

## **Meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

**Wednesday, 27<sup>th</sup> March, 2024 at 6.00pm  
in Committee Room 2, The Council House,  
Priory Road, Dudley, DY1 1HF**

### **Agenda – Public Session (Meeting open to the public and press)**

1. Apologies for absence
2. To report the appointment of any substitute members serving for this meeting of the Committee
3. To receive any declarations of interest under the Members' Code of Conduct
4. To confirm and sign the minutes of the meeting held on 25<sup>th</sup> January, 2024 as a correct record (Pages 4 - 14)
5. Public Forum
6. West Midlands Combined Authority – Dudley MBC Activity (Pages 15 to 38)
7. West Midlands Combined Authority – Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report (Pages 39 - 66)
8. Employee Health and Wellbeing (Pages 67 to 76)
9. Improvement and Sustainability Programme ('Fit for the Future') Scope and Governance (Pages 77 to 100)



10. Progress Tracker and Future Business (Pages 101 to 102)
11. To consider any questions from Members to the Chair where two clear days notice has been given to the Monitoring Officer (Council Procedure Rule 11.8)

**Distribution:**

Councillor I Kettle (Chair)  
Councillor M Hanif (Vice-Chair)  
Councillors S Ali, H Bills, J Clinton, A Davies, P Dobb, J Foster, E Lawrence,  
D Stanley and E Taylor.



**Chief Executive**

**Dated: 19<sup>th</sup> March, 2024**

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**Minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee  
25<sup>th</sup> January, 2024 at 6.00pm  
In the Council Chamber, The Council House, Priory Road, Dudley**

**Present:**

Councillor I Kettle (Chair)  
Councillor M Hanif (Vice-Chair)  
Councillors S Ali, H Bills, J Clinton, A Davies, P Dobb, J Foster, E Lawrence,  
D Stanley and E Taylor

**Cabinet Members (by invitation)**

Councillor P Harley (Leader of the Council)  
Councillor S Clark (Cabinet Member for Finance, Legal and Human Resources)  
Councillor M Rogers (Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care)

**Other Members (by invitation)**

Councillors R Collins, K Denning, D Harley, J Martin and C Reid

**Officers (Dudley MBC):**

B Heran (Deputy Chief Executive), M AbuAffan (Director of Public Health and Wellbeing), M Bowsher (Director of Adult Social Care), C Driscoll (Director of Children's Services), K Jones (Director of Housing and Communities), H Martin (Director of Regeneration and Enterprise), I Newman (Director of Finance and Legal), N McGurk (Acting Service Director - Neighbour Delivery), R Cooper (Head of Financial Services), I Grosvenor (Finance Manager), M Lyons (Interim Lead - Compliance and Building Safety), L Jones-Moore (Finance Manager), P Mountford (Head of Economic Growth and Skills) and S Griffiths (Democratic Services Manager – Scrutiny Officer).

**Officers (West Midlands Combined Authority)**

J Gibson (Head of Policy and Public Affairs) and J Hughes (Member Relationship Manager)

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25 **Introduction by the Chair**

The Chair explained the context for this meeting and informed all participants that the proceedings were being broadcast on the Internet.

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26 **Apologies for Absence**

There were no apologies for absence.

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27 **Appointment of Substitute Members**

There were no substitute Members appointed for this meeting.

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28 **Declaration of Interests**

Councillors I Kettle and D Stanley declared non-pecuniary interests, in accordance with the Members' Code of Conduct, in view of their membership of Overview and Scrutiny Committees at West Midlands Combined Authority.

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29 **Minutes**

**Resolved**

That the minutes of the meeting held on 7<sup>th</sup> December, 2023 be confirmed as a correct record and signed.

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30 **Public Forum**

A representative of Dudley Centre for Inclusive Living expressed concerns on the Council's budget proposals relating to Adult Social Care and Children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities. Concerns were raised regarding the proposals affecting the Unicorn Centre, Amblecote.

The Director of Adult Social Care acknowledged the valuable contribution made by the Unicorn Centre and referred to the re-provision of the service at Queens Cross. He acknowledged the need for staff training and support. Some service users already attended Queens Cross, however, others did not. It was necessary to balance the cost of providing the service in the context of the Council's overall financial position. A detailed equality impact assessment was in progress and the information would be made available when completed.

Further concerns were expressed that staff at the Unicorn Centre had been instructed not to discuss or disclose information about the proposals with service users. It was queried whether this was normal policy as it was considered beneficial for all concerned to be informed as soon as possible so that those affected could make any necessary preparations and changes. The proposal would have a significant impact on a small group of service users and might cost the Council more if people were subsequently moved into residential care.

The Chair (Councillor I Kettle) confirmed that the proposals in the budget report were subject to approval by the Full Council before any changes could be implemented.

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31 **West Midlands Combined Authority - Formal Ratification of the Single Settlement Memorandum of Understanding between the West Midlands Combined Authority and His Majesty's Government**

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Regeneration and Enterprise on the proposed single settlement memorandum of understanding between the West Midlands Combined Authority and His Majesty's Government. A report on this issue would be considered by the Cabinet on 15<sup>th</sup> February, 2024.

The Committee received a presentation from J Gibson (Head of Policy and Public Affairs – West Midlands Combined Authority). The presentation slides had been made available on the Council's website. Councillors K Denning and J Martin expressed concerns about the accessibility of the presentation slides, particularly as this meeting was open to all Members of the Council and to the public generally. Officers acknowledged and undertook to address the concerns raised.

The Head of Policy and Public Affairs – West Midlands Combined Authority responded to a question from Councillor S Ali concerning the future arrangements for developing place-based strategies and how this would differ from the existing arrangements.

The Chair (Councillor I Kettle) referred to the arrangements for local scrutiny, particularly the commitment to greater scrutiny including meetings with local Members of Parliament at regular broadcast sessions. The Chair queried the format and practical arrangements for these sessions. The Member Relationship Manager – West Midlands Combined Authority advised that terms of reference had been developed and were subject to approval through the appropriate governance process. It was anticipated that a meeting would be arranged with all MPs in the Combined Authority region in due course. The Head of Policy and Public Affairs – West Midlands Combined Authority also responded to questions from the Chair concerning the devolution of decisions on transport schemes.

The Chair thanked officers and representatives of the West Midlands Combined Authority for their attendance and the information provided at the meeting.

### **Resolved**

- (1) That the proposed Single Settlement Memorandum of Understanding between West Midlands Combined Authority and His Majesty's Government, as set out in the Appendix to the report, be noted.
- (2) That the high-level next steps for Single Settlement negotiations and implementation ahead of the first Single Settlement allocation, which is likely to be 1<sup>st</sup> April, 2025, be noted.

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## **32 Medium Term Financial Strategy**

The Committee considered a joint report of the Deputy Chief Executive and the Director of Finance and Legal on the draft Medium Term Financial Strategy to 2026/27, which had been approved by the Cabinet on 11<sup>th</sup> January, 2024 as the basis for consultation and scrutiny.

Following an introduction by the Director of Finance and Legal, Members considered the report. The following questions and comments were raised during the discussion:

Councillor S Ali referred to the perilous state of the Council's finances and the impact of Central Government funding cuts since 2010/11. Although it was acknowledged that the Council may be able to set a legal budget in 2024/25, considerable challenges were identified in future years. Councillor Ali referred to the process for setting the budget and questioned when and why it had been decided not to take the budget proposals to individual Select Committees for detailed scrutiny. The Cabinet Member for Finance, Legal and Human Resources (Councillor S Clark) referred to the pressures identified in adults and children's social care and the spending controls that had been implemented by the Cabinet in October, 2023. It was recognised that decisions impacting on services were necessary, however, no decisions had been proposed pending the outcome of the Government's Spending Review. Following a Cabinet Summit on 22<sup>nd</sup> December, 2023, the budget proposals had been considered by the Cabinet on 11<sup>th</sup> January and it was noted that all Members of the Council had been invited to a budget Question and Answer session on 17<sup>th</sup> January, 2024.

Councillor S Ali questioned who had made the decision not to take the budget report to individual Select Committees. He also referred to the recent announcement of additional funding for local authorities and how much additional funding would be available to Dudley. The Cabinet Member for Finance, Legal and Human Resources (Councillor S Clark) reported that the budget timetable had been discussed at the Cabinet Summit and it was considered essential that full details of the financial settlement were available before the budget proposals were agreed formally by the Cabinet as a basis for consultation and scrutiny.

In referring further to the budget and scrutiny process, Councillor S Ali questioned how far the original budget figures forecast by the Director of Finance and Legal had differed from the settlement figures received in December, 2023. The Cabinet Member for Finance, Legal and Human Resources (Councillor S Clark) responded that the experience in previous years had been that the Government settlement often represented an improvement in the forecast figures. In the current year, the Director's forecast was accurate. However, the Cabinet Member remained of the view that it was the correct decision to await the settlement figures before presenting the budget proposals for consultation and scrutiny.



The Leader of the Council (Councillor P Harley) referred to the budget summit held on 22<sup>nd</sup> December, 2023, which was the earliest, reasonable opportunity for Members and Officers to consider the provisional settlement. Officers had worked through the Christmas period to ensure the accuracy of the figures and present options. Information had been provided to the Leader and Deputy Leader of the Opposition Group along with the proposed budget timetable. The Leader expressed the view that the process was reasonable given the time restrictions and acknowledged that it would be beneficial to receive the provisional settlement from the Government earlier in the year. However, due to the considerable work undertaken, the Council was now in a position where a legal budget could be presented in March, 2024, without using earmarked reserves, and he remained confident that the Council could avoid the issue of a Section 114 Notice.

Regarding the recent Government announcement of additional resources of £500m to social care authorities, the Director of Finance and Legal reported that the Council would not receive details until the final local government settlement was announced in the first week of February, 2024 and this would be considered, along with any conditions, in the final budget report presented to the Cabinet and Full Council.

Councillor E Taylor referred to the Household Support Fund. She questioned the assistance given to people who had difficulty with computer access and how many people had received support from the fund. The Director of Finance and Legal reported that demand had significantly outweighed the available funding. In relation to the applications element, the Council had tried to manage this fairly by releasing funds in four tranches at different times of the day to fit around different personal circumstances. The eligibility criteria had also been adjusted. The Director of Public Health and Wellbeing also referred to the administration of the Household Support Fund and further information would be provided to Councillor E Taylor.

Councillor E Lawrence commented on the scrutiny process and supported comments made concerning the receipt of the provisional settlement figures from the Government. However, it was considered reasonable that all Members had the opportunity to comment at this meeting of the Committee. The Acting Service Director – Neighbourhood Delivery responded to a question concerning green waste collections and gave clarification of the proposals for future collections, which would be subject to review.

The Director of Housing and Communities responded to questions from Councillor C Reid concerning the impact of increased charges on the lowest paid including reference to the prevention of homelessness and poverty. The Director referred to the challenges associated with the Council's budget position and outlined a range of assistance and support that was offered to residents and vulnerable people.

Councillor A Davies referred to the need to view the proposed Council Tax and housing rent increases in context with the need to protect services and similar increases proposed by other local authorities in the region. The Director of Housing and Communities confirmed that the Council had low rents in comparison with other neighbouring authorities. The Director of Finance and Legal confirmed that Dudley's Council Tax was significantly lower than the average for metropolitan authorities and the lowest in the West Midlands. The increases proposed in Dudley for 2024/25 were consistent with increases proposed in similar authorities.

Councillor J Foster referred to detailed Equality Impact Assessments and expressed concern that the Assessments were not available for this scrutiny process. The Director of Finance and Legal reported that the Equality Impact Assessments were being developed alongside the budget process and these would be made available for the Cabinet meeting on 15<sup>th</sup> February, 2024 in line with the approach taken in previous years. The Chair referred to the tight timescales involved and the Deputy Chief Executive confirmed that work on Equality Impact Assessments was ongoing alongside the budget process.

The Director of Adult Social Care gave a detailed response to questions from the Vice-Chair (Councillor M Hanif) as to whether the proposed Adult Social Care budget was sufficient to meet regulatory requirements; if there were any anticipated care home closures that might worsen the Council's financial position and the inflationary award that had been factored into the budget to meet national living wage requirements.

In response to a question from Councillor J Martin, the Director of Finance and Legal acknowledged that the report presented an extremely uncomfortable and worrying position.

The Director of Adult Social Care responded to questions from Councillor J Martin concerning the timescales involved with identifying and reporting on the overspend of £7.6m in the Adult Social Care budget. This figure referred to the position in the October outturn, however, pressure had been building from May, 2023 onwards. The Director outlined the factors that had contributed to increased spending in mid-August to October, 2023. This had been noted through the Council's usual financial reporting processes.

In response to a question from Councillor J Martin concerning the £7.6m overspend in Adult Social Care and £4.7m overspend in Children's Services budgets, the Director of Finance and Legal reported that the emerging pressures in adults and children's had been highlighted to the Cabinet in July, 2023. This was acknowledged as a fast-moving position and overspend figures were reported to the Cabinet in October, 2023.

Councillor J Martin referred to comments from the External Auditor concerning the Council's long term financial planning and expressed further concerns about problems with the Council's in-year financial processes if large overspends were occurring in the middle of a financial year. Councillor J Martin referred to Adult Social Care and Children's Services budgets being consistently overspent. The Director of Finance and Legal referred to compliance with statutory duties in relation to providing social care and issues with changes and prices in the social care market. The situation was acknowledged as complex, volatile and difficult to monitor. However, it was considered essential that this situation was fully recognised and addressed in future financial years.

The Director of Adult Social Care supported comments made by the Director of Finance and Legal and indicated that 2023/24 had been an exceptional year for Adult Social Care. He acknowledged the difficulties this financial year but reported that the budget has been balanced for the previous three years. The situation in Dudley was reflected regionally and nationally and the Council's expenditure was necessary to comply with statutory obligations.

The Director of Housing and Community Services responded to a question from Councillor J Martin as to why the Council was retaining significant reserves in the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) during a cost-of-living crisis instead of improving services or, alternatively, not increasing the financial burden on tenants. It was stated that Dudley's HRA reserves were lower than comparable authorities and were considered necessary in the context of the future investment strategy and the ability to respond appropriately to future challenges.

Councillor H Bills questioned comparisons made between Dudley and other local authorities and stated that Members should consider the best interests of the people of Dudley. She emphasised the importance of taking the advice of auditors and, in this context, questioned decisions made by the Cabinet on 11<sup>th</sup> January, 2024. Councillor P Harley responded and explained reasons for the Cabinet's decision to override spending controls to allow the project to replace Pens Meadow School to proceed. He also commented on the long-term impact of decisions taken by the Council in previous financial years to freeze Council Tax. Councillor H Bills referred to the possibility of additional Government assistance and funding sources and issues relating to long term financial planning in the context of changes in political control. She also referred to the need for investment at Halesbury School.

Councillor D Stanley acknowledged the significant difficulties faced regarding financial planning in Adult Social Care taking account of the aging population and the current and future demands on those services.

Councillor S Ali made further observations on the state of the Council's finances and referred to issues previously raised by the Audit and Standards Committee. Reference was made to concerns that had been raised by the Chair of the Audit and Standards Committee in an email to the Cabinet Member for Finance, Legal and Human Resources. The Cabinet Member (Councillor S Clark) confirmed that the email had been received and the concerns had been acknowledged and noted. Councillor S Ali expressed concern that insufficient, timely action had been taken and requested assurance that key factors raised by external auditors had been taken into consideration. Councillor S Clark responded by again referring to the overspend in Adult Social Care and informed the Committee that issues had been identified, properly considered and a legal budget had been formulated for presentation to the Council in March, 2024.

The Leader of the Council (Councillor P Harley) commented on questions raised during the meeting and commended the work undertaken to present a legal budget to the Full Council on 4<sup>th</sup> March, 2024 without using earmarked reserves. He referred to the key importance of ongoing work to develop a new operating model for the Council with a view to achieving long term financial sustainability.

Councillor S Ali expressed his disagreement with specific comments made by the Leader in relation to libraries and repeated his concerns about the future of Dudley under the current administration.

## **Resolved**

That the comments of the Committee on the proposals for the Medium Term Financial Strategy to 2026/27, taking account of the considerations in the report and the issues raised at this meeting, be referred to the Cabinet for consideration at its meeting on 15<sup>th</sup> February, 2024.

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### **33 Interim Progress Report – Independent Assurance Board**

The Committee received a presentation from the Deputy Chief Executive giving an update on the Dudley Improvement and Sustainability Programme and Plan. The presentation slides had been made available in advance on the Council's Internet site.

Following the presentation, the Deputy Chief Executive responded to a question from Councillor K Denning concerning the metrics and data to demonstrate future improvements. Reference was made to the proposed adoption of a new one-year Council Plan focussed on the budget and sustainability with an associated set of performance indicators relating to the improvement programme, financial management and the impact on residents.

Councillor J Foster commented positively on the Local Government Association Peer Review process and the ongoing work of the Improvement Board. She referred to the importance of maintaining the confidentiality of discussions at the Improvement Board and expressed concern regarding comments that had been made in relation to the Opposition Group concerning the timetable associated with scrutiny of the Council's budget. The Leader of the Council (Councillor P Harley) expressed the view that the budget timetable was not confidential. This had been discussed at the Cabinet budget summit on 22<sup>nd</sup> December, 2023 in the presence of the Leader and Deputy Leader the Opposition Group. In responding to the comments of the Leader, Councillor J Foster indicated that the issue of confidentiality would be raised further at the Improvement Board.

Councillor J Martin referred to other authorities in which Government commissioners had been appointed and sought assurance that this process was similarly robust and credible. The Leader gave assurance regarding the process and stressed the importance of both main political groups contributing to and supporting the new operating model in the interests of the Council's future sustainability.

## **Resolved**

That the presentation and progress update be noted.

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### 34 **Progress Tracker and Future Business**

The progress tracker and programme of future business for the Overview and Scrutiny Committee was received and noted.

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### 35 **Questions Under Council Procedure Rule 11.8**

There were no questions to the Chair pursuant to Council Procedure Rule 11.8.

At the conclusion of the meeting, the Chair thanked everyone for their attendance and contributions.

The meeting ended at 8.20pm

CHAIR

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**Meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee – 27<sup>th</sup> March, 2024**

**Report of the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA)**

**WMCA Activity – Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council**

**Purpose of report**

1. This report seeks to set out the work that the West Midlands Combined Authority is carrying out within the Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council Area.

**Recommendations**

2. It is recommended that the Committee:-
  - Note the report which details the work that the West Midlands Combined Authority is carrying out in the Dudley MBC Local Authority Area.
  - Make any recommendations to Dudley MBC or West Midlands Combined Authority Officers on matters in this report for consideration.
  - Consider the frequency of updates from the West Midlands Combined Authority to both the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and any other Member bodies within the Local Authority.

**Background**

3. The report in Appendix 1 sets out, in detail, the work that the West Midlands Combined Authority is carrying out within the Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council Area.

## **Finance**

4. The attached report contains details of funding issues.

## **Law**

5. Section 111 of the Local Government Act 1972 provides the Council with power to do anything which is calculated to facilitate or is conducive or incidental to, the discharge of any of their functions. Pursuant to Section 1 of the Localism Act 2011 a local authority has a general power of competence to do anything that individuals generally may do.

## **Risk Management**

6. Dudley Council has an established Risk Management Framework to identify any material risks and how these are mitigated.

## **Equality Impact**

7. Our governance arrangements make provision for full consideration of equality impact, diversity and inclusion issues.

## **Human Resources/Organisational Development**

8. This report has been prepared by West Midlands Combined Authority working in conjunction with the Council and other partners.

## **Commercial/Procurement**

9. Commercial and procurement implications are considered in respect of specific projects, including compliance with Contract Standing Orders and procurement legislation.

## **Environment/Climate Change**

10. Dudley Council has declared a Climate Emergency and is committed to work to address Climate Change and achieve the Net Zero target.



## **Council Priorities and Projects**

11. Overview and Scrutiny is a key element of our governance arrangements to underpin the delivery of key priorities. The attached report contains details of activity impacting on various priorities including skills, economy, strategy, transport, net zero, housing and health and communities. The West Midlands Combined Authority recognises the role that the Borough plays in supporting the Combined Authority to deliver for the West Midlands Region.



### **West Midlands Combined Authority – Member Relationship Manager**

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### **Appendices**

- Appendix 1 – WMCA Activity – Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council

### **List of Background Documents**

None

## Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council Overview and Scrutiny Committee

<b>Date</b>	Wednesday 27 <sup>th</sup> March 2024
<b>Report title</b>	WMCA Activity – Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council
<b>Portfolio Lead</b>	N/A
<b>Accountable Chief Executive</b>	Laura Shoaf – Chief Executive, WMCA.
<b>Accountable Employee</b>	James Hughes - Member Relationship Manager, WMCA
<b>Report has been considered by</b>	Executive Board, WMCA

### Recommendation(s) for action or decision:

#### The Overview and Scrutiny Committee of Dudley MBC is recommended to:

- (1) Note the report which details the work that the West Midlands Combined Authority is carrying out in the Dudley MBC Local Authority Area.
- (2) Make any recommendations to Dudley MBC or West Midlands Combined Authority Officers on matters in this report for consideration.
- (3) Set out the frequency of updates from the West Midlands Combined Authority to both the Scrutiny Board and any other Member bodies within the Local Authority.

### 1. Purpose

- 1.1. This report seeks to set out the work that the West Midlands Combined Authority is carrying out within the Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council Area.
- 1.2. The report covers key directorates activity including skills, economy, strategy, transport, net zero, housing and health and communities.

- 1.3. The West Midlands Combined Authority recognises the role that the Borough plays in supporting the Combined Authority to deliver for the West Midlands Region.
- 1.4. The West Midlands Combined Authority is seeking to improve the engagement with the Constituent Authorities, and this report will be the first update in a series, of which the frequency is to be determined by the Board.
- 1.5. To date the West Midlands Combined Authority has either facilitated or influenced £514 million worth of investments in the Dudley MBC area. This equates to £1,608 per head.

## **2. Transport**

### **2.1. Overreaching Priorities**

- 2.1.1. Priorities are improving the reliability of public transport services, ensuring the continuation of bus routes in light of funding pressures, completing rail and metro infrastructure delivery, improving access by walking and cycling through improved infrastructure for the region and ensuring the road network operates safely, efficiently, and reliably.
- 2.1.2. Supporting the delivery of innovative transport solutions across the West Midlands.
- 2.1.3. The emerging programme of investment through CRSTS and long-term planning for the Single Settlement through the Local Transport Plan (LTP) and other policies will help to deliver a better connected, greener West Midlands.

### **2.2. Strategic Update**

#### **2.2.1. HS2 & Network North**

- In October 2023 Government announced the cancellation of HS2 north of the West Midlands with immediate effect. The key points from the announcement were:
  - ❖ HS2 Phase1 will be completed in full:
    - Both Euston (Central London) and Old Oak Common (Elizabeth Line connections) to the West Midlands stations at Interchange (NEC/Airport/Arden Cross) and Curzon St as well as to the junction with the West Coast Main Line at Handsacre (north of Lichfield)
  - ❖ The other proposed sections of HS2 will be scrapped with immediate effect:
    - HS2 Phase 2a (Handsacre to Crewe), HS2 Phase 2b (Crewe to Manchester), HS2 East (West Midlands to East Midlands Parkway and Midland Main Line)
  - ❖ Detailed work is underway to understand the impact of this decision on service patterns and frequencies on both the Phase 1 HS2 network and the existing conventional network.
  - ❖ The Mayors of WMCA and GMCA have announced a joint intention to improve connections between the West Midlands

and Greater Manchester, despite the cancellation of HS2 Phase 2. Work on an outline business case has already started.

- ❖ Due to the cancellation of HS2 Phase 2, £19.8bn have been reallocated to transport investments in the North, while £6.5bn are reallocated to the Midlands. As part of this, WMCA the indicative amount for CRSTS2 has increased by just over £1bn, from £1.566bn to £2.648bn. This is for the five-year period from 2027/28 to 2031/32.
- ❖ An additional £100m were announced by the Prime Minister as part of CRSTS1 to support the delivery of existing Metro extensions. These extensions are Wednesbury-Brierley Hill, Birmingham East Side Extension and Arden Cross as part of the HS2 station.
- ❖ The Network North proposals include building Midlands Rail Hub in full and this has had £1.75bn allocated to it. The project will be subject to full business case, planning and Transport & Works Act Order approvals. Due to the cancellation of HS2 East, it is expected that the West to East Midlands part of MRH will revert to delivering service enhancements to Tamworth, Derby, and Nottingham as well as to Nuneaton and Leicester.

### 2.3. Local Transport Plan Update

- 2.3.1. Developing the LTP is a statutory requirement and the responsibility for the WMCA.
- 2.3.2. The new LTP is called “Reimagining Transport in the West Midlands” and will be comprised of multiple parts including the Core Strategy, 6 Big Moves, 4 Area Strategies, and an Implementation Plan.
- 2.3.3. It sets out a high ambition for change in the transport system, with an emphasis on increasing public transport, walking, and cycling. It also embraces many positive changes which provide benefits for car users, including supporting zero emissions.
- 2.3.4. 6 Big Move strategies have also been approved by the CA Board, following consultation took place on drafts in 2023. These set out more detailed policies: Behaviour Change, Accessible & Inclusive Places, Walk, Wheel, Cycle and Scoot, Public Transport & Shared Mobility, A Safe, Efficient and Reliable Network, A Green Transport Revolution.
- 2.3.5. WMCA Board also committed WMCA and local authorities to collaborate on developing the four LTP Area Strategies (for Birmingham, Black Country, Coventry, and Solihull) which will set out and assess the impact of local proposals across the West Midlands. TfWM officers have worked closely with teams from Dudley and the Black Country over the last year on pulling the strategies together. The approach taken to develop the Area Strategies will also support with

the development of the future pipeline of schemes which will be delivered from 2027 onwards as part of CRSTS2/Single Settlement.

- 2.3.6. The single Implementation Plan will detail local proposals across the West Midlands including existing local priorities including projects currently funded for development through funds such as CRSTS, Active Travel Funds, and Towns Fund, as well as cross-cutting regional proposals. Details such as funding estimate, funding allocations, development stage, timelines, and the approach to developing the pipeline will be set out in the Implementation Plan.

## 2.4. Funding

- 2.4.1. In early February 2024, WMCA agreed the budget for 2024/25, which includes an indicative capital spending programme totalling £706.8m for that financial year.
- 2.4.2. The transport delivery budget for 2024/25 was approved at £198.3m, comprised of £119.4m from the transport levy (a 3.0% increase was not approved), £73.9m of grant income, and £5m windfall gains from treasury management.
- 2.4.3. TfWM has secured protection for existing bus network services until December 2024. Approximately £40m of the transformational BSIP will be repurposed to support the network. TfWM has secured formal agreements with operators to ensure value for money.
- 2.4.4. TfWM has also reported several cost and inflationary pressures to WMCA Board throughout 2023. DfT has permitted a one-off CRSTS re-baselining exercise for all MCA area. A TfWM Change Control and Rebasing request was submitted to DfT in late September and was approved by WMCA Board in January 2024.
- 2.4.5. WMCA are providing Dudley MBC with additional pothole funding for 2023/34 of £481,772, this is additional to highway maintenance and LNIP funding.
- 2.4.6. The WMCA's Single Settlement with the government may provide additional opportunities for funding from 2025/26 onwards.

## 2.5. Network Performance and Reliability

- 2.5.1. Bus services accommodate more than 4 million passenger journeys each week, but we have seen the region lose 12% of bus services between 2020 and October 2023.
- 2.5.2. Performance has seen improvements but does remain challenging for passengers. There have been driver shortages and, in 2023, services were severely impacted by strikes within National Express, with network performance being impacted in the run-up to this action. Operators have also experienced reduced patronage, reduced revenue, and a significant increase in costs.

- 2.5.3. Rail industrial action continues to feature. It has impacted performance and slowed the roll out of planned improvements. While issues with RMT have been resolved, progress in resolving dispute with ASLEF remain unclear.
- 2.5.4. The Regional Transport Coordination Centre (RTCC) continues to liaise closely with Dudley MBC and the Black Country UTC to make them aware of incidents that occur on the network and will likely have an impact on network operations and performance. The team ensure a multi-modal overview is provided to stakeholders and ensure that customer communication is coordinated and informed.
- 2.5.5. The Events & Emergency Planning team has integrated itself within Dudley MBC's event planning structure. This ensures that transport considerations are coordinated, and importantly supports our customers and spectators transport experience.

## 2.6. Bus Policy Delivery Options and Enhanced Partnership

- 2.6.1. TfWM has commissioned an independent assessment for future bus policy delivery options. This commission includes detailed options including a full franchise assessment. Work is ongoing and is scheduled to report to WMCA Board for a decision on how to proceed in summer 2024.
- 2.6.2. TfWM have worked closely with operators and local districts to create the 2nd Enhanced Partnership (EP) in the country. The EP covers the vehicle types, branding, payment options, on-board facilities and technology, journey time performance and which stops the bus service uses.
- 2.6.3. Variation 003 was made in September 2023 and expanded to include BSIP delivery. The areas covered by the Solihull AQPS and Wolverhampton AQPS were absorbed into the EP Scheme.

## 2.7. Road Safety

- 2.7.1. An updated regional road safety strategy has been approved by WMCA Board and an updated action plan is being developed. Formal consultation on the action plan will occur in February/March 2024.
- 2.7.2. The main themes of this refreshed strategy are to adopt a "Safe Systems approach" for: Safe road users, Safe vehicles, Safe speeds, Safe roads and mobility, Post-crash response.
- 2.7.3. In line with the LTP, the draft revised strategy includes a new target of a 50% reduction in the number of people Killed and Seriously Injured (KSIs) by 2030.
- 2.7.4. The refreshed strategy has been informed by valuable contributions of Dudley officers through attendance at the face-to-face road safety away days and receipt of written feedback.

## 2.8. Net Zero

- 2.8.1. Through Zero Emission Bus Regional Areas (ZEBRA), WMCA was awarded £29m from DfT to deliver 100 hydrogen powered buses and associated infrastructure plus 24 articulated electric buses for Sprint bus rapid transit routes. The project will deliver 100 hydrogen fuel cell buses and refuelling infrastructure as well as 24 battery electric articulated buses and charging infrastructure, subject to a business case review by the main partner National Express which is nearing completion. TfWM has also supported the region's second biggest operator, Diamond, in bidding for further ZEBRA 2 funding to support procurement of 14 buses, their first major step to electrifying their fleet.
- 2.8.2. Significant work is underway on updating the West Midlands ULEV and EV strategy to better align with the new LTP objectives. The refreshed Zero Emission Vehicle Infrastructure Strategy is expected to be finalised in mid-2024 and will set out new targets for charging infrastructure. TfWM is working with partners on delivering various types of EV infrastructure inclusively across the region through the CRSTS programme, government grants and collaboration with the private sector. WMCA is working closely with BC Transport team.

## 2.9. CRSTS Schemes

- 2.9.1. West Midlands City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement sees the WMCA receive £1.05bn in funding for investment in sustainable transport. To facilitate the effective delivery of these schemes, the dedicated Delivery Directorate was created within TfWM in 2023.
- 2.9.2. Work on phase one of the Wednesbury-Brierley Hill Metro Extension (from Wednesbury to Flood Street in Dudley town centre) will be complete in late 2024, following all safety checks, driver training, and the industry regulations satisfied as part of the safety into service, the route will then be open to the public. Some early works previously agreed for Phase 2 are nearing completion including essential maintenance works to Parkhill viaduct. Work on the updated Business Case, required as part of the additional funding from Government, on the extension beyond Dudley is underway.
- 2.9.3. Of this funding, £12m has been allocated to Coventry Very Light Rail (CVLR), based at the Very Light Rail National Innovation Centre in Dudley, which successfully ran on its test track for the first time in late 2023. This test run is leading up to a real-world demonstration of VLR in the streets of Coventry city centre.
- 2.9.4. £3m is allocated Stourbridge Town Centre Sustainable Connectivity Package, which includes active travel enhancements to improve safety and perception of safety. Delivery is expected to start in late 2024.

- 2.9.5. £20m is allocated to re-building Dudley Bus Station into Dudley Interchange, with improved connection to the Wednesbury to Brierly Hill Metro line which has a stop adjacent to this site. Delivery of this scheme is expected to be completed in Spring 2025.
- 2.9.6. TfWM will shortly commission support to undertake a study into transport improvements in the Walsall to Stourbridge corridor, considering how to connect Walsall to Wednesbury and Brierley Hill to Stourbridge building links to the WBHE metro being delivered. It is anticipated that this study will report later in 2024.

### **3. Skills, Health and Communities**

#### **3.1. Overarching Priorities**

- 3.1.1. The WMCA has recently launched its Employment and Skills Strategy 2024-2027. The strategy seeks to build further on this success by setting out a vision for an integrated employment and skills system for the region, through which we can stimulate economic growth, deliver better outcomes for residents and businesses, and create healthier thriving communities. Over the next three years, we will continue our focus on four key pillars:
- Building strong and inclusive communities.
  - Providing a good education up to level 2.
  - Supporting residents into-employment and supporting career progression.
  - Meeting future skills needs at level 3 and above through upskilling and reskilling.
- 3.1.2. We will also invest in the development of an effective regional ecosystem for employment and skills, building the leadership capacity and capability to transform outcomes for residents, businesses, and the region.

#### **3.2. UK Shared Prosperity Fund**

- 3.2.1. The total allocation over the three-year programme (2022-2025) is £6,925,826.
- 3.2.2. We are currently in Year 2 of the allocation which sits at £2,173,400 (including a £110,000 management fee). This is split into Capital (£459,746) and Revenue (£1,603,654).
- 3.2.3. This has been split into pillars with projects sat under each pillar theme.
- Business Support Pillar Projects - Centrally designed within the Hub & Spoke Business Growth West Midlands model. WMCA manage grants programmes to provide a feed in of businesses to access the locally managed grants programmes.
    - ❖ SME Grants: £343,378 - WM SME Grants Programme aims to improve economic prosperity by stimulating business and



enterprise activity, improving business confidence, encouraging investment, upskilling, and creating local jobs. Grant funding of £2,500 to £100k with up to a 50:50 match should be offered to businesses.

- ❖ NZ Grants: £167,874 - Net Zero Grants aims at removing financial barriers and enabling SMEs to make carbon savings through increased energy and resource efficiency. Up to 50:50 matched grant funding of £2.5k - £7.5k for new business start-ups and £5k to £100k for established SMEs.
- ❖ Business Advisors: £460,800 - Business Growth West Midlands work closely with the locally funded Business Advisors to offer local business advice and support, with the main objective to reduce fragmentation and offer a consistent, unified, and standardised business support offer in the region in coordination with the local partners.
- Communities & Place Pillar Projects
  - ❖ Vibrant Town Centres and Places – £375,828 – Dudley Town Centre improvements and pilot project to develop a town centre partnership. Targeted support to retail and leisure businesses, increasing the diversity of use (vacant premises) and encouraging alternative uses within public spaces to increase vibrancy.
  - ❖ Community Capacity Building – £32,214 – Capacity building for community organisations through forums and workshops including bid writing and managing projects.
  - ❖ Destination Marketing – £80,535 – Promotion and marketing campaign for Dudley's local areas of historic interest, visitor attractions, and experiences to increase visitors and pride in place.
  - ❖ Cultural Heritage – £80,535 – Create and deliver a cultural strategy for the borough. Enable cultural activity and events via the promotion of spaces where events can be held and piloting a cultural calendar of events to improve the visitor experience.
  - ❖ Community Engagement – £236,235 – Pilot a consistent and community led participatory structure / structure for engagement and local democracy
  - ❖ Digital inclusion - £16,107 – Investment and support for digital connectivity in local community facilities.
  - ❖ Start-up Support - £161,069 - Start-up and growth support including incubation to improve the life chances of new

businesses. The budget will be used to commission start-up support appropriate to Dudley's needs.

- ❖ People & Skills development – £108,827 – Development work in preparation for year 3 people and skills delivery.

### 3.3. Commonwealth Games Legacy Enhancement Fund

3.3.1. The total amount that has been awarded to Dudley Council for the full 2-year period is £801,714.28 which will be split over the 2 years, providing an annual award for financial years 2023/24 of £237,126.95 and 2024/25 of £564,587.33. The programme will deliver 5 projects within the Dudley area.

3.3.2. The targeted support offer will be delivered in Partnership with NHS and DMBC through the 'I can' project. This will include:

- Sector-based employment programmes for underrepresented group
- JD, Job Spec standardisation toolkits
- Liaising with HOS – vacancies, recruitment and campaigns, partnership work to support recruitment.
- Graduate pathway into professional roles, Career pathways and workforce planning
- Volunteer coordination & employment support for 'not job ready' and 'over 50's returners. Progression into WEX and employment support
- Social Value linked opportunities – work with employers and developers to engage and support residents into training and work opportunities.

3.3.3. The regional careers offer will work with Pre 16 and Post 16 cohorts that impacts NEET and Not known performance.

- Your Future – Your Choice initiative (Pre 16) for those at Risk of NEET (non-statutory cohort).
- Tracking and Follow-up (Fieldwork) to undertake home visitation for Not Known or disengaged NEET young people.
- Post 16 NEET 1-1 Support to access education, employment, and training
- SEND Employment Advisory work - analysis of NEET to develop a business case addressing identified employability needs requiring a broader or more specific offer.

3.3.4. Jobs and Skills hubs will be developed within deprived communities of Castle and Priory, Netherton, Woodside and St Andrews and Brierley Hill. The Hub will be a bespoke model of delivery with both statutory and community partners accessing and delivering within the "one-stop" approach.

- Access to digital

- Options for meeting with key professionals such as housing and CAB
  - Education and employers
  - Access to specialist VCS providers to meet with and support residents.
- 3.3.5. The Paid Work Placement model will offer 10 residents aged 18-29 years, furthest away from the labour market a bespoke work experience opportunity with local employers for a duration of 3 months - 16 hrs per week.
- Ongoing employability support – CV, Interview, presentation skills etc.
  - Enrolled into Gateway training as well as English and maths through Multiply.
- 3.3.6. The Mentoring support (Pre & Post 16 Support) project will support YP in achieving many outcomes and provide:
- 1 to 1 and Group Support
  - Winning Mentality programme
  - Educational Transition programmes
  - Counselling
  - Motivation & building confidence & self-esteem.
  - Managing behaviour and relationships,
  - Improving coping strategies

### 3.4. Multiply

- 3.4.1. Multiply offers financial literacy programmes to residents across the WMCA area. Total funding in Dudley, over 3 years, is £529,030. This is broken down by years as follows, Y1 –£62,800, Y2 - £233,115 and Y3 - £233,115.
- 3.4.2. The project is focussed on supporting residents with Financial Resilience & Family Finance.
- 3.4.3. Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council, in partnership with community organisations and Citizens Advice Bureau are delivering Multiply courses to employed residents across Dudley.
- 3.4.4. Dudley residents earn on average £589.20 per week for full time work which is significantly lower than the national average of £610.70. Through a blended offer of face to face and online learning, Dudley residents access the fully flexible financial resilience course and learn how to get their day-to-day costs down, understand credit, overdrafts and loans and how to use digital resources to manage budgets and financial commitments. Following the courses, residents have the opportunity to be referred for professional support or to progress onto further learning funded through Adult Education Budget.

- 3.4.5. The Family Finance course, aimed at employed residents on low incomes, is a 10-week programme which explores cutting costs and saving money. It focuses on participants gaining a generational change of attitude towards financial literacy where they learn how to cut costs and make everyday savings and how to become more sustainable to save the planet and the pennies.
- 3.4.6. Dudley residents can benefit from a package of support through accessing Multiply. Where residents are eligible, they receive digital support and devices through the Connected Services Fund. Supporting residents to increase both digital & numeracy skills increase opportunities for residents to access good work and has wider health and wellbeing benefits.
- 3.4.7. Delivered in the community as a time a place accessible to employed residents may be engaging with formal learning for the first time and the courses offer a chance for residents to gain a new level of confidence in an environment where they feel comfortable. Venues include libraries, schools, community centres and council locations. To ensure the success of the project, the content is linked to the very real needs of the Dudley residents to ensure they feel the value in participating.

### 3.5. Carers and Enterprise Company (CEC) Programme

3.5.1. Total funding allocation for the Academic Year (Sept 2023 - August 2024) is £69,969.

3.5.2. This is broken down to:

<b>Funding Area</b>	<b>Funding Allocation Max</b>	<b>LA match Req</b>	<b>Phased Release</b>
Coordinator Posts 1.5 inc provision for 1 FTE to be a Senior Post	£45 989	£45 989	Paid in arrears by claim over 4 periods
Local Hub Fund (based on £500 per institution with a signed MOU)	£15 000	0	Paid on termly profile subject to Delivery Plan approval and evidence of spend
Disadvantage (FSM) Uplift	£4 000	0	Paid on termly profile subject to Delivery Plan approval and evidence of spend
Teacher Encounters Fund	£4 980	0	Paid on termly profile subject to Delivery Plan approval and evidence of spend

- 3.5.3. The Local Hub Fund will enable all Hubs to improve careers provision in schools and colleges and as such allocation of spend and reflected in the LA Delivery Plan is:
- c30 % of fund to: Provide more high-quality experiences of the world of work for students
  - c30% of fund to: Amplify apprenticeships, technical and vocational routes
  - c30% of fund to: Target interventions for economically disadvantaged young people, those who face barriers, under-represented groups and those at risk of becoming NEET
  - c10% of fund to: Local Priorities
- 3.5.4. All schools and colleges complete a compass audit to measure themselves against the Gatsby benchmarks.
- 3.5.5. The eight Gatsby benchmarks serve as a framework for world class careers provision and have been adopted as part of the Government's Careers Strategy and are statutory guidance for schools and guidance for colleges. In addition, the Carers & Enterprise Company now supports the implementation of the benchmarks in education with a national network of support, resources and targeted funding.
- 3.5.6. The eight Gatsby benchmarks of good careers guidance are:
- A stable career programme,
  - Learning from careers and labour market information,
  - Addressing the need of each pupil
  - Linking curriculum to careers,
  - Encounters with employers and employees
  - Experiences of workplaces,
  - Encounters with further and higher education,
  - Personal guidance

### 3.6. Adult Education Budget

#### 3.6.1. Labour Market/Residents Summary

- When looking at residents with no basic quals (i.e. holding none or just at entry/L1), Dudley sits at 27%, which is slightly lower than the wider WM (28%), but higher than the UK (22%).
- There are 9,040 claimants aged 16+. This represents 4.6% of claimants, which is slightly higher than the England average of 3.7%
- The number of people in Dudley who are economically inactive stands at 37,100 (a decrease of 1,300 since Jan 23) and of those, there's no data to outline how many of those do want to find work.

### 3.6.2. AEB Provision 2022/23

- At the end of the academic year in 2022/23, Dudley had received £7.87m AEB funding which represents 7% of the CA region.
- This funding is attributed to 4,500 learners undertaking 9,600 qualifications/courses.
- A total of 70 providers have delivered in Dudley with Dudley College delivering the bulk of training.
- Halesowen College, Dudley MBC, Wolverhampton & Telford College have all delivered significant training in Dudley during 2022/23.
- 2022/23 saw a significant increase in into employment programmes and skills bootcamps.
- Largest proportion of provision is a Level X and Level 2, although Entry and Level 2 have decreased.
- The largest proportion of delivery was in SSA14 (preparation for life and work). We decreased delivery in SSA5 (construction, planning and the built environment) and SSA14 when compared to 2021/22.
- Positive destinations (education or employment) in Dudley need to increase from 2021/22 to achieve the minimum of 65% positive progression.
- There are huge opportunities to flex and innovate delivery to meet the vacancy demands of Dudley.

### 3.6.3. AEB Provision 2023/24 To Date

- Dudley funding for 2023/24 at December 2023 is £2.71m, which is 7% of WMCA funding for this period.
- Dudley has had 2,715 Learners, and 4,305 Courses/Qualifications, this is 6% of the WMCA, which is slightly below 2022/23 which ended at 7%
- Into Employment programmes are currently at 8% of enrolments, at the same period in 2022/23 Into Employment programmes were at 9% of the enrolments for Dudley, so this is a slight improvement.
- ESOL & Functional Skills programmes are at 4% currently, which is slightly lower than this time in 2022/23 (5%).
- L4/L5 delivery has started to see an increase. To date, there have been 126 Enrolments which is 15% of 23/24 Enrolments. In the same period in 2022/23, it was 16%.
- Positive Destinations is currently at 30% (30% Employment, 8% Education)

### 3.7. Skills Bootcamps

- 3.7.1. Skills Bootcamps are a free, practical and engaging short course designed to equip residents with the knowledge and skills needed by employers across the region. Courses cover a variety of skills that are currently in-demand, they last up to 16 weeks and are fully funded.
- 3.7.2. The Courses cover logistics, retrofit (EV Charging, Installation skills, Heat Pump), Advanced Manufacturing and Engineering, Green Professionals (Net Zero), and Digital.
- 3.7.3. Dudley residents have benefitted from £698,400 of bootcamp funding across the last 2 years with a total of 287 learners undertaking a skills bootcamp.
- 3.7.4. Of that total, 122 learners have undertaken programmes in 2023/24 at a funding value of £290,500.

### 3.8. Free Courses For Jobs

- 3.8.1. People in the West Midlands earning £30,000 a year or less can take advantage of free Level 3 job-related training. A Level 3 qualification is equivalent to an advanced technical certificate or diploma, or two A levels.
- 3.8.2. The annual wage limit was agreed at £30,000 as this is the average salary in the West Midlands.
- 3.8.3. Improving the region's qualification levels is key to delivering the WMCA's ambitions for a healthier, happier, better connected and more prosperous West Midlands.
- 3.8.4. Recent research has shown that adults who boost their skills and gain new qualifications are more likely to be employed, earn more, and are less likely to need to claim benefits than those without.
- 3.8.5. Residents in Dudley accessed £614,400 of funding in 2022/23 and to date in 2023/24 have accessed £885,000. There is significant additional budget available for residents to benefit from.

### 3.9. Health & Communities

- 3.9.1. There are a number of schemes across the Local Authority area. These are detailed below:
  - £30k TfWM Active travel funding led by the Health and Communities Team to Active Black Country which led to co-funded Love Explore project which led to over 8,000 Black Country residents visiting local parks across the Black Country including local Dudley papers.
  - £150k into Active Black Country to work with the 4 Local Authorities and CVSs to pilot Black Country Moving (placed based community project) creating a network of community connectors including in Brierley Hill, St James and St Thomas, this pilot informed the successful Black Country Sport England bid for Commonwealth

Active Communities, working together to remove barriers and get more people active.

- ❖ This work is now going to extended through an imminent £330k capacity grant to Active Black Country's CAC, now Place Based Partnership to strengthen stakeholder maturity, work with the community, get more people active and reduce inequalities plus a £80k to extend the monitoring, evaluation and learning plans across the 4 PbP.
- The WMCA also worked with Sport England and partners to assess the 3000 applications for CWG games equipment for which many Dudley community sport organisations are benefitting
- The Health and Communities team designed the sport, physical active and mental wellbeing criteria and grant thresholds for the CWG Legacy Inclusive Communities Fund for which over 1000 people have attended briefings and the results of the first successful applicants will be know very soon.
- The 3 other WMCA Sport England funded pilot projects – triage service to build the capacity of trusted organisations, testing the integration of physical activity as part of the mental health care pathway and extending the United by 2022 trailblazer sport volunteering project Gen 22 has the potential to benefit and impact on Dudley MBC and the WMCA will work with the Council to explore this.
- The WMCA is concluding a report to understand the barriers, good practice and enablers to get more people from the LGBTQ community area, this insight, similar to disabled people and sport work will help inform local planning and practice.
- £15k funding to lead on Dudley's element of the WMCA Feasibility Study as part of the submission to be one of DfT's social prescribing pilots. Although the bid was not successful, it has developed better awareness of social prescribing of walking and cycling initiatives.
- £73k TfWM Active travel funding led by Health and Communities team into Active Black Country charity to pilot work across the 4 Black Country authorities to get more people with health conditions prescribed to physical activity working with the Integrated care board and other providers in the area. This informed the work above and the impact of this project was to get more people walking, more prescribing of physical activity and improved mental health and wellbeing including better sleep.
- £80k budget generated including £40k from the WMCA for the Cycling Facilities Business Case, as one of the WM Mayor's priorities



and in response to the Halesowen Athletics and Cycling Club's campaigning. Ongoing discussions with Dudley MBC about potential benefit, impact and communications, with an option of next stage site feasibility study.

- £15k was granted to Dudley MBC to co-fund community insight to understand the actions to address the identified barriers identified through the delivery of Beat the Streets during the CWG games. This report has been used to inform the delivery of the Community Connectors and other investment. For the WMCA this report has been used for case making to change TfWM walking and cycling policy and practice.
- Funded Active Black Country to develop the evidence and provide the training to health professionals about the benefits of a physical health and activity conversation with disabled people to inform practice.
- 5 organisations from Dudley area are working to Include Me WM a pledge to be more inclusive in their programming and work with disabled people.
- The WMCA offers a workforce wellbeing programme, Thrive at Work, which accredits 'employers of choice' across the region, including Dudley. Employers that make a commitment to improve their employee health and wellbeing offer are supported through our Thrive at Work (best practice) framework, with our toolkit and continuous guidance, evidencing how they meet the framework's criteria on their journey to accreditation. Current programme funding (£1.5m across July 2022 – March 2024) comes from our role as delivery partner of the Mental Health and Productivity Pilot (MHPP) via Midlands Engine.
- The WMCA also offers Thrive into Work, an intensive employment support programme for residents with health barriers to work, based on an Individual Placement and Support (IPS) model. This is currently funded (£7.9m across financial years 2023-24 and 2024-25) by DWP's IPS in Primary Care initiative (IPSPC), and acts as a trailblazer for the forthcoming Universal Support. Across Dudley, this is delivered by our partner Black Country Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust. We also have a specialist neurodiversity pathway available to residents across the region, also delivered by BCHFT.
- Following the Autumn Statement announcement of a suite of measures to address health and employment, we worked with Black Country Integrated Care Board colleagues to support their bid to become a 'vanguard' site for the forthcoming WorkWell Partnership

programme, a joint DWP / DHSC initiative intended to provide an early intervention / low intensity service for those with health barriers to work and a single 'front door' for further interventions.

- The WMCA, with its subsidiary body WM5G, has secured £10m DLUHC funding (for financial years 2023-24 and 2024-25) to pilot / scale up digital health-tech innovations with our three local Integrated Care Boards. Through this, our Smart City Region programme, we are working closely with Birmingham and Solihull Integrated Care Board and local authority colleagues on remote monitoring, home diagnostics, a digital preventative health and wellbeing tool for employees (including the health and social care workforce) and transferable 'smart hospital' initiatives.

## **4. Strategy, Economy and Net Zero**

### **4.1. Trailblazer Deeper Devolution Deal**

- 4.1.1. The deal contains over 190 different commitments. Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council will benefit from specific benefits to Dudley and from the benefits that will be felt by the region as a whole.
- 4.1.2. The deal gives Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council 10-year certainty over its ability to retain business rates growth. The current rolling 100% business rate retention pilot could cease at any point. The deal therefore increases Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council's financial certainty.
- 4.1.3. The deal gives the region £100 million for town centre and estate regeneration and to support the delivery of complex housing sites, which is accessible to Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council. This is additional to the commitment to give the region more control over the Affordable Housing Programme, working with Homes England.
- 4.1.4. The deal gives the region new partnerships with Government in policy areas that are a priority for Dudley – skills and employment support services, housing, culture, digital infrastructure and economic development. They will bring policymaking closer to Dudley and offer opportunities to tailor policy to its local circumstances.
- 4.1.5. The Single Settlement:
  - Will enable Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council to contribute to the development of place-based strategies across the region. The strategies will bring together transport, housing, skills, net zero and local growth funding, to increase inclusive economic growth in targeted places across the region.
  - Will give Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council more influence over funding decisions. Through their role on WMCA Board, the Leader of Dudley will gain significantly more power over how funding devolved into the single settlement is prioritised across the region.

- Will give the region significantly more flexibility over funding decisions. WMCA will be able to select and fund projects to address the challenges facing the region with respect to levelling up, working towards an outcomes framework that will be jointly agreed between WMCA and government.
- Will increase certainty over the funding we receive through the single settlement. The settlement will offer a multi-year block grant, lasting for each Spending Review period, as opposed to the patchwork of 1- and 2-year grants we currently receive – strengthening our ability to do long-term economic planning across the region.
- The deal gives the region more flexibility over Skills Bootcamps, Free Courses for Jobs and future adult skills funding than any other area of England. This skills funding, along with partnership agreements with DWP and DfE, will allow us to shape the adult skills and education offer to better serve the needs of Dudley residents and be more closely aligned with current and emerging needs within the local labour market.
- People in Dudley will face fewer barriers to using public transport as a result of the commitment from government to integrate different modes of transport. This will open up economic opportunities for people and businesses in Sandwell. The deal also provides the region with the opportunity to have greater oversight of funding support for bus operators with the devolution of the Bus Services Operators Grant (BSOG).

## 4.2. Investment Zone

- 4.2.1. Although Dudley is not one of the local authority areas containing an Investment Zone site, it can still benefit in the long-term through the reinvestment of retained business rates into the primary economic sector – advanced manufacturing, around electric vehicles and battery technology, and its intersection with green industries, digital and health-tech. As such, it is important to note that government have accepted the region's Investment Zone proposition and the detailed approval is currently passing through parliamentary processes.
- 4.2.2. Once passed, this will see tax incentives and business rate retention sites at Birmingham Knowledge Quarter and Coventry-Warwick Gigapark, and capital investment into those sites and the Wolverhampton Green Innovation Corridor.
- 4.2.3. Dudley, and its businesses and residents, should also benefit from the range of business and skills support programmes also funded through the IZ which are being applied across the region. The £19m for these programmes will support businesses in R&D and supply chain development, as well as underpinning 'Angel funding' for

growing innovators, as well as skills support for residents, particularly in Levels 4/5.

#### **4.3. Energy**

- 4.3.1. Energy Capital works with Dudley MBC on all of its primary work areas; energy infrastructure, energy policy and retrofit.
- 4.3.2. The region is currently gearing up to input to the new Regional Energy Strategic Planning (RESP) process which OfGEM announced on the 15 November 2023. Energy Capital has been shaping this work with OfGEM to enhance the voice of places in the energy planning process through a project funded by OfGEMs Strategic Innovation Fund, called Project PRIDE. Dudley is a member of the Local Area Energy Planning Co-ordination Group (LAEP-CG), which is a local authority group leading the delivery of local area energy planning across the West Midlands to inform RESP. Fiona Mahon as Head of Energy, Sustainability and Climate Change is Dudley’s representative on this group and has commented that it is a useful forum to understand strategic implications of energy planning processes.
- 4.3.3. As part of Project PRIDE, Energy Capital is working with National Grid and Advanced Infrastructure, to develop a digital tool which will enhance West Midlands local authorities’ ability to engage in the energy system planning process, by providing data, insights and a valuable engagement tool. Dudley in the process of onboarding onto this platform with Harj Rayet having attended a number of training sessions and fed back as to the usefulness of the tool. We are keen to continue to trial this approach and understand the wider benefits of the LAEP data foundations development work, particularly as we have an opportunity to apply for further funding to expand this platform in terms of data availability and further functionality. We would especially like to understand how to account for major developments such as Dudley bus station and what impact this has on the wider community.
- 4.3.4. The Energy Capital team has also been working with Dudley on their district heating plans, both the immediate opportunities afforded by waste heat sources in the borough but more strategically by convening the Local Area Energy Plan Sub-Group on Heat. The remit of this group is to discuss a regional approach to heat networks and are working up a collective response to the DESNZ consultation on Heat Network Zoning Coordinator Role. If the national policy develops as indicated, it will mean new and significant responsibilities for a “heat network zone coordinator” to identify heat network zones, enter into commercial arrangements with the private sector to develop the heat networks within the zones, and enforce connections to qualifying buildings that will be mandated to connect. Energy Capital is working closing with Fiona and her team to discover the implications of the

various responsibilities of the role and pro-actively plan how to deliver the benefits of the proposals whilst managing and mitigating the inherent risks.

- 4.3.5. Dudley MBC has also been working closely with the Energy Capital delivery team on retrofit and form part of the WMCA led consortium on SHDF Wave 2.1 with the purpose of delivering energy efficient measures to around 27 tenanted properties within the borough, by September 2025. In addition, Energy Capital is also managing the HUG 2 programme on behalf of Dudley MBC, with the purpose of installing upgraded energy measures to approximately 70 privately owned homes which are “off gas” , the programme is currently targeting homes within the Brockmoor area of the borough. Energy Capital are also providing full customer journey and delivery support in order to achieve the target number of properties and establish “sign up “ of those residents who qualify through the schemes criteria, namely privately owned, off gas, and a gross household income of £31k or less. (This is now being reviewed by DESNZ and will increase to £36k from 2nd April 2024 ), project completion is 31 March 2025.
- 4.3.6. Dudley MBC is also working in partnership with the Energy Capital team to deliver the regions first Net Zero Neighbourhood as part of a regional cohort, with the other constituent local authorities. The project team comprises of Energy Capital & Dudley MBC, their lead partner EQUANS and a multi-disciplinary consortium of partners who will deliver energy systems, mobility and built environment improvements to the residents of Brockmoor. Energy Capital has been working closely with Dudley MBC as the project has entered its first phase of delivery consisting of an initial wave of community engagement events, retrofit assessments and installation of temperature & air quality sensors (both indoor & outdoor). Dudley MBC, through their participation in the Net Zero Neighbourhoods working group, are providing significant amounts of learnings and insights from the Brockmoor project to the other members of the regional cohort.

## **5. Housing, Property and Regeneration**

- 5.1. The Directorate has been holding six weekly Local Authority meetings with Helen Martin (Director of Regeneration and Enterprise, DMBC) and her team to discuss property and grant cases. More recently, since the WMCA has appointed a new Head of Development and Delivery, we have moved to a quarterly engagement meeting. We consider this revised arrangement will deliver several benefits, including:
- 5.2. Allowing greater project advancement – thereby facilitating a deeper, broader and more strategic discussion between stakeholders regarding key decisions that support and enable the progression of projects, programmes and associated initiatives.

- 5.3. Promoting active project level conversations – during the intervening period encouraging greater collaboration with lead HPR Development Managers and their counterpart Local Authority contacts.
- 5.4. Alongside this, we work closely with Mark Clarke (Head of Regeneration Projects) to understand the local regeneration priorities, the constraints, possible collaboration, and likely timelines to bring forwards these projects.
- 5.5. Work is ongoing in relation to projects at Daniels land, Portersfield and Brierley Hill Access Link. In addition to these projects where Dudley Council is/has been the applicant, the WMCA is also working with three private sector developers on grant applications at Stallings Lane, Blowers Green and Thorns Road.
- 5.6. Previous and ongoing schemes include Dudley College of Technology, Black Country Living Museum, Cookley Works, Cavendish House and Wallows Road.
- 5.7. Also worth highlighting, following engagement on the Social Housing Decency Fund, the WMCA is providing £2.1m grant towards ventilation, insulation and heating works to 192 properties.
- 5.8. More details of current projects can be found in the tracker circulated to Members outside of the agenda pack.

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**Meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee – 27<sup>th</sup> March, 2024**

**Report of the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA)**

**Overview and Scrutiny - 5th Annual Report 2022/23**

**Purpose of report**

1. This report sets out the work of the West Midlands Combined Authority Scrutiny function in the Municipal Year 2022/23.

**Recommendations**

2. That the Committee note and comment on the report.

**Background**

3. Overview and scrutiny are statutory functions of the WMCA. The Overview & Scrutiny Committee discharges these responsibilities through oversight of the work of the Mayor, Portfolio Lead Members and the wider WMCA decision making process in order to hold decision makers to account and improve the quality of the decisions (whether planned, underway or implemented) that the WMCA takes.

Overview & Scrutiny Committee members may make recommendations to the WMCA Board and other committees, call-in decisions for further scrutiny and challenge those whether planned, underway or implemented. The committee acts as an advocate for residents of the West Midlands by investigating issues that are important to local people's lives and by looking further into matters brought to its attention by the public.

**Finance**

4. There are no financial implications arising from the consideration of this annual report from West Midlands Combined Authority.

## **Law**

5. Overview and scrutiny are statutory functions of the WMCA.

## **Risk Management**

6. There are no implications relating to the Council's Risk Management Framework.

## **Equality Impact**

7. Our governance arrangements make provision for the overview and scrutiny of equality, diversity and inclusion.

## **Human Resources/Organisational Development**

8. The annual report has been prepared by Officers of West Midlands Combined Authority.

## **Commercial/Procurement**

9. There are no direct commercial or procurement implications in connection with the consideration of the annual report.

## **Environment/Climate Change**

10. Dudley Council has declared a Climate Emergency and is committed to work to address Climate Change and achieve the Net Zero target.

## **Council Priorities and Projects**

11. Overview and Scrutiny is a key element of our governance arrangements to underpin the delivery of key priorities.



## **West Midlands Combined Authority – Member Relationship Manager**

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Email: [james.hughes@wmca.org.uk](mailto:james.hughes@wmca.org.uk)

## **Appendices**

- Appendix 1 – Annual Report

## **List of Background Documents**

None





**West Midlands**  
Combined Authority

**Overview & Scrutiny**  
**5th Annual Report 2022/23**



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STATION CITY  
KENTHURST  
CENTRAL  
SIX

# Contents

5	Foreword
6	Introduction
7	What We Do and How We Do It
9	Holding The Mayor Of The West Midlands
9	And The Portfolio Lead Members To Account
10	Mayoral Q&A Sessions - Key Findings
12	Areas of Focus 2022/23
14	Scrutiny Working Groups 2022/23
15	Effectiveness and Outcome
16	Deep Dive Review:
17	A Look Back: Scrutiny Reviews 2021/22 -
17	Where Are We Now?
18	Transport Scrutiny Sub-Committee
18	Holding Those Responsible For Transport To Account
19	Transport Scrutiny Sub-Committee
20	Transport Scrutiny Sub-Committee Continued
21	Peer Learning and Sector Lead Improvement
22	Looking Forward 2023/2024
23	Committee Members 2022/23
24	Sub-Committee Members 2022/23



# Foreword

The last 12 months have been the busiest year of scrutiny since I have been sitting on the committee from 2018!

We started the year with the news that, along with Greater Manchester Combined Authority, we had been selected as partners in the Government's Trailblazer Devolution Deal, with all 'asks' believed to be on the table. Scrutiny had a big role to play in shaping these asks and offering a sense-check on ambitions and the resources available to deliver them. We held five working groups over the summer months and looked at every aspect the WMCA was putting forward. This demonstrated the absolute value of pre-decision scrutiny, helped to shape the final proposals submitted to the Government and demonstrated the strength of good governance. The Deeper Devolution Deal, as it has finally been called, will also be the catalyst for Government seeking to increase and the strengthen the role of scrutiny across all combined authorities and local authorities to ensure robust oversight.

The year also saw two strands of the governance review progressed, with the transport governance recommendations hopefully being signed off at the WMCA's upcoming AGM.



**Chair – Councillor**  
Cathy Bayton

As Chair, along with the support of Lyndsey Roberts, we have convened two meetings of the chairs and vice-chairs of all combined authorities across England. This has helped share good practice and ideas for how we can all strengthen and improve our scrutiny functions. We have agreed it is a useful meeting and to convene three further meetings during the next year.

The members of both Overview & Scrutiny Committee and Transport Scrutiny Sub-Committee have worked diligently, challenging and offering constructive observations to policy and delivery. I want to thank all of them as the demands on their time this year have been greater than ever and as their Chair, I have hugely valued their constructive support and contributions. I want to pay particular thanks to Councillor Naeem Akhtar from Coventry as Vice-Chair of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee and Councillor Chaman Lal from Birmingham as Vice-Chair of the Transport Scrutiny Sub-Committee. I also wish Councillor Lal every success in his forthcoming role as Lord Mayor of Birmingham. We have struggled again with the quorum this year, and it is hoped that the proposals contained within the new Levelling Up & Regeneration Bill to give powers to remunerate statutory committees may well help this issue. But it is also really important when local authorities nominate members to sit on our committees, those individuals have the capacity to commit to the work programme ahead.

As always, the backbone of the scrutiny function at the WMCA is the support that we receive from officers Lyndsey Roberts, Dan Essex and more recently Julia Cleary. Without their continued hard work to ensure the meetings have all the information they require, and the support offered to me as chair, the scrutiny function would not be as effective.

## Introduction

We are pleased to present the Overview & Scrutiny Committee's fifth annual report which outlines its focus, key work activities and the outcomes achieved during the 2022/23 municipal year.

Overview and scrutiny are statutory functions of the WMCA. The Overview & Scrutiny Committee discharges these responsibilities through oversight of the work of the Mayor, portfolio lead members and the wider WMCA decision making process in order to hold decision makers to account and improve the quality of the decisions (whether planned, underway or implemented) that the WMCA takes.

Overview & Scrutiny Committee members may make recommendations to the WMCA Board and other committees, call-in decisions for further scrutiny and challenge those whether planned, underway or implemented. The committee acts as an advocate for residents of the West Midlands by investigating issues that are important to local people's lives and by looking further into matters brought to its attention by the public. From reviewing the asks of the 'Trailblazer' Deeper Devolution Deal to understand the tangible benefits for residents of the West Midlands, value for money to scrutinising the impact of the devolution of the Adult Education Budget to the WMCA on the delivery of local skills training, the Overview & Scrutiny Committee, comprising the region's local councillors and business sector representatives is the body that is charged with providing this critical challenge.

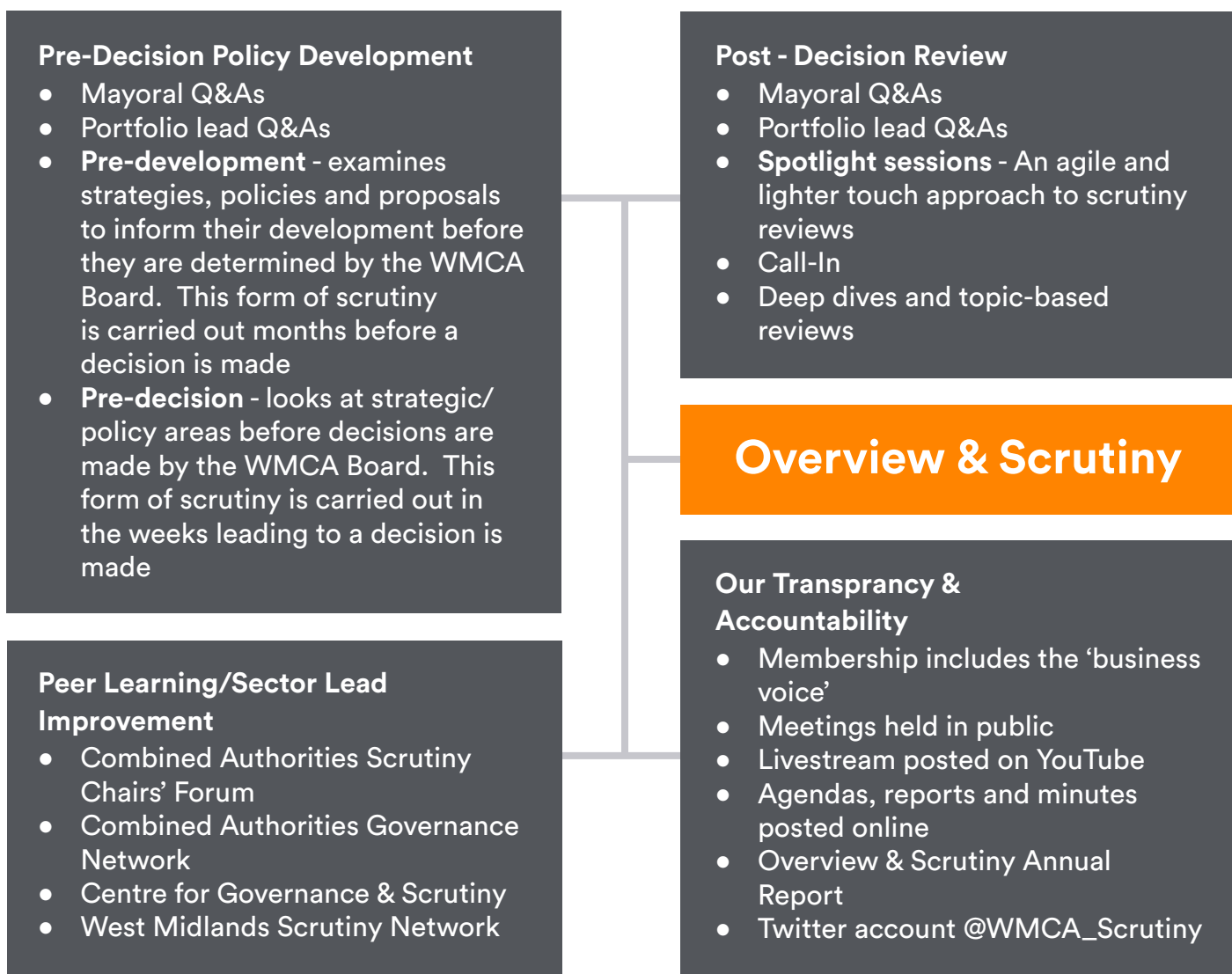
Scrutiny is a fundamental part of any efficient and equitable governance structure and decision-making process. Scrutiny is at the heart of good decision-making, which the WMCA has welcomed, encouraged and supported throughout the organisation.

While the committee's membership includes local councillors nominated by the WMCA's 18 member councils, it also has a representative from the business sector. This brings a business voice to discussions and ensures that the views of the region's commercial sector are heard at the highest levels of decision making.

The committee performs two functions 'overview' and 'scrutiny'. Overview focuses on the development of policy, and scrutiny that looks at decisions that have been made or are about to be made.



# What We Do and How We Do It



## Overview & Scrutiny's Focus for the Year

Due to the current economic situation in the region and the rise in the cost of living across the UK, it was important for Overview & Scrutiny Committee to ensure that the powers of the WMCA and its policies were delivering for the people of the West Midlands.

## Overview & Scrutiny Committee in 2022/23

This past year the committee focused on the 'Trailblazer' Deeper Devolution Deal proposals, the UK Shared Prosperity Fund Investment Plan, progress against the delivery of the 'Five Year Plan' to make the West Midlands net zero by 2041, the affordable housing supply strategy and delivery pilot, and the impact of the Adult Education Budget and how it was meeting the needs of the area, the employer and the disadvantaged. The committee has continued to have broad oversight of the policies of the WMCA and has reviewed the effectiveness of its key decisions. It has an important role in reviewing and scrutinising the Mayor, portfolio lead members, the WMCA and Transport for West Midlands in respect of plans, priorities, corporate governance arrangements and financial matters.



West  
Midlands  
Railway



# Holding The Mayor Of The West Midlands And The Portfolio Lead Members To Account

The committee has undertaken a number of public Mayoral Q&A sessions, structured around two core themes ‘accountability and investment’ with questions focusing on the key challenges, outcomes and benefits for the people of the West Midlands region.

In October, the committee questioned the Mayor on the delivery and impact of the WMCA’s policies. Questions focussed on:

- Cost of living pressures
- The WMCA’s ambition vs resource
- Investment Zones and potential unintended consequences for the wider economy
- WMCA’s ‘Trailblazer’ Deeper Devolution Deal
- The Levelling Up & Regeneration Bill
- Environment
- Skills
- Transport

In December, the committee held its second Q&A and questioned the Mayor and the Lead Member for Finance on financial matters relating to the developing budget for 2023/24, with a particular focus on:

- Financial challenges and sustainability of the budget
- Investment Programme
- WMCA’s ‘Trailblazer’ Deeper Devolution Deal (resource vs ambition)
- Investment Zones
- Transport (HS2 and approval of unfunded schemes)

“

*These public Q&A sessions were an important part of providing public accountability and transparency of decision-making for the WMCA’s only directly elected politician*

”





# Mayoral Q&A Sessions - Key Findings

## Delivery and Impact of the WMCA's Policies

The following matters were reported to the WMCA Board on 16 December 2022:

- **Adult Education Budget, Skills and Job Opportunities**  
The overall impact of higher education spend and the likelihood that any sub-regional disparity in this would affect the future of the region as individuals would seek employment and training opportunities outside of their boroughs. Access to learning and employment and how to change the mindset of individuals to take up the opportunities that were on offer was vitally important.
- **Investment and pace of delivery**  
Investment into the reliability and speed of investment to deliver the infrastructure and services needed to enable individuals to travel to work seamlessly and for businesses to operate effectively was important and remained a key challenge.

The 2041 net zero target was also reliant on improvements to the public transport offer.

- **Resource vs Ambition**  
Overview & Scrutiny Committee recognised that resource vs ambition had become a common theme and would be keeping a close eye on this throughout the year. Risk of shared failure and the consequences of this was highlighted as an-ongoing concern for members.

Whilst the breadth and diversity of the WMCA's ambitions was welcomed, along with the recognition of the challenges within the region, it was thought that focusing on those areas (housing, skills, transport and climate change) which caused the greatest concern for residents should be the priority focus for the WMCA.

- **Levelling Up Zones**  
Members were to be kept updated on the development of these Levelling Up Zones.
- **Communication**  
The committee stressed the importance of a strong communications strategy to counteract negative stories.

## WMCA's Budget 2023/24

The following matters were reported to the WMCA Board on 13 January 2023, during consideration of the WMCA's 2023/24 budget:

- **Regional Role in Energy Efficiency**  
Members expressed their concerns on the cost of energy and the impact that this had on the economy. There was a need to seek the introduction of alternative solutions, for example energy turbines.
- **Investment Portfolio**  
The committee questioned whether the WMCA was generating economic growth in specific areas, especially given the disparity of investment.
- **Greater Scrutiny - Arms' Length Companies and the Delivery of Outputs**  
The committee considered that there needed to be a greater focus on the outputs generated through investments and a greater scrutiny focus on arms' length companies and the outputs delivered for the region.
- **Carbon Neutrality**  
The committee stressed the importance of the work being undertaken to achieve carbon neutrality on projects that the WMCA was supporting.



## Areas of Focus 2022/23

### West Midlands Combined Authority 'Trailblazer' Deeper Devolution Deal

The Levelling Up White Paper was published in 2022 and defined levelling up as “increasing opportunity across the UK and reducing disparities between and within regions”. The White Paper discussed deepening devolution and offering a number of devolved powers to regions that want them. The WMCA had been invited to negotiate a 'Trailblazer' Deeper Devolution Deal.

The committee had met with the Executive Director for Strategy, Integration & Net Zero to understand the emerging draft devolution proposals, the governance process and timescales for submission.

Key lines of enquiry focused on:

- The ask vs the ability and capability to deliver
- The development of a West Midlands outcome framework
- Drawing down powers and finance from Government
- Funding simplifications for transport, housing, skills and retrofit and increased public engagement
- The importance of the availability of up-to-date information

Questions also focused on the implications of the Levelling Up & Regeneration Bill for the WMCA, which was announced in the Queen's speech of 10 May 2022.

### UK Shared Prosperity Fund Investment Plan

Members considered a draft of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund Investment Plan prior to its submission to the WMCA Board. The UK Shared Prosperity Fund was a central pillar of the Government's Levelling Up Agenda, providing funding for local areas to increase life chances across the UK and to build pride in place.

The committee met with the Executive Director for Economic Delivery, Skills & Communities to discuss:

- The allocation of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund to each local authority
- Its allocation for non-constituent authorities and the potential opportunities to work in collaboration
- The ability to spend year one funds by 31 March 2023
- The funding gap for 'people and skills' and challenges
- Risk assessments
- Outcomes

## WM2041 – Progress with ‘Five Year Plans’ to get to 2041

Members held a spotlight session with the Director of Energy Capital, Head of Environment and the Energy Infrastructure Lead to understand the progress against the delivery of the ‘Five Year Plan’ to make the West Midlands net zero by 2041.

Key lines of enquiry focused on:

- Resourcing
- The pace of delivery
- The ability of the supply chain to provide products and services that customers trusted
- A behaviour change programme, with a focus on affordability
- Carbon Zero Neighbourhoods
- Being aware of the obstacles that the business community faced
- The importance of the WMCA’s global ethical responsibilities

## Housing: Future Homes Strategy, Affordable Housing Supply Strategy, Affordable Housing Delivery Pilot

The committee met with the Lead Member for Housing & Land to discuss and answer questions on the development of a Future Homes Strategy, the Affordable Housing Supply Strategy and the Affordable Housing Delivery Pilot.

The following observations were considered by the WMCA Board:

### **Future Homes Strategy:**

As part of the development of the Future Homes Strategy, the proposal to hold a wider session with members and local authority officers to encourage the proactive utilisation of the opportunities available to deliver speedy, affordable and carbon neutral housing should be supported. The increase in the local supply chain and aim to drive the locally produced percentage of components was to be encouraged.

### **Affordable Housing Supply Strategy:**

There was an important need for genuine affordable housing, an improvement in the relationship between the WMCA, local authorities and developers to secure the delivery of a mix of tenure and the importance of local infrastructure to support the increase in car ownership.

### **Affordable Housing Delivery Pilot:**

The committee commended the pilot and the ambition to deliver 100% affordable homes.

“

*“Whilst it was **important** for homes to be **affordable to buy**, it was **equally important** for them to be **affordable in terms of location and running costs**”*

”

# Scrutiny Working Groups 2022/23

## WMCA ‘Trailblazer’ Deeper Devolution Deal

Following the committee’s meeting in July, members tested each of the ‘Trailblazer’ Deeper Devolution proposals to ensure that they had a clear focus on drawing down powers and funding from Government (including opportunities for ‘double devolution’ to the WMCA’s constituent member authorities where appropriate) and ensuring that the roles and responsibilities of those constituent authorities were not being devolved.

“

*The sessions have been extremely constructive and have helped to further illuminate how proposals may address some of the challenges faced by communities across the region*

”

A principle that the WMCA had adhered to throughout the development of the deeper devolution deal proposals was that **with more responsibility, there should be more accountability.**

Over the summer period (August 2022), a series of extensive working groups had been established to review each of the proposals in detail and to discuss the local benefits that would be delivered to each local authority and non-constituent authorities.

1

### Session One

- Transport
- Housing and Regeneration
- Smart City Region

2

### Session Two

- Industrial Decarbonisation
- Economy
- Skills
- Digital Inclusion
- Digital Infrastructure

3

### Session Three

- Social Economy
- Homelessness
- Prevention
- Funding Simplification & Fiscal Devolution
- Culture
- Health

4

### Session Four

- Data, Performance & Accountability
- Crime, Community, Safety and Resilience
- Net Zero
- Retrofit Commissioning Framework
- Local Area Energy Planning
- Climate Adaptation

5

### Session Five

Local benefits that could be delivered by the deeper devolution deal in each of the constituent and non-constituent authority areas.

“

*“Working Group members provided invaluable insight into some of the challenges that their communities faced. This ‘on-the-ground’ perspective was incredibly valuable for officers both in terms of greater understanding of the issues being faced by residents and businesses within the region, but also as evidence and case studies to bolster discussions with Government colleagues”*

”

# Effectiveness and Outcome

## Scrutiny of the ‘Trailblazer’ Deeper Devolution Deal

After considering each of the ‘Trailblazer’ Deeper Devolution proposals and the local benefits, a number of key themes and considerations emerged.

- **Investment sought compared to the scale of the ambition**  
The committee welcomed the scale of ambition outlined in the devolution proposals, but in some instances queried whether the investment being sought was bold enough to ensure delivery.
- **Priorities**  
Whilst the breadth and diversity of proposals were welcomed, the committee did reinforce the importance of prioritising these proposals. Key focus areas were identified as housing, transport, skills and climate change. Although this was not to the exclusion of other proposals, these areas reflected the greatest concerns for residents and there was genuine concern that spreading the capacity too thinly, given the level of resource being sought, would undermine delivery in these areas.
- **Impacts from the proposals**  
Members’ insights had reinforced the importance of representing people in the proposals rather than merely strategic measures and interventions.
- **Integration of strategic approaches**  
The interdependency between proposal areas became clear, for example the important relationships between skills and economic growth, or effective transport systems and easy access to employment opportunities. Members recognised that although many of these areas were already well-integrated and connected, the proposed devolution deal had highlighted even greater opportunities for the integration of approaches and measures.

“

*We are grateful to Cllr Bayton and her wider team for the time and commitment they have given to strengthening this work*

”

### Outcome

The conclusions of the work of overview & scrutiny were supported by the WMCA that helped to shape the Deeper Devolution Deal submission to Government.





## Deep Dive Review:

“

*A review of the impact of the devolution of the Adult Education Budget to the WMCA on the delivery of local skills training*

”

Following the findings of the 2020/21 review to ascertain whether the regional economic recovery proposals were meeting the needs that had been identified within the Black Country sub-region, members considered that it was now an appropriate time to undertake a further scrutiny review to assess the impact and outcomes that had been delivered through the Adult Education Budget since its devolution to the WMCA.

The review sought to understand the impact of the devolution of the Adult Education Budget on the delivery of local skills training within the region, and to identify the challenges and ways in which the WMCA and its constituent authorities could most effectively use skills development to address short- and longer-term challenges in the region, particularly in relation to the big economic challenges. The findings would be used to help shape future skills funding.

The review panel examined how the Adult Education Budget was meeting the needs of the:

- Area
- Employer
- The disadvantaged

The panel sought written evidence and undertook face-to-face interviews with a range of key witnesses to help inform the review including representatives from:

- Coventry & Warwickshire Chamber of Commerce
- Job Centre Plus
- Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council
- City of Wolverhampton Council
- Small/medium-sized enterprises
- Regional Business Council
- A local training provider

The findings of the review will be considered by Overview & Scrutiny Committee in 2023/24, prior to its submission to the Skills Advisory Board.



## A Look Back: Scrutiny Reviews 2021/22 - Where Are We Now?

### Helping to Deliver Affordable and Social Housing Scrutiny Review

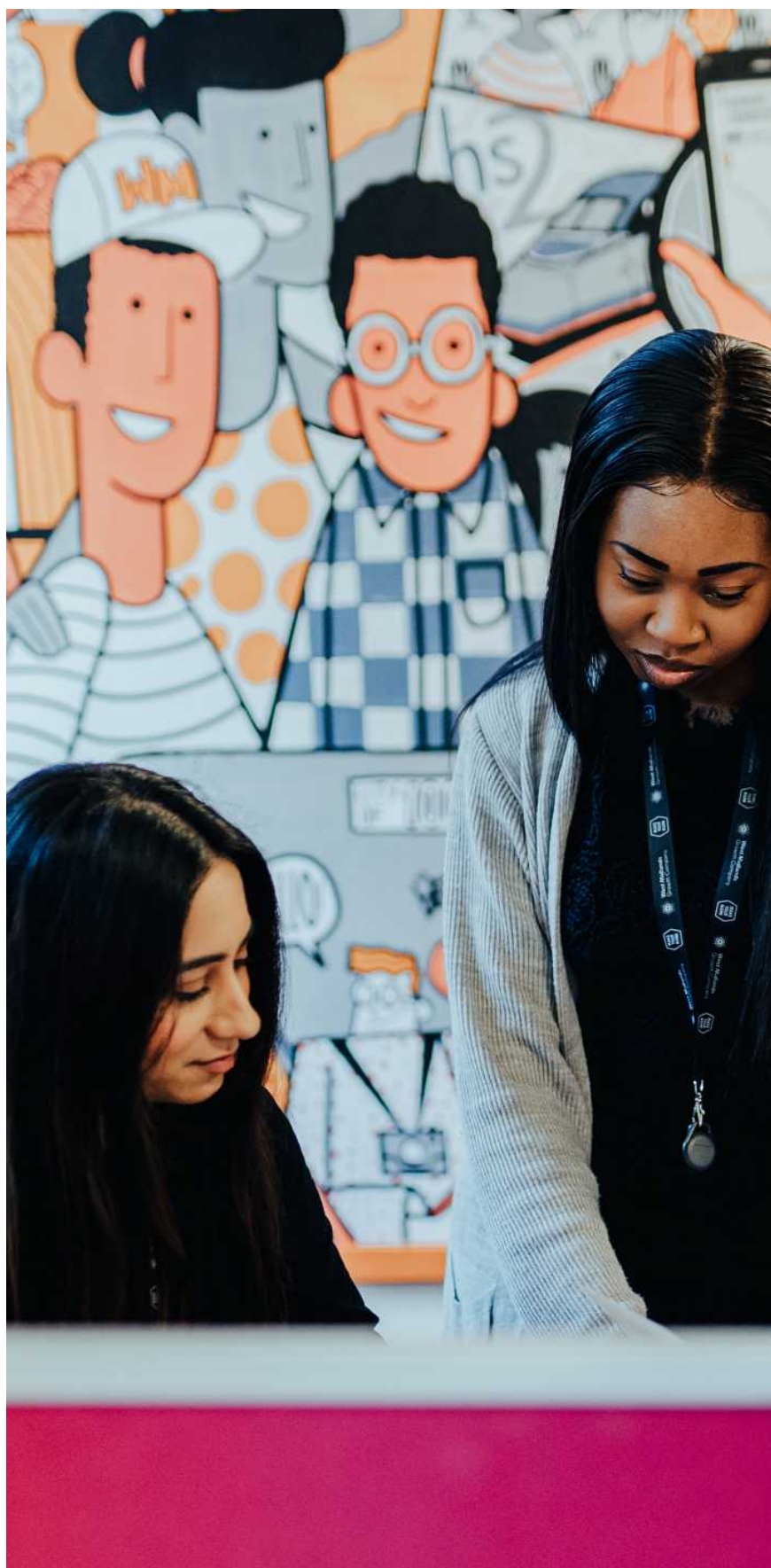
During 2020/21, members had identified the provision of affordable and social housing within the region as a key area of focus and agreed to undertake a review to examine the role and remit of the WMCA to deliver affordable and social housing within the West Midlands through the use of devolved housing and land funds.

The findings and recommendations of the review panel were considered by the Overview & Scrutiny Committee and then subsequently reported to and supported by the WMCA Board on 18 March 2022.

During the course of this year, the committee requested a written update on the work of the WMCA and its partners in implementing and responding to the recommendations from the scrutiny committee.

On 5 September, members considered a report on the progress that had been made on the delivery of the eight recommendations that were supported by the WMCA Board. A copy of the report can be accessed here >> [Full Report](#)

Overview & Scrutiny Committee will continue to receive regular reports on progress with delivering affordable homes, providing members with the opportunity to inform and provide recommendations to guide the ongoing work in this area.



# Transport Scrutiny Sub-Committee

## Transport Scrutiny Sub-Committee Focus for the Year

Overview & Scrutiny Committee appointed Councillor Cathy Bayton to chair the sub-committee for 2022/23. With the scale and scope of the transport-related projects currently being delivered, the sub-committee had ensured that those responsible for transport were held to account, demonstrated through regular Q&A sessions with the Portfolio Lead for Transport, the Chair of the Transport Delivery Committee, and the Executive Director for Transport for West Midlands.

“

*To ensure that Transport for West Midlands together with constituent authorities and stakeholders, were delivering the best public transport services that it could, in the public interest and ensuring that the users experience was paramount and at the forefront of Transport for West Midlands thinking, policies and initiatives*

”

## Holding Those Responsible For Transport To Account

### Councillor Ian Ward, Portfolio Lead for Transport

In October, a Q&A session was held with Councillor Ian Ward, Portfolio Lead for Transport, on transport policy related matters. Members questioned him on:

- Passenger value for money
- Financial challenges
- Impact on capital projects on funding pressures
- Concessions in helping in cost of living pressures
- Cross boundary travel for school aged children
- Effectiveness of processes for holding bus operators to account
- Impact of any scaling back of transport policies in meeting the WMCA's net zero carbon objectives
- WMCA's transport governance review

The sub-committee's observations and recommendations were endorsed by the Overview & Scrutiny Committee and Portfolio Lead Member for Transport.

### Councillor Richard Worrall, Chair of Transport Delivery Committee

In February, Councillor Richard Worrall attended a Q&A session to answer questions on transport delivery matters across the region. Questions focussed on:

- WMCA's transport governance review
- Metro City Centre Extension, Wolverhampton financial breach
- Holding Transport for West Midlands and arms' length companies to account
- Bus Franchising
- Behaviour change
- Commonwealth Games Birmingham 2022 - lessons learnt and legacy

The sub-committee's observations and recommendations were endorsed by the Overview & Scrutiny Committee and Portfolio Lead for Transport.

“

*Transport services needed to be more predictable and dependable*

”

# Transport Scrutiny Sub-Committee

This year the Transport Scrutiny Sub-Committee has focussed on the following areas:

## Metro Affordability (Wednesbury - Brierley Hill)

The sub-committee invited the Executive Director of Finance & Business Hub to answer questions on the affordability issues related to the Wednesbury - Brierley Hill metro extension.

Members questioned and received feedback on the current challenges, potential mitigations to fund the scheme and future funding opportunities.

## Bus Network Review

Members examined the content of the bus network review that was supported by a suite of information, including an update on the delivery of the West Midlands Bus Service Improvement Plan in the context of wider challenges faced in the bus market and the latest performance of bus services in the West Midlands. This information was used to help inform the lines of enquiry.

## Bus Franchising

Members reviewed the measures Transport for West Midlands was undertaking to address ongoing challenges in delivering bus services that met the ambitions of the region's Vision for Bus, including the on-going Enhanced Partnership and a Full Franchising Assessment.

Whilst the potential challenges associated with the introduction of a Bus Franchising model across the region were recognised, in terms of delivery, quality and encouraging behaviour change, members challenged the current commercial model and questioned whether it delivered what was needed for the residents of the West Midlands.

## Transport Governance Review

Members continued to be engaged in the development of the transport governance review that would provide clarity on roles and responsibilities, consistency and alignment with other WMCA boards and committees, simplification, clear lines of accountability and transparency of the transport decision-making arrangements within the WMCA.

Throughout 2022/23, the committee has continued to meet with the Director of Law & Governance on the emerging governance structures.

## Commonwealth Games 2022 - Lessons Learned in Transport

Between 28 July and 8 August, Birmingham hosted the 22nd Commonwealth Games, the largest multi-sport event held in England for the last 10 years. The games brought over 1.5m spectators and visitors to the region and transport had to answer to a complex set of challenges, including a complex and congested transport network, a compressed timescale for planning, impacts of COVID-19 and navigating the realities of industrial action on the rail network.

“

***Transport for West Midlands be commended on the success of the Commonwealth Games in terms of transport***

”

## Transport Scrutiny Sub-Committee Continued

### West Midlands Local Transport Plan 'Reimagining Transport in the West Midlands' - Final Core Strategy and draft Big Moves and draft Area Strategy Guidance'

Following the sub-committee's engagement on the Local Transport Plan Green Paper, it was then consulted on the final version of the West Midlands Local Transport Plan 'Reimagining Transport in the West Midlands' Core Strategy prior to its submission to the WMCA Board.

Key points raised by the sub-committee included:

- The need for a creative approach on the strategy to connect with younger members of the public and that were representative of the region.
- Creative solutions needed to be sought as to how retail outlets supported and encouraged its customers to use alternative modes of transport to access its facility.
- The importance of consumer affordability within the strategy.
- The provision of infrastructure to accommodate alternative modes of transport; and
- Benchmarking

“

*It was important for Transport for West Midlands to **develop a transport network** that would allow **passengers** to have the same **freedom to move around the region** as was currently enjoyed by car owners*

”



# Peer Learning and Sector Lead Improvement

## Centre for Public Scrutiny Training Events

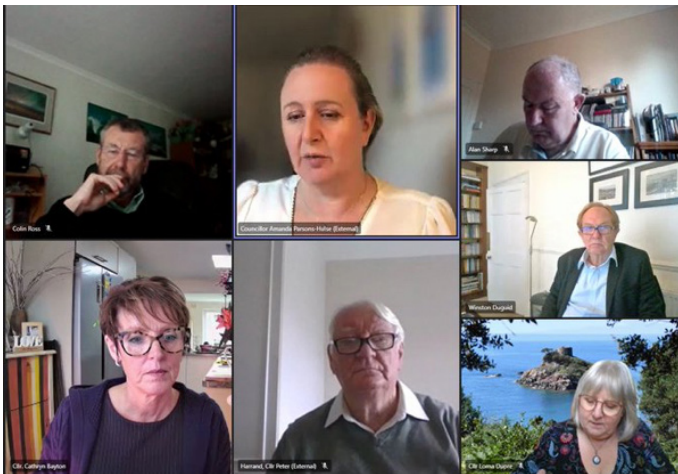
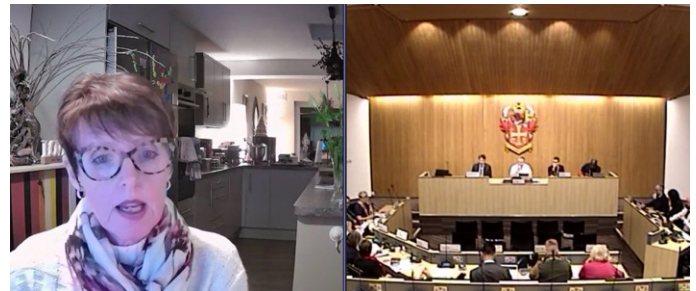
In addition to internal training, officers of the WMCA and members of the committee were informed of training and events that are led by the Centre for Public Scrutiny, as appropriate.

## Combined Authorities Scrutiny Chairs' Forum

The WMCA has been instrumental in setting up the new Combined Authorities Scrutiny Chairs' Forum, enabling the chairs from the country's ten combined authorities' scrutiny committees to meet to share best practice, discuss areas of common interest and to build relationships.

## Working with Local Authorities

The Chair of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee attended meetings of local authority partners to discuss and answer questions on the work of the WMCA's Overview & Scrutiny Committee.



## Combined Authority Governance Network Group – ‘A Collective of the Combined Authorities’

The Combined Authority Governance Network Group is a group of officers from combined authorities across the country that meet on a regular basis and share best practice and learn from others on governance matters, including overview and scrutiny issues. The WMCA was a regular participant of the network group, which was facilitated by the Centre for Public Scrutiny on behalf of the Local Government Association.

# Looking Forward 2023/2024

Overview and scrutiny is a statutory function within the WMCA, undertaken by the Overview & Scrutiny Committee that has responsibility to review the work of the Mayor and the WMCA and hold decision makers to account.

## Earlier and Regular Engagement between the Executive Board and Scrutiny

Whilst engagement with particular departments has improved during the course of the year, members would welcome a closer working relationship with Transport for West Midlands to enable them to understand the challenges, performance and outcomes of transport priorities and strategies.

## 'Trailblazer' Deeper Devolution - English Devolution Accountability Framework

The Government will, in the English Devolution Accountability Framework, develop a new scrutiny protocol. The WMCA will engage in the development of the protocol and the Overview & Scrutiny Committee would seek to also be engaged in this process.

Successfully implementing the protocol will be a key factor when Government will be determining eligibility for single funding settlements and deeper devolution deals.

## Greater scrutiny of the WMCA's Portfolio Lead Members

This area of scrutiny has been identified as 'needs improving' and therefore members will strengthen this area of scrutiny during 2023/24 by inviting Portfolio Lead Members on a regular basis to Q&As and Spotlight sessions to discuss and answer questions within their portfolio area.

## Public engagement within the scrutiny process

Through the establishment of a written questions process and public involvement in 'deep dives'

## Scrutiny of the WMCA's performance and outcomes

This is another area that has been identified as 'needs improving' and members would welcome the engagement of the Executive Board on the availability of performance, outcome and metric information that could be examined by the committee.



## Committee Members 2022/23



**Councillor Cathy Bayton**  
Dudley  
Committee Chair



**Councillor Naeem Akhtar**  
Coventry  
Committee Vice-Chair



**Councillor Andrew Burrow**  
Solihull



**Councillor Mike Chalk**  
Redditch



**Councillor Ellen Fenton**  
Association of Black  
Country Authorities



**Councillor Martin McCarthy**  
Solihull



**Councillor Nigel Lumby**  
Shropshire



**Councillor Ian Kettle**  
Dudley



**Councillor Lauren Rainbow**  
Birmingham



**Councillor Karen Simms**  
Sandwell



**Councillor Mike Sutherland**  
Cannock Chase



**Councillor Paul Sweet**  
Wolverhampton



**Councillor Jamie Tennant**  
Birmingham



**Councillor Ken Wood**  
Birmingham



**Councillor Vera Waters**  
Walsall



**Amanda Tomlinson**  
Business Voice - Black  
Country Housing Group

## Sub-Committee Members 2022/23



**Councillor Cathy Bayton**  
**Dudley**  
Sub-Committee Chair



**Councillor Chaman Lal**  
**Birmingham**  
Sub-Committee Vice-Chair



**Councillor Martin McCarthy**  
**Solihull**



**Councillor Barbara McGarrity**  
**Wolverhampton**



**Councillor Karen Simms**  
**Sandwell**



**Councillor Rupinder Singh**  
**Coventry**



**Councillor Alan Taylor**  
**Dudley**



**Councillor Vera Waters**  
**Walsall**







**West Midlands  
Combined Authority**

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## **Meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee - 27<sup>th</sup> March, 2024**

### **Report of the Chief Executive**

### **Employee Health and Wellbeing**

#### **Purpose of report**

1. To provide the Overview and Scrutiny Committee with a report on the findings from a review of the Council's employee wellbeing offer and the proposed action plan to address the issues identified.

#### **Recommendations**

2. It is recommended that, subject to any comments, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee: -
  - Note that employee wellbeing within the Council currently reflects the national trends of an overall increase in sickness and absence due to mental health related sickness.
  - Note the work undertaken to review the Councils' employee wellbeing offer and the findings of this.
  - Note that there is a need to strengthen the Council's wellbeing offer to employees to address the issues highlighted in the report.
  - Endorse the action plan as per Appendix 1.

#### **Background**

3. Members have requested a report to come to the Scrutiny Committee on employee wellbeing. Historically the responsibility for employee wellbeing sat with the Public Health Directorate, however following a review of arrangements in place to support employee wellbeing shortly after the Covid pandemic, the decision was made that employee health and wellbeing should sit with the Council's Human Resources function as part of the People and Inclusion Division. The responsibility moved during the current municipal year and provided an opportunity to undertake a review of the Council's offer.

4. Each year a national Health and Wellbeing at work report is produced for employers by the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD). The latest report published in 2023 found that the UK is currently experiencing the highest rate of sickness absence in a decade (the average of 7.8 days per employee per annum). It also identifies mental ill health as the top cause of long-term absence followed by musculoskeletal issues.
5. The majority of employers surveyed reported ongoing issues with stress related absence, with heavy workloads being cited as the most common cause. The report also found that despite an increasing number of workplace health and wellbeing services being put in place by employers, mental health issues for employees are continuing to increase.
6. The issues highlighted by the report are reflected in the Dudley Council context with our latest figures (based on Q2) identifying 5.48 days lost per FTE, slightly lower than that reported in the CIPD report. This figure is lower than the average figure for local government, where the latest LGA figure was 8.8 days average sickness rate per FTE employee or 3.6%. In addition, there is a downward trend as the current Q2 figure sees a 6.5% decrease compared to the figure from Q2 last year.
7. In terms of Mental health related illness, the position at Dudley Council reflects the national trend with Mental Health/Anxiety/Depression identified as the top reason for sickness in the latest sickness figures. Whilst there has been a decrease in the number of days lost compared to the same period last year, there has been an increase in the number of days lost for illness due to non-work-related stress. The areas identified as having the highest levels of mental health related sickness being Housing, Regeneration and Enterprise, Children's Services and Adult Social Care.
8. Whilst it is important to monitor and respond to the data, focussing on sickness absence alone is unlikely to uncover the underlying factors affecting health and wellbeing, or identify areas where any significant improvements can be made. Likewise, as highlighted in the CIPD report, simply putting new provision in place does not address the problem. Hence, the importance of understanding what good employee Health and wellbeing provision is. To this end, a review was undertaken utilising a framework that is seen as best in class which has been developed by the NHS. The framework provides guidance on how organisations can understand what good health and wellbeing looks like and what can be achieved.

9. The NHS Health and Wellbeing Framework: Organisational Diagnostic Tool, helps employers to measure their health and wellbeing offer against 7 key elements that should feature in a strong employee health and wellbeing offer. These are:
- i. Data Insights and organisational evidence covering, where we obtain our data from.
  - ii. Personal Health and wellbeing covering; mental health, physical wellbeing, and healthy lifestyles.
  - iii. Relationships covering; working together and supporting each other.
  - iv. Fulfilment at work covering; Bringing yourself to work, Life Balance and Recognition.
  - v. Environment covering; the physical working environment.
  - vi. Managers and Leaders covering; senior leadership responsibilities, healthy leadership behaviours and skilled managers.
  - vii. Professional Wellbeing support covering; support partners and organisational design and policy.

### **Our approach**

10. Through mapping, and holding 1-1 interviews with key stakeholders, we were able to identify and capture the current range of initiatives and support in place across the council. Support is currently offered to employees from different teams including, Health and Safety, Public Health, Childrens Services, Housing and Communities, People, and Inclusion. We placed a particular focus on mental health to look at everything we have in place to support this.
11. A range of evidence was also reviewed.
- Information from the employee assistance programme since launch in November 2023 (Viv-up).
  - Staff counselling data e.g., reasons for contact.
  - Workforce analytics including sickness data.
  - Information from employee surveys, including key wellbeing trends and,
  - Exit monitoring, and directorate employee surveys e.g., Childrens Services survey November 2023.
12. Benchmarking our current wellbeing offer against other local authorities and large public sector organisations, in order to identify good, and best practice as well as identify the range of provision that is on offer. Included in this was other local authorities within the West Midlands.

13. The NHS diagnostic toolkit was utilised to understand our status against the best practice elements within the NHS model for employee wellbeing, and to help us to prioritise areas to focus on for further investment.

## **Findings**

14. Based on the research, the best employee wellbeing provisions are those which are wide ranging and able to be tailored to an individual. For example, it needs to be capable of factoring type of work, protected characteristics, and/or care giving status. The best offers consider the whole employee life cycle.
15. Best offers all recognise that effective employee wellbeing encompasses mental, physical, emotional, and economic health, and is influenced by workplace relationships, resources, and decisions. It's enhanced by a positive culture prioritising wellbeing, clear tasks, motivation, and benefits like financial support, reasonable adjustments, and work-life balance measures.
16. Other local authorities identified in benchmarking, such as Runnymede Council, are leading the way on specific evidence and initiatives to better manage sickness absence. These focus on improved effective people management, of which we already have some of the right foundations in place via the People Strategy.
17. To maximise the effectiveness of an employee health and wellbeing provision and address workplace wellbeing, we need to develop a system wide employee health and wellbeing strategy, which has a strong focus on prevention.
18. A strategy needs to be supported by the most senior levels of leadership, because leaders play a crucial role in creating and maintaining a culture where positive mental health thrives for employees. The national report identified that the key link in the employee wellbeing chain is the supportive role that line managers play, the way they lead their teams and manage the work environment, they should be supportive, and empathetic, creating a climate open to conversation about an employee's wellbeing.
19. It has been identified that Dudley Councils' current wellbeing offer is disaggregated, with the current provision reflecting the environment prior to Covid. As identified nationally we have needed to provide more support for issues such as mental health. The mental health offer for employees needs to be improved in order to effectively respond to the increase in this area.

20. In Dudley we found:
- Pockets of good practice, but they are not joined up with a need for stronger governance and evaluation of the wellbeing offer.
  - A wealth of information on wellbeing is available on our intranet, but it is not organised in a form that is easy for employees, and managers to locate/use.
  - Some of the information available is out of date and ownership of the information and responsibility for updating this is split between different teams, meaning there is no real ownership.
  - Consistent duplication, and a lack of one council approach, with the latter resulting in not best use of resources.
  - The employee assistance programme recently introduced has the potential to significantly improve our offer of support for employee mental health, but employees are not aware of it in its entirety, meaning we are not fully utilising this.
  - Employees have reported via survey feedback that they were reluctant to use the mental health first aiders, and there has been an acknowledgement that the current scheme isn't applied appropriately.

### **Recommended Next steps**

21. The nature and scale of the current challenges faced by the Council will inevitably have an impact on employees and their wellbeing, particularly where they are continuing to deliver with less resource. Thus, there is a need to focus on building employee resilience as well as mitigation of risk and a focus on prevention. This together with the findings from this diagnostic exercise (using the NHS toolkit), forms the basis of the proposed actions below.
22. Senior leader engagement is required to ensure that we improve our wellbeing offer, and to demonstrate that we are aware of the importance of workplace health and wellbeing. Senior leaders must embed actions to ensure that it is taken seriously across the organisation. It is currently a standing item on Strategic Executive Board (SEB) but needs engagement with senior leaders at heads of service level too.
23. We need to progress the work already underway via the Dudley manager training and development programme, to improve skills of line managers and supervisors to manage people well. They need to be able to have sensitive conversations with people, to be able to offer support and flexibility. Line managers are key to employee wellbeing and should ensure people's workloads and deadlines are manageable. They should provide clear objectives and give constructive feedback, as part of a trust-based relationship with people.

24. Early access to occupational health support and other specialist sources of help, such as counselling and/or physiotherapy needs to be consistently provided. Improvements are already underway via the new OH provider, our internal staff counselling offer and the existing health and wellbeing provisions within the Viv-up Employee assistance programme.
25. Build a robust organisational framework as part of a new strategy to promote good mental wellbeing and foster a culture where people can talk about mental health and seek help where needed.
26. Ensure completion of a comprehensive risk assessment in conjunction with Health and Safety or audit on work-related stress across the workforce, as part of a preventive approach to identify its main causes as per the action plan attached at Appendix 1.
27. Identify and include an increased provision on mental ill health and adopt an alternative preventative and mitigative provision.
28. Continual assessment using diagnostic toolkit alongside findings from various surveys, exit monitoring etc. to shape and deliver an Employee Wellbeing Strategy.
29. **Action Plan**

It is proposed to:

- Conduct an organisation wide Employee health and wellbeing survey, with engagement of key stakeholders to ensure everyone understands wellbeing is important to us as an organisation.
- Undertake additional engagement of network support groups specifically, and our menopause champions to ensure support and initiatives provided are appropriate.
- Develop guidelines and toolkits to support implementation of an improved health and wellbeing offer to our employees.
- Develop metrics and performance indicators to measure success/effectiveness, and an annual action plan that is measurable.

A summary action plan is provided in Appendix 1 with timelines for delivery.



## **Finance**

30. A reduction in employee absence, employee relations cases linked to health and wellbeing, and improved attendance in areas around presenteeism and stress, are all likely to have a positive financial impact e.g., reflected in reduction of working days lost to employee sickness.

## **Law**

31. No legal implications have been identified. Arrangements are in place with Corporate Health & Safety to ensure that all statutory/regulatory requirements will continue to be met and undertaken.

## **Risk Management**

32. There are no material risks identified.

## **Equality Impact**

33. As an employer with an improved equality provision, this will have a positive impact of the proposals on people with different protected characteristics (age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation).
34. An Equality Impact Assessment will be undertaken as part of the work to produce a new employee health and wellbeing strategy.

## **Human Resources/Organisational Development**

35. The work to progress the proposals and action plan will be facilitated by the teams within the people and inclusion division.

## **Commercial/Procurement**

36. There are no commercial/procurement implications.

## **Environment/Climate Change**

37. There are environment or climate change implications.

## **Council Priorities and Projects**

38. The work on employee Health and Wellbeing contributes to the Council Plan 2024-2025 and specifically the key priority “Improving our organisation.



**Kevin O'Keefe**  
**Chief Executive**

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## **Appendices**

Appendix 1 Action Plan

Appendix 1

**Recommended Employee Health and Wellbeing Actions 2024-2025**

**Action**

**Timeline**

**Review online pages on employee intranet site.**

*Commence April 2024*

Review all of the pages that are currently online.

Add a holding message to communicate to the workforce the plans for the new wellbeing provision.

Plan what is to be contained in the new pages.

Create clear signposting for employees, linking to existing provision.

**Wellbeing Needs assessment survey.**

*Commence April 2024*

Creation of short survey.

The survey will be anonymous but ask for additional information in terms of EDI datasets, i.e., Female, Male, age range, disability status.

Questions to be created based on what the datasets are telling us so far.

Findings to be shared at senior level of the organisation.

Data to be used to inform the Health and Wellbeing Strategy and action plan

*Survey to be sent end of April.*

*Feedback delivered to organisation May.*

**Creation of Wellbeing Governance board**

*On going after report approval.*

Finalise and complete the diagnostic toolkit.

Link into Corporate Equalities group chaired by Chief Executive



**Key stakeholders**

Re-engagement of those involved in strategic review and workforce who will enable and implement.

*Commence April 2024*

**Employee communication**

Action to reach front line employees.

*On going after report approval.*

**Creation of strategy and action plan**

Inclusive of KPI's and metrics for measures of success.

*June – July 2024.*

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**Meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee – 27<sup>th</sup> March 2024**

**Report of the Deputy Chief Executive**

**Improvement and Sustainability Programme ('Fit for the Future') Scope and Governance**

**Purpose of report**

1. To present the scopes, timelines and key financial and other success measures and milestones of the improvement and sustainability Programme, to be branded 'Fit for the Future'. This report is being considered by the Cabinet on 20<sup>th</sup> March, 2024.

To present the governance arrangements, to ensure that the Programme delivers the necessary benefits for DMBC and its residents, to time, cost and quality.

**Recommendations**

2. That the Committee note the achievements of Phase 1 of the programme, which is now complete.

That the Committee note the detailed scopes of Phase 2, 'Fit for Purpose' at the first Programme Gateway, provided in Appendix 1.

That the Committee note the governance of the 'Fit for the Future' Programme, provided as Appendix 2.

**Background**

3. In response to the LGA Peer Review, the External Auditors Report, and the underlying financial risks facing the Council, DMBC stood up the Council improvement and sustainability Programme.

The objective of the Programme is to: ‘Establish the foundations required to assure delivery of Dudley Borough’s Vision, Forging a Future for All, through effective Strategy, Governance and Financial Sustainability’.

4. Phase 1, “Mobilising”, scoped to run from Oct 2023 to January 2024 is now complete.

In this phase, urgent financial controls were established by implementing spending controls, and Cabinet approved the suspension of the Council Plan on 15<sup>th</sup> February, as it was not financially viable. A refreshed Council Plan will be presented to Council for approval on 15<sup>th</sup> April, aligned to ‘Fit for the Future’ and 2024/25 MTFS.

Options for phase 2 of the spending controls are being presented to Cabinet for approval on 20<sup>th</sup> March, which will improve efficiency of the existing controls of people-spend and options to extend non-people spend controls, which currently only approve or not procurement contracts above threshold. The Spending Controls Group will remain in place throughout the programme, and until such a time spending controls are no longer required.

Programme Definition is now complete, meaning Phase 2 is now scoped, and the Programme can pass through a ‘Gateway Approval’.

The following workstreams have been scoped:

24/25 Change Portfolio: will reduce the Council’s operating costs, targeting £37.4m over 3 years, with as much savings/income as possible identified/delivered in 24/25 and delivered through a portfolio of change.

Governance: Design and deliver improvements to governance for 24/25 to create a ‘golden thread of governance’ to oversee the financial challenge.

MTFS Savings Reporting & Assurance: identify and deliver the improvements necessary to internal processes, grip and transparency to identify, assess, assure and report upon effective delivery of savings/income against the stretch target of £37.4m.

Organisation Redesign: Designs a financially sustainable organisation (TOM), aligned to a refreshed vision for the customer/resident. This is a programme in its own right.

Comms & engagement: underpins the Programme; ensures that stakeholders including colleagues, partners and residents have their needs understood and responded to in a timely, effective way.

5. Programme governance was established in November '23, with Strategic Executive Board taking collective ownership of Programme definition and Phase 1 delivery; and the Independent Assurance Board providing external expertise and holding DMBC to account for delivery.

At Phase 2 'Gateway Approval' the Programme governance is improved by:

1. Presenting project scopes, milestones, and timescales for approval, and establishing a 'Fit for the Future' Programme Board to be chaired by the Leader of the Council, to receive monthly Programme performance reports and hold officers to account for delivery.
  2. Establishing specific governance for Organisational Redesign, including the Functional Reviews, given the scale of potential change to strategy, functions, services, and structures. This governance will take a 'One Dudley' view across the whole organisation; and be responsible for ensuring the Programme responds fully to the LGA Peer Review and the External Auditor's report.
6. The detailed scope of Phase 3, "Transformation and Creating a Sustainable Organisation", depends upon the approval of the Target Operating Model and a Financially Sustainable Corporate Strategy, so will be approved as a future 'Gateway Approval'.

## **Finance**

7. Organisational Redesign is the vehicle for designing a financially sustainable organisation, which will enable the Council to meet the following financial Phase 2 Programme Objectives:
  - Develop a Financially Sustainable Corporate Strategy
  - Define the organisation, including Target Operating Model, required to deliver the Corporate Strategy
  - Establish financial governance and control of a sustainable budget to deliver the Corporate Strategy

The organisation will reduce operating costs through the 24/25 change portfolio. This includes MTFs savings/income of £17.4m by 2026/27 submitted for approved by Council on 4th March MTFs, the service options appraisals listed in the 24/25 Budget Report to Cabinet, functional reviews and additional pipeline of projects and savings/incomes initiatives which will be identified during 24/25.

Spending controls will need to remain in place until at least June 25, until the programme delivers the target operating model during Phase 3, or until the Council's unringfenced reserves return to a level of 20% of net revenue spend. An engagement plan will stimulate action, improve understanding of the need for spending controls, so a 'control spending' mindset is embedded at every level of the organisation.

## **Law**

8. Pursuant to Section 111 of the Local Government Act 1972, a local authority shall have power to do anything... which is calculated to facilitate, or is conducive or incidental to, the discharge of any of their functions.

Pursuant to Section 114(3) of the Local Government Finance Act 1988 the chief finance officer shall make a report if it appears to him that the expenditure of the authority incurred (including expenditure it proposes to incur) in a financial year is likely to exceed the resources (including sums borrowed) available to it to meet that expenditure. Following the issuing of the report all new agreements that incur expenditure are stopped for a period of up to 21 days in which time the full council must meet and respond to the report.

## **Risk Management**

9. The 'Fit for the Future' Programme has a Risk Register, which is presented to the Independent Assurance Board monthly and will be managed by the Programme Board.

The Change Portfolio will be underpinned by a RAID (Risks, Actions, Issues, Decisions) Log, specifically focused on managing delivery of the £37.4m stretch savings/income target.

## **Equality Impact**

10. As part of defining the Target Operating Model, Cabinet will approve a new vision and mission for Dudley Council, which will place customer needs at the heart of our operating model.

The Case for Change will include an evidence-based assessment of the reasons why change is required, and the root causes that need to be resolved, so that the future state organization can better meet the needs of stakeholders, including residents, Members, colleagues and partners.

An Equality Impact Assessment of the resulting draft TOM blue-print will be completed.



## **Human Resources/Organisational Development**

11. The challenging financial position facing the Council will require changes to our current ways of working and a programme to undertake an organisational review to develop the future target operating model will be a key programme in the new Council Plan and the People Strategy under the Leadership and Culture priority.

Capacity and capability have been allocated to the Programme as the Corporate Priority, through alignment of existing resources. This includes alignment to the refreshed Council Plan, secondments to a Programme Delivery Office, and 'dotted line' matrix management of existing project management resources. These arrangements will provide dedicated resources to drive change at pace and will inject project management. This temporary programme structure will only last the lifetime of the programme but aims to invest in lasting organisational capability for change, transformation and innovation.

## **Commercial/Procurement**

12. Functional reviews and service options appraisals will include reviews of commercial services.

## **Environment/Climate Change**

13. The Council will continue to support and contribute to the commitment to become a carbon net zero authority by 2030, as part of its Climate Emergency declaration.

## **Council Priorities and Projects**

14. The Council Plan 2024-25 has identified themes aligned to the 'Fit for the Future' Programme

The Programme scope, provided as Appendix 1, will serve as a significant proportion of the narrative of the Council Plan.



**Balvinder Heran**  
**Deputy Chief Executive**

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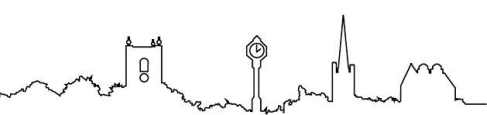
## **Appendices:**

- **Appendix 1 – Programme Scope, Milestones, Timelines and Success Measures (Phase 1, 2 and 3)**
- **Appendix 2 – Programme Governance, Phase 2**

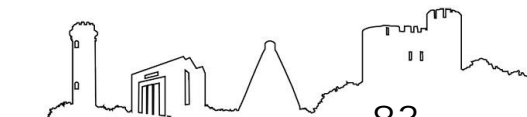
# Appendix 1

## Fit for the Future Programme Scope, Milestones, Timelines and Success Measures

### Phase 1, 2 and 3



Working as One Council in  
the historic capital of the Black Country



# Spending Controls

**Problem Statement:** At project initiation, General Fund spend in 23/24 will exceed budgets by £15.4m, depleting GF reserves to £6.4m. The External Audit report surfaced a history of under delivering against savings targets, and financial reporting lags, creating additional risk to the year-end position. Spending controls will need to remain in place until at least June 25, until the programme delivers a sustainable organisation or remain in place at least until the Council's unringfenced reserves return to a level of 20% of net revenue spend, avoiding a Section 114 Notice situation and accepting impact on services.

## **Management Information:**

Phase 1:

Spending Controls activity measures  
Direct impact of pay related spending controls (one off retrospective reporting)  
Forecast/actual reduction in outturn (proxy impact)

Phase 2:

- Strategic forecast of spending controls impact
- Measurement of impact

## **Milestone Timeline:**

Spending Controls Phase 2 approved by Cabinet: 20<sup>th</sup> March

## **Scope:**

Phase 1:

- Urgently design and launch robust spending controls & underpin controls with processes/tools/measurements/reporting.
- A coordinated approach and process to track delegated action, including for £33m of spend below the procurement threshold of £213,000.

Phase 2:

- Undertake lessons learnt and ensuring learning from phase 1 informs future phases to improve efficiency, transparency, ownership and flow of process.
- Engagement plan to stimulate action, improve understanding of the need for spending controls, so a 'control spending' mindset is embedded at every level of the organisation.
- Improvements to processes underpinning controls of 'people-spend', learning lessons from Phase 1. Recommendations to Cabinet on options to extend non-people spend controls, which currently only approve or not procurement contracts above threshold.
- Create assurance through governance and reporting that controls are reducing spending.

## **Project Resources and Responsibilities:**

Lead Director: Iain Newman

Spending Controls Working Group: Iain Newman, Luisa Fulci, Helen Martin, Nick McGurk

# Suspend & Refresh Council Plan

**Problem Statement:** The current public and colleague facing Council Plan, agreed with partners and members, is not financially viable. As an organisation, it is not possible to have a medium to long-term vision if the budget cannot be balanced beyond 2025.

**Project Resources and Responsibilities:**

Lead Director: Luisa Fulci

Working Group: Helen Martin, Mayada Abuaffan, Kathy Jones

**Scope: Suspend**

Symbolically withdraw the current plan, supported by engagement and communications so all colleagues, members, partners, residents and other stakeholders are made aware it is not deliverable. Communicate that any medium to long-term vision, is not currently financially viable, sending a strong signal of Exec and Member commitment to the Spending Controls and Improvement Programme.

**Milestones and Timeline:**

Suspend existing Council Plan – 15<sup>th</sup> February  
Approve refreshed Council Plan - 15<sup>th</sup> April

**Scope: Refresh**

Explain that the current Council Plan will be replaced by a cross-organisational one-year Plan, focused on delivering an Improvement Programme which will design and deliver a financially sustainable organisation.

Design the new plan - CPMO to facilitate a ‘Stop, start, continue, amend’ exercise, and Directors to identify circa 5-7 shared Council wide strategic priorities. Individual Directors to simplify/prioritise Service Plan performance indicators and actions, aligned to service planning process; and review/agree actions for outstanding audit recommendations. Engage Members, partners and colleagues, and create a golden thread through existing governance arrangements.

Communicate the new plan through clear and agreed messaging, which reassures residents and engages partners and media with key messages about the Improvement Programme. Create a clear golden thread that aligns Council task, individuals and environment to the Council Plan through clear comms and engagement and the new appraisal process.

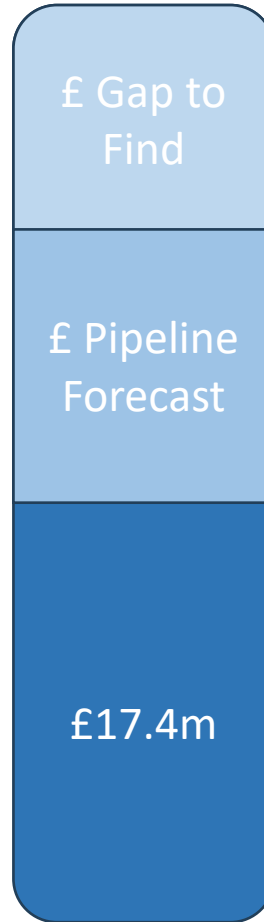
# Phase 2 Programme Success Measures, focused on the funding gap

**Overarching Programme success measure = Total Target - £37.4m**

(identifying as much as possible in 24/25)

MTFS savings/income, cumulative impact £17.4m by 26/27, made up of savings delivered in 24/25, 25/26 and 26/27. Programme success measures:

- £ Delivered
- £ Assured
- £ At Risk
- (£ Not Delivered/deliverable, not included in the total)



Stretch Target Savings/Income - £20m to find and deliver through additional incomes/savings initiatives, the 24/25 Change Portfolio and Org Redesign.

Programme success measures:

- £ Pipeline identified
- £ Pipeline approved
- £ Delivered
- £ Assured
- £ At Risk
- All measures to clarify financial impact 24/25, 25/26, 26/27

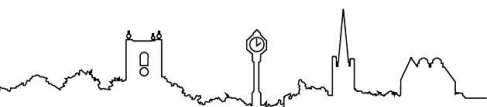
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# 24/25 Change Portfolio

- A 24/25 'Change Portfolio' of projects will deliver a significant % of the pipeline income/savings.
- A 'Stop, Start, Vary' exercise will a) create a pipeline of savings/income and b) will create capacity for change.
- Strategic Criteria underpin the Change Portfolio and 'Stop, Start, Vary' process

Strategic Criteria	Priority
Is this project fully funded, i.e. through the Capital Programme or the current MTFS, and in line with Spending Controls?	Essential
Will the project deliver Financial Benefits? E.g. efficiencies, cash-out, improved revenue.	High, once Essential criteria met
Does the project deliver benefits that are crucial to the Customer experience, and therefore help to deliver a sustainable organisation?	High, once Essential criteria met
Does the project deliver non-financial benefits aligned to the Improvement & Sustainability Programme objectives?	Medium, once Essential criteria met
Is the project case for change essential to meet Regulatory / Legislative / Statutory standards?	Necessary
Don't meet above criteria	Stop
Does the project have maturity to deliver benefits?	Set a new standard <sup>87</sup>



# Project: Governance

**Problem Statement:** The LGA Peer Review surfaced issues with Strategic Executive Board (SEB), and that improvements to Member and officer working are required if DMBC is to meet the financial challenge ahead. Members and officers must collaborate effectively to find ways to balance the budget, underpinned by a 'golden thread' of governance, clear roles and responsibilities, and an effective and value for money Democratic Services – all focused on the financial sustainability of the Council.

**Project Resources:**

Lead: Balvinder Heran

Working Group: Mohammed Farooq, Steve Griffiths, external support

Including Members TBC

Project Manager: Kelly Grandison

**Scope:** Design and deliver improvements to governance for 24/25 to create a 'golden thread of governance' to oversee financial challenge, including:

- Review SEB, including membership, ToR etc. and align Director's personal objectives to the Improvement Programme.
- Clarify purpose of Informal Cabinet meetings, and review support arrangements so discussions better flow into formal meeting structures.
- Review Scrutiny arrangements, focusing on the financial challenge.
- Functional review of Democratic Services, creating capacity to manage member engagement, and a 'golden thread of governance' focused on financial challenge and the Improvement Programme.
- Implement new arrangements so options produced by officers can be progressed through formal governance as soon as possible, underpinned by a 'culture reset' led by Group Leaders after May.

**Key Milestones Timeline:**

Improved Governance arrangements agreed: March



# MTFS Savings Reporting & Assurance

**Problem Statement:** The organisation must reduce its operating costs, with as much savings/income as possible identified/delivered in 24/25. Some projects will take time to realise savings. Existing MTFS savings/income of £17.4m by 2026/27 will be submitted for approved by Council on 4th March but is insufficient and leaves a forecast financial gap. The size of the required savings/income target is unprecedented, further complicated by a historic low taxing and low reserves. Performance against relatively modest savings targets has historically delivered less than 100% (46% in 23/24, 71% to date in 24/25). This project must identify and deliver the improvements necessary to internal processes, grip and transparency to identify, assess, assure and report upon effective delivery of savings/income and whether it is sufficient to meet an agreed savings/income stretch target.

## **Key Milestones Timeline:**

Processes for assurance and risk management of savings –  
End March

## **Scope:**

Lessons learnt exercise to identify opportunities for improvements to internal processes that maximise delivery and assurance of savings.

**Create/review/improves processes and reporting** which:

- Identify and agree savings/income stretch target;
- Change controls and communications if the savings/income stretch target changes in-year;
- Identify MTFS savings/incomes;
- Challenge new savings/income proposals to ensure robustness and likelihood of delivery for approval;
- Accurately and more frequently forecast savings/incomes, budget and savings management
- Risk reporting and remedial action/mitigation where delivery of targets is at risk;
- Create assurance of delivery.

## **Project Resources:**

Lead Director: Matt Bowsher

Working Group: Matt Bowsher, Catherine Driscoll, Kathy Jones, Rachel Cooper.

# Org Redesign: Case for Change

**Problem Statement:** Developing a 'Case for Change' is a key first step in organisational design and aligns to 'Programme Definition' which evidences and articulates the reasons why change is necessary so that the future state can a) resolve root causes of the problems the Council is currently experiencing, so programme benefits are sustainable and b) better meet the needs of stakeholders, including residents, Members, colleagues and partners.

**Project Roles and Responsibilities:**

Sponsor – Leader of the Council  
SRO – CEx/DCEx  
SME – AD People & Inclusion  
Programme Manager, JW  
Project Manager, MMc  
Stakeholders: in consultation with shadow leader/cabinet.

**Key Milestones Timeline:**

Financial Business Case and Case for Change – April  
Gateway Approval for projects 4 onwards – End Q1

**Scope:**

Desktop Review: LGA Peer Review Findings and Recommendations and External Auditors Report as objective inputs. Desktop review of existing data. Policy Review. Data from employee engagement. Insights from the EVP work.

Root Cause Analysis/Impact Assessment: Director and stakeholder interviews about root cause of LGA Peer Review and External Auditor findings, using '5 Whys' methodology. Draws together all the lessons learnt activities to date. Fishbone Analysis used to consult on themes and major root causes.

Case for Change: A narrative which sets out the reasons why change is required and the root causes that need to be resolved.

Financial Business Case: Will confirm the size of a Financially Sustainable Organisation and set out the benefits profile of each project and workstream so that the Programme can track financial benefits.

Success Measures: Will confirm how we measure success, for the Council, customers and stakeholders.

# Org Redesign: Programme Scope

**Problem Statement:** The scale of the financial challenge requires a fundamental organisation wide re-design, which will rethink how we deliver services on almost every level. This will take a 'One Dudley' view across the whole organisation, responding to the problem statements/feedback raised in the LGA Peer Review and the External Auditor's report. By designing and delivering the right shape and size organisation the Programme will deliver a financially sustainable organisation, mitigating the S114 Risk and consequences for Dudley residents. Note: this is a programme in its own right – and should not be confused with a restructure.

## **Programme Roles and Responsibilities:**

Sponsor: Leader of the Council

SRO: CEx/DCEX

SME: AD People & Inclusion

Programme Manager: Jen Williams

Project Manager: Michelle McLean

Stakeholders: in consultation with Shadow

Leader/Cabinet.

Dedicated team TBC

## **Scope:**

Designs and delivers a financially sustainable organisation (TOM), aligned to a refreshed vision for the customer/resident, underpinned by effective governance, by '25.

Includes the following projects:

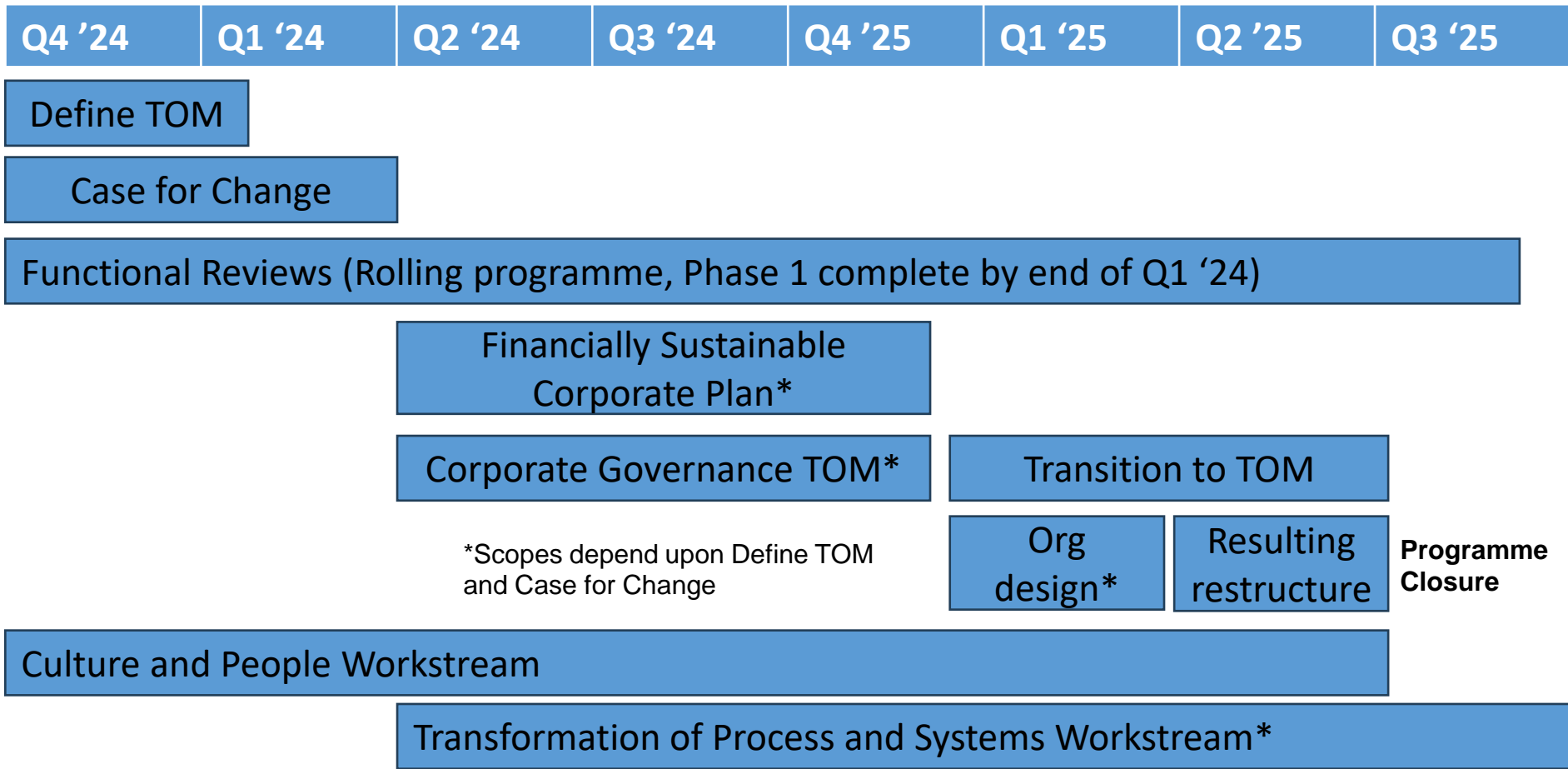
1. Define target operating models (TOM)
2. Functional Reviews
3. Case for Change
4. Financially Sustainable Corporate Plan (includes Financial and Performance Management)
5. Corporate Governance TOM
6. Transition to TOM (Single organisational wide redesign and resulting restructure, including Corporate Services and senior leadership restructure)

And is underpinned by 2 ongoing workstreams:

- People & Culture
- Transformation of Processes and Systems, which will run beyond the lifetime of the Improvement Programme

**Note: Scopes of Project 4 onwards requires a 'Gateway Approval' evidenced by the TOM and Case for Change.**

# Org Redesign: Programme Timeline

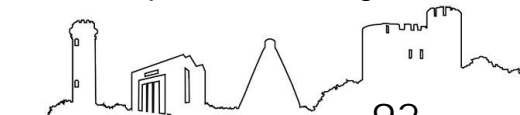


\*Scopes depend upon Define TOM and Case for Change

Transformation will run beyond the lifetime of the Improvement Programme



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# Org Redesign: Define Target Operating Model

**Problem Statement:** The Council's current approach sees service areas operating as single separate teams leading to duplication of effort, different behaviours and values and lack of joint working. We need a new operating model that focuses on getting the basics right for our customers, communities, and businesses at the heart of Council decision-making. The new operating model will address the 5yr funding gap by creating a workforce that is flexible with the necessary skills to work effectively, fully exploit digital technologies and enable the Council to accelerate their processes.

## **Project Roles and Responsibilities:**

Sponsor: Leader of the Council

SRO: CEx/DCEx

SME: AD People & Inclusion

Programme Manager: Jen Williams

Project Manager: Michelle McLean

Stakeholders: in consultation with Shadow Leader/Cabinet.

## **Scope:**

Agree a Vision and Mission for Dudley – to provide the strategic direction for a future Financially Sustainable Corporate Strategy.

Agree 'TOM Design Principles' – set of agreed 'universal building blocks' to prioritise and adhere to in the organisation design.

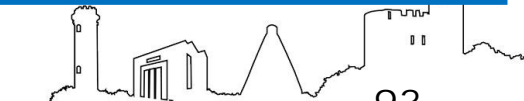
Create a TOM blue-print – a 'North Star' - a high-level description of a target operating model, which will better meet resident and internal customer needs and deliver a Financially Sustainable Corporate Strategy. Will place the customer at the heart of the TOM blue-print through customer journey mapping and customer insight. Will clarify operating model for corporate services.

## **Key Milestones Timeline:**

Vision & Mission – Early March

TOM Design Principles – Early March

TOM Blue-Print - April



# Org Redesign: Functional Reviews

**Problem Statement:** To deliver effective org redesign the Council has to be clear about each and every function, its scope and future state, which will then determine the future organisational structure, underpinned by the TOM Blue-Print.

## **Project Roles and Responsibilities:**

Sponsor: Leader of the Council

SRO: CEx/DCEX

SME: AD People & Inclusion

Programme Manager: Jen Williams

Project Managers: Michelle McLean, Malcolm Edwards

Directors to be responsible for leading Functional Review in their area.

Analysis/Assurance: Commercial Teams, Finance, Legal, People & Inclusion

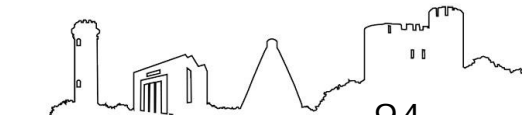
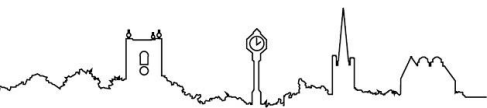
Stakeholders: in consultation with Shadow Leader/Cabinet.

## **Scope:**

- Collate list of Functions and total costs per Function. Phase the Functions into baskets of 6-8, with a clear timeline (Phase 1 to be complete by June).
- Evidence the Value-add/social-value of each function in Dudley, given the local market/partners and resident needs/perceptions, leaning on external expertise for input and check/challenge and internal data driven analysis.
- Make recommendations to Cease, Vary, Maintain and deliberate and evidenced based decisions about aspirations for Council performance.
- Complete impact analysis of Cease, Vary, Maintain recommendations, including cost implications. Case by case analytical evaluation where decisions about TOM are being made.
- Agree metrics KPIs per function

## **Key Milestones Timeline:**

Phase 1 completed, June



# Org Redesign: People & Culture

## **Problem Statement:**

At the heart of the issues raised around governance, is the current culture of our organisation. It's reflected in silo working, a lack of collaboration and communication, complicated processes and the failure to seize digital opportunities. This leads to inefficiencies and missed opportunities. There is a need to improve the internal control and assurance so that we are customer-centric with an unwavering focus on excellence.

## **Project Roles and Responsibilities:**

Sponsor – Leader of the Council

SRO – CEx/DCEx

SMEs – AD People & Inclusion, Trish Williams

Programme Manager, JW

Project Manager, MMc

Stakeholders: in consultation with shadow leader/cabinet.

## **Scope:**

Values and behaviours – We will refresh and implement values and behaviours that clear set the standards for ways of working and behaviours. These will be part of the updated annual appraisal scheme.

Management Practices – Improving practices so that managers are focussed on improving team and individual performance so that all employees know what is required of them and understand their role in the bigger picture.

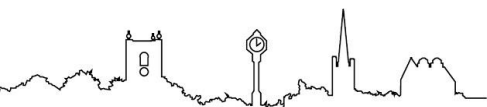
Change Readiness – Developing the workforce to enable them to thrive during the transition to the TOM and be equipped to work well in an environment of continuous improvement. We will also identify and reinforce new behaviours and ways of working that are sustainable.

Leadership Development – Developing current and future leaders at all levels of the organisation to support and embed the new culture and required ways of working.

People Governance & Intelligence – ensuring that the right frameworks, policies, procedures and data are in place to support and underpin this work.

## **Key Milestones Timeline:**

Refreshed people policies, appraisals and Employee Value Proposition themes, April



# Workstream: Comms and Engagement

## **Purpose**

The Comms & Engagement workstream underpins the Improvement Programme, ensuring that:

- All programme workstreams are supported by joined up communications.
- Stakeholders linked to programme delivery are clear on what is happening, what success looks like and what they need to do.
- Wider colleagues, partners and residents have their needs understood and responded to in a timely, effective way.

## **Project Resources**

Lead Director: Nick McGurk

Working Group: Mayada Abuaffan, Jacqui Branch, Barry Hutchinson, Phil Parker, Trish Williams

Project Manager: Michelle McLean

**Milestones and Timeline:** Comms and engagement activities require a responsive, collaborative and agile approach. Milestones will be agreed month-on-month (with associated success measures), in response to stakeholder needs and feedback and programme performance.

## **Scope:**

Work collaboratively with stakeholders to: Contribute to the creation of a supportive climate that will enable the delivery of the Council-wide change programme.

Deliver effective communications and a wide range of engagement activities covering both internal and external stakeholders (public, partners, colleagues).

Ensure a robust feedback loop into IDG and working groups, providing challenge and putting forward ideas in response to activities that impact staff engagement.

Measure the success of activities and interventions and undertake regular lessons learned.

Identify early adopters of change and success stories, sharing them to raise awareness of good/best and novel/innovative practice linked to the change plan.

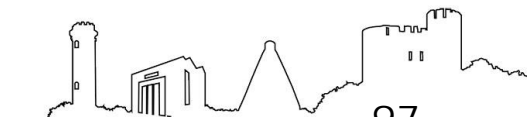


# Appendix 2

## Fit for the Future Programme Governance, Phase 2



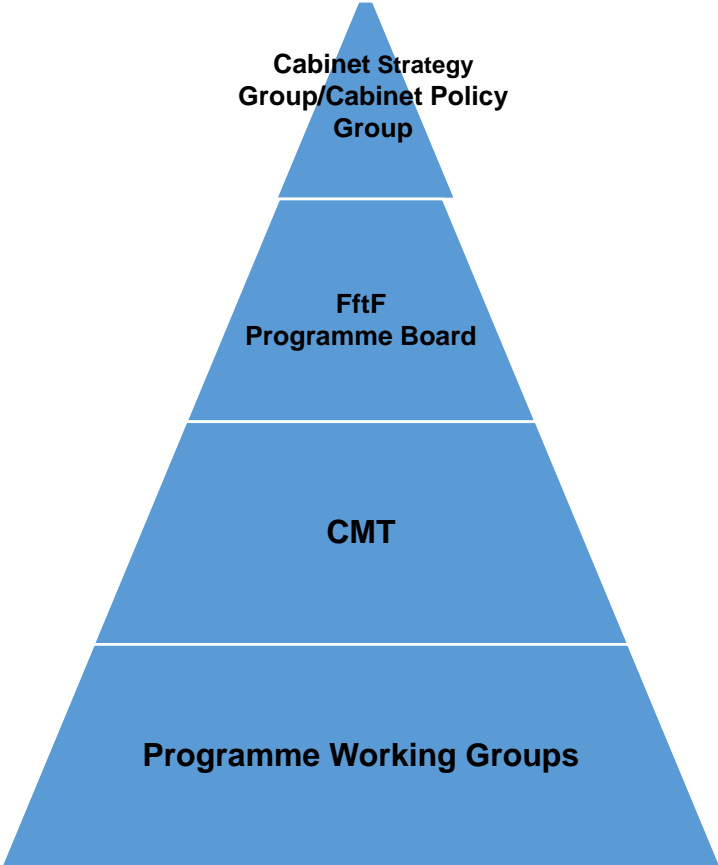
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# Governance reset

Action	Proposal	Membership
Delete Informal Cabinet	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Cabinet Strategy Group</b> – meets once a month to focus on big ticket discussions focussed on future financial sustainability, key priorities and improved governance.</li> <li>• <b>Cabinet Policy Group</b> (includes Cabinet agenda setting) - once a month in line with Cabinet meeting timetable – agenda and minutes</li> </ul>	<p>The Cabinet, CEx, DCEX, Directors</p> <p>The Cabinet, CEx, DCEX, Directors, MO, supported by democratic Services</p>
Delete SEB Phase out IDG	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Corporate Management (CMT)</b> – meets weekly - leadership, management of the organisation and input to and leadership of change</li> <li>• <b>Fit for Future (FftF) Programme Board</b> – meets monthly prior to IAB papers going out</li> <li>• <b>Senior leadership (SLT)</b> meets once a month.</li> <li>• <b>Programme Working groups</b> supported by project management resources report into Programme Steering Group.</li> <li>• <b>Wider staff engagement</b></li> </ul>	<p>CEx (chair), DCEX, Directors, MO, Assistant Director for P&amp;I for 'FfF' elements supported by democratic Services</p> <p>Chair – Leader of the Council, Shadow Leader, CEx, DCEX (SRO), Director for Finance &amp; Legal, Ass. Director for People &amp; Inclusion, Programme Manager and Cabinet lead member and Director on invite,</p> <p>CMT, Service Directors, Assistant Directors, HoS, 'FftF' PMT and relevant SMEs, arranged and supported by organisational development</p> <p>Working groups supported by Fit for Future Programme Team</p> <p>Detail and frequency being managed by C&amp;E Working Group, arranged and supported by organisational development and relevant SMEs</p>
Review Scrutiny function within the budget for members allowances	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Paper to main Group Leaders on options for Scrutiny linked to future financial sustainability and key priorities.</li> </ul>	DCEX, Director for Finance & Legal, MO and democratic Services Manager
Review functions undertaken by democratic services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Look at what functions can be moved to other teams (obvious non-democratic functions) and then build into functional reviews the remaining elements to confirm the future delivery vehicle. May need a transfer of capacity into the team</li> </ul>	

# DMBC Governance

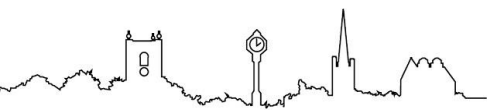


**Chair:** Leader of the Council, Cabinet  
**Membership:** CMT supported by democratic services

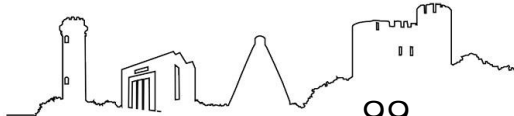
**Chair/Executive:** Leader of the Council, Shadow Leader, CEx  
**Membership:** DCEx (SRO), Director for Finance & Legal, Ass. Director for People & Inclusion, Programme Manager and Cabinet lead member and Director on invite,

**Chair:** CEx,  
DCEx, Directors, MO supported by democratic services

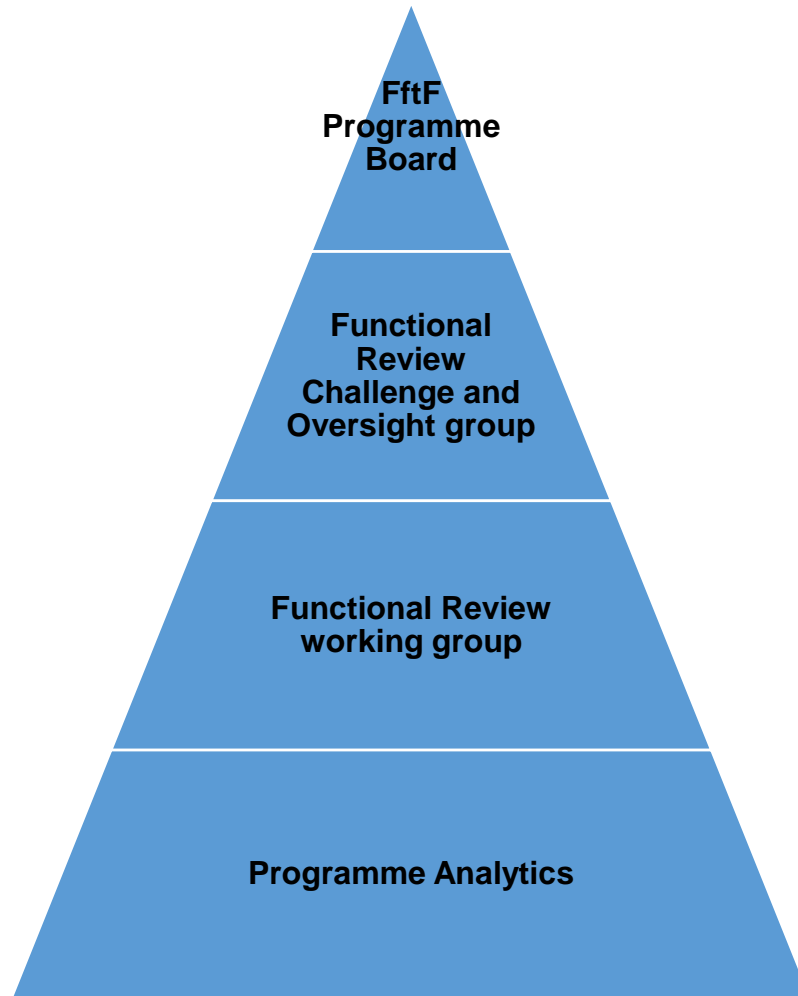
**Chair:** Lead Director  
**Membership** –as set by Chair, project manager and analytics rep relevant Cabinet lead member (on invite),



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# Governance: Org Redesign & Functional Reviews

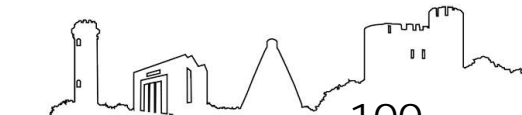
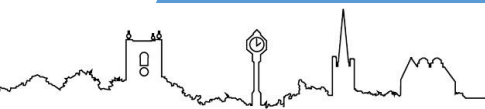


**Chair/Executive:** Leader of the Council, Shadow Leader, CEx  
**Membership:** DCEx (SRO), Director for Finance & Legal, Ass. Director for People & Inclusion, Programme Manager and Cabinet lead member and Director on invite,

**Chair:** DCEx (SRO)  
**Membership:** Lead Director, lead Cabinet Member (on invite), Director of Finance/AD People and Inclusion/Head of Legal, Programme Manager

**Chair: Lead Director** (revolving, based on the function).  
**Membership:** external challenge, P&I representation and lead Cabinet Member (on invite), project manager and analytics rep

**Lead:** Director of Digital, Customer and Commercial Services  
**Membership:** to be determined by lead.  
**Purpose:** Provide consistent methodology and analysis including evidence of need, financials, impact assessments.



**Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

**Progress Tracker**

<b>Subject (Date of Meeting)</b>	<b>Recommendation/action</b>	<b>Responsible Officer/Area</b>	<b>Status/Notes</b>
Corporate Quarterly Performance Report (12 <sup>th</sup> June, 2023)	That further reports be submitted on the specific issues of sickness absence and procurement taking account of the issues raised by the Committee.	Chief Executive (Assistant Director People & Inclusion)  Director of Digital, Customer & Commercial	Employee wellbeing is an agenda item for this meeting  Procurement to be considered for future scrutiny work programme
Dudley Economy (19 <sup>th</sup> October, 2023)	That further reports be presented to Members in due course.	Regeneration & Enterprise and Public Health & Wellbeing	To be considered for future scrutiny work programme
Traffic Congestion and the Impact on the Dudley Economy	That the issue of traffic congestion be included in the future scrutiny work programme with a view to a detailed scrutiny exercise being undertaken on this topic in the future.	Directors of Regeneration & Enterprise and Environment	To be considered for future scrutiny work programme

### Future Business 2023/24

<u>Date of Meeting</u>	<u>Work Programme</u>	<u>Responsible Officer/Area</u>
27 <sup>th</sup> March, 2024	West Midlands Combined Authority - Annual Scrutiny Report	Cllr C Bayton / Cllr McNicholas, James Hughes and Lyndsey Roberts
	West Midlands Combined Authority – Dudley MBC Activity	WMCA (James Hughes)
	Employee Wellbeing	Chief Executive (Assistant Director People & Inclusion)
	Improvement and Sustainability Programme	Deputy Chief Executive
	Information item (circulated to Members) - Corporate Quarterly Performance Report – Quarter 3	Chief Executive (Corporate Performance & Programme Manager)

**Dates of future meetings will be agreed at the Annual Meeting of the Council in May, 2024**