



## Housing & Land Delivery Board

<b>Date</b>	17 January 2024
<b>Report title</b>	Place Pilots Programme: Progress Update
<b>Portfolio Lead</b>	Councillor Ian Courts
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<b>Previous reports:</b>	N/A

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

Housing & Land Delivery Board is asked to:

- a) **Note** the latest work undertaken in collaboration with the Cabinet Office and the Local Government Association to continue to deliver HM Government's Place Pilots Programme in the West Midlands.
- b) **Note and endorse** the current direction of travel with regard to delivery of the Place Pilots programme.
- c) **Note** the potential of the programme to support regional ambitions for public land in line with WMCA's Public Land Charter; and
- d) **Endorse** continued engagement with the Cabinet Office and the Local Government Association to deliver the Place Pilots programme.

### 1.0 Purpose

- 1.1 The purpose of this paper is to provide a progress update to the Housing & Land Delivery Board of the Place Pilots programme, led by the Cabinet Office. WMCA have

continued to work closely with the Cabinet Office and Local Government Association (LGA) to scope, establish and deliver the West Midlands programme.

## **2.0 Background**

2.1 The '*Place Pilots: Public Property in Place*' Programme is a Cabinet Office initiative, delivered through the One Public Estate programme, which aims to bring together public sector landowners and puts place and the needs and ambitions of an area, at the centre of the transformation.

2.2 In practice, the Place Pilot initiative will encourage public sector partners to explore opportunities to optimise investment and support excellent public services through co-location, property disposals and relocations, land assembly and other multi-portfolio collaboration across regions. The overall ambition of the programme is to see a 'smaller, better, greener' public estate, delivered through fostering collaboration across the public sector, particularly between local and central Government bodies to help drive/ support local plans and ambitions.

In September 2022, WMCA were approached by the LGA and the Cabinet Office through the One Public Estate programme as an initial area to trial the 'Place Pilots' concept. The West Midlands programme aims to achieve programme ambitions through:

- Development of a pipeline of specific opportunities that can foster collaboration and joined up working in the public sector to realise efficiencies, support placemaking and deliver better public services
- Identification and testing of themes and trends that can be tested and replicated across the region to create a smaller, better, greener public estate
- Connecting landowners from across the public estate in an environment which fosters collaboration, engagement, and networking.

2.3 A pivotal component in delivering the programme is a series of collaborative workshops. To date, five workshops have been conducted, showcasing the program's potential as a potent tool for driving transformative change throughout the region. These workshops promote a more strategic approach to asset management through estate mapping and the development and testing of scalable methods applicable to departmental and public sector estate strategies.

2.4 The West Midlands region was the first of the Place Pilots to commence in the country and is the only Combined Authority, arguably the most complex to date. We have been approached by other Place Pilots for advice and the development of best practices.

## **3.0 Progress Update**

### Resourcing

3.1 Following a request from LGA/OGP, the team has been diligently working on commissioning an external resource to join the programme team. Progress has been substantial recently as we are about to appoint, having thoroughly evaluated the received bids. This ensures they can be on board with us in the new year, ready to hit the ground running.

## Governance

- 3.2 During discussions with Cabinet Office & LGA to develop appropriate and robust governance for the Place Pilots programme, it was proposed to establish a regional 'Place Forum'. The West Midlands Place Forum will bring together the regional public sector in one place with one approach to public land and its role in delivering better places, jobs, homes, services, and communities for the people of the West Midlands.
- 3.3 The inaugural place forum meeting has been rescheduled due to the ongoing efforts in resourcing the Place Pilots Programme management team and the concurrent procurement of a Place Programme Manager, who will play a key role in leading and advancing the Programme.
- 3.4 The WMCA remain firmly committed to spearheading a collaborative approach to asset management and planning across the West Midlands. Our goal is to achieve a more efficient and effective public estate and services, with a specific emphasis on enhancing the sense of Place. The revised date for this meeting will be January 30<sup>th</sup>, 2024. The agenda will encompass the exchange of best practices and will be an interactive session.

## Data Capture

- 3.5 Since the last update, momentum for the programme has sustained, and the workshops continue to effectively engage partners, identify opportunities for collaboration, and facilitate joint efforts within the public sector.
- 3.6 Findings from Workshop 2 (Town Centres) have been analysed, and a project theme has been chosen: "Public Sector Co-Location" to support the West Midlands Police's Estates Strategy ambition. This pilot involves exploring the possibility of WM Police co-locating with other public sector bodies in key areas to ensure a local presence as outlined in the police's estates strategy. Work is underway to commission and progress this initiative.
- 3.7 For clarity, police assets identified for merger or closure are not an activity that WMCA has been involved in as part of the Place Pilots Programme as this was an action taken by WM Police Senior Command Team (SCT) & PCC as part of a review and update of their 2018 WM Police Estates Strategy.
- 3.8 Regarding Workshop 3 (Depot & Fleet), the selected opportunity for further development is 'Mapping of the Public Estate.' This choice emerged from data analysis, which revealed a common need among public sector organisations to gain a better understanding of the broader regional public sector portfolio. This understanding includes improved access to essential information about property asset locations, ownership types, and building classifications.
- 3.9 Currently, the programme team is collaborating closely with ePIMS representatives and Cushman and Wakefield (C&W) who have been commissioned to help execute this pilot while leveraging existing databases and avoiding duplication of efforts. This theme is an essential platform for other projects and themes within Place Pilots programme, as well as being of value to the Public Land Task Force. It will draw together from all current

sources of data into one database and is also consistent with the outward facing element of the draft WMCA Single Estates and Property Strategy.

- 3.10 The direction of Workshop Four (Retrofit & Facilities Management) & workshop five (Data and Connectivity) are to be confirmed in the new year as we onboard the newly appointed programme manager and refine the outcomes of the workshops together, working closely with the LGA/OGP to advance a specific theme.
- 3.11 Overall there is a tangible shift in the culture of collaborative working across local and central government with a high level of engagement and realisation of the benefits of joint working, focussed foremost on beneficial outcomes on a “place” basis.

#### **4.0 Next Steps**

4.1 The anticipated next steps are as followed:

- Onboarding our newly resourced programme manager.
- Delivering Workshop Two Pilot: Finalising procurement documents.
- Delivering Workshop Three Pilot: Finalising the procurement of C&W to deliver the pilot.
- Reaching an agreement with the Cabinet Office and LGA on additional pilot themes that align with the programme's objectives and placing commissions to deliver these.
- Place Forum: preparing for the launch of the West Midlands Place Forum.

#### **5.0 Financial Implications**

- 5.1 It is noted that the purpose of this paper is to update Housing & Land Delivery Board on progress relating to the Place Pilots programme; and to advise on next steps for this programme.
- 5.2 The costs for the activities which fall under the Place Pilots programme will be covered by funding provided for this purpose. Further details on the progress of the Place Pilots Programme, including emerging financial implications, will be reported to future Housing & Land Delivery Steering Group and to the Housing & Land Delivery Board before onwards approval by the relevant Board.

#### **6.0 Legal Implications**

- 6.1 Part of the WMCA's economic, development and regeneration function is the promotion and facilitation of the improvement rationalisation and enhancement of the public sector estate with the WMCA's area. WMCA therefore has the power to undertake and take forward this Place Pilot Programme. This is entirely consistent with the Public Land Charter.
- 6.2 The source of the power referred to in paragraph 6.1 is Article 10 and Schedule 3 of the West Midlands Combined Authority Order 2016 and Section 113A of the Local Democracy Economic Development and Construction Act 2009.

6.3 The procurement of Cushman & Wakefield that is referred to in Workshop 3 is in accordance with the Authority's Contract Procedure Rules.

## **7.0 Equalities Implications**

7.1 The team are mindful of equality implications within this programme, specifically relating to the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) and will ensure these matters are considered and explored as benefits for maximising the Place Pilot objectives. It is important to remember the positive impact "place" can have for local residents including equality issues not least through better accessibility in its widest context.

## **8.0 Inclusive Growth Implications**

8.1 Inclusive Growth is considered throughout the delivery of this programme, including its outputs, which develop and test opportunities and recommendations that support inclusive growth objectives such as enabling public services to be moved to more accessible locations through collaborating with other public sector bodies or improving green credentials of buildings in town and city centres, in turn improving the air quality of more disadvantaged areas.

## **9.0 Geographical Area of Report's Implications**

9.1 The recommendations of this report apply to the whole of the WMCA area.

## **10.0 Other implications**

10.1 None.

## **11.0 Schedule of Background Papers**

11.1 No previous papers.