

West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) Overview and Scrutiny Committee
15/12/2021 - Teams Meeting

This was a question-and-answer meeting with the Mayor directly connected with the budget.

The Mayor, Andy Street, addressed the meeting explaining that the WMCA was in a good position as for the fourth year running, they had balanced the budget and achieved all that was expected. This was due to the efficiency with which the budget was prepared and checked. There was money levered into the area for specific purposes that were not always shown such as the £0.5B for growth. There were some concerns about progress in relation to the “levelling up white paper” and the new devolution deal.

There were several questions on housing and homelessness. There had been a £1.1B grant to use, in partnership with housing associations, to build houses.

A major part of the budget was for transport but there were allocations for jobs and skills and, when asked, there was an emphatic answer that there was no need at present for a Mayoral precept.

When the area of transport was questioned the Mayor explained the large amounts of infrastructure that were being built including for the Commonwealth Games and University Station. The Mayor indicated that £778M new money had been accessed. When questioned about subsidised bus fares, the Mayor explained that the reduced use of the buses was having an impact on the providers and that it was likely that more routes would cease and so more subsidies would be needed but that the budget might not allow this.

On the environment the Mayor drew Members’ attention to the fact that air quality was the responsibility of the local authorities but it may be that the WMCA would be given powers to act, though might not receive funding for this.

Some 400 contracts had been generated with 60 organisations, predominantly based in the West Midlands, to deliver NVQ level 3 adult education.