



Housing & Land Delivery Group

Date	21 February 2019
Report title	One Public Estate: Augmenting the OPE programme
Portfolio Lead	Councillor Mike Bird
Accountable Chief Executive	Jan Britton, Chief Executive, Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council
Accountable Employee	Gareth Bradford, Director of Housing and Regeneration, WMCA David Warburton, Senior Reporting Officer/Report Author, WMCA
Report has been considered by	This report was considered by the Housing & Land Delivery Steering Group on 1 February 2019, its contents agreed, subject to amendments, and approved for submission to this Board. The report has been amended in light of feedback from Delivery Steering Group.

Recommendation(s) for action or decision:

The Housing & Land Delivery Board is asked to note:

- the current position on the One Public Estate Programme (OPE)
- the potential need for further swift responses to queries arising out of the recent OPE Stage 7 funding bid
- the proposed enhanced governance and programme management arrangements for the West Midlands OPE programme
- the aspiration to develop the programme into an ambitious single public estate programme, and
- that this paper has been considered, and the broad contents endorsed, for submission to the Housing & Land Delivery Board by the Housing & Land Delivery Steering Group.



1.0 Purpose

- 1.1 The purpose of this paper is to provide an update on recent work, led by WMCA, on the One Public Estate Programme (OPE) and to outline aspirations for an enhanced scope of work which takes the strategy to a higher level, potentially providing the most ambitious single public estate programme in England and a key tool for the West Midlands' pursuit of inclusive growth.

2.0 Background

- 2.1 WMCA has recently agreed to host the West Midlands regional activities of the Cabinet Office/Local Government Association's '*One Public Estate*' initiative and to incorporate the local management and operation of this into the WMCA's governance structure.
- 2.2 A West Midlands OPE Partnership has been meeting bi-monthly chaired by an external consultant (Arcadis) funded by the OPE national programme.
- 2.3 Currently, the Partnership has representation from WMCA **constituent** local authorities, WMCA itself and a number of public bodies including the NHS and Police Service.
- 2.4 A number of locally-based projects have been created and overseen by the Partnership focusing on rationalisation of service provision (co-location of services across organisations in particular) and bringing forward surplus public estate for disposal and redevelopment. These projects have been progressing, but delivery is yet to commence.
- 2.5 WMCA and Government recognise the opportunity, presented by a significantly expanded OPE programme in the region, for increasing the availability of land to support the delivery of new homes and jobs in the West Midlands, and to drive forward wider growth and regeneration agendas (e.g. town centres). As such, and in addition to now hosting OPE and making available an interim dedicated programme manager resource, WMCA has recently co-ordinated and submitted an OPE Round 7 bid to Government to secure additional investment to enhance OPE activities in the Region.

3.0 Current position

- 3.1 On behalf of the partnership, WMCA recently submitted an OPE Round 7 Bid for funding to support the delivery of five pilot land-release projects in the West Midlands, bringing forward over 50 acres of surplus public land to enable the delivery of 1,800 new homes. The bid also provides for the appointment of a dedicated Programme Manager for OPE by WMCA.
- 3.2 Cabinet Office/LGA recently asked for further information/clarification of certain matters on several of the projects. Responses have been prepared by the relevant organisations and co-ordinated by WMCA on behalf of the partnership. A decision on

the OPE 7 bid is expected in March 2019 but additional queries might arise in the intervening period.

- 3.3 A key feedback from the cabinet Office is that the OPE programme in the West Midlands would benefit from the input of a dedicated programme manager. WMCA has therefore identified and recently appointed an interim Programme Manager for the OPE Programme to provide a specialist resource to drive delivery planning and implementation until the outcome of the OPE 7 bid is known. This will include project management and reporting responsibilities on current projects, the administration of monthly meetings and co-ordinating responses to queries on the current bid.

4.0 Augmenting the OPE programme

- 4.1 An enhanced and up-scaled OPE Programme for the West Midlands has the potential to, and indeed is widely now considered to be essential in bringing forward land and redevelopment opportunities to, deliver ambitious regional housing and job growth targets. For example, introducing new public sector land owners to the partnership could create opportunities for enhanced land assembly and disposal programmes and new opportunities for joint ventures with the private sector.

- 4.2 A further key objective of the enhanced programme is to deliver a **single public land disposal programme** for the entire public estate across the WMCA area. This would provide transparency of opportunity to investors and developers, and further drive accelerated and high quality delivery.

- 4.3 The region is already acknowledged by Cabinet Office and the LGA as having one of the widest memberships of all OPE partnerships and one of the most ambitious programmes. The scale of this ambition was set out in the OPE & bid and is of significant interest to the Cabinet Office, Treasury and the LGA; they are keen to work with us in developing the agenda and specific proposals.

5.0 Governance

- 5.1 To support an augmented programme and to respond positively to Cabinet Office and Treasury feedback, a new WMCA OPE Partnership Board is proposed. This would be chaired by Jan Britton, sponsor Chief Executive Officer, who previously chaired the OPE Board in the region.

- 5.2 Consideration is being given to how the above could work in conjunction with a potential **'WMCA Strategic Property Board'** covering the WMCA area and meeting twice-yearly. This Strategic Property Board would convey the level of priority afforded to the OPE programme in the region and help to facilitate engagement at national level with relevant asset-owning public bodies in Whitehall. It may be appropriate to invite those key bodies representing wider property interests in the Region, such as RICS, BPF to participate and contribute relevant expertise.



6.0 Next Steps

- 6.1 There are three immediate requirements: managing the programme of current activities including reporting responsibilities to the Cabinet Office/LGA; dealing with queries arising from the OPE 7 bid; and finishing the task of collating and mapping public land. Regular meetings of the existing partnership will be re-instated as OPE Strategic Delivery Group meetings to deal with these matters, with the first of these meetings planned for the second week in February 2019. An OPE Partnership Board is planned for March 2019.
- 6.2 Looking forward, WMCA wishes to explore, in collaboration with existing partners, how best to augment the programme and deliver the stated ambition. As previously indicated, an ambitious single public estate programme will be a significant asset when seeking to deliver the targets for growth and regeneration.

7.0 Financial Implications

- 7.1 There are no direct financial implications as a result of this report.

8.0 Legal Implications

- 8.1 Section 113A(1)(a) of the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009 gives the CA a power of competence appropriate for the purposes of carrying-out any of its functions. Part 4 of The West Midlands Combined Authority Order 2016 (2016 No 653) confers that the functions relating to any Economic development and regeneration in the constituent councils are exercisable by the CA. Part 3 of The West Midlands Combined Authority (Functions and Amendment) Order 2017 confers functions corresponding to the functions of the Homes and Communities Agency has in relation to the combined area.
- 8.2 Legal Services will advise further when instructed on specific funding agreements in relation to the One Public Estate programme.

9.0 Equalities Implications

- 9.1 Equalities implications will be assessed as the programme is developed. No direct implications arise from the recommendation to augment the programme.

10.0 Inclusive Growth Implications

10. The OPE programme creates the opportunity for WMCA to align the interests of a wide range of public sector land owners across a wide front. Many of these organisations are key service providers whose activities are critical to inclusive growth. An augmented

OPE programme will expand the partnership, allow more synergies in land ownership and service provision to be identified and deliver tangible benefits to local communities.

11.0 Geographical Area of Report's Implications

11.1 This report relates to the whole of the Combined Authority area and/or three LEP geography.

12.0 Other Implications

12.1 None

13.0 Schedule of Background Papers

13.1 None