

Attendance

Members of the Scrutiny Board

Cllr Paul Sweet (Chair)
Cllr Jonathan Crofts (Vice-Chair)
Cllr Philip Bateman MBE
Cllr Alan Bolshaw
Cllr Greg Brackenridge
Cllr Paula Brookfield
Cllr Val Evans
Cllr Phil Page
Cllr Rita Potter
Cllr Stephen Simkins
Cllr Mak Singh
Cllr Wendy Thompson
Cllr Dr Paul John Birch J.P.

In Attendance

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| Sarah Middleton | Chief Executive of the Black Country Consortium |
| Cllr Barbara McGarrity | Member Champion for Climate Change |
| Earl Piggott-Smith | Scrutiny Officer |
| Martin Stevens | Scrutiny Officer |
| Ross Cook | Director of City Environment |
| Richard Lawrence | Director of Regeneration |

Part 1 – items open to the press and public

Item No. *Title*

- 1 Apologies for absence**
An apology for absence was received from Cllr Sweetman. Cllr Birch was in attendance as a substitute.
- 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**

The Board drew attention to item seven on page four of the agenda in relation to the Towns Fund. As yet there was no new information about the amount of funding but it was confirmed that the Fund was being managed through the Council and that there was some revenue funding that had been provided.

The Board requested that when guidance regarding the Fund was received that the Council ensure that Wednesfield was represented and requested clarity as to whether this would be the case.

The Director for Regeneration stated that the Towns Fund had a geography that did not match the City boundary and that he didn't think Wednesfield and Bilston were included but Perton was. The Director confirmed that he would seek clarification on this.

A councillor stated that he had been pressing the Mayor of the West Midlands on the subject of the Towns Fund. Some work had been done, led by the Combined Authority on developing a plan for Bilston, however there had been no response as yet. The Board agreed that some negotiations were required especially regarding the number of derelict buildings and shops in the City centre due to internet shopping.

The Board requested that an update on the Towns Fund be brought to the next meeting of the Board.

Resolved: That an update be brought to the next meeting in relation to the Towns Fund.

5 **Local Enterprise Partnership update on activity and review of work being undertaken**

The Board welcomed the Chief Executive of the Black Country Consortium, Sarah Middleton to the meeting. Ms Middleton gave a presentation on the Black Country LEP. Ms Middleton detailed a slide titled, "Strategy into Delivery – An Evidence Based Approach." There were a range of indicators that the LEP used to determine the direction of travel. The indicators were intended to show if the LEP was making a difference in the areas they wished to.

The Board noted that one area of concern was that in Wolverhampton, residents' wages were not increasing at the same rate as the national average. In Wolverhampton the increase stood at 2% compared to a national average of 2.7%. The average wage of residents in Wolverhampton stood at £25,463, which meant a shortfall of £5,198 compared to the national average.

The employment rate was considered to be a key indicator. Overall in the Black Country Economy this indicator was classed as green. In the Wolverhampton economy it was classed as amber. So, whilst the situation was improving in Wolverhampton more needed to be done to match the national picture. In both the Black Country Economy and Wolverhampton Economy the gross value added (GVA) was growing, but not at the rate that they wanted. Overall in the Black Country Economy the rate was 2.5% growth compared to 3.1% growth nationally, whilst the Wolverhampton economy had a growth rate of 1.1%.

Ms Middleton remarked that there had been an overall downward shift in the job market in the Black Country. The situation in Wolverhampton was better with the number of jobs in Wolverhampton increasing by 103,000. This was a 1% increase compared to a national level of 0.6%. It was the quality of jobs in Wolverhampton and the wages which needed more investigation. The level of new enterprises being established had stalled nationally and this was also reflected locally in Wolverhampton. Ms Middleton commented that this was in part due to the role of the banks and them taking a tighter approach.

It was remarked that the LEP worked closely with the WMCA on creating a West Midlands Local Industrial Strategy. They were waiting to hear from Central Government as to how much importance the new Government would place on the strategy. The content would however remain relevant regardless of Central Government's position. The strategy outlined that the major new market opportunities were the future of mobility, data driven health and life sciences. The principles of implementation were to create a single pipeline of significant, strategic projects and programmes; to be proactive and biased towards action; to be collaborative and complement existing activity; and for projects and programmes to integrate commitment to a balanced and a more inclusive economy, engaging with communities and employees.

The Board noted that there was a Black Country Local Implementation Plan. In Wolverhampton and across the West Midlands one of the unique factors was the excellence in manufacturing and engineering.

Funding to the LEP had been drip fed since 2012, initially there had been no funding available. From a Wolverhampton perspective, there was a strong success rate of securing investment for projects. This was a real credit to the officers of the Council; the aim was to ideally double the figure by securing future investments. Securing funding for the City Quarter, interchange and the i54 was a top priority. Ms Middleton referred to sector action plans in a variety of different fields. The LEP were interested in all sectors.

The Board noted the importance of securing appropriate energy infrastructure for the West Midlands. Without greater control of the local energy infrastructure investment the LEP would not be able to deliver the local industrial strategy in a meaningful or cost-effective way. 35% of the West Midlands Energy use was in the transport sector. The LEP wanted to ensure businesses were investing in the right sustainable solutions and were doing so in a carbon neutral way.

Since the Spring of 2017 the Enterprise Advisor Network had been established. All senior schools had been matched with a Business Enterprise Advisor. They were now beginning to look at primary schools. They had seen some positive progress in the quality of career advice being given.

The next steps for the LEP moving forward were summarised as follows: -

- Funding baseline, fiscal tasks, new funding streams e.g. UK shared prosperity fund
- Ongoing Pipeline Development
- Cross LEP collaboration
- Policy Development in Brexit context

- Provide evidence and intelligence for future “asks” of Government
- Detailed delivery plans that outline short, medium and long-term actions needed for major new market opportunities, foundations and sectors development.

Ms Middleton stated that in terms of support for skilling and reskilling, that there had to be some flexibility in the adults support budgets to help people move from one skill to another rather than only being for people who had been made redundant. It was also important to push employers to reskill employees so that if there was a re-entry point then it could be taken up.

The Board requested an explanation as to what spatial zones and pipelines were. It was stated that the spatial approach (orange arrow) integrated core strategy with the planning framework to produce a plan with a view as to how different places needed to perform to deliver the transformation. This could be sliced and diced down to a town or regeneration corridor to enable officers to interrogate whether they were getting the funding that each area was entitled to and whether the investment was going to the right place. It was noted that there were 11 identified areas spread right across the Black Country and the Board queried how this would work.

It was stated that the spatial zones had originally been identified through the core spatial strategy, not at the exclusion of all places but identified through the planning regime as having capacity to change (could they attract more investment etc.).

The Board noted that the numbers for funding were high and questioned how the LEP might guarantee that in these corridors, jobs went to people from Wolverhampton and that the skills that were being given were the right skills.

The Board also noted that there was no mention of the green agenda and green issue in the presentation and that the current Mayor of the West Midlands regarding car batteries appeared contrary to what was required which some Board members considered was a move to hydro power.

The Board considered page 13 of the agenda that referred to sector strengths such as aerospace and considered that most of these areas looked like Warwickshire and Birmingham. The Board considered that it might be useful to see a comparative benchmark as to how Wolverhampton was doing compared to the other cities and then nationally.

The Board also considered that it could assume that most of the new entries were small or medium-sized enterprises and noted that the presentation did not consider business failures and exits or multinational businesses. Ms Middleton stated that information on the failure rate could be provided to the Board along with information on multinational and strategic companies (a barometer was available).

The Board queried whether social enterprise was already being carried out by Young Enterprise and that it would be better for the LEP to support this. It was stated that Young Enterprise was already in schools and that the LEP were coordinating this and provided a tapas style menu that schools could call on.

The Board queried what would replace European Regional Development Fund money and European Social Fund Money. It was stated that these would be replaced

by the UK Shared Prosperity Fund and that there were ongoing discussions as to how much money to put into this and what it would be used for. It was confirmed that the LEP would work with Local Authorities to shape the fund.

Ms Middleton stated that where public resources were going to businesses then the LEP did all that it could to encourage and put into the grant agreement a condition of grant that jobs go to local residents. What often happened however was that there was a commitment but then it didn't happen and there was a need to follow up on this through the partnership to identify what the barriers were.

In relation to the green economy there was an opportunity for Wolverhampton and the Black Country to ensure they were working with universities and the development and supply chain to ensure that we could link in with the wider economy. It was thought that Wolverhampton was holding its own in specific places, but work was required to ensure competitiveness. Many factories were now outdated and trying to relocate a business when there was no pipeline of sites was a challenge.

In relation to specific sectors Ms Middleton stated that they had an analysis that could be provided showing benchmarks and that there was a good understanding of our strengths and where there was potential for growth. It was accepted that there was a need to do a lot more work around marketing the offer Wolverhampton had.

The Board considered pages 17 and 18 of the agenda regarding the overall total identified and unidentified funds and whether a risk assessment had been carried out and whether there was a prioritised list. It was stated that a report could be provided that reflected the pipeline.

The Board noted that Tesla and Jaguar were struggling to recruit and whether there was a way to bring those work opportunities to Wolverhampton. One key part was whether it was a new type of apprenticeship. Work was happening in that area already with apprenticeships and higher apprenticeship levels improving plus bitesize courses and upskilling that could be included on a CV. It was important to continue to invest in skills in different ways and with different types of skill sets and to make sure that people could access jobs.

The Board noted that 42 companies had ownership outside of the UK and queried whether any work had been done relating to attracting industry back into the West Midlands.

It was confirmed that the City Council had officers working closely with growth companies to ensure that the best propositions were coming to the City. There had been a dry up of work recently primarily due to Brexit uncertainty. Marketing was important at the Midlands level and getting the geography right was essential as well as ensuring that the City had sites ready to go (landing sites). The Board considered that the issue of drying up was very concerning and needed to be discussed by the Board in more detail at a later date as the City could not afford to lose any more investment or industry. A clear understanding was required as to why this dry up was happening.

The Board questioned how investment was allocated and how it was decided that something was right for Wolverhampton. It was stated that there were Trade Missions carried out with enquiries fed into a Midlands wide pool and each Local

Authority was requested to respond. Each authority had an opportunity to respond but work was required to enhance this process.

Resolved: 1) That a report be brought to a future meeting of Scrutiny Board to exam the implications of economic conditions affecting work and investment in the City.

2) That the Chief Executive of the Black Country Consortium, Ms Sarah Middleton, be thanked for her in depth and informative presentation.

6 **Update from the Member Champion for Climate Change**

The Board welcomed Cllr Barbara McGarrity to the meeting. Cllr McGarrity stated that as soon as she was appointed to the role of Member Champion for Climate Change that the public were already starting to contact her by the end of the day. The public interest highlighted how concerned people and communities were about climate change. Cllr McGarrity stated that young people appeared to be especially concerned as evidenced by demonstrations being held outside of schools.

Cllr McGarrity stated that she had been invited to speak at the South West Labour Group where questions had been very varied. An event had also been held at St Peter's Church which had been an excellent experience. Cllr McGarrity had given a talk which had been very well attended and informative questions had been asked such as what food we should eat and whether solar panels were a good option. Other events were in the pipeline.

Cllr McGarrity explained that she also had a seat on the West Midlands Consortium Board on Climate Change and that the Association for Public Service Excellence (APSE) were going to get involved in this. Cllr McGarrity noted that Scotland appeared to be leading on climate change at the moment.

One area that was of particular interest to Cllr McGarrity was the issue of recycling centres and whether these could be brought inhouse. This might be a future piece of work for scrutiny as it would be useful to see what other areas were doing. Everyone had a part to play in managing climate change.

The Director for City Environment informed the Board that the Council had made a climate change pledge which was now on the website and had been initially presented by the Youth Council at Full Council. The Director stated that it was vital to ensure that young people were fully engaged in what they were doing and gave an example of the webpage which also enabled people to work out their carbon footprint. The Pledge was all about the small things and contained an action plan and a number of indicators for each directorate. Consultation was still ongoing, and the Leader and Council had adopted a citizens assembly approach to bring in a small group of people with a vested interest in climate change.

The Board thanked Cllr McGarrity and noted that the brief associated with climate change was huge and complex.

Cllr McGarrity agreed and stated that she had originally tried to set objectives, but everything had just come at once and there were so many things that it was impossible to embrace all of it but that it was vital to try to address as many areas as possible. Cllr McGarrity stated that she was the Council's Tree Champion which in itself was a huge responsibility but that she was working with other parts of the

Council on this and hoped that with further discussions there would be more clarity as to the way forward. The Director stated that the Council had already agreed the climate change key priorities which were now on the website awaiting indicators and that Cllr McGarrity might take responsibility for some of these. The Director stated that it was also important to make sure that there were businesses that could deliver the green initiatives.

The Board queried whether it might be best to look internally first at what they as elected members could do to reduce their carbon footprints and how we tested for clean air. One area for consideration might be moving to completely paperless meetings and to stop printing any copies of agendas.

The Board agreed that they would support this going forward by ensuring that where appropriate, all reports addressed the green agenda.

The Board congratulated Cllr McGarrity on her work to date and for taking on such a huge task.

Resolved: That the update be noted.

7 **Updates from the chairs of the scrutiny panels** **Adults and Safer City Scrutiny Panel**

Cllr Val Evans stated that the Panel had received a talk around dementia and had been presented with evidence and information from social workers and commissioning officers. Cllr Evans stated that the report would be sent out to members of Scrutiny Board for information.

The Panel had also considered the Adult Social Care Annual Report: The Local Account 2018-2019. The Panel welcomed the report and agreed to receive a final version of the report when available.

The Panel had invited the relevant portfolio holders for Public Health and Wellbeing and Adults to attend the next meeting when the draft Community Safety and Harm Reduction Strategy would also be considered.

Children, Young People and Families Scrutiny Panel

Cllr Potter stated that the Panel had met on 27 November when the portfolio holder for Education and Skills had provided a briefing on current priorities. This was the first time the Panel had received a presentation from the portfolio holder and Cllr Potter looked forward to repeating this in the future as it enabled the Panel to provide effective challenge. The meeting had been very helpful, and it had been agreed to carry out a piece of pre-decision scrutiny on the All Age Travel Assistance Policy.

The Panel had also considered the Budget and comments had been submitted as part of consultation. The Head of Safeguarding had also provided a presentation of upcoming safeguarding changes which were supported by the Panel and progress of these changes would be reviewed at a later date.

An additional meeting of the Panel had been scheduled to consider the proposals for the Towers Outdoor Education Centre.

The next meeting of the Panel would be considering school exclusions and work to support children to remain in mainstream education where possible and to explore alternative options. The Youth Council would also be in attendance to update the Panel on the Take Over Day in March.

Health Scrutiny Panel

The Scrutiny Officer provided an update on behalf of Cllr Page.

Areas covered at last meeting had included the Draft Budget and Medium-Term Financial Plan and the Public Health Annual Report.

In relation to the Wolverhampton CCG Annual Report, the Panel sent a considerable amount of advanced questions to which the CCG then provided written responses. This was a good example of forensic detailed scrutiny and all the responses and discussions were available in the minutes.

The Panel had considered the Healthwatch Annual Report and suggested that Healthwatch had a drop-in session at the Civic Centre on the ground floor. They had been in touch and were going to have a stand on the 6 February 2020.

The Panel also received an update on the development of the medical examiner role and on-site registrar and the improvements that had resulted as a consequence.

Upcoming reports included Accident and Emergency at New Cross Hospital (The Hospital had been having some Level 4's recently – the highest level that can be declared) and the Sustainability and Transformation Partnership (of particular interest to Councillors would be the recent publication by the King's Fund on STP's available on their website).

Resolved: That the updates be noted, and the chairs and panels thanked for their work.

8 Work programme

A request was made for an update on the possibility of a scrutiny review into neighbourhood policing.

Clarification was also sought as to who represented the Council on the Police and Crime Panel.

Resolved: That the Work programme be agreed.

9 Forward Plan

Resolved: That the Forward Plan be noted.