

Attendance

Members of the Scrutiny Board

Cllr Stephen Simkins (Chair)
Cllr Paula Brookfield
Cllr Jasbir Jaspal
Cllr Peter O'Neill
Cllr Jacqueline Sweetman
Cllr Philip Bateman MBE
Cllr Greg Brackenridge
Cllr Jasbinder Dehar
Cllr Sohail Khan
Cllr Martin Waite
Cllr Alan Bolshaw
Cllr Paul Singh

Part 1 – items open to the press and public

Item No. *Title*

- 1 **Apologies for absence**
Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Photay, Cllr Leach and Cllr Hardacre. Cllr Bolshaw and Cllr Singh were in attendance as substitutes.
- 2 **Declarations of interest**
There were no declarations of interest.
- 3 **Minutes of the previous meeting**
Resolved:
 That the minutes of the meeting held be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.
- 4 **Matters arising**
There were no matters arising.
- 5 **The West Midlands Combined Authority Overview and Scrutiny Committee - Update**
The Board welcomed Councillor Ian Shires, Vice Chair of the West Midlands Combined Authority Overview and Scrutiny Committee (WMCAO&SC) and Lyndsey Roberts, Scrutiny Officer for the WMCAO&SC, to the meeting.

Cllr Shires provided a presentation to the Board outlining the set up and structure of the WMCAO&SC.

The Overview & Scrutiny Committee was a statutory requirement specified within the West Midlands Combined Authority Order 2016. The committee had a role in reviewing the work of the West Midlands Mayor and the WMCA and the power to call the Mayor, members and officers to account. The Overview & Scrutiny Committee could make recommendations to decision-making bodies and call-in decisions that had already been made.

The Committee had a big agenda covering all the delivery boards of the Combined Authority.

There had been two Mayoral question times, the first one being hosted at Wolverhampton. Cllr Shires stated that this had gone very well with the Committee being well prepared with both initial and follow up questions. The finance budget question time had been held just before Christmas.

Cllr Shires referred to the 'Leaders Like You' programme which sought to increase diversity across the regions; Cllr Shires suggested that the Scrutiny Board might consider undertaking some work around this.

The Committee were now looking at the West Midlands Police and Crime Commissioner function. The first phase of consultation had taken place and the second phase was now underway. Some concerns had been raised by the Committee when looking at the original documentation as it was thought to contain a number of leading questions.

It was stated that the Mayor was the only person directly elected to the position, members of the Committee were elected councillors but not directly elected to the committee.

Cllr Shires updated the Board on the WMCAO&SC's upcoming work plan. There was a desire to carry out more pre-decision scrutiny and to further promote public engagement in scrutiny. Cllr Shires stated that members of the public did not attend meetings but that there were some important issues that could come out of scrutiny and that the Committee needed to make more use of webcasting.

The Board considered the issues regarding members of the WMCA Board not being directly elected and did express some concern about this as it seemed to be moving further away from the Local Authority where councillors were directly elected and accountable and had an understanding of strategic direction.

The Board understood the high-volume workload the WMCAO&SC had and the good work that was being done. An argument was put forward that a role should be created within the council with a level of responsibility similar to that of a cabinet member. The suggested role would include a requirement for the appointed member to feed into and back from the WMCAO&SC and encourage councillor and public engagement.

The Board considered that there was a need to add value to issues being considered by the Combined Authority and that this needed to be driven from the bottom up.

Horizons needed to be widened by individual local councils and understanding needed to improve regarding how the Combined Authority operated. It was important that the Combined Authority did not dictate to the districts, it needed to look at what happened in a region or district as a starting point.

The Board questioned whether the WMCAO&SC held the Mayor to account and it was confirmed that it did.

The Board queried whether the WMCAO&S might consider a uniform way of feeding back to all the districts. Cllr Shires stated that each authority had a representative on the WMCAO&SC and that there was an annual report that went back to full council at his authority. Cllr Shires also stated that as chair of economy and environment he also took items to that committee. At the moment it was the prerogative of each district how as to how their representative fed back.

Some members of the Board considered that the call-in process needed to be scrutinised and that it needed to be more robust with more substance.

Cllr Shires stated that there was a governance working group chaired by Cllr John Cotton. Recommendations would be coming from this group before the end of the council year.

It was stated that the Combined Authority had to maintain a strategic view whilst maintaining accountability to the districts and ensuring that it continued to represent them. The Combined Authority needed to be a partnership of all the councils involved.

The Chair of the Scrutiny Board considered that the Council should have a permanent member at the level of a Cabinet Member to help shape the future of Wolverhampton and West Midlands in the future. This post would attend all meetings of the WMCAO&S Committee and report and liaise between it and the Council. The Chair stated that he would liaise directly with the Leader regarding this issue.

The Board queried the current situation regarding land and property in Wolverhampton. It was agreed that feedback would be provided regarding this and that there was a set agenda. The WMCAO&SC had been looking at modular homes and had meetings with the companies that manufactured them.

Cllr Shires stated that it was also very important that information be fed from the districts to the WMCAO&SC and questioned what board members would like to see the CA doing for Wolverhampton.

The Board queried what the CA was doing in relation to Brexit and it was confirmed that there was a briefing note that could be circulated.

The Managing Director confirmed that the Council were planning for Brexit including in terms of practicalities such as ensuring fuel supplies for emergency vehicles.

The Board thanked Cllr Shires and Lynsey.

Resolved: That the Chair of the Scrutiny Board liaise with the Council Leader in relation to the creation of a new member post with direct responsibility for liaising with the WMCAO&S Committee and representing the Council on all meetings and working groups associated with the WMCAO&S Committee.

6 **Work programme**

Resolved: That the workplan be noted and agreed.

7 **The Forward Plan - January 2019**

Resolved: That the following items be considered for pre-decision scrutiny:

- Youth Council Annual Report
- Housing Strategy
- Move to enable buying Council Houses