

Report from WMCA Overview & Scrutiny Committee – Monday 3 March 2025

A number of items were discussed at the meeting, including the following:

West Midlands State of the Region 2024/25

This is a high-level, annual review of the condition of the West Midlands. It provides context to help understand the region's performance and brings attention to opportunities and challenges.

Recommendations set out in the report included the following:

Inclusive economy: While the region's economy has grown, it has done so at a slower pace compared to the overall growth in the UK. Moreover, households are not experiencing the benefits of this growth, as their disposable income is increasing at a rate below the UK average. Therefore, the development of a local growth plan must not only focus on fostering high-growth clusters but also consider its positive impact on households and improving the quality of life for everyone.

Power and participation: In 2023/24 only 25% of WMCA residents felt they could personally impact local decision-making, slightly above the national figure of 23%. As the region regains powers through deeper devolution, and gains opportunities to decide how funding is spent through an integrated settlement, the WMCA and its constituent local authorities must ensure that residents and communities are fully informed, included, and involved in the decision-making process, so that changes to things that affect people's lives are done with people, rather than to people.

Affordable and safe places: The increase in the cost of living over the past few years continues to put pressure on household finances for homeowners and renters alike, with increases in monthly rental and mortgage costs. There are disparities in how the cost of living is felt by different population groups and across towns and cities. There is a need to ensure that homes are of a decent standard, and the work to unlock key housing sites connected to transport networks is a huge opportunity to create more affordable and decent homes for everyone.

Health and wellbeing: Public services need to be reformed to be more integrated and more strongly focused upon prevention, with interventions built around the way people live their lives so that the socioeconomic causes of health inequalities can be addressed.

Councillor Joanna Kane

Redditch Borough Council's Representative, WMCA Overview & Scrutiny Committee