

WMCA Board

Date	23 July 2021
Report title	Race Equalities Taskforce
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Report has been considered by	WMCA Strategic leadership Team - 30 June WMCA Programme Board

Recommendation(s) for action or decision:

The WMCA Board is recommended to:

- (1) Endorse the establishment of a Taskforce focussing on race equalities.
- (2) Note the proposed approach including scope, composition, and timetable.

1. Purpose

- 1.1 To seek the endorsement and support of the WMCA Board to the establishment of a Race Equalities Taskforce.
- 1.2 To set out a proposed approach including scope of the Taskforce, its composition, immediate next steps, and the envisaged timescale for its work.

2. Background and rationale

- 2.1 The nature of inequality in the West Midlands is both wide and deep. Inequalities are inter-related but different communities are affected in different ways. A more sophisticated understanding of key regional inequalities and their impact – informed by citizen experience as well as data and analysis – will enable us to refine our priorities and programmes of activity, to realise our vision of Inclusive Growth and ensure all communities are able to share in the region's success.
- 2.2 The mayoral manifesto included a pledge to: *“Set up an Equalities Taskforce, with representatives of all communities, to make sure all communities share in the region's success and specifically to look at the issues facing under-represented communities in Combined Authority policy areas like transport, skills, jobs and housing.”* This would align with the existing work of the WMCA Inclusive Communities Portfolio, which was established to coordinate activity across portfolios to enable the organisation to plan, decide and deliver in a more inclusive way.
- 2.3 The proposed 'Race Equalities Taskforce' would focus on improving equality of opportunity – looking at the extent to which different ethnic groups (including White groups) experience different social and economic outcomes and concentrate on developing policy solutions in areas which the WMCA has roles and responsibilities in delivering, enabling and influencing (see **Paragraph 3.3**).
- 2.4 A focus on what leads to different racial and ethnic groups to have different social and economic outcomes (for example, higher rates of unemployment amongst some ethnic minority groups and not others, or lower levels of educational attainment amongst some White working-class groups) would support the region in addressing key strategic challenges and extending opportunity to more people. The WMCA and its partners have influence over policy areas which contribute to racial disparity, such as health outcomes, educational outcomes, crime and income – many of which were highlighted in the WMCA Health of the Region Report which demonstrated the relationships between ethnicity, health and economic opportunity.

3. Scope of the Taskforce

- 3.1 This is intended to be an an initiative that is likely to lead to some quite **difficult and challenging issues**. It will embrace and address equalities issues with openness, honesty and humility.
- 3.2 It is important that the Taskforce needs to be **action-orientated**. While it is important that it is founded upon a strong evidence base, the onus will be on the WMCA and its partners taking action to address key aspects of race inequality. The Taskforce will need to be able to enable, influence and deliver activity to address the challenges and issues identified.

3.3 If the Taskforce is going to have traction and impact it needs to have a clear scope and focus for its action. It is proposed that:

- a) The primary focus will be on race inequalities, the extent to which different ethnic groups living and working in the West Midlands experience different social and economic outcomes. The Taskforce will take an inclusive and sophisticated approach to understanding race, and will recognise the important nuances between the experiences of 'Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic' groups and consider the experiences of White British and White Other groups. The Taskforce will also need to account for issues of intersectionality in its work.
- b) The Taskforce should concentrate its efforts on those policy areas over which the WMCA has roles and responsibilities in delivering, enabling and influencing - namely: jobs and the economy; education and skills; transport and connectivity; housing and homelessness; health and wellbeing; and also criminal justice with the cooperation of the Police and Crime Commissioner as chair of the Local Criminal Justice Board.
- c) As an early activity, the Taskforce will commission a 'Baseline Report' looking at social and economic outcomes for different ethnic groups. The Report will be used as an opportunity to map existing activity in the region, to ensure the Taskforce will add value to work being led by local authorities and other partners.

4. Proposed approach

4.1 We propose that the approach to a Race Equalities Taskforce draws heavily on the experiences and learning from similar initiatives, notably the Homelessness Taskforce.

4.2 It is proposed that the Taskforce has a long-term remit and a cross-sector membership, similar to the existing Homelessness Taskforce. This will enable it to articulate an approach or 'theory of change' that mobilises a wide cross-section of partners to take action to address its primary goals and influence the right people in the right way. These goals will need to be developed and 'owned' by Taskforce members themselves and will take time to develop.

4.3 It is important to recognise that there is a lot of activity already being led by local authorities, their partners and other public bodies to address these issues – for example, the ongoing work around equalities being led by Birmingham City Council and Sandwell Council. The Race Equalities Taskforce must complement and add value to the existing work taking place across the region. Its work will not be to take on anything that local authorities and their partners are doing already, rather it is to bolster and support it.

4.4 It will be critical to the Taskforce's work to build trust and credibility with those communities it seeks to empower. It will need to develop a clear and coherent programme of community and stakeholder engagement. We propose this has three elements:

- a) Regular engagement with the range of networks that the Combined Authority already has that can provide advice and support on inequalities issues. This would include the Faith Strategic Partnership Group; the Leadership Commission; the Young Combined Authority; the Health of the Region roundtable; and the forthcoming Life Chances Commission.

- b) A series of working groups and one-off activities engaging with a wide range of groups and organisations focused on key issues raised by the Taskforce. This will include activity focused on engaging and influencing the private sector.
- c) A range of mechanisms for allowing diverse communities to share their own lived experience to guide and inform the deliberations and action plans of the Taskforce on a regular basis.

5. Composition of the Taskforce

5.1 We propose:

- a) A diverse Taskforce of around 25-30 'strategic doers' representing local authorities and other public, private and voluntary sector organisations from across the region – strategic doers - people who can take action to address the Taskforce 'goals' and can then hold one another to account. We propose these are selected by the Chair (see below), the Mayor and the Portfolio Lead Member (Inclusive Communities) following a short recruitment campaign.
- b) A high profile, influential chairperson who can work closely with the Mayor and Portfolio Lead Member (Inclusive Communities) to mobilise activity in a range of contexts, including in central government but who also has an air of independence and the ability to speak truth to power. The Chair, and possibly a deputy chair, will be appointed by a small panel comprising the Mayor, Portfolio Lead Member (Inclusive Communities), Mayoral Policy Advisor (Faith and Communities) and a representative from the Police and Crime Commissioner's office.
- c) A Members Advisory Group co-chaired by the Portfolio Lead Member (Inclusive Communities) comprising political representatives from local authorities that can represent a bridge between the Taskforce, local authority activity and wider WMCA activity.
- d) A significant and on-going programme of community engagement involving a diverse range of perspectives that can shape and influence the Taskforce's agenda.
- e) An on-going programme of stakeholder engagement including focused work with different sectors and groups, for example: engaging with or influencing the private sector around its role in advancing equality of opportunity. Such activity will be supported by the cross-sector makeup of the Taskforce.
- f) A series of local authority officer led task-and-finish / working groups on specific themes or issues identified by the Taskforce. The Taskforce has the ability to hear evidence from activity in specific sectors to address race inequalities, for example health, criminal justice and broader public services.
- g) A small secretariat or 'virtual team' linking together officers from a number of different WMCA directorates and headed-up by a lead officer.

6. Timetable for establishing the Taskforce

6.1 We propose the following steps for setting up the Taskforce:

Date	Activity
July 2021	WMCA Board discussion and approval; Announcement of chair, taskforce recruitment and preparation of Baseline Report; Launch recruitment process for Programme Manager.
August 2021	Recruitment of initial cohort of Taskforce members; Development of draft Baseline Report; Recruitment of Programme Manager
September 2021	First formal meeting of the Taskforce – consideration of the first draft Baseline Report and commence exploration of priority areas and community engagement plans; First meeting of Members Advisory Group.
Sept 2021 & Oct 2021	121 engagement with Taskforce members to discuss priorities.
October 2021	Second formal meeting of the Taskforce – finalise baseline report, confirm priorities, theory of change and community engagement plans; Second meeting of members Advisory Group; Publication of Baseline Report
Nov 2021 onwards	Regular programme of meetings, reporting on work programme etc. proceeds thereafter with a view to publishing an initial work programme in early 2022

7. Financial Implications

7.1 The costs associated with establishment of the Taskforce to support the proposed approach are not within the agreed budget for 21/22.

7.2 It is anticipated at high-level that the Taskforce will require a dedicated Programme Manager combined with external advice budget and this is expected to cost c.£143k in 2021/22. This will be funded by one-off use of reserves as noted in the financial monitoring report.

7.3 The funding request for subsequent years will be incorporated into the Corporate Strategic Planning process and updated Medium Term Financial Plan that will be presented to Board in September.

8. Legal Implications

8.1 There are no legal implications at this stage, the work of the Taskforce will be compliant and indeed exemplify Equalities legislation.

9. Equalities Implications to update

9.1 This paper sets out plans to lead a Race Equalities Taskforce which will be inclusive of, and adherent to broader equalities agendas. The Taskforce will consider the WMCA Corporate Strategy and WMCA Equalities Scheme (due to be presented to WMCA Board in September 2021) when shaping its priorities and work programme.

10. Inclusive Growth Implications

10.1 The notion of a Race Equalities Taskforce aligns with our inclusive growth ambitions through tackling inequalities.

11. Geographical Area of Report's Implications

- 11.1 The Race Equalities Taskforce will focus its energies initially on those policy areas where the WMCA has the most leverage; transport, education and skills and housing. The Race Equalities Taskforce therefore covers all of the constituent and non constituent authorities

12. Other Implications

- 12.1 As part of the Theory of Change, the Race Equalities Taskforce will work to secure the necessary support to deliver, enable and influence changes in the way their respective organisations and partners work. It is to be expected that this will have secondary implications across the policy areas which the Taskforce focuses upon.

13. Schedule of Background Papers

- 13.1 None.