



## WMCA Board

<b>Date</b>	15 September 2023
<b>Report title</b>	Appointment of Combined Authority Returning Officer
<b>Accountable Chief Executive</b>	Laura Shoaf, West Midlands Combined Authority email: laura.shoaf@wmca.org.uk  Julie Nugent, Coventry City Council email: julie.nugent@coventry.gov.uk
<b>Accountable Employee</b>	Helen Edwards, Director of Law and Governance and Monitoring Officer email: helen.edwards@wmca.org.uk
<b>Report has been considered by</b>	Executive Board - 6 September 2023 Mayor and Portfolio Leads - 1 September 2023

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

#### The WMCA Board is recommended to:

- (1) Appoint Julie Newman, Chief Legal Officer and Monitoring Officer at Coventry City Council as the West Midlands Combined Authority Returning Officer.

#### 1. Purpose

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to enable the West Midlands Combined Authority to appoint a Combined Authority Returning Officer in respect of the Combined Authority Mayoral election on 2 May 2024.

#### 2. Background

- 2.1 The Combined Authorities (Mayoral Elections) Order 2017 provides that each Combined Authority must appoint one of its officers or one of the officers of a constituent council to be the Combined Authority Returning Officer (CARO). If an officer of a constituent authority is chosen this will normally be the Returning Officer for that area.

- 2.2 The CARO will have overall responsibility for the election of the Mayor and may, for example, give to a Returning Officer of a constituent member authority, directions relating to the conduct of the election. In addition, the CARO will be responsible for accepting nominations and coordinating the regional result.
- 2.3 For the 2021 election a decision was taken to appoint the Returning Officer of Coventry City Council as the CARO. The WMCA does not maintain an elections team and is not responsible for any elections with the exception of the Mayoral election.
- 2.4 It is recommended therefore, that Julie Newman, Chief Legal Officer and Monitoring Officer at Coventry City Council is appointed as the West Midlands Combined Authority Returning Officer for the Mayoral Election 2024. The CARO will be supported by the electoral teams from Coventry City Council and Birmingham City Council.
- 2.5 Agreed protocols covering access to information and contact with all candidates in order to provide full transparency are being developed by the Combined Authority and will be jointly agreed by the Combined Authority Chief Executive and the CARO.

### **3. Wider WMCA Implications**

- 3.1 The Mayoral election covers the whole of the constituent area of the WMCA but does not include the electorate of the non-constituent authority areas.

### **4. Financial Implications**

- 4.1 The CARO will have responsibility for the conduct poll and any directions made by the CARO may have implications on the cost of delivering the election. The cost of the election and the appropriate publicity is borne by the Combined Authority.

### **5. Legal Implications**

- 5.1 The Combined Authority will be in breach of its statutory duty if a CARO is not appointed and it will not be possible for the election to be held.

### **6. Equalities Implications**

- 6.1 A full range of measures are employed to ensure that all electors are able to cast their vote without difficulty.

### **7. Inclusive Growth Implications**

- 7.1 There are no specific inclusive growth implications arising from this report.

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

- 8.1 This is dealt with in paragraph 3.1 above.

### **9. Other Implications**

None

### **10. Schedule of Background Papers**

N/A