

Birmingham City Council

City Council

11 October 2022



Subject: West Midlands Combined Authority - Overview & Scrutiny Committee

Report of: Chair of the WMCA's Overview & Scrutiny Committee, Councillor Cathy Bayton

Report author: Lyndsey Roberts, WMCA Scrutiny Officer

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 during 2021/22, as well as its planned work programme for 2022/23.

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 undertake this responsibility, which it does through reviewing the work of the elected Mayor of the West Midlands, the WMCA Board and its committees, making recommendations arising out of topic-specific scrutiny reviews and by operating a 'call-in' of policy decisions for further scrutiny where required.
- 3.2 The Overview & Scrutiny Committee produces an annual report that sets out its work over the last 12 months. The latest annual report was submitted to the WMCA's AGM on 10 June 2022 and is attached as an appendix to this report for information.

- 3.3 During this current year, the work of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee will continue a strong focus on whether the policies, investments and actions of the WMCA continued to benefit all communities within the West Midlands, with particular attention being given to the outcomes of the WMCA's strategic aims and objectives.
- 3.4 This year's work programme will also focus on the propositions contained within the proposed 'Trailblazer Devolution Deal' due to be submitted to the Department for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities later in the year and the local benefits that this deal could deliver to the West Midlands, the implications of the Levelling Up & Regeneration Bill for the WMCA, the delivery of local skills training, the integration of the Local Enterprise Partnerships and the progress being made in relation to the delivery of WMCA's net zero carbon strategies.
- 3.5 Scrutiny members will undertake this work programme in a range of ways including topic-specific working group sessions, public Q&As with the Mayor and Portfolio Lead Members, spotlight sessions and 'deep dive' scrutiny reviews.
- 3.6 So far this year, the committee has commenced work on two elements of its work programme as follows:

4. Trailblazer Devolution Deal and the Local Benefits

- 4.1 The Trailblazer Devolution Deal process is continuing with devolution proposals being developed across a wide range of themes. Proposals are being drafted in accordance with the principles and plans previously agreed by the WMCA Board. In particular, proposals are being tested by Overview & Scrutiny Committee to ensure that they have a clear focus on drawing down powers and funding from Government (including opportunities for 'double devolution' to the WMCA's constituent member authorities where appropriate), and ensuring that the roles and responsibilities of those constituent authorities were not being 'devolved' upwards.
- 4.2 Over the summer period, a series of scrutiny working groups have been held to review each of the devolution proposals in detail and to discuss the local benefits that could be delivered to each local authority and non-constituent authorities through the proposed Trailblazer Devolution Deal. A detailed report on the findings of the working groups will be available following its agreement by the committee and WMCA Board.

5. Skills

- 5.1 The Adult Education Budget for the West Midlands area was devolved to WMCA for delivery from August 2019. The WMCA agreed an approach to commissioning adult education and training that was able to align the mix of provision more closely to local and sectoral priorities, whilst avoiding the unnecessary destabilisation of locally based colleges and adult education providers.
- 5.2 The Overview & Scrutiny Committee considered that it was now an appropriate time to undertake a scrutiny review to assess the impact and outcomes that had been delivered through the Adult Education Budget since its devolution. The review will

commence in October and will report its findings to the Overview & Scrutiny Committee in January 2023 for consideration.

- 5.3 The review will seek to understand the impact of the devolution of the Adult Education Budget to the WMCA on the delivery of local skills training within the region, and to identify the challenges and ways in which the WMCA and its constituent authorities could most effectively use skills development to address short and longer term challenges in the region, particularly in relation to the big economic challenges. The findings of the review will be used to help shape future skills funding.

6. Mayoral Q&A Sessions

- 6.1 As part of its role in holding the Mayor of the West Midlands and WMCA Board to account, the committee will hold two Q&A sessions this year, which will focus on policy related matters that are the responsibility of the WMCA (20 October) and on matters relating to the proposed draft budget 2023/24 (15 December).

7. Learning & Development

- 7.1 As part of its learning and development programme to help scrutiny members to be more effective in their role, the committee will undertake a series of training workshops, including a focus on the WMCA's Investment Programme and on the detail of the draft budget 2023/24.
- 7.2 The WMCA has also been instrumental in setting up a new Combined Authorities Scrutiny Chairs' Forum, enabling the chairs from the country's ten combined authorities' scrutiny committees to meet to share best practice, discuss areas of common interest and to build relationships.

8. Transport Scrutiny Sub-Committee

- 8.1 The Transport Scrutiny Sub-Committee has a specific responsibility to oversee the role and performance of Transport for West Midlands. This year the sub-committee will focus on a review of the transport governance structures currently in existence and their suitability and effectiveness, the delivery of the Wednesbury - Brierley Hill Metro extension, the lessons learnt from the Commonwealth Games, walking and cycling, automated mobility, the bus service improvement plan and bus franchising.
- 8.2 A Q&A session will also be held with Councillor Ian Ward, the WMCA's Portfolio Lead for Transport on 13 October, and will be based on transport policy related matters. In February 2023, a Q&A will be held with Councillor Richard Worrall, the Chair of the WMCA's Transport Delivery Committee on transport delivery matters.

10. Birmingham City Council's Representation

- 10.1 The city council is represented on Overview & Scrutiny Committee by Councillor Lauren Rainbow, Councillor Jamie Tennant and Councillor Ken Wood. It is represented on Transport Scrutiny Sub-Committee by Councillor Chaman Lal.

11. Legal Implications

- 11.1 There are no direct legal implications arising from the recommendations set out in this report.

12. Financial Implications

- 12.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from this report.