with the Mayor on 15 December, which will have a focus on the WMCA's proposed budget for 2022/23.

8. Transport Scrutiny Sub-Committee

- 8.1 The Transport Scrutiny Sub-Committee, chaired by Councillor Liz Clements, has focussed on the development of the new West Midlands Local Transport Plan for the region. Transport for West Midlands had published a Green Paper to help build awareness of the role of transport in creating a more prosperous and better connected West Midlands which was fairer, greener and healthier. Members' views were used to help inform a session with the leaders of the West Midlands on the future transport policy.

9. Pre-Decision Scrutiny: Bus Delivery Options

- 9.1 As part of its work programme for 2021/22, the Transport Scrutiny Sub-Committee has examined the e-scooter trial, West Midlands Cycle Hire Scheme and the Sustainable Transport Settlement Bid but in particular has undertaken pre-decision scrutiny on future bus delivery options prior to a decision being sought from the WMCA Board in January 2022.
- 9.2 In 2019, WMCA Board had asked Transport for West Midlands to assess future delivery options for bus services in the West Midlands in order to best achieve the objectives of the WMCA's Vision for Bus strategy. This work had reviewed options available under the Bus Services Act 2017, including franchising.

10. WMCA's Portfolio Lead Member for Transport Q&A Session

- 10.1 At its meeting held on 22 October, the sub-committee held a Q&A session with Councillor Ian Ward, the WMCA's Portfolio Lead Member for Transport on transport policy related matters. Questions focussed on the Commonwealth Games, the bus network, the economic impact of congestion, capital projects, transport levy and the City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement. A Q&A session with the Chair of the WMCA's Transport Delivery Committee (Councillor Kath Hartley) will be held in February 2022.