

Report from WMCA Overview & Scrutiny Committee – Monday 21 October 2024

The whole meeting was a question-and-answer session with Richard Parker, the Mayor of the West Midlands, who was elected in May 2024.

Overview

The Mayor gave an opening statement outlining his priorities.

He said his focus is on four key themes:

- Homes – a commitment to delivering more social affordable housing in the most ambitious programme for decades
- Good jobs for everyone
- Economic growth and the need to be more competitive – he said that since 2017, the West Midlands region's productivity has fallen about 15 per cent behind Manchester's
- Transport – he particularly highlighted bus franchising.

The Mayor also emphasised the importance of rebuilding the economic fabric of the region, especially improving the skills and job prospects of young people, and of focusing on delivery.

He said the West Midlands Combined Authority may need to do things differently in the future.

Topics covered included the following:

Financial situation

The Mayor said that a projected shortfall was expected, but discussions with the Government were underway to address the funding gaps. He said his manifesto commitments were still on track, with housing and skills development being prioritised within the current financial limits. Public transport, especially the bus franchising system, was a priority. He was optimistic about securing Government support to continue major infrastructure projects.

Housing

The Mayor gave an overview of how he intended to resolve the housing crisis by delivering 20,000 additional homes by 2031, equating to an annual goal of building more than 2,800 homes.

The plan included streamlining housing delivery processes, collaborating closely with local councils, and attracting investment. He identified the need for an overhaul of the existing housing resource allocation system, which had historically been fragmented and ineffective. He confirmed that he was aiming for a more strategic and efficient use of resources.

Councillor Joanna Kane,
Redditch Borough Council Representative on WMCA Overview and Scrutiny Committee