

WMCA Board

Date	8 February 2019
Report title	Leadership Commission: Developing and Delivering a Youth Combined Authority
Portfolio Lead	Cohesion & Integration and Public Service Reform - Councillor Steve Eling
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Report has been considered by	Programme Board – 25 January 2019

Recommendation(s) for action or decision:

The WMCA Board is recommended to:

1. Approve the establishment of a Youth Combined Authority as recommended by the WMCA Leadership Commission on the basis set out in this report.
2. Approve investment of £50,000 to support the establishment of a Youth Combined Authority.
3. To agree to the Youth Combined Authority to have Observer status on West Midlands Combined Authority Board.
4. Note that this investment contributes to meeting Recommendation 5a of the WMCA's Leadership Commission.

1.0 Purpose

- 1.1 To recommend the establishment of a Youth Combined Authority to fulfil the aspirations set out in the findings of the WMCA Leadership Commission in 2018.
- 1.2 To agree overall investment of £50,000 into the Youth Combined Authority (YCA).
- 1.3 To establish the principles for the remit, formation, membership, development and running of the YCA, on the understanding that the power to shape and develop it will sit with its Members.
- 1.4 To agree that the YCA should have Observer status on West Midlands Combined Authority Board, and will send a representative to each meeting.
- 1.5 To agree a review of YCA deliverables and budget after one year of operation.

2.0 Background

- 2.1 On 25 May 2018, WMCA Board endorsed and supported the draft findings of the Leadership Commission. The report, 'Leaders Like You', was subsequently published in June 2018.
- 2.2 Section five of that report recommended the creation of a YCA: *"it is critical that more is done to raise levels of aspiration for young people in our marginalised communities. We recommend the creation of a Youth Combined Authority, working in partnership with relevant youth organisations, to bring young people from all parts of our region together to build future political leadership capability and help us see the world through their eyes."*
- 2.3 Since this report was published, work has been undertaken to establish how the relationship between WMCA and a potential YCA could work. In practice this will and should be substantially shaped by the Members of the YCA. Nonetheless, the following principles will be important:
 - **Recognising diversity:** Members will be selected from across the WMCA area, and as such, they will have different views, experiences, abilities, and will be from different ethnic, cultural and socioeconomic backgrounds. At least some of the young people involved should be in care (or otherwise care experienced), as well as experience of living with chronic conditions or disability. However, the YCA's challenge will be to reflect a range of views and experiences of children and young people in this region, beyond their own.
 - **Advising and challenging:** while the YCA will have control of its own project budget of £7,000, it will not take decisions on behalf of the WMCA. However, it will advise and challenge the WMCA, and it is expected that officers and politicians alike will invest their time and engage constructively.
 - **Peer and shared learning:** as well as the YCA working to raise aspirations and build political leadership capability in young citizens, WMCA will benefit from the insight and guidance of the YCA. Political and officer leadership, for example, may well benefit from being mentored by a young person, who can help them to improve how they work with young people.

- **Crafted by its Members:** while there needs to be overlapping priorities, the WMCA will not tell the YCA how to prioritise, or how it can challenge.
 - **Investing in people:** while becoming a YCA Member should take a smaller time investment than becoming a councillor, it is nonetheless important that the YCA Members are invested into in a similar way.
 - **Autonomy:** the WMCA will support and enable the YCA in its work, but will not instruct them in how they focus and prioritise. As such, it makes sense that YCA Members should be at least 16, and therefore able to freely organise between meetings.
- 2.4 While there was not enough time to bring this report to a formal meeting of the WMCA Overview & Scrutiny (O&S) committee before bringing it to WMCA Board, it was circulated to O&S Members beforehand, and their feedback has been incorporated into the final version of this report. Notably, the experience of O&S relating to the challenges of influencing policies before they become decisions is highly relevant, and will help to overcome those barriers.

3.0 Implementation

- 3.1 It is proposed an independent youth organisation will be procured to lead the marketing and application process for the YCA. This will ensure impartiality. The organisation will recruit a membership of 20-30 people between the age of 16-25 that reflects a balance of gender, ethnicity, and geography, and meets other criteria including representation from Children in Care Councils and Care Leavers Forum, those living with chronic conditions and disability, young parents and those who are LGBT+.
- 3.2 Meeting the criteria above will be challenging, and it is important to be pragmatic – if it proves difficult to encourage people to apply, the YCA will reflect on how to engage with those who are not represented.
- 3.3 Several WMCA Members and partners have committed to help share the opportunity with young people that they are already linked to. The independent youth organisation leading the recruitment will make use of these links, and further offers arising from the commencement of this work will also be welcome.
- 3.4 Once established, WMCA will work with the same independent youth organisation (which will also provide project management support) to help YCA Members understand regional priorities, so that they can assemble a work programme for the year. This will be in the gift of the YCA to define and deliver, but there is an expectation that all parts of the WMCA and its Member Authorities will support them in those endeavours. Observer status for the YCA will ensure that WMCA Board is kept up to date on its work. Furthermore, each portfolio will share its business plan for the year, so that YCA Members can clearly assess priorities and plan their involvement ahead of time.
- 3.5 In the event that YCA Members would like to participate on other WMCA boards and committees, this will be accommodated where possible. There is also an aspiration to involve YCA Members in the recruitment process for senior appointments within the WMCA, and this will be explored when the Members are in post.

- 3.6 The project management support will be partly shaped by the priorities of the YCA, but will focus on building understanding of the WMCA, its policy development processes, and its context among the Members. It will also support them to set priorities, and to plan and execute their projects. The support will also interface with various parts of the WMCA and its wider partnership, to ensure that YCA activity can influence in the way envisaged by the Leadership Commission.
- 3.7 The YCA will meet formally 4-6 times per year, but will be encouraged and supported into meeting informally between those times. Members will be able to book rooms at WMCA's offices at 16 Summer Lane for these informal meetings. Furthermore, other WMCA Members and partners have also indicated that they would be willing to provide spaces. This will give the YCA plenty of choice as to the sort of spaces that best meet its needs.
- 3.8 There are examples across the region of local authority youth services and other community-led initiatives helping young people to organise, and to be part of democracy – including a number of youth councils. This investment is intended to bolster this work, and to amplify the voices of young people already expressing themselves across the region.

4.0 Links with the Transport for West Midlands Youth Forum

- 4.1 Transport for West Midlands (TfWM) has consulted with its Youth Forum on developments across its network over the past five years, and the group has become an important part of understanding what young people need from their transport network. While it will be up to the YCA as to how the links between the two are made, part of their remit will be to ensure that there is a relationship and collective endeavour between the two.
- 4.2 The TfWM Youth Forum currently has 90 members aged 12 to 24 years. The members have signed up to the Forum following promotion in schools (mainstream, SEN & PRU), Colleges and Universities as well as from Youth Groups, Youth Employment Initiative (YEI) schemes and regional Social Work Schemes.
- 4.3 TfWM Youth Forum meetings tend to be held on a Saturday, three times a year. By their own choice, the Members do not hold formal roles, and use their meeting time to immerse themselves in the workings of the transport network, often in the form of visits.
- 4.4 Members of the TfWM Youth Forum have expressed an ongoing desire to be more closely involved in policy development, and the YCA should work with those members to find ways to make that reality. For example, one identified barrier is that TfWM policy development work (understandably) tends to take place during work hours, which TfWM Youth Forum Members find it hard to accommodate.
- 4.5 Application forms for the TfWM Youth Forum can be requested via youth.forum@tfwm.org.uk.

5.0 Financial implications

5.1 The proposed outline budget is as follows, and will be reviewed after a year of operation:

Item	Cost to WMCA
Travel costs (comprised of 30 6-day nBus tickets plus contingency)	£1,600
Project management	£38,000
Marketing and Communications	£3,400
YCA project budget	£7,000
Total	£50,000

5.2 The proposal would see £1,600 for the provision of travel tickets invested from the TfWM budget, with the remaining £48,400 invested as a one off, in year cost from WMCA resources.

6.0 Legal implications

6.1 The YCA will be consultative at this stage and it is not proposed to delegate any specific decision-making powers to the YCA except in that as highlighted elsewhere in the report they will be responsible for shaping and developing their operation and work programme. The WMCA Board is able to agree to allow the creation of further organisations having 'Observer' status.

6.2 It is not intended to place undue constraints on the workings of the YCA but where appropriate and necessary their operation would be covered by the appropriate provisions in the WMCA Constitution.

7.0 Equalities implications

7.1 Investing resources into amplifying the voices of young people from diverse backgrounds has positive equalities implications, as it will enable young people to gain experience, insight and influence over regional government, in a way they do not at the moment.

7.2 After a year, the YCA will reflect on its impact, which will include the inclusivity of the wider WMCA and how it has improved that, both by virtue of its existence and by influencing existing practice.

8.0 Inclusive growth implications

- 8.1 Referring to the Inclusive Growth Framework, the establishment of the YCA has most relevance to the 'Power, Influence and Participation' theme, as it will enable the YCA Members (and the young people they connect to) to influence regional policy and investment, as well as helping to shape these processes so that they are more inclusive of young people from all backgrounds and lived experiences.
- 8.2 By demystifying the process of holding a role in a democratic organisation, and through regular interaction with elected representatives, the YCA Members will have increased confidence in their ability to hold public office, and are more likely to seek it in the future, and to encourage others like them to do so. There are a number of ways that this enthusiasm could be captured - for example, by running a West Midlands version of the Local Government Association's 'Be a Councillor' campaign.
- 8.3 A key inclusive growth consideration is the legacy that investment into people and places leaves for future generations, and it is anticipated that the YCA Members will consider this as part of their work. This will encompass other themes of the Inclusive Growth Framework. For example, if the YCA decide to explore investment into climate change mitigation and adaptation – on the basis that it will be them who will be tasked with meeting that challenge in the future – would fall under Sustainability.
- 8.4 In the event that the YCA wishes to influence the development and application of inclusive growth principles, this will be welcomed and accommodated by the Public Service Reform Portfolio.

9.0 Schedule of background papers

- 9.1 June 2018: Leaders Like You – A report from the West Midlands Combined Authority's Leadership Commission 2018:
https://www.wmca.org.uk/media/2218/leadership-diversity-in-the-west-midlands_-002.pdf