

# Minutes of Budget and Corporate Scrutiny Management Board

**Wednesday 6 November 2024 at 6pm  
In the Council Chamber at Sandwell Council House, Oldbury**

**Present:** Councillor Fenton (Chair);  
Councillors Davies, Hinchliff, Rahman and Williams.

**In attendance:** Mike Jones (Monitoring Officer and Assistant Director – Legal and Assurance) and Alexander Goddard (Scrutiny Lead Officer).

**Representing the West Midlands Combined Authority**  
Councillor Burrow (Chair - Overview and Scrutiny Committee), Councillor Huxtable (Chair – Transport Delivery Overview and Scrutiny Committee), Lyndsey Roberts (Statutory Scrutiny Officer, West Midlands Combined Authority) and Harriet O’Hara (Member Relationship Officer).

## 60/24 **Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Dhatt, E M Giles, Lewis and Trumpeter.

## 61/24 **Declarations of Interest**

No declarations of interest were made.

## 62/24 **Minutes**

**Resolved** that the minutes of the meeting held on 3 October 2024 are approved as a correct record.

63/24 **Additional Items of Business**

There were no additional items of business.

64/24 **West Midlands Combined Authority Scrutiny and Audit Annual Report 2023-24**

The Chair of the Budget and Corporate Scrutiny Management Board welcomed representatives of the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) to the meeting.

The WMCA Scrutiny Annual Report set out an overview of the work of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and the Transport Delivery Overview and Scrutiny Committee in 2023/24. The Chairs of both of those committees presented the report and outlined the structure, operating methods and recent work programmes of the Committees.

An overview of the integrated settlement, which had been negotiated under the previous Mayor and was due to come into effect on 1 April 2025, was provided. The new settlement was focussed on the refining of Mayoral powers and the devolution of further authority to the Mayor. Five key areas were highlighted:-

- Adult skills;
- Housing;
- Retrofit;
- Local transport;
- Regional growth and place.

As part of the devolution deal, there was an enhanced scrutiny regime at the WMCA. This comprised two committees; Overview and Scrutiny Committee and the Transport Delivery Overview and Scrutiny Committee. Every constituent local authority of the West Midlands nominated to these committees to ensure the local voice was represented at the regional level.

From the comments and questions by members of the Scrutiny Management Board, the following responses were made, and issues highlighted:-

- There would be an independent review of the Metro, the findings of which would be considered by the Transport Delivery Overview and Scrutiny Committee in due course.
- Active Travel funding was provided to both the WMCA and local authorities. Some WMCA schemes collaborated with local authorities and some Active Travel schemes were cross-boundary. In the recent budget, £100m have been allocated nationally to Active Travel funds.
- Any schemes, for example cycle paths, had to be authorised by the relevant local authorities Highways and decision making processes.
- The northern leg of the HS2 scheme had been cancelled, but work was ongoing with a £1.75b infrastructure investment to provide regional connectivity throughout the West Midlands.
- Work was being done to electrify parts of the train network which currently operated diesel engines.
- A key area of work for the WMCA was training and skills for employability. There was a significant demand for skilled workers, however this was not being met by the local population; there was a need to ensure they had access to education and training that would equip them with the skills necessary to access these employment opportunities.
- Apprenticeships, especially those relating to skilled trades, which could support the necessary ambitious house building targets in the region was a priority for both the previous and current Mayor who had set a target of 8000 new apprentices in the region.
- In addition to apprenticeships there were also skill-based training programmes in construction with a guaranteed interview for employment at their conclusion. It was reported that the majority of those completing the programme were offered jobs.
- The Mayor was undertaking a tour of the region's constituent local authorities to answer questions from councillors as well as holding wider public-facing events.

- The WMCA Overview and Scrutiny Committees acknowledged the wish to provide further challenge on the Mayor's manifesto delivery.

The WMCA Scrutiny Chairs invited councillors to attend their meetings in-person or online to help increase engagement and understanding of the work of the Committees.

The Scrutiny Management Board thanked the representatives of the WMCA for attending the meeting, presenting and answering questions.

Councillor Williams left the meeting during consideration of this item and did not return.

#### 65/24 **Tracking and Monitoring of Scrutiny Recommendations**

The Board noted the status of actions and recommendations it had made. Further updates would be reported to future meetings of the Board.

#### 66/24 **Cabinet Forward Plan and Budget and Corporate Scrutiny Management Board Work Programme 2024/25**

The Board received and noted the Cabinet Forward Plan and the Board's work programme. Members discussed a piece of scrutiny work on the proposals for Alternate Weekly Collections for waste which were contained within the Medium Term Financial Strategy, which had been suggested by the relevant Cabinet Members.

**Resolved** that a joint working group of the Budget and Corporate Scrutiny Management Board and the Economy, Skills, Transport and Environment Scrutiny Board be established to consider Alternate Weekly Collections for waste, to feed in to the decision making process.

Meeting ended at 7.15pm)

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