

ANNEX 3

DRAFT Deeper Devolution Deal Information Note and Formal Public Consultation Document

[This will be designed into a simple web page and leaflet]

What is the West Midlands Combined Authority?

The West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) is made up of 17 local councils, seven of which are constituent and have voting rights (Birmingham, Coventry, Dudley, Sandwell, Solihull, Walsall and Wolverhampton), and is led by the Mayor of the West Midlands, Andy Street.

A combined authority is a group of local councils working together to make their region a better place to live.

What is devolution?

Government gives combined authorities the money and power/functions/responsibilities to make decisions for their regions. It means that decisions are made locally by people who know their region best.

What is the West Midlands Combined Authority's current role?

The WMCA wants to make the West Midlands region a better connected, more prosperous, fairer, and healthier place to live by:

- making it easier and safer to travel in and around the region
- using derelict (brownfield) land to build homes
- protecting our green spaces
- making sure people have the education and employment opportunities to make a great start in life
- working together to support our communities and build a better connected, more prosperous, fairer and healthier West Midlands
- tackling climate change through our WM2041 pledge

The WMCA is not a local council. Most services are delivered by our partners. The WMCA's role is to co-ordinate, influence, develop plans and secure funding to achieve these objectives.

Why is there a need for a deeper devolution deal?

There is a lot more regional leaders could do if more powers and funding can be secured from central government. The productivity of the region has remained at 90% of the national average for the past 10 years. Lifting the productivity of the West Midlands to just the UK average would deliver an estimated £7.8 billion per year to the UK economy to help improve the lives of the people of the West Midlands. **There needs to be a change to enable this growth.**

Therefore, the government agreed to open talks on deeper devolution deals (more local funding and functions/responsibilities/powers) with the WMCA (and Greater Manchester Combined Authority) and have agreed that the proposed deal might act as a blueprint for other areas of England to follow.

What is a deeper devolution deal?

The deeper devolution deal puts more cash and functions in the hands of local leaders to invest in the priorities that local communities truly care about, such as better bus and train services, skills, housing and health.

A new deal will enable the Mayor of the West Midlands and local councils to plan for the long term, with certainty, and unlock substantial benefits for almost 3 million people living in the area.

This will also allow local leadership to make the right decisions to encourage growth and inclusion across the towns and cities of the West Midlands.

What is included in the new deeper devolution deal?

The government has agreed a deeper devolution deal with the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA). The deal includes:

- A new long-term funding settlement, including the right to retain 100% of business rates for 10 years' - giving an estimated £45 million a year to the WMCA and local authorities to spend locally.
- There will be a new departmental-style budget arrangement with a single pot of funding which should make funding projects quicker and simpler.
- A new partnership with Homes England, with a commitment to work towards investing (spending) up to £400m in the West Midlands by 2026, offering greater flexibility to drive brownfield (unused land) regeneration and unique powers and funding to deliver affordable housing quicker.

- The deal also includes the provision of essential infrastructure especially public transport connectivity to give communities access to essential services, facilities, and opportunities, including £60 million of additional investment for the proposed metro line extension from Wednesbury to Brierley Hill.
- Bus Services Operating Grant - this grant is currently paid to operators of eligible (must meet certain rules) bus services and community transport organisations to help them recover some of their fuel costs. This new function will support the government's and West Midlands' shared priorities to support important local bus services and reduce environmental impacts through assisting the change to zero emission buses.
- Creation of a transport 'sandbox' to put the West Midlands at the forefront of transport innovation, to deliver cleaner and safer vehicles and innovative (new modern) transport services to our streets faster while supporting new jobs and investment.
- Greater control over public transport with a new rail partnership with Great British Railways.
- Further influence/responsibility over key policy areas such as non-apprenticeship adult skills functions, post-16 technical education, careers and employment support. This will give local decision makers (WMCA) more freedom and flexibility to support people into work, gain better skills and improve their quality of life.
- Devolution of funding to retrofit buildings, to bring down energy bills for households across the West Midlands.
- A new partnership with national arts and culture organisations to use the West Midlands' globally renowned cultural strengths. To maximise the impact of this investment, and to explore new ways in which culture, heritage and sport can deliver on wider levelling up outcomes like health and wellbeing, the government will work with WMCA to support an ambitious regional culture and heritage framework.
- Ways to support the roll-out of high-speed broadband across the region and £4 million for devices and data to get more people online.

There will be a process in place to ensure that the WMCA is accountable and held responsible to its residents to deliver value for money.

Have your say

As part of the deal, there is one new function that will be transferred to the WMCA that requires formal public consultation.

Improving the public's health is a new duty for the WMCA and for this power to be given the WMCA needs to consult the public (asking for views) on the scheme and share results with the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities.

The WMCA therefore wants your views on the transfer of functions/responsibilities. You have until **11.59pm on 11th August 2023** to have your say.

*** Suggest the text below goes in a special box***

What are we consulting on?

A new formal duty by Government to improve the public's health. The WMCA would hold the duty alongside the public health functions that are already delivered by local councils.

This won't be replacing any health services already provided either within the NHS or through local councils' public health functions.

It is to ensure that the WMCA formally has to consider how it consider public health in everything that it delivers – from transport to housing to skills to net zero.

The government and WMCA can use their combined resources and expertise to develop and test new ways to improve people's health. The duty will also mean the WMCA is better placed to attract future additional funds to the region to help improve public health.

The WMCA will play a key role through exercising its transport, housing, skills and economic growth functions, which have a key impact on health outcomes.

Under the new health improvement duty, the WMCA will work with its constituent local authorities to carry out activities which might include: enhancing the provision of and access to a healthier food environment for children and young people; establishing a regional tobacco alliance with local public health and integrated care boards and pilot vaping as a quit tool to reduce smoking rates in the region; and driving forward the ambition to be an exemplar region for disabled people through the development of a regional disability strategy in conjunction with Government.

END BOX

How can I have my say?

Please complete the questionnaire by **11.59pm on 11th August 2023**. If you have any questions, you can join us at one of our events.

Questions

Primary Questions

Question 1

In the devolution deal there is a new formal duty by Government to improve the public's health, concurrent with local councils as set out in NHS Act 2006. The WMCA would hold the duty alongside the public health functions that are already delivered by local councils.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposal to give a new formal duty to the WMCA to improve the public's health?

Strongly agree
disagree

Somewhat agree

Neither agree nor

Somewhat disagree

Strongly disagree

Don't know

Are there any other points you'd like to make?

Supplementary Questions

Question 2

To what extent do you agree that the provisions set out in the Deeper Devolution Deal will bring benefit to the people of the West Midlands?

Strongly agree
disagree

Somewhat agree

Neither agree nor

Somewhat disagree

Strongly disagree

Don't know

Are there any other points you'd like to make?

Question 3

Are there any aspects of the Deal that you are particularly enthusiastic about? Please tell us why.

Are there any aspects of the Deal that you are particularly concerned about? Please tell us why.

Question 4

Before today, how aware were you of the WMCA?

Include logo

Fully aware Partially aware Unaware Don't know

Question 5

Before today, how aware were you of Transport for West Midlands (part of the WMCA)?

Include logo

Fully aware Partially aware Unaware Don't know

About You

Question 5

Could you tell us your age?

Under 16 16-24 25-44
45 – 64 65+ I do not wish to disclose

Question 6

What is your gender?

Male Female I do not wish to disclose

Prefer to self-describe

Question 7

What is your ethnicity?

Which of the following best describes your ethnic origin?

- White British
- White Other
- Mixed/multiple ethnic group
- Asian or Asian British
- Black African/Caribbean/ Black British
- Chinese or Chinese British
- Prefer not to say
- Other, please specify: _____

Question 8

What is your religion?

- Christian (all denominations) Hindu Muslim
- None (includes atheist & humanist) Sikh Other (please specify)
-

Question 9

Do you consider yourself to have a disability which has

- Severe impact on everyday life Mild impact on everyday life
- No disability Prefer not to say
- Other (please specify).....

Question 10

Which constituent (voting) council area do you live in?

- Birmingham Coventry Dudley Sandwell Solihull
- Walsall Wolverhampton I don't live in the West Midlands
- I don't know which council area I live in (please provide postcode).....
- Other local authority area (please specify).....

Question 11a

