

Transport Governance Review at Member Level

Background

The Governance Review undertaken in 2021 focused on reviewing the formal decision-making and consultative bodies of the Combined Authority, as well as looking at improving ways of working in relation to good governance practices. The findings and recommendations of the Review were endorsed by the Mayor, Constituent Leaders and the Combined Authority Senior Leadership Team.

The Review resulted in:

- the acceptance of recommendations to amend the economic structure around economic development in the Combined Authority
- recommendations were endorsed for a further process of rationalisation of decision-making and advisory bodies within service areas to take place.

The review also identified key themes for improvement and an action plan was developed to drive delivery of subsequent improvements.

The Interim Director of Law & Governance is currently working through recommendations, this included the setting up of an Independent Remuneration Panel (IRP) to look at Member allowances. The IRP has now undertaken its evidence gathering and is scheduled to report to the Board in July. Work is about to also progress on guidance and recommendations from the review focused on improving engagement of Constituent and Non-Constituent authorities.

It is envisaged that over the forthcoming months separate reviews will take place in relation to each of the portfolio areas to further streamline and rationalise decision-making in other areas.

The Mayor and Leaders Liaison Meeting requested that specific focus be placed upon a review of Transport Governance at the Member level.

The Terms of Reference and Key Considerations

The Executive Director of Transport, working in conjunction with the Interim Director of Law & Governance (together acting as review sponsors) and supported by external governance specialist support, have started work on the Transport Governance Review. A terms of reference has been developed and agreed, and the evidence gathering phase of the review had begun, supported by the Deputy Mayor in a governance oversight role.

The Terms of Reference of the Review are:

- To review the formal and informal decision making at member level on transport issues.
- To make recommendations to streamline and improve the arrangements taking into account best practice elsewhere.
- To ensure decision making and governance arrangements are clearly understood and are communicated effectively by those who are a part of the Governance structure for transport.

The Stage 1 governance review of the Combined Authority as a whole identified areas for potential improvement in Transport governance and areas that would benefit from further review. This included specific transport conclusions which are to be taken on board during the Transport Governance Review as follows:

- The Transport governance picture is confusing and requires modernisation and refining, the Strategic Transport Board however is a positive example of engaging Constituent Councils through the right membership (Cabinet Lead Members for Transport)

- The role and remit of the Transport Delivery Committee needs to be considered and addressed as part of a future Transport governance review
- Although allowances are not part of the remit of this review it is clear that the allowances paid to TDC represents an anomaly within the allowances scheme

In addition the Stage 1 Governance Review of the Combined Authority highlighted key themes for consideration in all subsequent Portfolio reviews including the Transport Governance Review as follows:

- Effectiveness of Portfolio Lead model in a Mayoral Combined Authority
- Ensuring organisational and portfolio wide consideration in approaches – not reinforcing silo approaches
- Ensure effective constituent engagement within Portfolios
- Effectiveness of political relationships
- Strategic planning
- Clarity of roles and responsibilities
- Delivering appropriate reporting to inform effective decision-making

This needs to be considered alongside the recommendations from the Stage 1 review for all portfolio areas to:

- Undertake a process of rationalisation of decision-making and advisory bodies
- Seek to further improve and refine reporting and engagement processes

It has therefore been agreed that the review will seek to:

- **Identify key principles of governance to apply and reflect across the organisations governance framework and to drive development of governance within WMCA and transport decision-making by elected members.**
- **Improve, rationalise and simplify WMCA political governance arrangements in relation to transport, to deliver more effective decision-making in line with the golden thread principles established in stage 1 of the review**

Deliverables

The intent would be to create a fit for purpose political governance framework for the transport portfolio within WMCA.

The Review

The review has an agreed scope supported by its terms of reference and has an agreed methodology to evidence gathering. To be effective and deliver actionable results the review needs to be well planned and managed. It needs to consider the circumstances of the organisation and have defined objectives. The methodology used must be capable of achieving those objectives and not simply a one size fits all approach.

Initial methodology for the review will seek to build upon the key themes identified in stage 1 of the governance review and deliver the governance principles that have already been agreed. The methodology is based around review of current key documentation, ways of working, practices and existing governance structure and process. The initial aim of the review is to accurately produce a full governance map of Transport Governance at WMCA.

The documentational review is supported through specific interviews with key witnesses designed to build an informed picture of current effectiveness and identify key barriers and opportunities.

To date the following interviews have been undertaken:

- Portfolio Lead for Transport
- Chief Executive WMCA
- Chair of Transport Scrutiny Sub Committee (at the time)
- TfWM Leadership Team Members

Outstanding interviews that will take place as part of the review are as follows:

- The Mayor
- METRO
- West Midlands Bus Alliance
- Chair of the Transport Delivery Committee
- New Chair of the Transport Scrutiny Sub-Committee

Consideration is also being given to undertaking wider engagement with Strategic Transport Board membership (Constituent Lead Members for Transport) and wider membership of the Transport Delivery Committee.

It is possible that second interviews will take place with key individuals in order to provide an opportunity to test emerging themes and initial ideas around conclusions and recommendations.

In addition, best practice review is being undertaken with other Combined Authorities and the GLA, alongside a review of key documentation such as the Terms of Reference of decision-making bodies according to their respective constitutions.

Next Steps

The review has some way to go, it is intended to complete the mapping exercise and interviews by mid-July before developing a provisional report for discussion for the review sponsors. This will then inform whether further interviews with key individuals are required to test provisional recommendations.