

## WMCA Board

<b>Date</b>	18 September 2020
<b>Report title</b>	Inclusive Communities Portfolio Update
<b>Portfolio Lead</b>	Inclusive Communities - Councillor Brigid Jones
<b>Accountable Chief Executive</b>	Deborah Cadman, West Midlands Combined Authority email: <a href="mailto:deborah.cadman@wmca.org.uk">deborah.cadman@wmca.org.uk</a> tel: (0121) 214 7200
<b>Accountable Employee</b>	Paul Clarke, Head of the Chief Executive's Office email: <a href="mailto:paul.clarke@wmca.org.uk">paul.clarke@wmca.org.uk</a> tel: (0121) 214 7461  Lucy Gosling, Leadership Commission Delivery Plan Co-ordinator email: <a href="mailto:lucy.gosling@wmca.org.uk">lucy.gosling@wmca.org.uk</a> tel: (0121) 214 7441
<b>Report has been considered by</b>	Strategic Leadership Team - 26 August 2020 Programme Board - 4 September 2020

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

#### The WMCA Board is recommended to:

- (1) Note and endorse the updates and planned activity within the Inclusive Communities portfolio, including:
  - The recent changes to the Young Combined Authority
  - The proposed renewal and refocus of the Leadership Commission
  - Other WMCA activity to embed equalities, diversity and inclusion.

## **1. Purpose**

- 1.1 To update the Board on the key deliverables and activity as part of the Inclusive Communities portfolio, including updates on:
- The delivery of the Young Combined Authority;
  - The renewal and refocusing of Leadership Commission activity, and;
  - WMCA activity to embed inclusion across the organisation and its work.
- 1.2 This report provides a summary of how Inclusive Communities portfolio activity is being refocused to better support the post Covid-19 recovery, and also to respond to recent events such as Black Lives Matter, building on the Equalities Update report presented to the WMCA Board on 24 July 2020.

## **2. Background and context**

- 2.1 The report 'Annual Planning: Review of 2019/20 delivery and update on 2020/21 planning' agreed by the WMCA Board suggested a need to ensure that WMCA portfolio delivery, support and influencing activity is aligned to the Region's emerging Covid-19 recovery priorities.
- 2.2 Inclusive Communities portfolio activity has subsequently been reviewed and some minor change and realignment is being proposed. In particular, activity under the portfolio needs to take account of how the Covid-19 pandemic has highlighted significant inequalities across national and regional economies, and the challenge of ensuring that the region's recovery from the pandemic is inclusive and works for everyone, across all the region's towns, cities and rural areas. (State of the Region report to WMCA Board, 24 July 2020).
- 2.3 The Covid-19 pandemic has thrown existing social, economic and health inequalities across the region into sharp focus, disproportionately impacting Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic communities, women, young people and other disadvantaged groups in our society. There is a significant risk that this unequal impact will further embed disadvantage illustrated in recent weeks (e.g. the 'digital divide', impact of A-Level grades standardisation algorithm, etc.)
- 2.4 WMCA Board has also accepted the need for collective action to respond to issues highlighted by Black Lives Matter and, more specifically, the Young Combined Authority (YCA) members who raised this with the Board on 24 July 2020. Action is needed to address inequality and the WMCA through its Inclusive Communities portfolio should be explicit about the contribution it aims to make.

2.5 The 'Equalities Update' report presented to Board on 24 July included a short section on the WMCA's organisational response to Black Lives Matter and also referenced the West Midlands Leadership Commission's plan to refresh its membership and mission. This report provides further detail on the activity proposed as part of the Inclusive Communities portfolio.

### 3. Update on the Young Combined Authority

3.1 The Young Combined Authority (YCA) was a key recommendation of the West Midlands Leadership Commission in 2018. It was established in 2019 and remains a key Inclusive Communities portfolio deliverable. It brings together a diverse board of young people, aged 16 to 25, from across the West Midlands to help guide and challenge the WMCA when making decisions that will shape the future of the region.

3.2 Since its launch in September 2019, the YCA has contributed to the development of WMCA policy and identified its own priorities for young people. It has a voice at WMCA Board and YCA members have used this platform to highlight key issues including the impact of Covid-19 on young people and, more recently, a call for change in response to Black Lives Matter (as referenced in paragraph 2.4 above).

3.3 Reflecting on its first 12 months, and informed by feedback from YCA members themselves, changes have been made recently to the YCA operating model (which comprised a single board of around 30 young people). At the heart of these changes have been the principles of engagement – ensuring the voice of the under-25s is present in planning, decision-making and delivery – and supporting the development of a closer relationship between YCA and WMCA political leadership that will enable more informed challenge and input.

3.4 From September 2020, the YCA will be formed of two distinct but complimentary forums:

- **A smaller and more focused YCA Board**, with a more defined role to work closely with the WMCA on policy development. The YCA Board will be positioned to inform and challenge the Mayor, WMCA Portfolio Lead Members and other decision makers to see the world from the perspective of under 25's.
- **A diverse YCA Community (Engagement Panel)**, to provide an inclusive sounding board for policy and drive regional youth engagement. This will offer a more flexible way for young people to be involved and heard – through online surveys and focus group activity.

- 3.5 This dual approach offers benefits to both YCA members and the WMCA. Young people who continue with the YCA Board will be better positioned to influence policy development while others are given a more flexible alternative to have their say through the YCA Community. For WMCA, the proposed changes will increase capacity for regional youth engagement and youth-inclusive policy development.
- 3.6 The YCA Board had its first meeting on 2 September 2020. YCA members are planning to introduce a range of measures to strengthen their impact. These are likely to include:
- **A forward plan** supported by the WMCA Governance Team and shaped by the YCA Board to help maximise opportunities to have impact.
  - **Lead roles** within the YCA Board, to enable closer links with WMCA Directors and WMCA Portfolio Lead Members on particular programmes and portfolios.
  - **A 'deal'** where there is a better mutual understanding between WMCA and YCA about how opportunities to inform decision making and policy development will be supported.
- 3.7 The YCA Community will be supported by the WMCA Communications Team and shaped by existing YCA members. The ambition is to connect with other youth councils and groups and, in due course, enable partners to use the Community to engage young people across the West Midlands on a range of topics and themes.

#### **4. Update on Leadership Commission activity**

- 4.1 The WMCA Board established the West Midlands Leadership Commission in July 2017 to 'improve the opportunities for people from those communities and groups which are currently underrepresented in the leadership of the West Midlands... [and] ensure the leadership of the future is representative of the region it serves.'
- 4.2 The Commission published its final report, Leaders Like You, in June 2018, setting out a series of cross-sector recommendations for the West Midlands. The WMCA has since enacted key recommendations including: the establishment of a Young Combined Authority; delivering a year-long Inclusive Leadership Pledge campaign (secured 250 commitments and 1,250 LinkedIn followers); driving inclusive growth and leadership through policy, such as the Local Industrial Strategy (May 2019) and; leading by example, such as securing Living Wage Accreditation (March 2020).

- 4.3 Two years on, the global movement for Black Lives Matter and the unprecedented impact of Covid-19 have thrown a spotlight on the persistent inequalities experienced by some communities in the West Midlands. The pandemic has compounded existing inequality and disadvantages faced by young people, women and Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic communities – all of whom are more vulnerable to the economic impacts of the crisis, including redundancy.
- 4.4 This context provides a compelling rationale for a relaunched West Midlands Leadership Commission that will focus on improving economic opportunities for underrepresented groups. It is proposed for the 2020/21 Inclusive Communities portfolio deliverables of ‘inclusive leadership initiatives’ and ‘campaigning engagement’ to be repurposed to support the Leadership Commission’s renewed activity.
- 4.5 Initial discussion has taken place with Anita Bhalla OBE (original Commission Chair) and Professor Kiran Trehan (lead author of the Leadership Commission report), who will co-chair this phase of activity. This has suggested a need for future activity to be action-oriented, delivered with urgency and provide a model for other regions to follow. The aims for a renewed Commission will be:
- To champion the creation of more **representative leadership** for the West Midlands, including a focus on improving diversity at board level.
  - To demonstrate **practical interventions** which can be replicated by organisations in the West Midlands to help achieve this change.
  - To identify opportunities to **systematically improve** equalities, diversity and inclusion outcomes within organisations and across the region.
- 4.6 It is anticipated that the Leadership Commission will maintain its cross-sector focus and work with a range of partners to co-design and deliver initiatives that will bring tangible change. Indicative activity potentially includes a focus on:
- **Unequal representation (boardrooms):** Focus on improving diversity at board level by challenging and supporting private and public sector organisations (e.g. the Commonwealth Games Organising Committee), to improve representation on their boards.
  - **Diversity in the workplace:** Work with businesses (for instance the professional services or recruitment sectors) to identify areas for improvement and implement change. This work will be supported by meaningful contributions from participating businesses and produce easy to replicate examples of best practice.

- **Social inclusion (including faith communities):** Build on the valuable partnership work developed by WMCA and faith leaders throughout the pandemic. This could focus on ensuring that communities are engaged throughout the region’s recovery.
- **Health inequality (including minority ethnic communities):** Support the Regional Health Inequalities from Covid-19 (RHIC) Taskforce by reviewing its findings and helping to shape practical action to improve outcomes for the Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Communities who have been disproportionately affected by the crisis.
- **Economic inequality (including women and young people):** Assess how effective the ‘Recharge the West Midlands’ economic aspirations and delivery will be at protecting the interests of women and work with partners, such as West Midlands Women’s Voice, to systematically identify and address gaps. Help to ensure that young people from underrepresented communities can access economic opportunities throughout the post-Covid recovery period.

4.7 The Commission will continue to review and develop these indicative ideas to build an Action Plan, in conversation with the West Midlands Mayor’s Office and WMCA Portfolio for Inclusive Communities. Next steps for this process are proposed as:

Activity	Due
Convene the Leadership Commission Action Group.	September end.
Deliver a campaign to mark 10 years of the Equality Act 2010, tied to the Commission’s refreshed priorities.	October (throughout).
Agree an Action Plan for the Commission’s influencing, enabling and delivery activity.	October end.

4.8 The Commission will work closely with and regularly report progress to the WMCA Portfolio Lead Member for Inclusive Communities.

## 5. Update on other WMCA equalities, diversity and inclusion activity

5.1 An ‘Equalities Update’ report was presented to WMCA Board on 24 July 2020. This outlined the WMCA’s progress on delivering its equality agenda and intention to take further action to improve diversity and inclusion outcomes. This further action includes the following planned and potential activity:

- **Equality impact assessments:** Carry out a programme of equality impact assessments across different WMCA portfolios to ensure Covid-19 adverse impact is identified and mitigated where possible.

- **Review WMCA activity:** Undertake a review of WMCA's influencing, enabling and delivery activity in order to support how we plan, decide and deliver our inclusive growth aspirations.
- **Recruitment:** Introduce positive action in recruitment where there is under-representation. Positive action refers to the selection of a candidate from a protected characteristic when both candidates are equally qualified to do the job.
- **Employee training and development:** Unconscious bias training for all managers and campaigns/awareness for all employees, and equality competency considerations within the manager fundamentals programme and behavioural framework currently being developed.
- **Employee engagement:** Establish an Equality and Inclusion group that will advise the WMCA Equality and Diversity Manager and consider ways to more actively engage with employees across protected characteristics
- **Race Pay Gap:** In addition to the statutory Gender Pay Gap, the WMCA will commit to undertaking Race Pay Gap analysis for the organisation and reviewing the findings.

## 6. Financial Implications

- 6.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from the recommendations in this report. The activity of the Inclusive Communities Portfolio is being repositioned within existing available budgeted resources.

## 7. Legal Implications

- 7.1 There are no specific legal implications arising from this paper. A terms of reference with the renewed Leadership Commission will be agreed, outlining the Commission's responsibility to report progress to the WMCA Board through the portfolio for Inclusive Communities. As a public authority the WMCA is subject to the public sector equality duty to have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, the advancement of opportunities and to foster good relations. This report sets out a range of strategies to strengthen and develop our response in relation to this important matter.

## 8. Equalities and Inclusive Growth Implications

- 8.1 Activity set out under the Inclusive Communities portfolio is intended to improve equalities and inclusive growth outcomes.

## **9. Background Papers**

- 9.1 'The West Midlands Leadership Commission', WMCA Board on 21 July 2017:  
<https://governance.wmca.org.uk/documents/s518/Report.pdf>
- 9.2 'Leaders Like You', Leadership Commission report, June 2018 and 'Report of the Leadership Commission', WMCA Board on 25 May 2018:  
[https://www.wmca.org.uk/media/2218/leadership-diversity-in-the-west-midlands\\_-002.pdf](https://www.wmca.org.uk/media/2218/leadership-diversity-in-the-west-midlands_-002.pdf);  
<https://governance.wmca.org.uk/documents/s1563/Report.pdf>
- 9.3 'Leadership Commission: Developing and Delivering a Youth Combined Authority', WMCA Board, 9 February 2019:  
<https://governance.wmca.org.uk/documents/s2581/Report.pdf>