

Attendance

Members of the Scrutiny Board

Cllr Stephen Simkins (Chair)
Cllr Ian Angus
Cllr Philip Bateman
Cllr Greg Brackenridge
Cllr Jasbir Jaspal
Cllr Rupinderjit Kaur
Cllr Louise Miles
Cllr Peter O'Neill
Cllr Arun Photay
Cllr Rita Potter
Cllr Jacqueline Sweetman
Cllr Val Evans
Cllr Wendy Thompson

Employees

Keith Ireland	Managing Director
Julia Cleary	Systems and Scrutiny Manager
Earl Piggott-Smith	Scrutiny Officer
Neil White	Scrutiny Officer
Matt Vins	Project Manager

Part 1 – items open to the press and public

Item No. *Title*

- 1 Apologies for absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Brookfield and Cllr Patten. Cllr Thompson attended as a substitute for Cllr Patten and Cllr Evans attended as a substitute for Cllr Brookfield.

The Chair also welcomed Cllr Tersaim Singh to the meeting. Cllr Singh was the Authorities representative on the Combined Authority Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

The Chair thanked members and officers for their work throughout the year.
- 2 Declarations of interest**

There were no declarations of interest.
- 3 Minutes of the previous meeting**

Resolved:

That the minutes of the previous meeting be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

4 **Matters arising**

It was noted that in relation to page 4 of the minutes that the Board had agreed to support work being done to encourage younger people to register to vote and to support any initiatives aimed at lowering the voting age to 16.

5 **Scrutiny Arrangements in relation to the Combined Authority**

The Chair welcomed Councillor Peter Hughes to the meeting; Cllr Hughes was the Chair of the Combined Authority Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Cllr Hugh's thanked the Board for inviting him to attend the meeting and introduced Sarah Sprung who was currently seconded on a part time basis to support the Combined Authority Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Miss Sprung referred to the document entitled *Principles of Scrutiny between WMCA Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Local Authority Scrutiny* which had now been ratified. Miss Sprung also confirmed that a job description for a West Midlands Combined Authority Overview and Scrutiny Member had been produced and would be circulated in due course.

Cllr Hughes provided a presentation which included a section on Councillors and LEP Governance Structure. Cllr Hughes highlighted the area relating to the Combined Authority Commissions which were:

- Mental Health Commission
- Productivity and Skills Commission
- Land Commission

Cllr Hughes stated that these areas were constantly under review and reflected the work undertaken by the Combined Authority. Overview and Scrutiny Task and Finish Groups had already been set up to reflect these commissions along with a standing Task and Finish Group focused on scrutiny of the budget.

Cllr Hughes stated that each member authority had been requested to nominate a lead officer and a lead member to attend meetings relating to the CA Overview and Scrutiny Committee and that there had been a lot of initial ground work covered over the last 12 months even though the regulation had not been published until January 2017 and there had only been 4 meetings of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to date.

It was stated that a workshop had been held in November 2016 with Leaders and Chief Executives to establish a work programme.

Cllr Hughes confirmed that the Mental Health Task and Finish Group had already presented some findings. Cllr Hughes explained that the task and finish groups would work on a less formal basis and have a less rigid structure with a less prescribed quorum thus allowing a larger range of witnesses or participants to attend.

Miss Sprung provided an overview of the membership of the committee including the different roles of constituent and non-constituent members and that as far as

possible political balance was to be maintained. Miss Sprung stated that the Combined Authorities (Overview and Scrutiny Committees Access to Information and Audit Committees) Order 2017 would be going live on 8th May 2017, that there was a 2/3 quorum requirement for Board meetings, that the Chair had to be from a different political party than the mayor and that Constituent members had to be majority.

Members considered the importance of communication between the member authorities and the CA and agreed that this had to be effective in both directions and that work was required in relation to this especially in relation to understanding all the different work programmes that would be in place and where there might be duplication, overlap or gaps identified. Miss Sprung stated that it was probable that the CA O&S Committee would be calling on member authorities to provide evidence in relation to task and finish groups in order that the correct level of detail could be achieved. It was therefore vital to ensure that the City Council's nominated representative on the CA O&S Committee was given an opportunity to feed back to the Scrutiny Board on work being carried out by the CA O&S Committee and report back to the CA O&S Committee any issues identified by the City Council's Scrutiny Board.

Members considered whether and where the minutes of the Combined Authority Board and Combined Authority Overview and Scrutiny Committee should be considered including whether they should be reported to Full Council meetings.

The question was raised as to whether a more detailed work programme would be provided and whether there would be a risk register. Cllr Hughes stated that so far the work programme had been focused on getting the Committee up and running in line with the regulations. Cllr Hughes confirmed that a risk register would be available and that this would be considered by the Combined Authority Audit and Risk Committee. It was also confirmed that there would be an Annual Report which would be available online from 30 April 2017.

Members highlighted the fact that it was crucial to have buy in for the Combined Authority from the public and that at the moment it was complicated and not readily understood. Members also noted that the regulations did not appear to be helping the creation of a fit for purpose organisation with unclear parameters that would still be in flux for at least another 12 months. Members agreed that in order to best represent their constituents it would be crucial to have information on and input into the commissions and task and finish groups.

Members reiterated their concerns that the CA appeared to be a largely unaccountable body and that work was required on insuring it was as open and transparent as possible and detail was requested as to how this would work, how issues would be reported and when.

It was confirmed that no pre decision scrutiny had been carried out to date as the Committee was still catching up and getting settled and that once the May elections were over then there would hopefully be a period of stability.

Members again stated that it was vital that processes at local and CA level were integrated and linked together. Members also stated that it had been thought that one of the roles of the CA was to help bring investment into the area and look at

topics such as land, skills and transport. Officers confirmed that this was happening and that there would be inward investment for the West Midlands and investment for skills. Officers also confirmed that information relating to all of this was available on the website.

Members agreed that there was support for the Combined Authority and that the main concerns related to ensuring that it was accountable and delivered at both a central and local level whilst avoiding duplication.

The Scrutiny Board thanked Cllr Hughes and Miss Sprung for attending the meeting.

Resolved: (a) That the presentation from Cllr Peter Hughes and Miss Sprung be noted.

(b) That the Scrutiny Board be kept notified of decisions going through the CA Board.

(c) That regular updates on the work of the CA O&S Committee be provided to the Scrutiny Board from the City Council's representative on the Board.

(d) That the Board have sight of the CA Annual Report.

6 **Outcome of the Local Government Association Corporate Peer Review**

The Panel considered a report from the Managing Director informing the Scrutiny Board of the outcome of the recent LGA Corporate Peer Review and requesting it to consider the recommendations and action plan arising from it.

The Managing Director introduced Mr Matt Vins to the Board and thanked him for all of the work he had done in relation to organising the Peer Review and for making staff and councillors feel very welcome at the City Council.

The feedback from the Peer Review had been very positive and Members congratulated the Managing Director and agreed that the feedback appeared good and fair whilst also allowing room for further improvement. Members noted that the role of councillor was rapidly changing alongside changing expectations from constituents and a constantly moving social media landscape and that this necessitated additional training for members.

Officers thanked all members for getting involved in the Peer Review and for providing vital evidence and feedback.

Resolved: 1. That the comments of Members on the Local Government Association's (LGA) Corporate Peer Review final report be noted.

2. That the comments of Members on the draft action plan arising from the recommendations within the LGA Corporate Peer Review final report be noted.