



WMCA Board

Date	9 March 2018
Report title	Devolution Action Plan
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Report to be/has been considered by	WMCA Programme Board - 23 February 2018

Recommendation(s) for action or decision:

The WMCA Board is recommended to:

- (1) Approve the approach to further work with government on devolution described in this report, with the coverage and portfolio leadership set out in the high level Action Plan attached.

1.0 Purpose

- 1.0 To provide the Board with more details on the proposed Devolution Action Plan and “phase three” of devolution referred to in the report on the Second Devolution Deal at the February 2018 meeting.
- 1.1 To provide constituent member councils with more information on the ways in which the WMCA intends to build on the commitments made in the Devolution Deal.

2.0 Background

- 2.0 The second devolution agreement was approved by the constituent authority leaders and the Mayor and then announced by the government at the Autumn Budget on 22 November 2017. The Board gave formal approval to the agreement at its meeting of 9th February 2018.
- 2.1 The agreement contained a number of commitments from government and the Combined Authority to work together to achieve further progress on priority issues. Therefore, the report to the February meeting of the Board also referred to a new approach to devolution in the future and work on an Action Plan setting out collaborative work with government. It was agreed that a further report should be brought to the Board on the Action Plan.

3.0 Developing a new approach to devolution

- 1.1 Discussions with officials from several government departments have indicated enthusiasm for a new approach to devolution discussions. The intention is that this should be more of a continuous process, with initiatives and agreements announced at different times, moving away from the stop-start approach to agreeing deals, and towards a more continuous, collaborative relationship.
- 1.2 This provides an important opportunity to develop proposals for more powers and flexibilities, and a better approach to funding, through longer term partnership, enabling evidence and cases for change to be fully developed and discussed and ensuring that trust is developed through implementation.

4.0 The Action Plan

- 4.1 The attachment sets out the overall approach to this work and the partnership we are seeking with government. It then summarises a wide ranging agenda, including work on the Housing Deal and the Local Industrial Strategy as well as projects covering skills, employment, transport, public services and the Funding for Growth Commission.
- 4.2 The Action Plan provides an opportunity for the West Midlands to move into the vanguard of the devolution agenda, working in a closer partnership with government to deliver our shared West Midlands priorities for the decade ahead.
- 4.3 We are engaging with government officials on the basis of a detailed programme built on this Action Plan and are working jointly with government officials to agree the shared agenda for future work. Portfolio leads (as indicated in the attached document) will be fully engaged in that process and the work ahead.

5.0 Financial implications

5.1 Policy Advisor and programme support resource requirements to take forward the proposed action plan have been included with the Combined Authority's 2018/19 Operational Budget. The specific resource implications of each policy development area will however be detailed and quantified as part of the ongoing refinement of the work programmes. Where these identify additional costs to be incurred, over that currently budgeted, this will require additional or alternative funding sources to be identified and reported separately to the Board for approval prior to progression.

6.0 Legal implications

6.1 The Action Plan deals with those parts of the second devolution agreement that involve further joint work to develop new proposals. As such, there are no direct legal implications at this stage. However it is intended that some areas of work may lead to further devolution of powers and flexibilities requiring statutory processes. Any such proposals will be brought to the Board and the constituent authorities for approval, following approval by the Mayor and the leaders of the constituent authorities.

7.0 Equalities implications

7.1 There are no direct equalities implications arising from this report.

8.0 Attachment

West Midlands and Government Working Together: Our Action Plan.