



WEST MIDLANDS
COMBINED AUTHORITY

Board Meeting

Date	30 September 2016
Report title	The West Midlands Land Commission
Portfolio Lead	Councillor Sean Coughlan – Housing & Land
Accountable Chief Executive	Jan Britton, Chief Operating Officer, WMCA Tel: 0121 569 3501 Email: jan_britton@sandwell.gov.uk
Accountable Employee	Peter Yeomans, Group Manager, Sandwell MBC Tel: 0121 569 3501 Email: peter_yeomans@sandwell.gov.uk
Report to be/has been considered by	WMCA Programme Board – 16 September 2016

Recommendation(s) for action or decision:

The Combined Authority Board is recommended to:

1. Note the progress to date of the West Midlands Land Commission, the appointment of the Commissioners and the draft timetable for the delivery of the final report of the Commission.

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1.0 Purpose

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to advise the Programme Board of the progress made in the establishment of the West Midlands Land Commission and steps that have been taken since the matter was previously considered by the Programme Board on the 10th June 2016.

2.0 Background

- 2.1 The Land Commission is one of the three commissions established by the Combined Authority, the other two being Productivity and Mental Health. All the Commissions will investigate specific topics considered of strategic importance in delivering the planned economic growth across the region. Since the last update to the Board in June 2016 the Chair of the Commission Paul Marcuse has appointed four other Commissioners. The Commissioners have been drawn from different specialisms across the development industry to reflect the varied development issues across the conurbation. Clearly the issues surrounding development on brownfield land and viability are not the same as development pressures around the need to identify new strategic opportunities on green field land to deliver the growth agenda. You will recall that the Chairman, Paul Marcuse has presented his progress with regards to the Commission to the CA Board on two occasions in the past.

3.0 Progress to date

- 3.1 Over the summer the Chairman has made a number of visits to local authorities and LEP's to meet leaders, chairs and chief executives to ascertain their views upon development and potential constraints that currently impede the pace of delivery and scale of development across the region. This sound grounding has assisted in the refining of the terms of reference and the choice of commissioners, together with the scope of additional evidence that will be needed to be gathered.
- 3.2 The Commission has been very fortunate in securing the services of nationally acknowledged experts in their own fields to serve as Land Commissions alongside Paul Marcuse. Four Commissioners have been appointed and a brief synopsis of the individual's cv's are below:
- **Bill Oliver** is the retiring Chief Executive of the leading regeneration company St. Modwen's This Company is the lead developer for the former Longbridge car plant in south Birmingham and has a very strong track record in regeneration across the Region and Nationally.
 - **Bridget Rosewell** is a prominent UK economist and a non-executive director at Network Rail; she has been working on the Infrastructure Commission alongside Lord Andrew Adonis.

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- **Bruce Mann** is the Executive Director of the Cabinet Office's Government Property Unit; he is driving a new commercially driven approach to land and property asset management across the Central Government estate. He is also leading the Government's Open Public Estate initiative where the CA is fully involved.
 - **Jerome Frost** is Ove Arup's Global Planning Director prior to that he was Head of Design and Regeneration for the Olympic Delivery Authority (London 2012). Jerome works out of Ove Arup's Solihull office on Blyth Valley.
- 3.3 The call for evidence from the public and private sectors with an interest in commercial and residential development was issued in early September and has been very widely circulated within the development community. Through the tracking of emails we know that the call for evidence has been seen by over one thousand interested individuals this is significantly higher than would have been anticipated when compared to similar consultation exercises.
- 3.4 There are proposed to be three 'Hearings of Evidence' spread across the region to reflect the differing circumstance that impact upon development matters within the three LEP geographical areas. One session is proposed to be at the Wolverhampton Science Park, the second session will be within the National Exhibition Centre and the third session will be held at the Coventry Science Park. These sessions will be chaired by Paul Marcuse assisted by the Commissioners with support provided by the Commission's secretariat. Due to the Commissioners very busy pre-existing diary commitments not all the Commissioners will be at all the proposed meetings. However, this is not thought to present an issue since the Chairman will be at all the meetings of the Commission.
- 3.5 Once all the evidence has been collected it will be collated and assimilated Metro Dynamics who have been commissioned by the West Midlands Combined Authority to draft the final report. The interim report is anticipated to be available in late December 2016 with the final report being produced by spring 2017.
- 3.6 It needs to be stressed that the Land Commission will not make any site specific recommendations with regards to any development site in the region. This is specifically not the role of the Commission. It will produce a number of policy recommendations, some of which may be better ways of working to speed up the pace of delivery but some of the recommendations may well require changes in primary legislation and accordingly central government will need to be convinced of the merits of the final report's arguments.
- 4.0 Financial implications**
- 4.1 The work on the Land Commission is being progressed within the approved Combined Authority Governance Budget.

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5.0 Legal implications

5.1 There are no legal implications directly arising from this report. It is providing an update to the Board on the progress made and the anticipated time table for the Final Report.

6.0 Equalities implications

6.1 There are no equalities implications directly arising from the consideration of this report.