

West Midlands Combined Authority
14th October 2021

This was a question-and-answer session with the Mayor. As there were a few new members the Chair asked for a round table introduction.

The Mayor then thanked the committee for the valuable work we do and went on to highlight several crucial items for the future.

1. The bid for £1.7B toward devolved transport
2. £200M paid out from the brown field fund

There was a minor interruption while we discussed the devolution deal

3. Eco recovery suggested that employment levels were improving with an excellent “plan for growth”
4. The corporate strategy was to be presented to the November Board meeting, where decisions would be made as to do or not to do.

When asked about what powers he would like, the reply was that we did not have the best devolution deal so powers without money to act was not the best outcome. However, on skills we do not have total control, to achieve net zero emissions we need more devolution and on eco-development he had asked for more power.

On the economy, we have the best growth and recovery from Covid but even this was not as good as hoped. The plan for growth related to growth, the approach to net zero and people. There is an emphasis on clean manufacture, but this needs new skills. The plan was to build on our skills for medical development, electric vehicles and efficient energy. There is an imbalance between job vacancies and people on benefit, based on attitudes and what seems to be a non-functioning DWP. More work was needed on digital and construction skills. The Kick start programme has spent £7K of some £20K available, hence the comment on the DWP. It was hoped that the Giga factory in Coventry would soon be announced as the Government was ready and a private operator was soon to be appointed.

There was wide ranging questions and discussion on transport *The Mayor emphasised that he would await the conclusions of Transport for West Midlands’ report on this matter, although he would need to be persuaded that bus franchising provided the best model for the operation of bus services within the region.*

On the question of air quality, *The Mayor explained that he had limited concurrent powers with the local authorities and air quality issues had been addressed by local authorities not the WMCA.*

(Italics are direct quotes from the minutes)

Councillor Mike Chalk