



## Overview & Scrutiny Committee

**Date:** Monday 10 July 2023

**Time:** 10.00 am **Public meeting** Yes

**Venue:** Room 116, 16 Summer Lane, Birmingham, B19 3SD

### Membership

Councillor Cathy Bayton (Chair)  
Councillor Naeem Akhtar  
Councillor Philip Bateman MBE  
Councillor Andrew Burrow  
Councillor Ian Kettle  
Councillor Nigel Lumby  
Councillor Emma Marshall

Councillor Paul Moore  
Councillor Lauren Rainbow  
Councillor Jamie Tennant  
Amanda Tomlinson  
Councillor Vera Waters  
Councillor Ken Wood

Association of Black Country Authorities  
Coventry City Council  
City of Wolverhampton Council  
Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council  
Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council  
Shropshire Non-Constituent Local Authorities  
Worcestershire Non-Constituent Local Authorities  
Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council  
Birmingham City Council  
Birmingham City Council  
Business Representative  
Walsall Metropolitan Borough Council  
Birmingham City Council

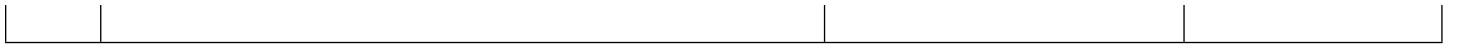
Quorum for this meeting shall be 7 members

If you have any queries about this meeting, please contact:

**Contact** Lyndsey Roberts, Statutory Scrutiny Officer  
**Telephone** 07917 473824  
**Email** [lyndsey.roberts@wmca.org.uk](mailto:lyndsey.roberts@wmca.org.uk)

# AGENDA

No.	Item	Presenting	Pages
<b>Meeting Business Items</b>			
1.	Appointment of Chair To note the appointment by the WMCA Board at its meeting on 9 June 2023 of Councillor Cathy Bayton as the Chair of this committee for 2023/24	Chair	None
2.	Appointment of Vice-Chair	Chair	None
3.	Apologies for Absence	Chair	None
4.	Declarations of Interests Members are reminded of the need to declare any disclosable prejudicial interests they have in any item being discussed during the course of the meeting. In addition, the receipt of any gift or hospitality should be declared where the value of it was thought to have exceeded £25 (gifts) or £40 (hospitality).	Chair	None
5.	Terms of Reference	Chair	1 - 4
6.	Minutes - 13 March 2023	Chair	5 - 10
7.	Matters Arising	Chair	None
8.	Scrutiny within the WMCA	Dan Essex/Lyndsey Roberts	11 - 18
9.	WMCA's Priorities and Challenges 2023/24	Laura Shoaf	Verbal Report
10.	Scrutiny Review: The impact of the delivery of local skills training following the devolution of the Adult Education Budget to the WMCA	Amanda Tomlinson	19 - 30
11.	Deeper Devolution Deal - Scrutiny Implications	Dan Essex	31 - 44
12.	Grant Register	Kate Taylor	45 - 52
13.	Work Programme (a) Overview & Scrutiny Committee – Work Programme (Draft) (b) WMCA Board Forward Plan	Lyndsey Roberts	53 - 62
<b>Date of Next Meeting</b>			
14.	Monday 4 September 2023 at 10:00am	Chair	None



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<b>Overview &amp; Scrutiny Committee - Terms of Reference</b>	
<b>Purpose</b>	<p>To be an advocate for residents of the West Midlands and ensure that the decisions made by the WMCA help to make the West Midlands a more prosperous and better-connected region which is fairer, greener and healthier.</p> <p>To undertake pre-decision scrutiny, pre-development scrutiny and enact the call-in arrangements, as and when required, for the WMCA.</p>
<b>Accountable to</b>	WMCA Board
<b>Membership</b>	<p>Birmingham City Council x 3                      Coventry City Council x1                      Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council x 1                      Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council x 1                      Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council x 1                      Walsall Metropolitan Borough Council x1                      City of Wolverhampton Council x 1                      Association of Black Country Authorities x 1                      Non-Constituent Authorities x 4                      Business Representative x 1</p>
<b>Chair</b>	<p>The Chair will be appointed by the WMCA Board from the members of the committee appointed by the constituent authorities.</p> <p>The Vice-Chair will be appointed by the Overview &amp; Scrutiny Committee.</p> <p>The Chair and Vice-Chair must not be from the same political party as the Mayor.</p>
<b>Voting</b>	Members appointed from constituent authorities will have one vote each.

	<p>Members appointed from non-constituent authorities and all other members of the committee are non-voting representatives.</p> <p>The Chair does not have a second, casting vote. If a vote is tied on any matter, it shall be considered not to have been carried.</p>
<b>Quorum</b>	Two-thirds of voting members appointed to the committee.
<b>Frequency</b>	The committee shall meet seven times a year, or more often if it is determined necessary to discharge its responsibilities.
<b>Servicing</b>	The meetings will be serviced by the WMCA's Governance Services team.
<b>Functions</b>	<p><b>To undertake 'overview' and 'scrutiny'</b> focussing on strategies, policies and proposals to inform their development before they are determined by the WMCA Board, Mayor or other committee (<b>overview function</b>) and to scrutinise decisions that have been made or are about to be made (<b>scrutiny function</b>).</p> <p><b>To review or scrutinise decisions made, or other action taken</b>, in connection with the discharge of any functions which are the responsibility of the WMCA with the exception of transport-related matters.</p> <p><b>Make reports or recommendations to the WMCA Board or the Mayor</b> on matters that affect the WMCA area or the inhabitants of the area.</p> <p><b>Make reports or recommendations to the WMCA Board or to the Mayor</b> with respect to the discharge of any non-transport functions which are the responsibility of the Combined Authority.</p> <p><b>Call-In</b> decisions made by the WMCA, committees or the Mayor (excluding Transport Delivery Overview &amp; Scrutiny Committee and Audit, Risk &amp; Assurance Committee). Decisions that have been delegated by the WMCA or the Mayor to other committees or officers may also be called in.</p>

	<p><b>To undertake at least two public Mayoral Q&amp;A Sessions per annum</b> structured around ‘policy’ and ‘budget’. To make reports, observations and recommendations to the WMCA Board and the Mayor on any findings, as appropriate. Overview &amp; Scrutiny Committee may publish its report, observations and or recommendations and by notice in writing require the WMCA and or the Mayor to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) consider the report, observations and recommendations;</li> <li>b) respond to the Overview &amp; Scrutiny Committee indicating what (if any) action the WMCA proposes to take. The Mayor and or WMCA to respond within two months.</li> </ul> <p><b>To undertake deep dives and or establish scrutiny working groups</b>, as and when required.</p> <p><b>To monitor the progress delivery of recommendations</b> made by the Overview &amp; Scrutiny Committee to the WMCA, Mayor or any other committee.</p> <p><b>Who Can Refer Matters to the Overview &amp; Scrutiny Committee?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A member of the Overview &amp; Scrutiny Committee</li> <li>• A member of the WMCA, including the Mayor</li> <li>• A member of a constituent or non-constituent authority</li> </ul> <p><b>Who Must Attend Meetings of the Overview &amp; Scrutiny Committee?</b></p> <p>Members (including the Mayor and the Deputy Mayor) or officers of the WMCA must attend meetings, if invited, to answer questions.</p> <p><b>Access to Information Requirements</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Combined Authorities’ decision-making is covered by Access to Information requirements, which means that 28 clear days’ notice has to be given before a key decision can be taken (unless the general exception or special urgency rules apply).</li> <li>• The WMCA’s Forward Plan of Key Decisions enables the scrutiny committee to keep abreast of major decisions that are going to be taken by the WMCA, the Mayor.</li> </ul>
<b>Review</b>	Annually in June.

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## West Midlands Combined Authority

### Overview & Scrutiny Committee

Monday 13 March 2023 at 10.00 am

#### Minutes

##### Present

Councillor Cathy Bayton (Chair)  
Councillor Andrew Burrow  
Councillor Ian Kettle  
Councillor Nigel Lumby

Association of Black Country Authorities  
Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council  
Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council  
Shropshire Non-Constituent Local  
Authorities

Councillor Martin McCarthy  
Councillor Jackie Taylor  
Amanda Tomlinson

Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council  
Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council  
Black Country Local Enterprise  
Partnership

##### In Attendance

Steve Bowyer

Partnerships and Engagement Strategic  
Lead

Dan Essex  
Cheryl Hiles  
Lyndsey Roberts  
Laura Shoaf  
Kate Taylor

Governance Services Manager  
Director of Energy Capital  
Scrutiny Officer  
Chief Executive  
Head of Finance Business Planning and  
Strategic Planning

Councillor Vera Waters (MS Teams)

Walsall Metropolitan Borough Council

##### Item Title No.

##### 119. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Naeem Akhtar (Coventry), Councillor Mike Chalk (Redditch), Councillor Mike Sutherland (Cannock) and Councillor Paul Sweet (Wolverhampton).

##### 120. Inquorate Meeting

The meeting was inquorate and therefore decisions taken at the meeting would be deferred to the next meeting of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee on 10 July 2023 for formal approval.

##### 121. Chair's Remarks

The Chair reflected on the activities of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee during 2022/23 and thanked the members of the committee for their support and cross-party contributions during the year.

**122. Minutes - 12 January 2023**

The minutes of the meeting held on 12 January 2023 were agreed as a correct record.

**123. Matters Arising**

**(a) Trailblazer Deeper Devolution Deal**

The Chief Executive provided an update on the negotiations with the Government to finalise the trailblazer deeper devolution deal. It was anticipated that an announcement by Government would be made in the Spring Budget.

**(b) Site Visit to Green Square Accord**

It was agreed that a site visit to Green Square Accord would be arranged for the committee during 2023/24, as a low carbon homes manufacturer.

**(c) Future Homes Strategy**

At its January meeting, members proposed that a wider session with members and local authority officers should be held to encourage the proactive utilisation of the opportunities available to deliver speedy, affordable and carbon neutral housing. The Chair requested a progress update to be provided prior to the next meeting of the committee.

**(d) Scrutiny Review: The Impact of the Delivery of Local Skills Training**

Members received an update on the progress being made with the Skills Scrutiny Review that examined the impact and outcomes that had been delivered through the Adult Education Budget. The review panel had sought a range of written and verbal evidence to help inform the review. The interviews with key witnesses had now concluded and it was anticipated that a report on the conclusions and recommendations arising from the review would be submitted to the Overview & Scrutiny Committee in early 2023/24, prior to its submission to the Skills Advisory Board for consideration.

**124. Mayoral Question Time: Budget - Response from the Mayor to the observations presented to the WMCA Board on 13 January 2023**

The committee received a response in respect of the observations it had identified following the Mayoral Q&A session on 15 December 2022, based on the WMCA's proposed draft budget 2023/24.

Regarding arms' length companies, it was considered that there needed to be a greater scrutiny focus on arms' length companies and the outputs delivered for the region. The Chair agreed to liaise with the Chair of Audit, Risk & Assurance Committee to discuss this matter further.

Resolved:

- (1) The response be noted.

## **125. WM2041 - UPDATE**

The committee considered a report of the Executive Director, Strategy, Integration & Net Zero on the progress being made by the WMCA as part of the region's aspirations to become a net zero region by 2041.

In 2019 the WMCA declared a climate emergency and set out its vision to make the West Midlands net zero by 2041. In 2021, the WMCA developed the first of its 'Five Year Plan' (2021 – 2026) to get to 2041. This was a comprehensive and evidenced plan that set out the practical measures required to meet a range of trajectories to achieve the net zero goal.

The committee discussed and shared comments on local area energy planning, supporting renewables and the WMCA's technical competency to support the business community to reduce their carbon footprint. Whilst it was recognised that the WMCA had created a supportive environment for businesses to share and learn from each other on their journey to reaching net zero, it was important for the WMCA to also understand the obstacles and barriers for the business community.

With regards to home insulation, it was considered that work needed to be undertaken to ensure that the appropriate supply chains provided products, services, information, and guidance that residents could trust. The importance of the WMCA's ethical global responsibility was also highlighted and the need for it to be acutely aware that its route to achieving decarbonisation did not have any unintended consequences.

Resolved:

- (1) The progress being made with the delivery of the Five Year Plan be noted; and
- (2) The observations of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee regarding the need for work to be undertaken to ensure that the appropriate supply chains provided products, services, information and guidance that local residents could trust in relation to insulating their homes, the WMCA to be aware of the obstacles for the business community to reaching net zero and the importance of the UK's impact on the developing world and how this could be made more visible within reports, be noted.

## **126. WMCA Scrutiny 2023/24 - Ways of Working**

The Chair summarised the way in which the committee had undertaken its work programme during the year and discussed potential changes that could be imbedded to improve the scrutiny function going forward.

This year, the WMCA had been instrumental in setting up the new Combined Authorities Scrutiny Chair's Forum that enabled the chairs from the ten combined authorities' scrutiny committees to meet to share best practice and discuss areas of common interest.

The committee considered that regular training opportunities for members, early engagement with the Executive Board, greater scrutiny of the WMCA's

Portfolio Lead Members and greater citizen engagement in the scrutiny process was important, and a clear focus on performance, outcome and metric information that could be examined by the committee.

In addition, it was added that “with greater powers comes with greater accountability” and members recognised that there was a strong focus by the Government on the creation of strong scrutiny within combined authorities.

Resolved:

- (1) The comments be noted.

## **127. Grant Register**

The committee considered a report of the Executive Director of Finance & Business Hub that provided an update on the grant register which contained all current ‘live’ grants where the WMCA was the accountable body and captured a comprehensive total of grants, awarding body, time period for delivery and a description of what the grant delivered.

The Chair enquired about the way in which the Social Housing Fund of £14.9m would be devolved to local authorities. The Chief Executive reported that the Mayor and Portfolio Lead Members were in dialogue as to how this fund would be allocated.

The committee received an update on the scoping of the Commonwealth Games Legacy Enhancement Fund, a £70m resource investment that the WMCA would be granted by the Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport. At its meeting in December 2022, the WMCA Board agreed that the fund was to be allocated across four thematic pillars relating to economy, trade and tourism (£38.9m), culture and heritage (£4.07m), inclusive communities (£20.8m) and wellbeing and sustainability (£4.07m). The WMCA had been working with local authorities and stakeholder groups to shape the programmes and dialogue continued with the Mayor and Portfolio Lead Members. A further report would be presented to the WMCA Board on 17 March 2023.

Amanda Tomlinson sought assurances that the individual funds would generate additionality within the region and would not be utilised to alleviate funding pressures elsewhere. She asked whether the committee could receive a report on the comprehensive programme that detailed the initiatives that the funds would be spent on. The Chief Executive assured the committee that the business case for all programmes would be subject to review by the WMCA’s Investment Board but also welcomed scrutiny’s oversight.

[Amanda Tomlinson declared a prejudicial interest in this item, as Chief Executive of the Black Country Housing Group].

Resolved:

- (1) The Grant Register be noted; and

- (2) A report on the Commonwealth Games Legacy Enhancement Fund's four thematic programmes that detailed the individual initiatives, timescales and funds be presented to a future meeting of the committee in 2023/24.

**128. Minutes: Transport Scrutiny Sub-Committee - 6 February and 16 February 2023**

The committee received the minutes of the Transport Scrutiny Sub-Committee's held on 6 February and 16 February 2023.

Resolved:

- (1) The minutes of the meetings held on 6 February and 16 February be agreed.

**129. Work Programme**

The committee received a draft work programme of items that were to be considered at future meetings of the committee.

Resolved:

- (1) The draft work programme of items to be considered at future meetings be noted.

The meeting ended at 12.00 pm.

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# An introduction to Overview & Scrutiny within the WMCA

**10 July 2023**

Overview & Scrutiny are statutory functions of the West Midlands Combined Authority

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The WMCA's two scrutiny committees provide important challenge and oversight of the work of the Mayor, WMCA boards/committees, Portfolio Lead Members and officers.

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The committees perform two distinct functions under the remit of 'Overview' and 'Scrutiny':

**Overview** - focusing on the development of policy. This form of scrutiny is carried out in the earlier stages of policy development.

**Scrutiny** - looking at decisions that have been made or are about to be made. This form of scrutiny is often carried out in the immediate weeks leading up to a decision being made.

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# What is WMCA Overview & Scrutiny?



Identifying matters of concern or interest - Being informed of the relevant issues - Shaping policy decisions - Making recommendations for action or change.

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**Pre-Development Scrutiny:** Considering potential strategies, policies and proposals to inform their shaping and drafting earlier in their development.

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**Pre-Decision Scrutiny:** Looking at topics/reports immediately before decisions are made by the WMCA Board.

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Undertaking **deep dives and topic-based reviews** and making reports and recommendations to be considered by the WMCA Board and or its boards/committees.

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Exercising the power of **Call-In** of decisions.

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Monitoring the **implementation, performance** and **impact** of policies and decisions of the WMCA

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# What We Do & How We Do it

# The difference between local and combined authority scrutiny?

## Local authority scrutiny

Focus on strategic matters but with operational delivery influencing and informing where scrutiny's priorities lie.

Partnership is important to delivery but scrutiny is often about the council, as an institution, doing things.

Involves oversight of a very wide range of service, safeguarding and community issues.

## Combined authority scrutiny

Highly strategic - long-term strategies to deliver change in 10+ years time, mixed with operational oversight of transport.

Partnership is fundamental to the delivery of its priorities - everything the CA does is about partners and partnership.

Driven by devolution deals - primary focus on economy and growth. Also oversight on operational matters such as transport.

# Characteristics of scrutiny

Scrutiny is a fundamental part of the WMCA's governance and decision making processes. Scrutiny is at the heart of good decision making, as made clear by the Government in its recent devolution deal with the region. Within the WMCA, good scrutiny is being built on four key characteristics:

## **CONSTRUCTIVE SCRUTINY**

'Providing a critical friend challenge to decision makers'

## **COLLABORATIVE SCRUTINY**

'To work in collaboration with the WMCA to support the development of strategies, policies and proposals to help improve the region'

## **EVIDENCED-BASED SCRUTINY**

'To pursue lines of enquiry that will challenge decision makers to explain, provide the evidence and justify their reasoning'

## **PRODUCTIVE SCRUTINY**

'To ensure that scrutiny activity is focused on where it will have the biggest impact'

# Work Planning & Programming

Cannot scrutinise and monitor *everything*, so choosing what you do is a key determinant of good scrutiny:

- Do we understand the benefits scrutiny would bring to this issue?
- How could we best carry out work on this subject?
- What would be the best outcome of this work?
- How would this work engage with the activity of the WMCA and other decision-makers, including partners?

# Different ways to undertake scrutiny

- Regular scheduled agenda items at committee meetings.
- Special overview & scrutiny committees to consider single items.
- Q&A sessions with politicians, officers, partners.
- An informal briefing session to better understand an issue.
- Scrutiny Champions charged with carrying out a review to report back to the committee.
- ‘Deep Dives’.
- Public engagement.
- Inviting external experts/witnesses to meetings.

# Questions?



## Overview & Scrutiny Committee

<b>Date</b>	10 July 2023
<b>Report title</b>	A review of the impact of the delivery of local skills training following the devolution of the Adult Education Budget to the WMCA
<b>Members Undertaking the Review</b>	Amanda Tomlinson (Chair) Councillor Martin McCarthy Councillor Andrew Burrow Councillor Ian Kettle Councillor Jamie Tennant Councillor Vera Waters
<b>Accountable Employee</b>	Clare Hatton, Director of Employment & Skills email: clare.hatton@wmca.org.uk

### Recommendation(s) for action or decision:

#### The Overview & Scrutiny Committee is recommended to:

- (1) Endorse the conclusions and recommendations of the scrutiny review group, as set out in sections four and five of the report, for submission to the Skills Advisory Board.

#### 1. Purpose

- 1.1 To consider the findings of a scrutiny review undertaken in order to understand the impact of the devolution of the Adult Education Budget (AEB) to the WMCA on the delivery of local skills training within the region, and to identify the challenges and ways in which the WMCA and local authorities could most effectively use skills development to address short and longer term challenges in the region, particularly in relation to the big economic challenges.

#### 2. Background

- 2.1 Through its skills investment, the WMCA has a key role to play in moving people into the labour force, improving workplace support, and helping people find good, well-paid employment and progress at work. The WMCA and partners need to make sure no-one or place is left behind.

- 2.2 Following the findings of the 2020/21 review to ascertain whether the regional economic recovery proposals were meeting the needs that had been identified within the Black Country sub-region, the Overview & Scrutiny Committee considered that now was an appropriate time to undertake a further scrutiny review to assess the impact and outcomes that had been delivered through the AEB since its devolution to the WMCA in 2019.
- 2.3 This review sought to understand the impact of the devolution of the AEB on the delivery of local skills training within the region, and to identify the challenges and ways in which the WMCA and its constituent authorities could most effectively use skills development to address short and longer-term challenges in the region, particularly in relation to the big economic challenges. The key objectives for the review were identified as being to:
- Understand the current delivery of the devolved Adult Education Budget within each constituent authority and the difference devolution has made to date.
  - Understand how additional skills investment has increased the offer in each Local Authority for residents and businesses.
  - Consider the approach to the relative distribution of investment in the context of need and the economic challenges – this should include consideration of balancing the needs of business against the drive to increase qualification levels of the workforce.
  - Understand the key drivers in terms of current and future employment, including which job sectors and residents are most at risk and their locations within the region.
  - Ascertain views on how skills development can best contribute to levelling up, improving career pathways, and addressing the challenges for the region and where it has limitations or dependencies on the impact that can be created.
- 2.4 The scrutiny panel was chaired by Amanda Tomlinson and also comprised Councillor Martin McCarthy, Councillor Andrew Burrow, Councillor Ian Kettle, Councillor Jamie Tennant and Councillor Vera Waters and was supported by Clare Hatton (Director of Employment & Skills) and Lyndsey Roberts (Scrutiny Officer).

### **3. Evidence Gathering**

- 3.1 The scrutiny panel sought a range of written and verbal evidence to help inform its conclusions and recommendations. A briefing note was prepared by the Director of Employment & Skills that summarised the impact of the WMCA's work in delivering on its ambitions to benefit the residents across the seven metropolitan area local authorities.
- 3.2 In addition, the scrutiny panel also considered some regional highlights and trends on the current labour market, employment and unemployment activity, labour market shortages and business growth within each local authority area.
- 3.3 The scrutiny panel used this data and information as an evidence base to help frame its questions for key witnesses.



3.4 In addition to the written information submitted, the review group conducted online face-to-face interviews with a range of key witnesses to gain their understanding and insight into the impact of the devolution of the AEB on the delivery of local skills training within the region and challenges. These key witnesses represented:

- Coventry & Warwickshire Chamber of Commerce
- Job Centre Plus
- Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council
- City of Wolverhampton Council
- Chamber of Commerce
- A local training provider.

#### **4. Emerging Themes and Considerations**

4.1 During the consideration of the written and oral evidence gathered over the course of the review, a number of broad themes emerged. Some are specific to AEB and some more widely to the skills system:

- There was strong agreement that devolution of AEB had delivered positive local impact with skills training aligned according to labour market need.
- Shared view that success of AEB strategy result of WMCA partnered approach, and continued emphasis will strengthen partnership, alongside a place-based focused investment.
- Reflection that AEB investment needed to evolve and focus on helping residents develop skills for employment, and to provide support for employers to meet labour market shortages. Working with education providers to ensure a more flexible curriculum offer will be key.
- Consensus that a regional employer engagement strategy needed to better secure employer commitment in workforce development, navigate the skills system, and feed into the AEB strategy.
- Increased need to help learners succeed, through integrated employability skills and wraparound support models to tackle barriers, build confidence and secure successful employment outcomes.
- Agreement that getting careers guidance right was another cornerstone to better preparing residents for market entry and mobility, by developing better integration and understanding about labour market changes across the educational system. Working with schools will be key, alongside FE and HE providers, regional partners and employers.

4.2 Broad consensus found devolution of the AEB to be a highly valued enabler to tackle the distinctive labour market challenges across the region for employers and residents. Witnesses welcomed the WMCA partnered approach, emphasising the importance of a place-based focus when determining skills funding, and that data (both local authority and AEB funding) could continue to ensure a targeted approach. Witnesses also highlighted the work of the AEB team as positive and constructive and welcomed continued opportunities to co-design programmes in constituent localities.

4.3 Key witnesses reported acute challenges within the labour market, particularly in the number of job vacancies, which would necessitate an AEB approach that is flexible and adaptable as the market changes. One witness indicated a change in employer recruitment practice, moving from hiring (qualified) specialists towards employees with the potential to develop into the role with training, though this was not always feasible,

for example in the manufacturing sector, where technical roles had become hard to fill. The cumulative effects of a tight labour market regionally and locally, were that employers could not grow, shrinking workforce capacity and in turn potential to progress (e.g. to higher skilled roles or better pay).

- 4.4 The pace of change in the labour market adds complexity and challenge. Common to the feedback received was a stronger need for employer engagement. This was seen to be central to understanding the changing needs of business and how skills development could improve employment opportunities; noting most AEB learners are unemployed and therefore ever more emphasis on getting people into employment was needed. Witnesses reported employer confusion in navigating the training and skills system with different funding arrangements, for example between the Sector-based Work Academy Programme, Apprenticeships, and the Multiply programme. More work to link funding streams regionally was encouraged, for example aligning business support under UKSPF with AEB investment. In placing greater focus on helping residents secure employment, two witnesses invited the WMCA to review where its AEB procedures could allow more flexibility so that education providers delivered the types of skills programmes that will better serve employer requirements, citing it could be overly bureaucratic or result in a tendency to micro-manage providers.
- 4.5 Employers are unsure about available advice and to whom they may turn to for help to address workforce challenges or to innovate (and diversify) business practices. Whilst witnesses included employer representation in local boards, this was at different stages of maturity, and there was widespread support for more to be done regionally as an opportunity for partners to learn from one-another's approaches and to co-create a regional employer engagement strategy. There was agreement that WMCA, together with constituent partners and the Chamber of Commerce, had a key role to incorporate the employer voice and to work with employers to extend the impact of AEB investment. This work would be in tandem with the developments arising from the Local Skills Improvement Plan.
- 4.6 In seeking to balance the needs of residents, employers, and the principle of education as a force for lifelong good, there is an appreciable tension. Key witnesses agreed the WMCA has a good hold of the skills needs and key areas of deprivation across the region and, consequently the relative distribution of AEB investment; although the level of investment was not always consistent to the local need, for example the City of Wolverhampton Council noted higher need for English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) as well a low level of numeracy in both its locality and Sandwell. To date AEB investment is both historical and based on learner demand and subsequent uptake.
- 4.7 The challenges of the labour market has created a pressure balance between serving the ever-changing needs of the local and regional economy, directly responding to residents, and, developing a future workforce that is resilient, equipped with the tools and mindset of a life-long learner. Against this backdrop, witnesses largely agreed that AEB should focus on helping people secure good work, beyond employment itself, and that the integration of employability or 'soft' skills into wider programmes should result in a responsive and adaptable workforce. Certainly good skills provision should deliver against these requirements and be able to instil the values of lifelong learning, however we should also recognise that training and qualifications are only one determinant of whether an individual can access work.

- 4.8 At a local level, devolution of AEB had made a noticeable difference because of the strong partnership approach between the WMCA and constituent authorities. Key witnesses welcomed the shared and place-based working adopted through the AEB strategy, with some constituent authorities noting their inclusion in shaping the AEB offer in its first year, as well as the opportunity to inform the design of commissioned activity in the years that have followed. Such examples were considered to be especially useful. Another witness observed that whilst the Plan for Growth identified the eight clusters and emerging sectors across the region, there were some sectors that were not identified which are a priority to the constituent authority, for which there could be a missed opportunity in terms of local skills investment which may pose a future challenge. Constituent authorities emphasised the importance of maintaining a partnered approach going forward as part of the conversation with employers, key strategic partners, and the new co-creation opportunities arising from the Trailblazer Deal (e.g. DWP).
- 4.9 Presently the key drivers for employment are to ensure the supply of sufficiently skilled workers in key local sectors – manufacturing, hospitality, and tourism – all with acute labour shortages, some which were skills driven. Emerging areas of interest in Net Zero, Sustainability, and Digital skills, also featured in the feedback, noting that some employers understand the need to develop in these areas but are unable to make progress due to wider recruitment challenges. Witnesses agreed that securing employment as a ‘job first’ principle could offer a ready solution for employers and residents, to accrue critical work skills and fill gaps. Securing sound basic skills in numeracy, literacy and digital were considered essential in achieving this objective, alongside employer engagement to help with in-work progression. One witness invited further exploration of community learning to enable access into under-served communities and groups of residents where basic skills deficits are most pronounced and are significant barriers.
- 4.10 AEB investment alone cannot tackle the challenges of the labour market. The disconnect between employer and resident expectations was a reported concern, creating a barrier to employment. Amongst the issues highlighted were working conditions (particularly long hours and low pay) and employer inflexibility to adopt more hybrid practices, particularly following the Covid-19 pandemic. Jobs in sectors with high turnover and vacancies, such as care, offer little to counter negative perceptions or attract potential talent. Some witnesses suggested more work was needed through skills training to help residents understand that an entry or low-paid role would often lead to progression, better pay and more fulfilling careers. Another witness noted that in-work progression as a policy rested on the principle that residents were in the right job (or career) first. However the labour market challenges extend beyond the AEB ambit, and require a whole system response, recognising that whilst WMCA, with regional partners, have a role to play, employers also occupy an essential position.
- 4.11 Several witnesses agreed employers had a responsibility to provide work experience/placement opportunities so that residents could learn critical workplace behaviours, particularly as currency of work experience can be a deciding factor for recruiters. And whilst strengthening the focus on employment outcomes through the AEB will help residents, witnesses were clear that employers needed to also consider their own recruitment, progression and retention policies, alongside their pay and wider terms and conditions, to create and/or maintain attractive workplace offers, particularly in sectors where there are acute labour market shortages. Most witnesses saw a stronger employer engagement strategy as a vehicle to strengthen insights into how and where AEB investment is best served, but some also suggested that more could be

done to explore how specific business networks, such as those with the Chambers and constituent authorities, could serve as communication channels or feed forward tools to increase employer awareness and support.

- 4.12 Employers have also altered their staff training approach. Whilst it was noted that employers will possess a staff training budget, depending on the size of the employer it will be limited, and typically used to train already skilled or qualified staff. A witness reported that some businesses are no longer prepared to support workers for 12-18 month long training programmes, and there was consensus that short, modular-based skills programmes would offer an attractive alternative. One witness cited a pilot between the Coventry and Warwickshire Chamber with UK Hospitality and 'Rest Less' to support rapid skills development to support vacancies in hospitality and tourism. This supports earlier feedback for a flexible skills response to help manage the pace of change in the labour market. However it does also pose a challenge regarding traditional curriculum programmes typically offered by Further Education Colleges, or the potential uptake of apprenticeships that carry minimum durations set by the national regulator, the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education. On the latter, there was consensus that apprenticeships offer good employment opportunities, especially for younger residents aged 19-29 years, but that challenges regarding apprentice wages and lack of support to help businesses establish and meet apprenticeship requirements in their workplaces, particularly for small to medium sized enterprises (SMEs), could be holding back local potential. One witness suggested that more was needed to help SMEs take on an apprentice, particularly those employers with little experience of apprenticeships, but whom could nevertheless offer a good apprentice experience. A couple of witnesses suggested that as part of the regional employer engagement strategy, discussions should emphasise the benefits of workforce development as a business investment to mitigate for the earlier observation that some employers were less likely to invest in long qualifications, opting for short skills interventions. If the AEB approach is to successfully address workforce skills gaps, discussions with employers will need to be clear about how and where skills interventions can effectively address employer requirements and where it cannot, for example, if an employer is seeking an accredited qualification or apprenticeship over a shorter delivery window than awarding body or funding agency rules allow.
- 4.13 Future employment drivers were reported to incorporate changes in national skills policy such as the shift from funding specific BTEC qualifications to T-Levels, changing the type of knowledge and skills that learners will acquire which may be different to what employers expect, alongside continued changes in the workforce (presently over 50s and economic inactivity amongst young people), as well as issues with long-term mental and physical health (particularly the rise in work limiting disability amongst young people, with growing poor mental health in males under 30). There was clear consensus that in addressing these developments, the AEB approach needed to allow greater wraparound support for residents to succeed, especially if they are currently under-represented, where structural inequalities may have had a disproportionate impact in securing and/or retaining long-term employment. Key witnesses agreed that wraparound support is a priority and was widely recognised to be a tool that would enhance the skills offer, particularly with employability. Most agreed that coaching/mentoring models that focus on the individual in the cohort would be valuable, alongside targeted mental health care. One witness proposed extending wraparound support into employment, as a potential mechanism to improve job retention and support transition into work or new/different careers. This has not been the focus of policy and funding for AEB historically, instead this residing more with DWP and ESF programmes.

- 4.14 In delivering wraparound support, witnesses emphasised the need for greater employability skills to be woven into skills/curriculum delivery. It was reported that employers were looking for candidates with good team working skills (virtually and in-person), were resilient, reliable, adaptable, approachable, confident and creative, and able to problem solve, with a high level of emotional intelligence. Such skills are considered transferable and highly prized by employers across sectors, supporting the principle of a flexible workforce. One witness reported that for many employers being able to get up and travel to work punctually was now also considered a core ability. Highly skilled workers with technical expertise were still considered a necessity, however this shift towards soft skills was reported to be a response to the shortages in finding suitably skilled employees, though may also reflect the growing importance of transferable skills. Achieving a balance between technical knowledge, applied skills, and employability will require careful curriculum design. However witnesses noted staff shortages in the education sector will have a continued effect, especially in colleges. Supporting providers to shift to a flexible curriculum offer, with rapid skills development, that meets employers' requirements will require further detailed consideration. For example one witness noted that the provision offered at Walsall College did not reflect the type of employment available locally. This aligned with feedback from another witness who observed that many employers did not engage with education providers and providers needed to do more work with these employers to offer a more creative flexible curriculum.
- 4.15 At a place level, key witnesses welcomed the positive contribution of AEB investment and the CA's partnership approach. There was consensus that in increasing the focus on employer needs and better employment through a responsive skills system, AEB processes could benefit from regular review to ensure sufficient flexibility in its procedures. For example one witness suggested the prevention of out-of-area sub-contracts may limit access to high quality skills offers. Other witnesses noted the value of data on the range and uptake of provision within their localities and suspected gaps in the level 2 offer; another requested more opportunity to partner with the CA when commissioning SWAPs to draw on the constituent authority's expertise in employment support, such as the Wolves at Work service, to secure successful transition into employment. Another witness reported that whilst the constituent authority had good relationships with college providers, there was less insight into the shape and scale of Independent Training Providers (ITPs) delivering provision to residents within their locality, and that proposed solutions such as a provider directory had not yet come to pass but continued to be of interest to them.
- 4.16 There was strong consensus that greater integration and availability of careers advice and guidance would contribute to levelling up and improving career pathways. Changes in labour market demands and the impact of technology will require adaptable residents. However, a lack of access to careers support may be limiting insight into what high-vacancy sectors have to offer or the types of careers available. Witnesses agreed that more was needed to improve resident awareness about career pathways and associated skills progression, especially amongst young people (who are dispirited about their future due to a lack of opportunity), or for mature and older learners (who are likely to see several career changes over their working lives). One witness suggested the post-19 skills approach was dependent on the success of a post-16 careers advice and guidance system, which for many disadvantaged groups was inadequate. Key witnesses agreed that more attention should be given to preparing residents to meet current and future labour market demand by understanding their

aspirations and career hopes earlier with several suggesting it be from the age of 14-15 years. As such, an all-age integrated careers offering presented an opportunity to maximise the effectiveness of skills investments and wider economic interventions throughout the resident's working life, helping to support early and mid career transitions, when necessary. However witnesses recognised that developing such an approach within the wider system, this would be a challenge because it relied upon a sufficient and shared network of data about every potential learner and resident within the region, the range of careers advice, guidance and support available and provided, and a continuous record of engagement with the individual. This added complexity and would mean the policy will require much more thought to secure the ambition. Accepting this was a challenge, witnesses were supportive, and if achievable, could see the potential dividends alongside a regional employer engagement strategy, and AEB investment.

## **5. Conclusion and recommendations**

- 5.1 This review sought to understand the impact of the devolution of AEB on the delivery of local skills training within the region. Feedback indicates strong support for the changes arising from the devolution of AEB and that through its investment there has had a positive impact on local skills training, overall achieving a balanced and proportional distribution in the main. The devolved AEB is considered a highly valued enabler in tackling the distinctive labour market challenges across the region for employers and residents. Its success is tied to the valued partnership model adopted by the WMCA with constituent authorities, which has included opportunity for constituent authorities to inform the shape of funded provision and commissioned activity relevant to their localities or regional skills interests. It is clear that the approach taken by the AEB team has established excellent foundations from which to continue to strengthen the partnered and place-centred approach going forward and there is a clear action for the CA to maintain, and expand on opportunities for further collaborations with constituent authorities, for example to align constituent authority employment services with delivery of SWAPs so that residents receive extended support as they seek or transition to employment, or to share additional data from the individual learner record about the detailed provision in respective localities and the residents who had taken up AEB funded provision, again to inform follow up support services from the constituent authority.
- 5.2 This review also sought to identify the challenges and ways in which AEB investment could continue to effectively serve skills development to address short and longer-term labour market challenges. Witnesses confirmed that the WMCA had a good appreciation of the skills needs and levels of deprivation across the region. Whilst some witnesses invited further consideration for how AEB investment might increase support where there are higher resident numbers with ESOL and numeracy need, there was clear consensus that skills investment needed to help employers with labour market shortages particularly in sectors acutely effected such as manufacturing, hospitality and tourism, and care – whilst also enabling future workforce development in key industries such as net zero, sustainability and digital. Incorporating a 'work first' approach to manage vacancy demand was considered a practical solution, although the wider objective should be to help residents secure good work and progression in work. Critically, witnesses agreed that there needed to be greater emphasis and integration of employer views and engagement to enable a responsive skills delivery system. The creation of a regional employer engagement strategy, co-created with employers and regional partners, in tandem with developments from LSIP presented an opportunity to

visibly set out how this would be achieved. Strengthening employer engagement was considered a priority.

- 5.3 Addressing current and future labour market demand will necessitate a flexible skills and curriculum offer. There was clear consensus that traditional curriculum models cannot deliver at the pace and content needed to meet employer requirements, and it was accepted that the CA needed to work with education providers to help adapt and develop more flexible creative curriculum solutions. Feedback also indicated growing demand for employability or 'soft' skills, and there was strong agreement that continued AEB investment needed to integrate employability into wider programmes, alongside better wraparound support to help residents succeed and develop lifelong learning skills. Central to delivering this objective will be managing resident and employer expectations and creating wider understanding about the range of careers, sectors and jobs skills that are available both now and into the future. Many witnesses agreed this required an integrated all-age careers strategy, that included schools as key partners, with other post-16 education providers, employers and regional partners (such as the DWP), to operate alongside a targeted AEB approach.

#### 5.4 Recommendations

After considering the written and oral evidence received, the review panel concluded that a number of recommendations should be considered by the Skills Advisory Board.

Recommendation 1: For the WMCA:

1. To share participant data with constituent authorities about engagement of residents in local provision and review AEB procedures.
2. Incorporate feedback into the development of the all-aged careers strategy, with opportunity for constituent authorities and relevant stakeholders to input into the design and potential implementation as needed.
3. Provide an update on the development of a Provider Directory, particularly ITPs delivering provision to constituent authority residents, to support awareness of the range of commissioned providers.

Recommendation 2: For WMCA, Constituent Authorities and Regional Partners

1. Co-develop a regional engagement strategy with employers to identify and integrate skills requirements.
2. Develop approaches to increasing work experiences / placements offering with employers maximising links to business support activity.

Recommendation 3: For WMCA with Constituent Authorities:

1. Review and map out the range of available funding opportunities available to employers to help navigate the skills system and outline how Business Support is aligned with AEB investment to draw on full range of opportunities.
2. Develop approaches to incorporate constituent authority services such as employment support, into SWAPs, in relevant localities.

Recommendation 4: For WMCA with Education Providers:

1. Design and integrate an employability programme that supports learners to develop transferable skills valued by employers to help secure good work, and to work with education providers to ensure effective delivery.

## **6. Strategic Aims and Objectives**

- 6.1 The overview & scrutiny function supports all six of the WMCA's aims for the region by ensuring that decision taken at boards/committees have considered all relevant matters and opinions. This particular review looking at the impact of the devolution of the AEB on the delivery of local skills training within the region will help to promote inclusive economic growth in every corner of the region and stimulate the creation of good jobs through the enhanced work to be undertaken together with local authorities, regional partners and educational providers.

## **7. Financial Implications**

- 7.1 There are no direct financial implication from this report. The recommendations are likely to result in financial implications in the future to enable and support the delivery, which will be funded from within the existing budget. Any request above this will follow the existing governance processes.

## **8. Legal Implications**

- 8.1 The function of ensuring adult education provision was conferred on WMCA by the West Midlands Combined Authority (Adult Education Functions) Order 2018. There are no new legal implications resulting from this report.

## **9. Equalities Implications**

- 9.1 Overall, the devolution of the AEB to WMCA has a significantly positive equality impact. The ethos of being able to influence how Adult Education provisions are provided within the West Midlands ensures that our approach is fit-for-purpose and tailored to our residents. The WMCA has a sound understanding of the deprivation and inequalities faced within our region, as echoed by feedback shared within the report. Aligning education and training opportunities with labour demand increases the likelihood of training recipients obtaining the appropriate skills to go into employment, as their knowledge and expertise can fill the gaps in the market; the impact of gaining employment has confounding positive equity outcomes, supporting social mobility and encouraging more proportional access to opportunities.



9.2 It is clear that there are areas for development within the WMCA's approach to have a greater positive equality impact. Namely around strengthening relationships with partners and providers; recommendations 2, 3 and 4 will help address any areas for improvement by facilitating a collaborative approach, across stakeholders, regarding the implementation of the AEB.

9.3 It is acknowledged that the longer-term vision is to minimise the existing equality gap regarding residents who have lower levels of numeracy and English proficiency, it's important that this remains embedded to continue to support equitable outcomes for those who are the most deprived within the region. Should the recommendations be taken on board, it's likely to enhance the AEB provision and have a greater level of long-lasting success.

## **10. Inclusive Growth Implications**

10.1 The AEB provisions and recommendations within the report supports a number of the Inclusive Growth Fundamentals: Education and Learning; Power and Participation and Equality.

## **11. Geographical Area of Report's Implications**

11.1 The Overview & Scrutiny Committee comprises 10 members appointed by constituent authorities, four members appointed by non-constituent authorities and a representative from the business sector.

## **12. Other Implications**

12.1 None.

## **13. Schedule of Background Papers**

13.1 None.

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## Overview & Scrutiny Committee

<b>Date</b>	10 July 2023
<b>Report title</b>	Deeper Devolution Deal - Scrutiny Implications
<b>Portfolio Lead</b>	Levelling Up / Devolution - Councillor Sharon Thompson
<b>Accountable Chief Executive</b>	Laura Shoaf, West Midlands Combined Authority email: laura.shoaf@wmca.org.uk
<b>Accountable Employee</b>	Dan Essex, Governance Services Manager email: dan.essex@wmca.org.uk

### Recommendations for decision:

#### The Overview & Scrutiny Committee is recommended to:

- (1) Note the announcement of the Government's Deeper Devolution Deal with the WMCA, along with its expected ratification by constituent authorities during September and by the WMCA Board at its meeting on 13 October.
- (2) Welcome the publication of the English Devolution Accountability Framework and the forthcoming scrutiny protocol, setting out the Government's expectations for local accountability within institutions exercising devolved powers.
- (3) Agree that a further report be submitted to the committee when it meets on 4 September setting out in more detail the content of the scrutiny protocol and how the WMCA intends to apply it to its overview and scrutiny function.

#### 1. Purpose

- 1.1 To update the committee on activity and developments relating to the WMCA's Deeper Devolution Deal negotiations with the Government since the matter was last reported to the committee on 13 March.

## **2. Background**

2.1 On 15 March, as part of its Spring Budget statement, the Government announced that it had agreed with the WMCA a Deeper Devolution Deal that would provide for wide ranging provisions to devolve policy making and control over spending decisions to the region, bringing additional investment to the region worth more than £1bn. Highlights of the deal included:

- The potential for the WMCA to be treated as if it were a Government department with a simplified five-year funding settlement, enabling it to prioritise, target and decide how funding was spent in key areas.
- A landmark housing deal worth up to £500m.
- Fiscal devolution, including 100% business rates retention over 10 years, worth an estimated £450m to the WMCA and other local authorities.
- Up to Six Levelling Up Zones where priority areas would be chosen by local decision makers to receive support to accelerate growth, development and regeneration.
- A commitment to devolving retrofit funding that would enable the region to prioritise allocations and accelerate the delivery of warmer homes and net zero targets.
- Empowering the region's transport transformation through the devolution of bus service operator grants and a new partnership with Great British Railways.
- Further influence over key policy areas such as skills, careers, employment support and digital inclusion.

2.2 A summary document setting out the detail of the deal is attached as an appendix to the report.

2.3 In order for the WMCA to assume the new powers contained in the deal, it has to follow the statutory process set out in the Local Democracy, Economic Development & Construction Act 2009. The only new function that requires a statutory process to be followed is the Bus Service Operators Grant (BSOG), which is a mayoral function.

2.4 There is then to be a period of public engagement and awareness raising on the contents of the entire deal, following which, each constituent authority has been requested to:

- Provide feedback to WMCA on the draft Governance Review and Scheme in relation to the BSOG in sufficient time to allow these documents to be amended where appropriate for consideration at the WMCA Board meeting on 13 October.
- Provide, through their own governance processes, individual local authority consent to the devolution deal.

## **3. Progress to Date**

3.1 At the WMCA Board on 9 June, members approved the draft Governance Review and Scheme, with the exception of the formal consultation required to progress with the proposed Health Improvement Duty, which would have formally recognised the impact that the existing statutory functions of the WMCA could have in improving health outcomes for the region's communities.

3.2 The engagement exercise has now commenced and runs from 23 June - 19 August, consisting of a survey, a digital campaign to promote the survey, and a number of accompanying online engagement activities that anyone from the region can attend. The aim of this engagement is to provide the general public, business and other stakeholders across the seven local authority areas with the opportunity to share their views on the proposals. The WMCA will then use the feedback received to inform local authority consents and any final decision by the WMCA Board on 13 October.

#### **4. Governance and Accountability**

4.1 In announcing the Deeper Devolution Deal, the Government rightly highlighted the importance of governance and accountability underpinning these new powers and responsibilities. These enhanced accountabilities have been framed within the English Devolution Accountability Framework, which was published in March and formed a key part of the Government's thinking in respect of local accountability. The accountability framework seeks to ensure that mayors and other local leaders are subject to robust and effective scrutiny by local politicians and an informed public. It applies to all English institutions with devolved powers (including combined authorities).

4.2 In launching the new framework, Dehenna Davison MP, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Levelling Up said:

*“The accountability system described in this framework acts as a safeguard against unethical behaviour, inadequate performance and poor value for money for the local taxpayer by placing a focus on transparency and scrutiny. It will ensure that local councillors are empowered to provide effective scrutiny through a new scrutiny protocol. It will improve the decision making process and allow greater progress in delivering levelling up to all areas that have agreed devolution deals.”*

4.3 Within the Deeper Devolution Deal agreement text itself, the Government set out more clearly its expectations in respect of the West Midlands (paragraph 20):

*The WMCA will, through this deal, be subject to three levels of accountability:*

- (a) As a local authority, it is subject to the requirements of the Local Government Accountability Framework.*
- (b) As an institution with devolved powers, the WMCA will be subject to the English Devolution Accountability Framework which details additional accountability processes for all institutions with devolved powers and highlights those requirements of the Local Government Accountability Framework which are of particular significance for such institutions, including the decisions that mayoral combined authorities are responsible for and the recourse available to the Government.*
- (c) In light of the specific new powers being agreed in this trailblazer deeper devolution deal, including the single settlement, and in the spirit of greater power requiring greater accountability, the WMCA commits to building a culture of greater scrutiny and accountability through the proposals set out in this section.*

- 4.4 A key piece of work therefore for the WMCA this year (assuming the deal is ratified by constituent authorities and the WMCA Board at its meeting on 13 October) will be to “*build a culture of greater scrutiny and accountability*”. To help facilitate this, the English Devolution Accountability Framework commits the Government to develop what it is calling a ‘scrutiny protocol’ for all institutions with devolved powers which will set out the relationship between the mayor, the institution and its scrutiny and audit functions. The scrutiny protocol will focus on ensuring that each institution has a sustained culture of scrutiny, which it characterises as (paragraph 24):

*“.....designed to ensure that all areas with devolution deals, but especially those which manage single settlements, should have best in class scrutiny functions. Membership on committees, and in particular the role of chair, should be prized and competed for. Retention of members for several years should be common. Members should be able to devote the time to the role. The committees should have the profile and cache to ensure that their findings are brought to the attention of the public wherever necessary.”*

- 4.5 The Department for Housing, Levelling Up & Communities has convened a small working group to help develop the contents of the scrutiny protocol, which includes representatives from the Centre for Governance & Scrutiny, Greater Manchester Combined Authority and the WMCA’s Head of Corporate Support & Governance. It is expected that the protocol will be published later in the Summer, and a full report will be submitted to the Overview & Scrutiny Committee on 4 September setting out requirements of the protocol in detail. It is intended that members of this committee will be asked to approve in September the manner and means by which the WMCA will apply the protocol to its overview and scrutiny function going forward, committing to meeting a key requirement of the Deeper Devolution Deal.

## 5. **Mayoral Scrutiny by Members of Parliament**

- 5.1 Whilst not directly falling within the remit of this committee, but nonetheless forming part of the WMCA’s wider ‘accountability and scrutiny framework’, the Deeper Devolution Deal also introduced the new idea of the region’s Members of Parliament scrutinising the Mayor in four public sessions a year covering the performance and strategic direction of the WMCA. These are completely new arrangements, the details of which have not yet been formulated, and so the report to the September committee will provide further clarity as it emerges. Similar to the scrutiny protocol though, officers of the WMCA are working closely with the Department for Housing, Levelling Up & Communities to help shape these MP Q&A events to ensure that they add value to the wider governance and accountability of the WMCA, whilst ensuring that there is no duplication of the critical role members of this committee play in exercising overview and scrutiny of the WMCA’s decision makers.

## **6. Conclusions**

- 6.1 This is a period of significant change and growth for overview and scrutiny within the WMCA and across institutions with devolved powers within England. Announcements from the Government over the last six months have clearly indicated that it expects combined authorities to strengthen the role of strong, independent overview and scrutiny within its decision making and performance reporting arrangements. This committee, working alongside Transport Delivery Overview & Scrutiny Committee and Audit, Risk & Assurance Committee, will help shape the new arrangements and meet the expectations placed on it by the Government and the wider public of the region. In doing so over the course of the coming year, members of the committee will be playing a key role in delivering on the WMCA's Deeper Devolution Deal and meeting the commitment given when the deal was announced in March:

*The Government and the WMCA agree that implementation of these scrutiny arrangements, and adherence to the scrutiny protocol, is a vital part of the implementation of the full range of commitments in the devolution deal.*

## **7. Strategic Aims and Objectives**

- 7.1 Whilst the provisions of the Deeper Devolution Deals impact on all of the WMCA's corporate aims, securing and implementing the deal specifically relates to the following aims:

Aim 5 - Securing new powers and resources from central government.

Aim 6 - Developing our organisation and our role as a good regional partner.

## **8. Financial Implications**

- 8.1 There are no direct finance implications arising out of this report.

## **9. Legal Implications**

- 9.1 The WMCA will comply with the legal implications required by the devolution deal in respect of overview and scrutiny.

## **10. Single Assurance Framework Implications**

- 10.1 There are no direct implications for the Single Assurance Framework arising out of this report.

## **11. Equalities Implications**

11. There are no direct equalities implications arising out of this report.

## **12. Inclusive Growth Implications**

- 12.1 There are no direct inclusive growth implications arising out of this report.

### **13. Geographical Area of Report's Implications**

- 13.1 The Overview & Scrutiny Committee comprises members from across the constituent and non-constituent authorities participating within the WMCA.

### **14. Other Implications**

- 14.1 There are no other direct implications arising out of this report.

### **15. Schedule of Background Papers**

West Midlands Combined Authority Trailblazer Deeper Devolution Deal - 15 March 2023  
English Devolution Accountability Framework - 16 March 2023



# Delivering a Deeper Devolution Deal for the West Midlands



# Introduction

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**The West Midlands is embarking on a new phase of devolution – ending the ‘begging bowl’ culture by bringing greater investment, control over investment and powers to the region.**

**This landmark deal, estimated to be worth in the region of £1.5bn, will reboot the economy, provide vital housing, jobs and skills, bolster our existing strengths in transport and Smart City Region innovation, and drive our net zero ambitions – generating economic growth and levelling up outcomes for all our residents and communities.**

## Background

In February 2022, Government announced, in its Levelling Up White Paper, new devolution deals for the West Midlands, along with Greater Manchester. Since then, the region and its partners have been working closely with Government to secure the best deal for the region, its economy and its communities.

This offer of greater devolution is built on the region’s previous deals in 2015 and 2017, and the West Midlands’ track record in realising a tenfold increase in transport investment, delivering transformation of the region’s skills performance and pioneering new approaches to brownfield development and zero carbon homes. The Deal recognises the point that the WMCA has lacked the key levers and flexibility to ‘unleash the potential of devolution’, and goes on to address this through a range of new powers, responsibilities and resources.

The Deal is established on the key principles that new powers and funding should sit at the lowest feasible level of governance and that they should be drawn down from government and ‘double-devolved’ where appropriate and not drawn up from local authorities. When referring to WMCA as the decision-making body in this briefing note, it means those members appointed by the seven constituent councils and the Mayor.



## Executive Summary

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The Deeper Devolution Deal will maximise the WMCA's current role and responsibilities and revolutionise how Government funding is implemented – providing the tools to deliver more inclusive growth. Many of the offers are 'firsts' for regional devolution.

- A commitment towards a **Single Funding Settlement**, where for the first time, a region will be treated as if it were a government department, enabling the region to prioritise, target and decide how funding is spent in key areas from the next spending review onwards.
- A landmark housing deal worth **up to £500 million** – with flexibilities around deployment for regenerating brownfield land, a route to full devolution of Affordable Housing Programme funding, and the West Midlands leading a pioneering new approach to maximising Government land assets.
- Fiscal devolution, including committed **10-year retention of business rates** – worth an estimated £45 million a year to the WMCA and its partner authorities.
- The ability to designate **Levelling Up Zones** – priority areas identified jointly by the WMCA and its partner authorities that will attract 25-year business rates retention, to accelerate growth, development and regeneration.
- Commitment to devolving **retrofit funding** (from 2025) – providing certainty and consistency that will build confidence in the marketplace, enable the region to prioritise its allocations, and accelerate the delivery of warmer homes and net zero targets.
- Empowering the region's **transport** transformation through devolution of bus service operator grants and a new partnership with Great British Railways, and the world's first 'regulatory sandbox' to enable the region to test and develop cutting-edge transport solutions.
- Greater responsibility and oversight of post-16 and post-19 **education and skills**, and over careers advice, and the establishment of a unique partnership with Department for Work and Pensions to target employment support.
- A stronger role in supporting **business productivity, trade and investment and innovation**, through influence of some of the key national levers of funding and policy development.
- Measures to boost **digital inclusion** including high speed broadband connectivity across the region and a £4 million fund for devices and data.
- Recognition of, and resources to support, the region's **environmental, energy and net zero** ambitions.



# The Details of the Deal

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## Governance and Accountability

With greater powers comes greater accountability, and Government has set out its expectations around the measures the region should put in place to receive this new, Deeper Devolution Deal.

Unless otherwise stated, functions will be devolved through the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009, and need to be accepted by WMCA under its constitution and local governance processes.

It will be held accountable through the Local Government Accountability Framework, English Devolution Accountability Framework and enhanced scrutiny measures. In addition, the Mayor and WMCA will be expected to present to Parliamentary Select Committees as requested, in conjunction with Mayor's Question Time and quarterly engagement with West Midlands MPs.

## Fiscal Devolution, Funding and the Single Settlement

The commitment to **10-year Business Rates Retention** across the region is estimated to be worth £450m over the period and will drive confidence in public sector borrowing, de-risk investment modelling and accelerate delivery. It will also remove the uncertainty of the current

pilot scheme, boosting public financial sustainability and local authority spending power.

Through its '**Single Settlement**', the Government commits to giving WMCA single capital and revenue funding certainty, equivalent to government departments – increasing regional autonomy and the ability to prioritise decisions locally in the areas of:

- local growth and place
- local transport
- housing and regeneration
- adult skills
- housing retrofit

These settlements will cover an entire spending review period.

In addition, Government has committed to a **£25m capital fund** to support business decarbonisation, culture, environmental programmes and the West Midlands' Smart City Region initiative.



## Transport

Building on the West Midlands' strengths in transport innovation, as the country's first future transport zone, and its close partnership working with Government, the Deeper Devolution Deal provides:

- A pioneering Local Transport Plan approach which embeds 'quantifying carbon reductions' (QCR);
- Leading a collaborative research and learning programme through an 'influencing transport lab' (ITL);
- Establish a 'regulatory sandbox' to boost global investment and cluster growth, and test new innovations to inform national policy;
- Devolution of the Bus Service Operators Grant to improve services and incentivise net zero transition;
- Closer partnership with Great British Railways to deliver a rail service closer to the standards of London;
- Additional £60m to Wednesbury-Brierley Hill Metro extension
- Supporting development of the region's ambitious Very Light Railway scheme in Coventry.

Additionally, and separately to the Deal, there is a future funding commitment for round 2 of the City Region Sustainable Transport Settlements, from 2027, to support major transport infrastructure projects.

## Housing, Land and Regeneration

A **£100m Single Regeneration Fund** will be deployed flexibly across the region, and for the first time, brownfield land funding will support commercial, employment land and mixed-use development, as well as delivering 4,000 homes.

The commitment of up to **£400m Affordable Housing Programme ('AHP')** funding to the region, and greater influence over affordable housing delivery and strategy acts a precursor to full devolution of the AHP, worth billions of pounds in funding, to the region from 2026 – the first time this has happened outside Greater London.

In another 'first', for any Combined Authority, WMCA will be involved in decisions on major UK **government land** disposals and reconfiguration – driving regeneration and unlocking private investment through repurposing and redeveloping publicly owned land.

The region will also be able to designate '**Levelling Up Zones**': priority areas that would benefit from enhanced and targeted fiscal measures. These 'growth zones' will attract 25 year Business Rates Retention (with no reset) with the six zones being considered for inclusion:

- East Birmingham North Solihull Corridor (including UK Central)
- Wolverhampton Corridor (incl. Green Innovation Corridor & University of

Wolverhampton's National Centre for Sustainable Construction)

- Walsall Growth Corridor
- Dudley Metro Corridor [x 2] (Sandwell Zone from Wednesbury to Birmingham Road, Tipton; Dudley Zone from Dudley to Brierley Hill)
- Coventry and Warwickshire Gigafactory Levelling Up Zone

Additionally, and separate to the Deal, the region has been invited to submit a proposal for one Investment Zone under the Government's new programme which seeks to maximise innovation and growth corridors.

## Skills and Employment Support

Further areas of **post-19 education and skills** will be devolved to WMCA along with greater oversight of **post-16 technical education** and skills, and careers, including a crucial role to ensure the local skills system responds to the Local Skills Improvement Plan ('LSIP'). This will include, from the next Spending Review, greater devolution of non-apprenticeship adult skills functions and funding, and greater freedoms around Free Courses for Jobs and Bootcamps. WMCA will also become the 'central convenor' for **careers advice** in the region, working closely with Government to ensure provision meets the economic needs of the West Midlands.

Alongside establishing a Regional Labour Market Partnership Board, WMCA will be

able to co-design contracted **employment support programmes** with DWP to ensure they are the aspirations of the region, supported by enhanced data-sharing agreements.

## Business Productivity and Innovation

WMCA will adopt a new role in integrating and promoting **business support services** across the region – powered by a new Strategic Productivity Partnership with departments across Government, greater involvement in the governance of the British Business Bank's UK funds, and collaboration with the UK Investment Bank on commercial arrangements for infrastructure finance.

Building on the West Midlands' participation in the £100m Accelerator funding, through a Strategic Innovation Partnership WMCA will be able to present regional innovation opportunities to inform UKRI's future funding strategies – working collaboratively to bolster **regional R&D growth** and pilot new initiatives, such as the UK Further Education Innovation Fund, place-based knowledge transfer programmes, and public procurement flexibilities.



## Trade and Investment

The Department for Business and Trade ('DBT') will recognise the West Midlands Growth Company as the lead agency for investment in the region and work with them to develop a **WM International Strategy**, enhance data sharing routes and undertake a review of key account management with the region's major employers.

DBT will also support WMCA to boost West Midlands' presence in **trade missions** and dedicate support from the UK Export Academy to increase trade opportunities.

## Net Zero and Environment

From 2025, Government will pilot with the West Midlands the **devolution of housing retrofit funding**. This will remove uncertainty and inefficiencies in the existing funding system and inform future models for Government net zero funding.

There is recognition of the region's involvement in wider **energy system management and planning**, and responsibility for heat zone designation, energy efficiency advice and attracting private sector finance. In addition, funding from the £25m capital pot is anticipated for **industrial decarbonisation** programmes for regional businesses, **natural environment finance** models and **air quality** monitors to support the region's wider environment and net zero ambitions.

## Digital and Data

The Department of Science and Technology ('DSIT') will work proactively with WMCA through a **Digital Infrastructure Leadership Group** to accelerate broadband roll-out and connectivity, and through a £4m fund, provide 20,000 devices to boost **digital inclusion**.

Government will agree a new Data Partnership with WMCA, which will streamline WMCA's negotiations with individual government departments over access to specific datasets and support timely access to data particularly around: skills, careers and labour markets; business support, trade and investment; and energy and climate resilience.

Alongside this, Government will work with WMCA and its public body partners across the region to improve routes for data-sharing to enable WMCA to undertake regional analysis of data to better inform strategic decision-making locally.

## Culture, Social Economy and Tourism

To maximise the Commonwealth Games Legacy Fund, a new **Regional Culture and Heritage Framework** will seek to align and maximise funding from arm's length bodies, including opportunities for co-investment and greater collaboration. Local authorities will be closely involved in the development of the Framework and continue to engage directly with funding bodies.

Recognising WMCA's commitment to double the size of the social economy, Government will work with the Combined Authority to develop a pioneering **Social Economy Accelerator Programme** and Growth Fund.

DCMS and Visit England will work with WMCA and WMGC to create England's second **Destination Development Partnership pilot** and the associated merits of establishing WMGC as a Local Visitor Economy Partnership ('LVEP').

## Public Service Reform

Government and WMCA will agree a new formal duty on WMCA to improve public **health** – concurrent with local authorities and neither superseding, or being subservient to, existing duties. Through this, they will explore how best to use their collective resources and expertise to develop innovative solutions to shared prevention and population health priorities, and lead regional initiatives like an exemplar region for disabled people. Innovations include AI labs, predictive analytics and machine learning, and shared care records, building on the West Midlands' Smart City Region strengths, and supported by in-principle funding through the £25m allocation mentioned above. This will need further development at the implementation stage before being finally approved.

In addition...

Government will also collaborate with the West Midlands on other key priorities:

- A newly formed Ministerial Housing Strategy Group will work with WMCA to pilot new schemes to address **Homelessness** – enabling better standards and outcomes for residents, and exploring new models such as locally designed rent simplification for young people.
- Working closely with WMCA and its local authority partners to pilot and test new initiatives in **Early Years** – building on existing work within the region and aligning with national priorities.
- A new West Midlands Fast Stream pilot will set a blueprint for establishing long-term career pathways by delivering a pipeline of civil service talent and skills in the region, complementing Government's **Places for Growth** commitment to relocate 2,100 roles to the West Midlands by 2025.

Please note that the Devolution Deal will be subject to ratification with each local authority, and we are working closely with officers and leaders in that process.

This briefing note is a summary of the Deal only and is not intended to be exhaustive.

The full Devolution Deal can be accessed through the gov.uk website.







## Overview & Scrutiny Committee

<b>Date</b>	10 July 2023
<b>Report title</b>	Grant Register
<b>Accountable Chief Executive</b>	Laura Shoaf, West Midlands Combined Authority email: laura.shoaf@wmca.org.uk
<b>Accountable Employee</b>	Linda Horne, Director of Finance and Business Hub Director email: linda.horne@wmca.org.uk

**Recommendation(s) for action or decision:**

**The Overview & Scrutiny Committee is recommended to:**

- (1) Note and comment on the grant register.

## **1. Purpose**

This paper provides an update on the grant register. This contains all current 'live' grants where the WMCA is the accountable body and captures a comprehensive total of grants, awarding body, time period for delivery and a description of what the grant delivers.

## **2. Grant Register Update**

2.1 The grant registers are attached as an appendix to this report.

2.2 Following the last report to the committee, a number of grants have concluded and hence no longer appear on the register.

2.3 There are also a number of new grants that WMCA has been successfully awarded, which have been reported to WMCA Board via the financial monitoring report in the period since the Committee last met. The most significant grants are:

- £25m of capital funding from Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities.
- A further £12.6m of Active Travel funding to support cycling and walking initiatives across the region.
- Home Upgrade Grant of £16m as part of the Midlands Net Zero Hub consortium bid of £140 million.
- Extension of Local Transport Fund to 30 June 23 providing £6.1m of funding for the bus network.

## **3. Legal Implications**

There are no legal implications as a direct consequence of this report.

## **4. Impact on Delivery of Strategic Transport Plan**

None

## **5. Equalities Implications**

None

## **6. Inclusive Growth Implications**

None

## **7. Geographical Area of Report's Implications**

None

## **8. Other Implications**

None

## **9. Schedule of Background Papers**

Appendix – grant registers

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**Capital Grants Register**

Grant Name	Provider	Date of grant Award Letter	Total Grant Awarded in full £	Notes
DfT - Major Scheme (Eastside / Edgbaston)	DfT	Apr-19	£ 187,559,779	Midland Metro Extensions
ITB WMCA	DfT	Apr-21	£ 17,755,000	Annual rolling settlement from DfT, rolled into CRSTS from 22/23. Funding is distributed to WMCA and all & LAs on a formula basis which is agreed locally. The 21/22 annual value only is shown here.
Road National Productivity Investment Fund (NPIFF)	DfT	Sep-17	£ 17,055,000	National Productivity Investment Fund including projects in Birmingham (Growth Point Public Transport Package), Walsall (Economic Growth and Infrastructure Project) and Solihull (Strategic Cycle Network)
Clean Bus Technology	DfT	Feb-18	£ 5,987,750	Projects that work with bus operators or technology providers to retrofit buses to reduce emissions
Transforming Cities Fund	DfT	Annually	£ 250,000,000	The purpose of the Transforming Cities Fund is to boost productivity, transform intra-city connectivity and reduce congestion through investment in public and sustainable transport in the West Midlands. No detailed constraints as to what it can be spent on, but the WMCA should have regard to the national objectives of the Fund. Programme agreed Nov 2018. Additional £71.5m TCF2 now funded through CRSTS)
Joint Air Quality	DfT	Jan-19	£ 3,456,520	Fund retrofit buses with kits that tackle exhaust emission in Birmingham
Association of Directors Environment Economy, Place & Travel (ADEPT) Live Labs	DfT	Jul-19	£ 2,650,000	Network Resilience Live Lab funding covering the transport network to build up a detailed picture of traffic and transport movements around the region through collection of data
Opening LA Transport Data Competition	DfT	Pre 18/19	£ 100,000,000	Data / Technology
Future mobility Zones	DfT	Jun-19	£ 20,000,000	The purpose of the Future Mobility Zones is to: trial new transport services modes and models, creating a functioning marketplace for mobility that combines new and traditional modes of transport; improve integration of services; increase the availability of real-time data; and provide access to digital planning and payment options. The fund also aims to explore options for: providing mobility credits, or other low-cost options, for lower income households; and delivering efficiencies through shared (dynamic) demand responsive transport.
TfWM Bus Priority	DfT	Jul-20	£ 24,225,000	Funding bus priority measures in Birmingham City Centre and between Dudley and Druids Heath.
Emergency Active Travel Fund	DfT	Nov-20	£ 13,182,667	Phase 2 of Active Travel Fund to support longer term walking and cycling schemes (Phase 1 classed as revenue grant)
Active Travel Fund (Tranche 3)	DfT	Mar-22	£ 17,250,000	Phase 3 of Active Travel Fund to support longer term walking and cycling schemes
All Electric Bus Town Competition (Coventry) (AEBT)	DfT	Mar-21	£ 50,000,000	Coventry All Electric Bus City project
Zero Emissions Bus Regional Areas (ZEBRA)	DfT	Mar-22	£ 30,383,250	Grant to deliver 124 hydrogen buses plus associated infrastructure in the region
City Region Sustainable Transport Summary (CRSTS)	DfT	Apr-22	£ 1,050,000,000	Supporting inclusive economic growth, provide better connections between places and encourage more people to use sustainable and zero-carbon transport
West Midlands Land Fund	MHCLG	Apr-18	£ 100,000,000	Quarterly reporting to MHCLG as part of the grant. This is against the outputs specific to Housing of 8,000 homes and the wider West Midlands target of 215,000 homes by 2031, which includes outputs from the Local Authorities
Brownfield Housing Fund	MHCLG	Apr-20	£ 125,381,582	Quarterly reporting to MHCLG on the outputs of this grant. Deliver between 7,714 and 9,773 homes.
Brownfield Housing Fund Extension	MHCLG	Mar-22	£ 17,350,000	Extension agreed to the Brownfield Housing Fund March 2022.
Sustainable Warmth Competition	BEIS	Mar-22	£ 2,600,000	Upgrade homes to a target energy efficiency rating
BEIS Social Decarbonisation Fund	BEIS	Feb-22	£ 6,174,205	Improve the energy performance of social rented homes
Metro Birmingham Eastside Extension	EZ	n/a	£ 18,000	Enterprise Zone funding
University Hospital Birmingham - University Station	3rd Party	Aug-20	£ 5,000,000	Delivery of University Station build.
Rail Network Enhancement Pipeline (RNEP) Funding	DfT	Oct-21	£ 39,650,000	Rail Station Development-Package 1 Walsall - Wolverhampton
Rail Network Enhancement Pipeline (RNEP) Funding	DfT	Oct-21	£ 19,350,000	Rail Station Development-Package 2 Camp Hill
PB - Highways England	Highways Eng	n/a	£ 86,400	Relates to HS2 Modelling Framework
Public Realm Schemes	BCC	Jun-22	£ 606,543	Enhance public realms for Commonwealth Games
A435 Alcester Rd Bus Priority Revitalisation	BCC	21/22	£ 154,000	A435 Alcester Rd Bus Priority Revitalisation
Clear Air Zone	BCC	Mar-22	£ 5,218,000	Rail Station Development-Package 2 Camp Hill
Rail Development	Walsall MBC	21/22	£ 68,000	Rail Station Development-Package 1 Walsall - Wolverhampton
Air Quality	Defra	Mar-22	£ 990,000	Develop and/or implement measures that deliver air quality benefits in the near future (one to two years), projects which develop solutions over the longer term by increasing awareness to encourage behavioural changes, and new, innovative ideas if they will successfully and as closely as possible meet the needs and objectives of the Applicant's local area.

LA - Birmingham	LA	n/a	£ 14,279,629	Rail funding = £8.983m: BCC funding for Perry Barr = £5.083m BCC funding for University = £3.9m BCC funding for Package 2 = £5.2m
UK Shared Prosperity Fund - capital element	DLUHC	Dec-22	£ 8,900,000	Capital allocation for 23/24 of UKSPF Fund. Permission has been sought from grant providers to carry forward £5.7m of UKSPF into 2023/24
Social Housing Fund	DLUHC	Feb-23	c. £14,900,000	Working with local authorities and registered housing provider for repairs and improvements to properties to raise homes to 'Decent Homes Standard'. Works may include insulation, replacement of doors and windows, roofing repairs, reduction of mould and damp and repairs/replacements to ineffective heating systems.
Air Quality Grant 22/23	DEFRA	Feb-23	£ 140,000	Provision of sensors that monitor air particles PM2.5 and PM10.
ADEPT LIVE LAB 2 - Highways CO2laboration centre	DfT	Feb-23	£ 4,035,000	The UK CO2laboration Centre of Excellence for Materials Decarbonisation will be a single centre based across two campuses: a physical centre based in Birmingham and a virtual centre hosted by North Lanarkshire Council. It will provide a centralised hub for research and innovation for the decarbonisation of local roads materials, developing a knowledge bank, real-life conditions testing and sharing and learning insights.
CCAV - MACAM	Innovate UK	Nov-23	£ 1,485,000	Part of wider automated public transport demonstrator project to prove viability of services.
CCAV - EBNS Feasibility Study	Innovate UK	Nov-23	£ 55,000	Feasibility project looking at how Connected and Autonomous Mobility technologies could be used in East Birmingham and North Solihull. Part of larger project.
Social Decarbonisation Fund (Wave 2.1)	BEIS	Mar-23	£ 17,776,915	Funding to make homes more energy efficient through retrofitting with better insulation, new doors and windows and greener heating systems. This will be matched by further £35 million from registered social housing providers across the region to benefit approximately 3000 homes.
Homes Upgrade Grant	DESNZ	Mar-23	£ 16,000,000	Retrofit off gas grid homes in Birmingham, Dudley and Sandwell, Dudley. The bid was part of the Midlands Net Zero Hub consortium that successfully bid for £140 million for the wider Midlands area.
DLUHC Capital funding	DLUHC	Feb-23	£ 25,900,000	Grant to support delivery of the following schemes: i. The extension to the West Midlands Metro network that will link Dudley and Brierley Hill via Line One to Wolverhampton and Birmingham ii. The extension of the Wolverhampton Metro iii. A package of works to renew life-expired sections of key systems on Metro Line One iv. Funding for the renewal of University station v. The provision of digital devices through the Connected Services Project
Highways Maintenance Funding	DfT	Mar-23	£ 3,617,000	For Additional Highways Maintenance and Pothole repair announced within the Central Government 2023 Budget Statement
Local Investment in Natural Capital Programme	DEFRA	Mar-23	£ 1,000,000	DEFRA funding to support the establishment of a natural environment investment fund.
Active Travel Fund (Tranche 4)	DfT	Mar-23	£ 12,608,201	Phase 4 of Active Travel Fund to support longer term walking and cycling schemes

**Revenue Grant Register**

Grant Name	Provider	Start Date	End Date	Total Grant Awarded in Full	Notes
BSOG	DfT	Annual		1,792,259	A discretionary grant paid to operators of eligible local bus services to help them recover some of their fuel costs.
Emergency Active Travel Fund	DfT	Aug-20	Mar-23	3,765,980	Phase 1 of Active Travel Fund to support temporary walking and cycling schemes in response to Covid 19 pandemic
Intra-City Transport Settlements	DfT			8,900,000	Intracity Prep Fund (now CRSTS)
Cycling for Everyone	DfT	Nov-21	Nov-22	2,000,000	Cycling for Everyone
Tourism, Trade & Investment	DCMS			13,200,000	An integrated programme of tourism, trade and investment jointly developed and to be jointly delivered by the West Midlands Growth Company, DCMS, DfT and Visit Britain. It will leverage the 2022 Commonwealth Games in Birmingham to deliver a legacy of economic benefits across the region.
DWP - ESF Find Your Future	DWP	Nov-21	Dec-23	2,620,730	Tailored engagement and support project for residents that will enable those less likely to benefit from the opportunities provided by the Commonwealth Games and City of Culture to do so.
Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund Wave 1	BEIS	Apr-22	Aug-23	1,337,142	Overall grant award of £7.51m
Supported Bus Services	DfT	Apr-20		879,836	Provided to as revenue support to help provide more bus services in areas by improving current services, restoring lost services or supporting new services
Bus Capacity Grant	DfT	Apr-20		100,000	Funding to support LTAs in developing local bus proposals as outlined in the National Bus Strategy (NBS), in particular, it is being offered to help LTAs towards the development of their Enhanced Partnership Schemes(EPS) or franchising scheme, and Bus Service Improvement Plans (BSIP) work, and to meet the timescales that go alongside that work.
22/23 AEB Devolution	DfE	Annual		131,875,523	Devolved budget from DfE for delivery of adult education (19+) in West Midlands region
22/23 Adult Education Budget Level 3	DfE	Annual		10,954,673	Devolved budget from DfE for delivery of level 3 education offer open to adults without an existing L3 qualification in West Midlands
Technical Bootcamps	DfE	Apr-22	Mar-23	11,250,000	Technical bootcamps 22-23 allocation of £11.25m in priority sectors of digital, technical, construction, green and HGV – with 10% to be used flexibly in other areas: Health and Social Care (inc Life Sciences); Creative Industries; Hospitality; Leadership and Management; Professional Services (inc Finance).
Tackling Loneliness through Transport Fund	DfT	May-22	May-23	460,469	The TLwT Fund offers grant funding to the public and charity sectors to run pilot transport schemes that aim to reduce loneliness. The pilots will be measured and evaluated rigorously, enabling DfT to understand more about how transport can be used to help reduce loneliness and to share these findings with organisations within and outside government.
Black Country Cultural Capital Development	Arts Council England	Apr-22	Mar-25	725,000	This grant is specifically marked to be spent in the Black Country, with the aim to support development of future cultural sector capital projects within Sandwell, Walsall, Wolverhampton and Dudley. The grant activity will specifically focus on developing capital project feasibility studies and business cases, together with some support resources for cultural organisation.
DLUHC - Rough Sleeping Initiative	DLUHC	Apr-22	Mar-25	1,491,707	3 year settlement to allow Authorities to build on the progress of previous funding interventions, moving increasingly from a focus on intervention to supporting long term recovery and preventing rough sleeping.
Multiply	DfE	Apr-23	Mar-24	5,849,000	Multi year grant allocation of 16.7m total funding over 3 years. Amount shown here is for year 1 only. Grant supports literacy and numeracy skills development activities in line with investment plan submitted to HMG
Bus Service Improvement Plan	DfT	Apr-23	Mar-24	36,686,987	Multi year grant allocation of £87.8m total funding over 3 years. Amount shown here is for year 2 only. Grant supports transformation activities to support bus service improvement in line with investment plan submitted to DfT.
UK Shared Prosperity Fund	DLUHC	Apr-22	Mar-23	7,175,415	UKSPF is a central pillar of this government's levelling up agenda, and replacement funding for the European Union Structural Funding. Funds will be spent in line with the investment plan submitted to government.
Technical Bootcamps Wave 4	DfE	Apr-23	Mar-24	10,605,000	Continued support for Bootcamp activity. Amount reflects current amount confirmed via grant letter but total allocation is confirmed as £15.15m.
Thrive into Work	DWP	Feb-23	Mar-25	7,936,260	Continued support for existing Thrive into Work employment scheme.
Active Travel Capability Fund	Active Travel England	Jan-23	Jan-24	3,456,000	To support the better design, planning and development of cycling , wheeling and walking schemes in the region.
Local Government Cyber Security Resilience Fund	DLUHC	Jan-23		175,000	To support digital and data requirements in this area
Air Quality Grant 22/23	DEFRA	Apr-23	Mar-25	778,531	Provision of sensors that monitor air particles PM2.5 and PM10.
Create Central	BFI	Apr-23	Mar-26	1,000,000	National Lottery Funding to support screen production workforce development and training
Place Pilot	DLUHC	Nov-22	May-24	500,000	Grant to support the realisation of efficiencies across the public estate, and also unlock opportunities to release land held by central and local government. It builds on the strength of the One Public Programme and pilots a place-based approach to strategic asset management. Funding can be allocated for purposes such as data analysis and mapping, undertaking feasibility studies, mastplanning, seed funding to initiate opportunities, programme coordination, etc.

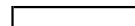
Leveling Up Capacity Grant	DLUHC	Apr-22	Mar-23	625,000	Following successful bid to DLUHC on 24/02/2023, the grant has provided funding to build the necessary capacity and capability support infrastructure to support local authorities within the MCAs geographical area to deliver their capital projects. A further 2 years of funding will be made available, subject to delivery of outcomes outlined in the proposal to DLUHC.
Local Transport Fund- Bus Recovery Fund extension	DfT	Apr-23	Jun-23	6,087,372	March Board report indicated that Government had extended the funding for support of the bus network to June 2023 in light of the challenges that the sector continues to face. This report confirms the value
Cycling facilities (velodrome)	DfT	May-23	Maximum term of 7 years specified	40,000	Grant to fund expert consultants to determine whether there is a business case for specialist cycling facilities in the West Midlands. The consultancy will make recommendations to a Cycling Facility Advisory Group chaired by the WM Walking and Cycling Commissioner as to whether there is a strategic, site allocation, business, commercial, management and financial business case(s) for such facilities.
One Public Estate Opportunity Development Fund	DLUHC	Apr-23	Not specified	140,000	The Opportunity Development Fund (ODF) will fund a comprehensive forward-looking assessment of the region's public estate. The assessment will identify pipeline opportunities for land release to deliver new homes, employment, health and community space alongside wider inclusive growth benefits.
Events Screening	DCMS	May-23	May-23	45,000	Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport grant of £30k for coronation screening events across the region plus £10k for the Eurovision screening,

#### Specific Revenue/Devo Grants

Devo Deal Grant	MHCLG	Annual		36,500,000	Devolution Grant Deal (Investment Programme)
MHCLG - Office for Data Analytics	MHCLG	Apr-18	No end date	800,000	Devolution funding to support operational activities of ODA
Devo Housing Package	MHCLG	Apr-17		6,000,000	Revenue grants to support capital housing grant activity delivery
Brownfield Housing Fund	MHCLG	Apr-20		2,826,498	Revenue grants to support capital housing grant activity delivery
One Public Estate	LGA		Apr-22	1,246,141	Support OPE activity - drawn down by partners delivering OPE activity as required.

#### Other Revenue Contributions

MHCLG -Brexit	MHCLG	Apr-18	No end date	1,375,059	
IPS Programme	DWP	Mar-17	Jun-22	2,059,911	







## WMCA Overview & Scrutiny Committee - Work Programme 2023/2024

Title of Report	Description of Purpose	Date of Meeting	Lead Officer/Member
<b>Spotlight Session: Skills, People and Employment</b>		4 September 2023	Clare Hatton
Portfolio Lead Member for Skills and Productivity	To obtain a deeper understanding of the priorities and progress to date in achieving the objectives within the portfolio area.	4 September 2023 <b>TBC</b>	Portfolio Lead Member – Councilor George Duggins
Affordable Homes Programme - WMCA & Homes England’s Joint Approach	To receive an update from the WMCA and Homes England on the affordable homes programme	4 September 2023	Rob Lamond & Homes England
Affordable Homes Strategy	To review and comment on the strategy	4 September 2023	Rob Lamond
Affordable Housing Delivery Pilot	To consider the progress being made with the delivery of the pilot including the governance process.	4 September 2023	Rob Lamond

Title of Report	Description of Purpose	Date of Meeting	Lead Officer/Member
Performance against the WMCA's Annual Business Plan	To consider the mid year review of the deliverables contained within the 2023/24 Annual Business Plan	4 September 2023	Fiona Bebington
Grant Register	To receive and review the Grant Register	4 September 2023	Kate Taylor
<b>Members Workshop:</b> WMCA Policy Matters		6 October 2023	Dan Essex/ Lyndsey Roberts
<b>Mayor's Question Time:</b> Policy		19 October 2023	Dan Essex/ Lyndsey Roberts
<b>Spotlight Session:</b> Culture & Digital		6 November 2023 <b>TBC</b>	
Portfolio Lead Member for Culture & Digital	To obtain a deeper understanding of the priorities, challenges and progress to date in achieving the objectives within the portfolio area.	6 November 2023 <b>TBC</b>	Portfolio Lead Member – Councillor Patrick Harley
Levelling Up/Investment Zones	To consider the latest position regarding levelling up and investment zones	6 November 2023 <b>TBC</b>	Ed Cox

Title of Report	Description of Purpose	Date of Meeting	Lead Officer/Member
Commonwealth Games Legacy Enhancement Fund	To review the progression on the programmes within each of the four thematic pillar's, funding and governance processes followed	6 November 2023 <b>TBC</b>	Ed Cox
Future Homes Strategy	To review and comment on the Future Homes Strategy	6 November 2023 <b>TBC</b>	Rob Lamond
Grant Register	To receive and review the Grant Register	6 November 2023	Kate Taylor
<b>Members Workshop:</b> Proposed Draft Budget 2024/2025		1 December 2023	Dan Essex/Lyndsey Roberts
<b>Mayor's Question Time:</b> Proposed Draft Budget 2024/2025		14 December 2023	Dan Essex/Lyndsey Roberts
Grant Register	To receive and review the Grant Register	29 January 2024	Kate Taylor
Grant Register	To receive and review the Grant Register	4 March 2024	Kate Taylor

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# West Midlands Combined Authority

## Forward Plan

## Forthcoming key decisions

Title of key decision:	Decision to be taken by and date:	Open or Exempt:	Portfolio Lead	Employee to contact:
<b>Appointment of WMCA Boards and Committees 2023/24</b>	WMCA Board 9 June 2023	Open		Julia Cleary Head of Corporate Support & Governance
<b>Financial Monitoring 2022/23</b> To outline the latest financial position of WMCA and provide an update on any current financial matters affecting WMCA.	WMCA Board 9 June 2023	Open	Councillor Bob Sleigh Finance Portfolio Lead	Linda Horne Executive Director of Finance & Business Hub
<b>Transport Governance Review</b>	WMCA Board 9 June 2023	Open	Councillor Bob Sleigh Deputy Mayor	Julia Cleary Head of Corporate Support & Governance
<b>Report of the Independent Remuneration Panel</b> To consider the report of the Independent Remuneration Panel	WMCA Board 9 June 2023	Open	Councillor Bob Sleigh Finance Portfolio Lead	Julia Cleary Head of Corporate Support & Governance
<b>West Midlands Investment Zone</b> To formalise Priority Sector and Investment Zone Criteria	WMCA Board 9 June 2023	Open	Councillor Ian Brookfield Economy & Innovation Portfolio Lead	Jonathan Skinner Head of Economic Policy and Partnerships
<b>Deeper Devolution Deal - Statutory Processes</b> Trailblazer Devolution Deal	WMCA Board 9 June 2023	Open	Andy Street Mayor	Melissa Brown Head of Policy & Public Affairs

<p><b>Wednesbury - Brierley Hill Metro Extension Funding Mitigation Measures</b> To consider the latest progress in securing the mitigation measures for addressing the funding gap identified for phase 1 of the project and to close the funding gap for the full scheme.</p>	<p>WMCA Board 9 June 2023</p>	<p>Part exempt</p>	<p>Councillor Mike Bird Transport Portfolio Lead</p>	<p>Anne Shaw Executive Director of Transport for West Midlands</p>
<p><b>West Midlands Transport Investment Programme &amp; CRSTS Review</b> A report setting out the progress over the first year of the City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement programme and key matters and decisions arising for the remainder of the programme.</p>	<p>WMCA Board 9 June 2023</p>	<p>Part exempt</p>	<p>Councillor Mike Bird Transport Portfolio Lead</p>	<p>Mike Waters Director of Policy, Strategy and Innovation - TfWM</p>
<p><b>Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report</b> To consider a report setting out the activity of overview &amp; scrutiny during 2022/23.</p>	<p>WMCA Board 9 June 2023</p>	<p>Open</p>	<p>Councillor Bob Sleigh Deputy Mayor</p>	<p>Helen Edwards Director of Law and Governance</p>
<p><b>Regional Activity &amp; Delivery Update</b> To provide an update on recent activity of the WMCA.</p>	<p>WMCA Board 21 July 2023</p>	<p>Open</p>	<p>Andy Street Mayor</p>	
<p><b>Financial Monitoring Report</b> To provide a summary of the WMCA's financial position as at 31 May 2023.</p>	<p>WMCA Board 21 July 2023</p>	<p>Open</p>	<p>Councillor Bob Sleigh Deputy Mayor</p>	<p>Beverly Sullivan Financial Planning and Coordination Manager</p>
<p><b>Investment Zones Update</b> To consider the latest position regarding Investment Zones.</p>	<p>WMCA Board 21 July 2023</p>	<p>Open</p>	<p>Councillor Ian Brookfield Economy &amp; Innovation Portfolio Lead</p>	
<p><b>Regional Activity &amp; Delivery Update</b> To provide an update on recent activity of the WMCA.</p>	<p>WMCA Board 15 September 2023</p>	<p>Open</p>		
<p><b>Financial Monitoring Report</b> To provide a summary of the WMCA's financial position as at 31 July 2023.</p>	<p>WMCA Board 15 September 2023</p>	<p>Open</p>	<p>Councillor Bob Sleigh Finance Portfolio Lead</p>	<p>Beverly Sullivan Financial Planning and Coordination Manager</p>

<p><b>Mid-Year Review of Annual Business Plan</b> To consider the mid-year review of the deliverables contained within the 2023/24 Annual Business Plan.</p>	<p>WMCA Board 15 September 2023</p>	<p>Open</p>	<p>Councillor Bob Sleigh Finance Portfolio Lead</p>	<p>Fiona Bebbington Head of Business Improvement</p>
<p><b>Refreshed Regional Road Safety Strategy Launch</b> Refreshed Regional Road Safety Strategy Launch</p>	<p>WMCA Board 15 September 2023</p>	<p>Open</p>	<p>Councillor Mike Bird Transport Portfolio Lead</p>	<p>Darren Divall Regional Road Safety Manager</p>
<p><b>City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement 1 Re-basing Application</b> To approve any proposals to re-base the CRSTS1 programme for submission to the Department for Transport.</p>	<p>WMCA Board 15 September 2023</p>	<p>Open</p>	<p>Councillor Mike Bird Transport Portfolio Lead</p>	<p>Mike Waters Director of Policy, Strategy and Innovation - TfWM</p>
<p><b>Regional Activity &amp; Delivery Update</b> To provide an update on recent activity of the WMCA.</p>	<p>WMCA Board 13 October 2023</p>	<p>Open</p>		
<p><b>Deeper Devolution Deal</b> To consider the outcome of the public consultation, feedback from local authorities in respect of the governance review and scheme, and to determine whether these should be sent to the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing &amp; Communities.</p>	<p>WMCA Board 13 October 2023</p>	<p>Open</p>	<p>Councillor Sharon Thompson Levelling Up Portfolio Lead</p>	
<p><b>Regional Activity &amp; Delivery Update</b> To provide an update on recent activity of the WMCA.</p>	<p>WMCA Board 17 November 2023</p>	<p>Open</p>		
<p><b>Financial Monitoring Report</b> To provide a summary of the WMCA's financial position as at 30 September 2023.</p>	<p>WMCA Board 17 November 2023</p>	<p>Open</p>	<p>Councillor Bob Sleigh Finance Portfolio Lead</p>	<p>Beverly Sullivan Financial Planning and Coordination Manager</p>



## The Forward Plan

This document sets out known ‘key decisions’ that will be taken by the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) over the coming months.

Forthcoming key decisions are published online to meet the statutory 28 day notification rule for each meeting where a key decision will be taken. Where it has not been possible to meet the 28 day rule for publication of notice of a key decision or an intention to meet in private, the relevant notices will be published as required by legislation as soon as possible.

### What is a key decision?

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A ‘key decision’ means a decision of the Mayor, WMCA or officer which is likely:

- (a) to result in the WMCA incurring expenditure, making savings or generating income amounting to £1m or more; or
- (b) to be significant in terms of its effects on communities living or working in an area comprising two or more wards in the area of the WMCA

The report relating to a decision, together with any other documents being considered, will be available five clear working days before the decision is to be taken (unless the documentation contains exempt information).

The forward plan also provides notice of when the WMCA may decide to exclude the press and public during consideration of a particular matter due to the potential for disclosure of confidential or exempt

information. The grounds upon which local authorities can exclude the press and public are specified by law and details of the exempt categories are available on request from the Governance Services team ([governance.services@wmca.org.uk](mailto:governance.services@wmca.org.uk)).

Councillors or members of the public wishing to:

- make a representation about why a matter should be heard in public, or
- submit information to the decision-making body about an item in the forward plan, or
- request details of relevant documents, or
- seek advice about the WMCA's decision-making arrangements,

should contact the Governance Services team: [governance.services@wmca.org.uk](mailto:governance.services@wmca.org.uk)