



Committee and Date

West Mercia Energy Joint
Committee

25th September 2026

WEST MERCIA ENERGY JOINT COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held on 27 March 2026

**In The Council Chamber, The Guildhall, Frankwell Quay, Shrewsbury, SY3 8HQ
10.00 - 11.08 am**

Responsible Officer: Shelley Davies

Email: shelley.davies@shropshire.gov.uk Tel: 01743 257718

Present

Councillor Peter Stoddart (Chairman)

Councillors Roger Evans, Zona Hannington (Vice Chairman) and Ollie Vickers

Officers in Attendance:

Nigel Evans – Director, WME

Jo Pugh - Head of Finance and Billing, WME

Gavin Owen - Head of Business Development, WME

Julie Wassall - Head of Energy Procurement and Energy Services, WME

George Thomas - External Auditor, WR Partners

Adam Williams - Principal Auditor, Shropshire Council

Duncan Whitfield - Section 151 Officer, Shropshire Council (Remotely)

Richard Vaughan - Sustainability & Climate Change Manager, Herefordshire Council
(Remotely)

Chris Bird - Chief Accountant, Worcestershire County Council (Remotely)

1 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Graham Biggs, Ian Cresswell, Rob Wharton and Rob Wilson.

2 Minutes

RESOLVED:

That the Minutes of the West Mercia Energy Joint Committee held on 26th September 2025 be approved as a correct record.

3 Public Questions

No public questions had been received.

4 Disclosable Pecuniary Interests

None declared.

5 **Supplier contracts**

Nigel Evans, Director reported a new entry to the procurement register dated 12th March 2026, concerning a late tender submission for the supply and installation of solar PV, which was allowed to be considered due to mitigating circumstances.

6 **External Audit Plan 2025/26**

Jo Pugh, Head of Finance and Billing introduced the report which set out the proposed external audit plan for 2025/26.

George Thomas, External Auditor provided an overview of the External Audit Service Plan for 2025/26, outlining the scope of the audit, confirmation of auditor independence, and key responsibilities, noting that the audit would primarily focus on the statutory audit with financial statements prepared by officers. He explained the proposed materiality level, the identified risks (including fraud, management override of controls and sector-wide going concern considerations), and confirmed that no significant issues had arisen from planning and interim work undertaken to date.

RESOLVED:

That the Joint Committee:

1. approve the draft audit plan for 2025/26 as presented by WR Partners attached at Appendix 1.
2. approve the commissioning of WR Partners to undertake the audit in accordance with the audit plan.

7 **Internal Audit Annual Report 2025/26**

Adam Williams, Principal Auditor introduced the Internal Audit Annual Report for 2025/26, which provided a summary of Internal Audit's work for 2025/26. He highlighted that a substantial assurance opinion had been issued, confirming that governance, risk management and internal control arrangements were sound and operating effectively. It was explained that this was the highest level of assurance available and reflected the strong control environment in place. He summarised the audit work undertaken, covering areas including finance, debtors, procurement, IT and corporate governance, noting that no adverse audit opinions had been issued and that only a small number of recommendations had been made, largely to address minor weaknesses or housekeeping matters.

The Chairman commented that the findings were reassuring and welcomed the positive assessment, noting that the report provided confidence that the organisation was operating as expected and that controls were being applied effectively.

RESOLVED:

That the Joint Committee endorse:

- a) Performance against the Audit Plan for the year ending 31 March 2026.
- b) That the system of governance, risk management and internal control is operating effectively and can be relied upon when considering the Annual Governance Statement for 2025/26.
- c) The Chief Audit Executive's substantial year end opinion on West Mercia Energy's governance, risk management and internal control environment for 2025/26 based on the work undertaken and management responses received.

8 Internal Audit Strategic Plan 2026/27

Adam Williams, Principal Auditor introduced the Internal Audit Strategic Plan for 2026/27, explaining that the proposed programme of work had been developed in consultation with management and aligned with the West Mercia Energy risk register to ensure appropriate coverage of key financial, governance and IT risks. The plan included audits covering areas such as procurement, debtors, finance, IT and corporate governance, with flexibility built in to address any emerging risks during the year, and it was noted that detailed scopes would be agreed with officers prior to each audit commencing.

The Chairman noted that he welcomed the level of audit days allocated, which he considered was a good figure and demonstrated that the work will be conducted with appropriate depth and analysis.

RESOLVED:

That the Joint Committee endorse the proposed programme of audits for 2026/27.

9 Anti-Slavery and Human Trafficking Statement 2025/26

Nigel Evans, Director presented the Anti-Slavery and Human Trafficking Statement Transparency Statement for 2025/26 and requested delegated authority to finalise and publish the statement after year-end.

RESOLVED:

That the Joint Committee:

1. approve the draft WME Transparency Statement for 2025/26.
2. delegate authority to the Director to finalise the WME Transparency Statement and publish it in accordance with section 54 of the Modern Slavery Act 2015.

10 Risk Management Update

Nigel Evans, Director presented the Risk Management Update, which provided a review of the WME Risk Management Strategy. He explained that risks were formally reviewed by the management team twice a year and reported that the majority of identified risks were assessed as low or very low due to effective controls being in place. It was noted that one medium risk remained, relating to the potential breach of capital risk levels arising from volatility in energy markets, which was considered particularly relevant in current market conditions. He also reported that a previously identified medium risk concerning potential loss of school business linked to a central government initiative had been reassessed and downgraded, following improved engagement with the Department for Education (DFE) and increased confidence around re-approval as a DFE framework provider.

The Chairman welcomed the pragmatic and proactive approach to risk management, noting that the risk register was actively used as a live management tool rather than a static document and the approach demonstrated effective risk oversight and ongoing monitoring.

RESOLVED:

That the Joint Committee:

1. approve the WME Risk Management Strategy attached at Appendix A; and
2. accept the position as set out in this report.

11 Exclusion of Press and Public

RESOLVED:

That under Section 100(A)(A4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded during the consideration of the following items of business on the grounds that they might involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Schedule 12(A) of the Act.

12 Exempt Minutes

RESOLVED:

That the Exempt Minutes of the West Mercia Energy Joint Committee held on 26th September 2025 be approved as a correct record.

13 Annual Business Plan and Budget 2026/27 including review of 2025/26

Nigel Evans, Director presented an exempt report for approval.

RESOLVED:

That the recommendations contained within the exempt report be approved.

14 Energy Governance, Accountability, Risk and Reporting Policy

Nigel Evans, Director presented an exempt report for approval.

RESOLVED:

That the recommendation contained within the exempt report be approved.

15 Date of Next Meeting

It was noted that the next meeting of the West Mercia Energy Joint Committee will be held on Friday 25th September 2026 10.30 a.m. in the Council Chamber, The Guildhall, Shrewsbury.

Signed (Chairman)

Date: