

Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council

15 October 2019

Subject:	West Midlands Combined Authority
Contribution towards Vision 2030:	
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DECISION RECOMMENDATIONS

That Council:

1. Consider opportunities for the Borough arising from the West Midlands Combined Authority.

1 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 To provide Council with an update in relation to West Midlands Combined Authority activity since the last update was provided to Council on 16 October 2018.
- 1.2 This report gives an overview of a number of issues, further detailed information about West Midlands Combined Authority, including key projects and initiatives, is available on the [WMCA website](#).

2 IMPLICATIONS FOR SANDWELL'S VISION

- 2.1 Participation in West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) activity has the potential to help Sandwell deliver all of the ambitions contained in the Vision.

3 BACKGROUND AND MAIN CONSIDERATIONS

Governance

3.1 At its Board meeting on 28 June 2019 appointments were made to Combined Authority Portfolio Areas:

Portfolio

Deputy Mayor
 Culture & Digital
 Economy & Innovation
 Environment, Energy & HS2
 Finance
 Housing & Land
 Inclusive Communities
 Public Service Reform
 & Social Economy
 Skills & Productivity
 Transport
 Wellbeing

Lead Member

Councillor Bob Sleigh (Solihull)
 Councillor Patrick Harley(Dudley)
 Councillor Ian Brookfield (W-ton)
 Councillor Ian Courts (Solihull)
 Councillor Bob Sleigh (Solihull)
 Councillor Mike Bird (Walsall)
 Councillor Brigid Jones (Birmingham)
 Councillor Yvonne Davies (Sandwell)

 Councillor George Duggins (Coventry)
 Councillor Ian Ward (Birmingham)
 Councillor Izzi Seccombe (Warwickshire)

3.2 Sandwell Council, at its annual meeting on 4 June 2019, appointed the following members to represent the Council on WMCA fora:-

Committee	Member/s
WMCA Board	Councillor Y Davies Councillor Khatun
WMCA Overview & Scrutiny Committee	Councillor Bostan
WMCA Audit & Risk Assurance Committee	Councillor Bostan
WMCA Environment Committee	Councillor Crompton
WMCA Investment Board	Councillor Ali
WMCA Strategic Economic Delivery Board	Councillor Lloyd
WMCA Growth Company	Councillor Y Davies
City Deal, Growth Deal and WMCA Advisory Board	Councillor Lloyd
WMCA Housing & Land Delivery Board	Councillor Hadley
WMCA Public Service Reform Board	Councillor Y Davies
WMCA Wellbeing Board	Councillor Shaeen

West Midlands Police and Crime Commissioner – proposed transfer of functions

- 3.3 The Combined Authority consulted across the seven West Midlands Council areas (constituent authorities) on the proposals to transfer the powers and responsibilities of the West Midlands Police and Crime Commissioner to the Mayor of the West Midlands in May 2020.
- 3.4 The consultation across the seven WMCA constituent council areas took place in two stages at the request of the Board. The first stage took place between Friday 16 November 2018 and Friday 11 January 2019 and focused on the principle of the transfer of responsibilities. The second stage of the consultation focused on the proposed detail of how the strategic leadership and direction (governance) of policing could operate within the WMCA and who would be responsible for making decisions if the proposals were to go ahead. This stage commenced on Monday 14 January 2019 and closed on Monday 11 March 2019.
- 3.5 Stage 1 of the consultation focused on the principle of the proposals. It attracted a great deal of interest, with a total of 6,059 completions. A consultation event was held by WMCA in each of the seven Constituent Council areas.
- 3.6 Stage 2 of the consultation focused on the detail of how elements of the strategic leadership and direction of policing might operate within the WMCA, and who would be responsible for making decisions if the proposals were to go ahead. A total of 735 responses were received.
- 3.7 The Combined Authority Board received a report on 22 March 2019 setting out the findings of the consultation. Details of the findings can be found on the Combined Authority website. It was noted that there were strong levels of support throughout the consultation for transferring the Police & Crime Commission role with that of the Mayor. However, the Board did not agree to progress the proposal to the next stage and so for the time being, the Police Crime Commission role will remain separate to that of the Mayor.

West Midlands Fire and Rescue Authority

- 3.8 As members may be aware the proposed transition of the West Midlands Fire and Rescue Service will not be progressed. Primarily, this was due to the fact that the Final Draft Statutory Order from the Home Office, received on 9 January 2019 contained an amendment that led the Chief Fire Officer to advise that the Order not be consented to on the basis that the change was too significant and compromised the intent of the proposed governance changes.

- 3.9 In order for the transfer of the governance of West Midlands Fire and Rescue Service to the Combined Authority to go ahead it required a unanimous agreement amongst the Constituent Councils and the Combined Authority as each Authority must give their consent to the Home Office for the Order to be laid before Parliament.
- 3.10 The implication of the order not receiving unanimous consent from the 7 Constituent Councils has been the Home Office taking the decision to withdraw the order from being laid before parliament, and the proposed transfer of governance of West Midlands Fire and Rescue Service to the Combined Authority cannot proceed as envisaged.
- 3.11 As a result of this decision the Combined Authority has taken the decision to stand down the project team working on the transfer. The governance arrangements for West Midlands Fire and Rescue Service will remain as they currently are, overseen by a Fire and Rescue Authority made up of local elected councillors.

Projects benefiting from Combined Authority funding in Sandwell

- 3.12 During the last year, an increased number of opportunities have been secured for Sandwell from the Combined Authority. Details on these projects are set out below:
- 3.13 Delivery of a comprehensive residential redevelopment of Bescot/Friar Park, Wednesbury
SMBC and the WMCA have entered an agreement to work together collaboratively to deliver a masterplan and disposal strategy for the 26ha Bescot/Friar Park site for comprehensive residential redevelopment. This agreement is set out in more detail in a Cabinet report on 5 June 2019.

The agreement is dependent on the acquisition and remediation of the former sewage works by the WMCA and the assembly of a comprehensive redevelopment site. The Council and the WMCA will then work together to prepare a master plan for the site, jointly secure Outline Planning Permission and agree a detailed delivery and marketing strategy for the site.

The site is considered to have an approximate development capacity of over 750 dwellings which will make a significant contribution to the Council's housing delivery targets.

3.14 WMCA Housing First Pilot

On 10 May 2018, it was announced that the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) would receive £9.6m to deliver a Housing First Pilot. The pilot will operate up to the close of March 2023. The Council has been allocated £935,137 of the funding with a view to facilitating up to 55 tenancies during the course of the pilot.

Practised in Northern Europe and North America, Housing First (HF) is now a well-established approach to tackling homelessness amongst the most vulnerable and entrenched individuals who often have a complexity of needs. The overriding philosophy of HF is to provide a stable, independent affordable home together with intensive wrap around personalised support to enable the person to maintain their tenancy. A Cabinet report on 5 June 2019 contains further details on the initiative.

Following initial assessment and scoping exercises a procurement process commenced in March to appoint a provider to deliver the pilot and the provider with the winning submission is Accord Housing Association Ltd.

3.15 Wednesbury to Brierley Hill metro extension

The Wednesbury to Brierley Hill extension to the West Midlands Metro network will provide a direct rapid transit link to Birmingham, West Bromwich, Wolverhampton, Dudley and Merry Hill/Brierley Hill. This will benefit residents and workers in the Golds Hill, Great Bridge, Horseley Heath and Dudley Port areas of Sandwell. There will be 17 stops including six in Sandwell at Golds Hill (provisional), Great Bridge, Horseley Road, Dudley Port (for interchange with rail), Sedgley Road East and Birmingham New Road.

Overall, the scheme will cost £449m. This is made up of £207m of Transforming Cities Fund which is devolved to the WMCA, £103m of CA Investment Fund with the balance being made up of Prudential Borrowing against future fare box revenue.

Work will start towards the end of 2019 with completion in 2023.

3.16 A4123 Birchley Island/M5 Junction 2 Improvement

A major highway improvement is planned at Birchley Island to improve capacity, reduce delays, provide pedestrian and cycle facilities and improved bus journey time reliability.

The scheme will cost £26.2m. Funding is made up of £16.15m Local Growth Fund (through the BCLEP), £2.62m of SMBC funding and £7.48 of WMCA Transforming Cities Fund.

Subject to the outcome of any public inquiry, work should start in late 2021 and take approximately two years to complete.

3.17 Bull Street, West Bromwich

The West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) Town Centre Programme is intended to provide funding, expertise and support from the WMCA and other partners to revitalise 5 selected pilot areas, one of which is West Bromwich Town Centre. A collective share of £20m between these areas will also assist Local Authorities to deliver tangible, capital regeneration interventions.

Sandwell proposes to use this assistance to deliver major regeneration initiatives to the eastern most part of the High Street, which is an area suffering from acute retail decline and in need of swift reinvention. The demolition of the Multi Storey Car Park on Bull Street, is the first major site which Sandwell is seeking funding support from the WMCA. A business case and funding agreement are currently being prepared for the consideration of Cabinet.

In addition to the major capital interventions, the Town Centre Programme will look to implement a number of 'softer' improvements to West Bromwich. As such a c.£220k initial proposal has been submitted to the WMCA for public realm works to the top of Princess Parade, a key gateway site to the town. These will aim to transform the area from an uninspiring entrance to a vibrant, attractive and aspirational town centre arrival site and will also look to address a severe lack of urban greenery in the area.

3.18 Adult Education Budget

WMCA has taken control of the £126m regional Adult Education Budget with delivery agreements in place for the 2019/20 academic year. Sandwell Adult and Family Learning Service has two Adult Education budgets 2019-2020 under the WMCA - AEB1 is £1,331,498.00 of which £1,090,598.00 is for adult and community and learning and £240,900 for skills. AEB2 is a new fund of £200,000 with the potential of a further performance based payment of up to an additional £200,000 in February.

3.19 **Other headline WMCA achievements**

- Launched Local Industrial Strategy, focused on boosting productivity, earning power and competitiveness of the region
- Worked with partners to prepare the region for Brexit, administering a pooled fund for projects aimed at ensuring services adapt to the new regulatory environment
- Secured a £350m Housing Deal with government, including a £165m funding package to build the Athletes' Village for the 2022 Commonwealth Games and the infrastructure needed for thousands more new homes

- A regional town centre taskforce has been established to offer expert advice on revitalising town centres. Approximately £20m of funding has been approved to unlock land for regeneration in five town centres including West Bromwich.
- Secured the first Skills Deal in the country with government that includes £69m of new and planned investment
- The region has been selected to become the innovative home to the UK's first multi-city 5G test bed, pathing the way for 5G roll out across the country

4 STRATEGIC RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 The contribution to the Combined Authority from Sandwell Council for 2019/20 is £0.612 million.
- 4.2 Section 21 of the West Midlands Combined Authority (Functions and Amendments) Order 2017 has the effect that where costs are incurred by the Combined Authority and are not met from other sources of income, then they fall to be met by the seven constituent councils, including Sandwell.

5 LEGAL AND GOVERNANCE CONSIDERATIONS

- 5.1 Part 6 of the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009 ("the 2009 Act") provides for the establishment of combined authorities for the areas of two or more local authorities in England. Combined authorities are bodies corporate which may be given power to exercise specified functions of a local authority under sections 104 and 105 of the 2009 Act, and power to exercise specified functions of any other public authority under section 105A of the 2009 Act.

6 EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 6.1 The priorities of the West Midlands Combined Authority reflect the equality and diversity of the West Midlands, including striving to create prosperity through a strong and collective economic strategy and the policy aspiration to champion all that makes the West Midlands a Great Place to Live. The equality impact of any specific proposals will need to be addressed in reports to the WMCA Board or the appropriate decision making body.

7 DATA PROTECTION IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 7.1 The recommendations in this report do not result in the collection or retention of personal data.

8 CRIME AND DISORDER AND RISK ASSESSMENT

- 8.1 There are no Crime and Disorder issues arising from the recommendations set out in this report.

9 SUSTAINABILITY OF PROPOSALS

- 9.1 The information in this report does not directly have any sustainability implications, however as schemes are delivered by the WMCA there is a need to ensure that the evidence that underlies decision making is robust, up-to-date and is in line with current planning and environmental legislation.

10 HEALTH AND WELLBEING IMPLICATIONS (INCLUDING SOCIAL VALUE)

- 10.1 All constituent members of the WMCA are be better placed to contribute and influence the Health and Social Care offer for local residents and create:
- A more sustainable local health and care economy;
 - Improved quality and experience of care;
 - Improved population health.

11 IMPACT ON ANY COUNCIL MANAGED PROPERTY OR LAND

- 11.1 There are no direct implications contained in this report.

12 CONCLUSIONS AND SUMMARY OF REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS

- 12.1 Participation as a constituent member of the WMCA enables Sandwell to deliver improvements to the locality that would otherwise be more difficult to achieve. In addition, through WMCA activity, we can ensure that Sandwell residents have the skills to access new employment opportunities both here in Sandwell and across the region, with excellent public transport available connecting the whole of the West Midlands.

13 BACKGROUND PAPERS

None.