

West Midlands 'Trailblazer' Deeper Devolution Deal: Thematic Summaries

August 2023



West Midlands
Combined Authority



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Introduction

The purpose of this document is to provide local authorities (LAs) an overview of the trailblazer deeper devolution deal (the deal) between the region and Government. It sets out how the commitments in the deal will be implemented, how LA partners will be engaged in decision-making, LAs roles in delivery and indicative timescales for commitments to be progressed and implemented. A more detailed breakdown of deal implementation activities is set out in the fuller implementation plan that follows these summaries. The different policy areas in the deal have been grouped into the following themes:

- Operating more effectively. This covers governance and accountability, data and the single settlement;
- Economy. This covers business support and finance, innovation, trade and investment and visitor economy;
- Employment and skills. This covers adult skills, careers and employment support;
- Transport. This covers rail, buses, transport innovation, transport planning and infrastructure capital support;
- Supporting clusters. This covers digital, social economy and Places for Growth;
- Net zero and environment. This covers energy efficiency, industrial decarbonisation, heat zoning, natural capital, local area energy planning and air quality;
- Transforming places. This covers housing, regeneration, Levelling Up Zones and business rate retention;
- Pride in place. This covers homelessness, anti-social behaviour and early years.

In addition, there are three further special features that cover areas of the deal in more detail. These are:

- Single settlement;
- Transport;
- Levelling Up Zones.

Plans on a page

For every thematic summary, a 'plan on a page' is provided to show indicative timescales for implementation activities.

A bar like the below with a single diamond is used to indicate a deadline:



A bar like the one below with a diamond at either end is used to indicate the duration of an activity:



- Operating more effectively
- Economy
- Supporting nascent clusters
- Pride in Place
- Transforming places
- Adult Skills and Employment Support
- Net Zero and Environment
- Transport

Overview of the deal

There are over 190 different commitments in the deal. The commitments are of different kinds, including:

1. Commitments to provide new funds to the region;
2. Commitments to increase flexibility and local decision-making power over existing and future funding;
3. Commitments to new partnerships to plan and manage the delivery of government programmes; and
4. Commitments to enable the region to co-design new policy initiatives with Government.

The highest number of commitments relate to the themes of economy, operating more effectively and transport. Taken together, these commitments, the policy levers and funding they include, represent a step-change in our ability to realise our collective vision of a better connected, more prosperous, fairer, greener and healthier West Midlands.

Financial value of the deal to the region

The total value of the deal in fiscal terms to the region is estimated at c£1.5 billion. This estimate is to a large extent influenced by the ability of the region to establish Levelling Up Zones as intended, and the economic growth in the region which will flow back to LAs through the Business Rates system.

Fund	Potential Value	New Money?
Levelling Up Zones ¹	c.£0.5bn Minimum	Yes
10-year Business Rates Retention	c.£450m	Difficult to assess
Affordable Housing Programme	£200-400m	Yes
Single Regeneration Fund	£100m	Yes
Wednesbury to Brierley Hill Metro Extension	£60m	Yes
Smart City Region	£10.0m	Yes
Air Quality Sensors	£0.5m	Yes
Digital Devices	£4.0m	Yes
Industrial Decarb	£10.5m	Yes
Natural Environment	£1.0m	Yes
Cultural Infrastructure Fund	£4.0m	Yes

¹ Estimate based on incremental Business Rate Retention if all 6 LUZs are given Government consent and delivered.

Operating more effectively

Inclusive Growth Fundamental: Power and Participation

Exec Lead: Ed Cox

Governance, Scrutiny and Accountability

What will the deal achieve?

A condition set by government for the region to receive the benefits of the deal is strengthening existing WMCA scrutiny arrangements and introducing new processes to enhance our accountability, both to central government and to our residents.

What will we deliver?

- Quarterly MPs/Mayor/Portfolio Leader sessions.
- Review of WMCA overview and scrutiny arrangements.
- Revised outcome reporting to Government.
- Publication of a Scrutiny Protocol by Government.
- Enhanced Mayoral Question Times.
- Enhanced resources and profile for WMCA scrutiny committee chairs.

How will local authorities be involved?

- The Terms of Reference for MPs Quarterly Sessions will be shared with Regional Chief Legal Officer and Senior Local Authority Officer Group for feedback;
- LAs will have the opportunity to vote on a resolution to implement the MPs Quarterly Sessions at WMCA Board;
- Through the Regional Chief Legal Officers Meeting, local authorities will be consulted on the recommendations of the review of WMCA overview and scrutiny practices by DLUHC and the Centre for Local Governance and Scrutiny.

Data

What will the deal achieve?

The deal will increase the range of central government data that WMCA and partners have access to, improve data sharing within the region and support our ability to use outcomes evidence in decision making. Improvements in the region's data sharing capability are key to supporting the realisation of benefits across multiple other elements of the deal, for example, partnership agreements in housing and adult skills.

What will we deliver?

- Changes to WMCA data governance;
- Access to the Chief Data Officer's Council;
- A Data Partnership with Government;
- Data sharing gateways with Government departments.

How will local authorities be involved?

LA leaders will be asked to agree proposed changes to enhance WMCA Data Governance and get WMCA ready for enhanced data sharing and agree new data sharing practices and principles at a regional level.

The West Midlands Insights on Society and Economy group with local authorities will develop proposals for local data sharing and scope out what data is held within local authorities and WMCA and what data would be beneficial from central government. Together, they will build on the process used to create the Birmingham Data Charter and lead to the co-creation of a West Midlands Data Charter.

Single settlement

Exec Lead: Linda Horne

What will the deal achieve?

The deal offers the region the opportunity to receive government department-style multi-year financial settlements. This will reduce the amount of competitive bidding for government funding, provide more certainty over levels of funding and enable joined-up, strategic funding delivery. The single settlement will also streamline reporting and evaluation processes associated with bidding to multiple competitive pots. The single settlement will provide us with greater power over investment decisions locally, and greater ability to fund our priorities.

What will we deliver?

- A Memorandum of Understanding covering the design principles for the single settlement.
- Reduction in competitive bidding for government funding.
- Streamlined monitoring, evaluation and assurance processes.
- Funding from central government with fewer prescribed spending conditions.
- Greater funding certainty for greater time periods, enabling simpler financial planning.

How will local authorities be involved?

- The decision on whether or not to sign the MoU will be taken to WMCA Board for agreement.
- The Senior Local Authority Group (SLAOG) will be used to co-develop negotiating positions to be communicated to DLUHC and Treasury. Finance Directors and other subject matter experts from local authorities will also be engaged.
- Special sessions with Leaders will be arranged over Summer and early Autumn to update them on negotiations and refine negotiating positions.
- After the MoU has been developed, there will be further engagement through Chief Execs on the changes that are required to WMCA governance and decision-making structures to make most of single settlement funding.
- As part of our approach to funding delivery, we currently expect place-based plans to set out local funding priorities and strategies that join up the multiple functions – and funding streams – of the single settlement.

Operating more effectively

	May	June	July	August	September	October	November	December	2024	2025
Governance and Scrutiny	◆ Develop <u>ToRs</u> for Mayor/MPs Sessions ◆					◆ WMCA Board resolution			◆ First session	
				◆ Publication of Scrutiny Protocol		Publication of Plain English Guidance			◆	
	◆ Review of WMCA/GMCA governance and scrutiny with DLUHC									
Single Settlement	◆ Negotiate MoU with GMCA, HMT and DLUHC ◆						◆ MoU to Board		◆ Assumed SR	
	◆ Co-develop MoU with Local Authority partners ◆									
							◆ Review WMCA decision making ◆		◆	
							◆ Develop data, M&E capability ◆		◆	
							◆ Develop assurance and scrutiny ◆		◆	
Data	◆ Improvements to WMCA data governance ◆									
	◆ Develop Data Partnership with Government ◆									
	◆ Establish data sharing Gateway(s) ◆									
	◆ Build Local Data Sharing Network ◆									
	◆ Attend Chief Data Officer's Council ◆									
									◆ Data Symposium ◆	



Special Feature: Single Settlement

Challenge & Opportunity

The region has proved its capability to deliver large-scale funding programmes that make a real difference to people, communities and businesses.

Whether it's the 100 derelict sites that have been unlocked, the 200 transport projects the region will deliver by 2026 or the tens of thousands of adult learners who have received support to boost their skills – we have shown we can work in partnership to deliver change at scale.

With the right tools, the region could do more. We receive funding from government through a myriad of funding streams, each with a separate delivery timetable, different output prescriptions and overlapping reporting and accountability arrangements. This gets in the way of our ability to take joined up, strategic decisions drawing on all our resources in the round.

How the deal addresses it

The commitment to a single department-style settlement for the region will change this.

It will allocate a single capital and revenue settlement to the region spanning multi-year Spending Review periods, supporting medium-term, strategic planning.

It will allow us to realise the benefits of delivering local growth and place, local transport, housing and regeneration, adult skills and net zero functions in parallel, generating more impact for the region.

It will give the region greater flexibility and more control to deliver projects and initiatives aligned to local needs and place-based opportunities.

It will significantly reduce pressures on officer time from having to make repeat bids into national funding competitions, with decisions routed through regional decision-making structures instead.

Why that's different from pre-deal

The single settlement represents a significant step forward relative to the status quo.

The single settlement will change the way the region works with and receives funding from government for the better, underpinned by new accountability arrangements and a jointly agreed outcomes framework.

It will see new ways of working between partners across the region, with more local control over decisions routed through local decision-making and accountability structures.

When things will happen

- Summer 2023: Early engagement within the region on the design of the single settlement;
- Autumn 2023: A memorandum of understanding between the region and government;
- 2024: Further work across the region to prepare for single settlement implementation, working towards an allocation at the next Spending Review (timing tbc, but assumed to be Autumn 2024);
- 2025 (tbc): Following the next Spending Review, the first single settlement would be allocated to the region.

Economy

Inclusive Growth Fundamental: Inclusive economy

Exec Lead: Ed Cox

Trade and investment

What will the deal achieve?

The deal will help to bring greater foreign direct investment into the region and help more businesses to export by strengthening the region's influence over the Department for Business and Trade, increasing the region's visibility to overseas investors, securing support from the Office for Investment and better connecting businesses to sources of export and investment support.

What will be delivered?

An International Strategy, joint agreement of future High Potential Opportunities and joint delivery with the Department for Business and Trade.

How will local authorities be involved?

Directors of Economic Development will work with the WMCA and West Midlands Growth Company to progress the commitments in the deal, feeding into the Economic Growth Board and Combined Authority Board.

Innovation

What will the deal achieve?

The deal gives the region greater influence over national innovation funding and makes a number of commitments that will help businesses across the region to innovate and adopt new technologies, building on the region's status as an Innovation Accelerator and the recently-published WMCA – Innovate UK Action Plan.

What will be delivered?

A new Strategic Innovation Partnership, bi-annual meetings with HMG Science Ministers and a knowledge transfer partnership with Innovate UK.

How will local authorities be involved?

LA officers will be engaged via Business Support Officers Group and Directors of Economic Development. Directors of Economic Development are, with Innovation Board and universities, shaping the direction of the Partnership, with the Economic Growth Board and Combined Authority Board in decision-making roles.

Visitor Economy

What will the deal achieve?

The deal strengthens the West Midlands Growth Company's role in coordinating the region's visitor economy.

What will be delivered?

West Midlands Growth Company to be granted Destination Development Partnership pilot 2 status and support more LAs to achieve Local Visitor Economy Partnership status.

How will local authorities be involved?

LAs have been engaged in the development of DDP proposals through signing off the Growth Company’s Business Plan, while two LAs have already received LVEP status. LAs will be engaged through ongoing quarterly meetings.

Business support and finance

What will the deal achieve?

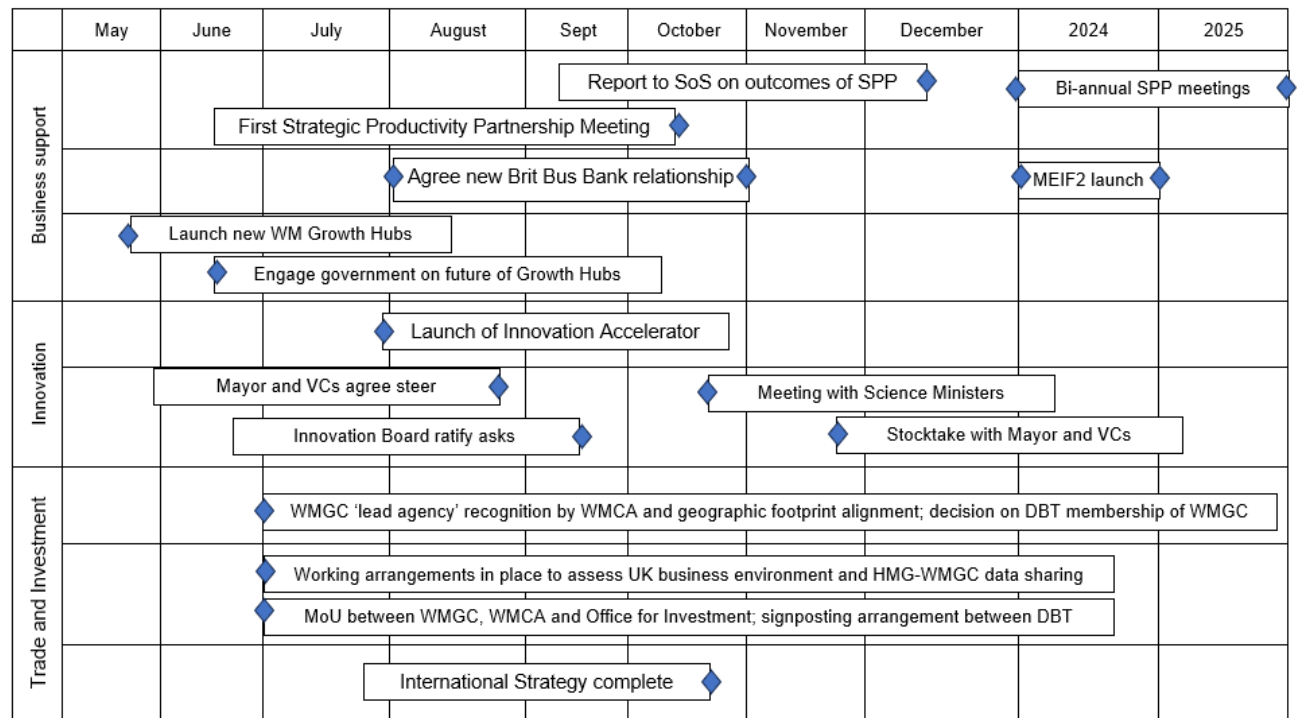
The deal gives the region greater influence over national business support programmes now and the ability to make the case for devolved business support in future. The deal will also help to better align sources of SME finance and infrastructure investment with regional opportunities.

What will be delivered?

A new Strategic Productivity Partnership, regional engagement in the future of Growth Hubs, a role for the region in the governance of the British Business Bank’s regional fund (MEIF2).

How will local authorities be involved?

With input from the Business Support Officers Group and Business Insights Forum, Directors of Economic Development are shaping commitments in this section of the deal to feed into Economic Growth Board and CA Board. Across this theme, data and intelligence gathered through the Business Growth West Midlands Service will be used to inform policy design in the economy and skills partnership.



Employment and skills

Inclusive Growth Fundamental: Education and Learning

Exec Lead: Clare Hatton

Adult skills and employment

What will the deal achieve?

Although the deal has separate chapters on adult skills and employment support, we continue to advocate to Government that these are complimentary and should be treated as one workstream. This will ensure adult skills and employment support are properly integrated and mutually reinforcing.

In adult skills, the deal commits to the creation of a joint governance board to provide oversight of post-16 technical education and skills in the WMCA area, ensuring our training offer is aligned to local skills needs, providing strategic oversight of the Local Skills Improvement Plan, supporting better data sharing and providing oversight for the development of an all-age careers strategy. The deal offers greater flexibility over how existing adult skills funding (Free Courses for Jobs and Skills Bootcamps) can be spent and a commitment to fully devolve these funds as part of the single settlement. The deal recognises WMCA as the central convenor of careers provision, with joint governance of the current National Careers Service contract and a commitment to co-designing future careers provision for all ages in the region.

On employment support, the deal commits to the creation of a new regional Labour Market Partnership Board to oversee the development and implementation of a regional labour market strategy. It provides a new role in co-designing future contracted employment programmes for young people and adults, which the CA will commission on behalf of DWP on a WMCA footprint.

We continue to push for the Joint Governance Board for Adult Skills and the Labour Market Partnership Board to be combined into one.

What will be delivered?

- Terms of reference for an integrated adult skills and employment support board;
- Sign-off of the Local Skills Improvement Plan and of the application for the Local Skills Improvement Fund that supports LSIP implementation;
- An all-age careers strategy;
- Co-design of future contracted employment support programmes, on a WMCA footprint (N.B. no new contracted employment support programmes expected during this SR period);
- Free Courses for Jobs and Skills Bootcamps expanded to create a stronger training offer that meet labour market and skills needs across the economy;
- Better access to data that supports planning and delivery of adult skills provision and demonstrates outcomes and impact;
- Joint governance of the current National Careers Service contractor and role in shaping future specifications.

How will local authorities be involved?

- LAs will have a key role in new governance structures for skills and employment support programmes within the WMCA area. These are currently in development. In the interim, we will engage with LAs via Directors of Economic Development, with governance decisions taken at Economic Growth Board;
- The CA will also work closely with individual LAs and our LA Employment & Skills Officers Group to understand and respond to employment and skills needs in their area – to inform adult skills procurement in each area;
- Adult skills provision will continue to be delivered through an ecosystem of LAs, FE colleges, independent training providers, universities and the VCS. LAs will continue to receive grant funding for community learning provision;
- The CA will also work closely with individual LAs and our LA Employment & Skills Officers Group to understand and respond to employment and skills needs in their area – to inform commissioning of employment support provision.

	May	June	July	August	September	October	November	December	2024	2025
Adult Skills and employment	Develop new governance structures – with agreed Terms of Reference - for employment and skills									
	Deploy greater flexibility in Adult Skills funding									
	MoU signed with HMT and DLUHC on Single Settlement								Assumed SR	



Special feature: A transport network closer to the standards of London

Challenge

After decades of underinvestment, our region is beginning to turn our transport network around. But significant challenges remain in tackling the defining issues of our time, such as climate change, air quality, our health, and now the cost of living and energy pressures facing our citizens.

To enable Inclusive Growth means improving people's access to opportunities. But the pandemic and the cost of living crises have resulted in problems to overcome. Public transport costs have gone up whilst demand to travel has dropped, this has put levels of service at risk. And although people are driving less as fuel has increased in cost, this has not resulted in a proportionate uptick in travel by other modes; people are less socially and economically active.

Progress has been made to strengthen the West Midlands' transport since the first two devolution deals in 2015 and 2017: the next five years will see at least 40% more investment in transport capital compared to the last five years. Moreover, the region remains a world leader in the future of transport.

Connectivity reduces production costs, enables businesses to reach customers more effectively, links employers to a wider pool of potential employees and ultimately encourages business development. Without an integrated network, our progress on levelling up and economic standing relative to other regions will be constrained.

How the deal addresses it

- The deal commits to explore a fully integrated, multi-modal fares and ticketing structure alongside pay as you go ticketing infrastructure pilots and co-development of a regional branding proposition for rail – key tenets of regional transport integration;
- A formal partnership between the West Midlands Rail Executive and Great British Railways (GBR) will increase local, democratic accountability over the region's railway;
- The deal unlocks an additional £60 million for the Wednesbury to Brierley Hill Metro extension;
- With the devolution of the Bus Service Operators Grant, we can change the mechanisms for providing public subsidy to private bus operators to improve accessibility across the region and support the decarbonisation of bus fleets.

Why that's different from pre-deal

We have made great improvements to our network since the first devolution deal was agreed. However, the pandemic has shifted patterns and behaviours, with patronage remaining below pre-pandemic levels. The bus industry, in particular, is facing acute challenges.

The deal gives the region a greater set of tools to face these challenges and create an integrated transport system that is fit for the future. In line with our Local Transport Plan, we will use the provisions of the deal to deliver a network with improved accessibility, reduced traffic and decarbonised public transport.

When things will happen

- 2024/2025: Reformed commercial BSOG devolved;
- January 2025 onwards: WMRE – GBR Partnership goes live;
- 2027 onwards: Full very light rail routes could form part of the second round of the City Region Sustainable Transport Scheme.



WM 197

Toilet

Alitalia

Transport

Inclusive Growth Fundamental: Connected Communities

Exec Lead: Anne Shaw

Rail

What will the deal achieve?

The deal will lead to a partnership agreement between West Midlands Rail Executive (WMRE) and Great British Railways (GBR). This will enhance local accountability and influence over the regional rail network. It will increase our ability to influence rail planning with local growth and social priorities, better integrate rail with other modes of transport and support the roll out of integrated smart ticketing.

What will we be delivered?

A new partnership agreement between WMRE and GBR and a pilot for fully integrated fares and ticketing.

How will local authorities be involved?

The partnership agreement will be approved through the WMRE Board.

Infrastructure and planning

What will the deal achieve?

The deal will drive further investment in the regional transport network, alleviate cost pressures on existing schemes and support regional transport planning. This is additional to the announcement of a further round of funding through the City Region Sustainable Transport Scheme.

What will be delivered?

£60m of additional funding towards the Wednesbury to Brierley Hill Metro Extension and additional transport planning resources for the Combined Authority implement new data and analytical tools.

How will local authorities be involved?

The Senior Transport Officer's Group will support the development and oversight of relevant business cases, with strategic decisions taken by the Combined Authority Board. Coventry City Council is leading the development of very light rail infrastructure.

Buses

What will the deal achieve?

The deal hands more power to the region over payments to bus operators; commits to investigate additional powers to tackle anti-social behavior on the transport network; and to further work to obtain pavement parking powers for local authorities.

What will be delivered?

Devolution of the Bus Services Operator Grant (BSOG).

How will local authorities be involved?

Transport Support Group will test and refine advice to DfT on the design of the BSOG scheme and its appropriate boundaries. The BSOG Governance Review and Scheme is provided alongside this document for local authority feedback and will be approved at WMCA Board in October.

Transport innovation

What will the deal achieve?

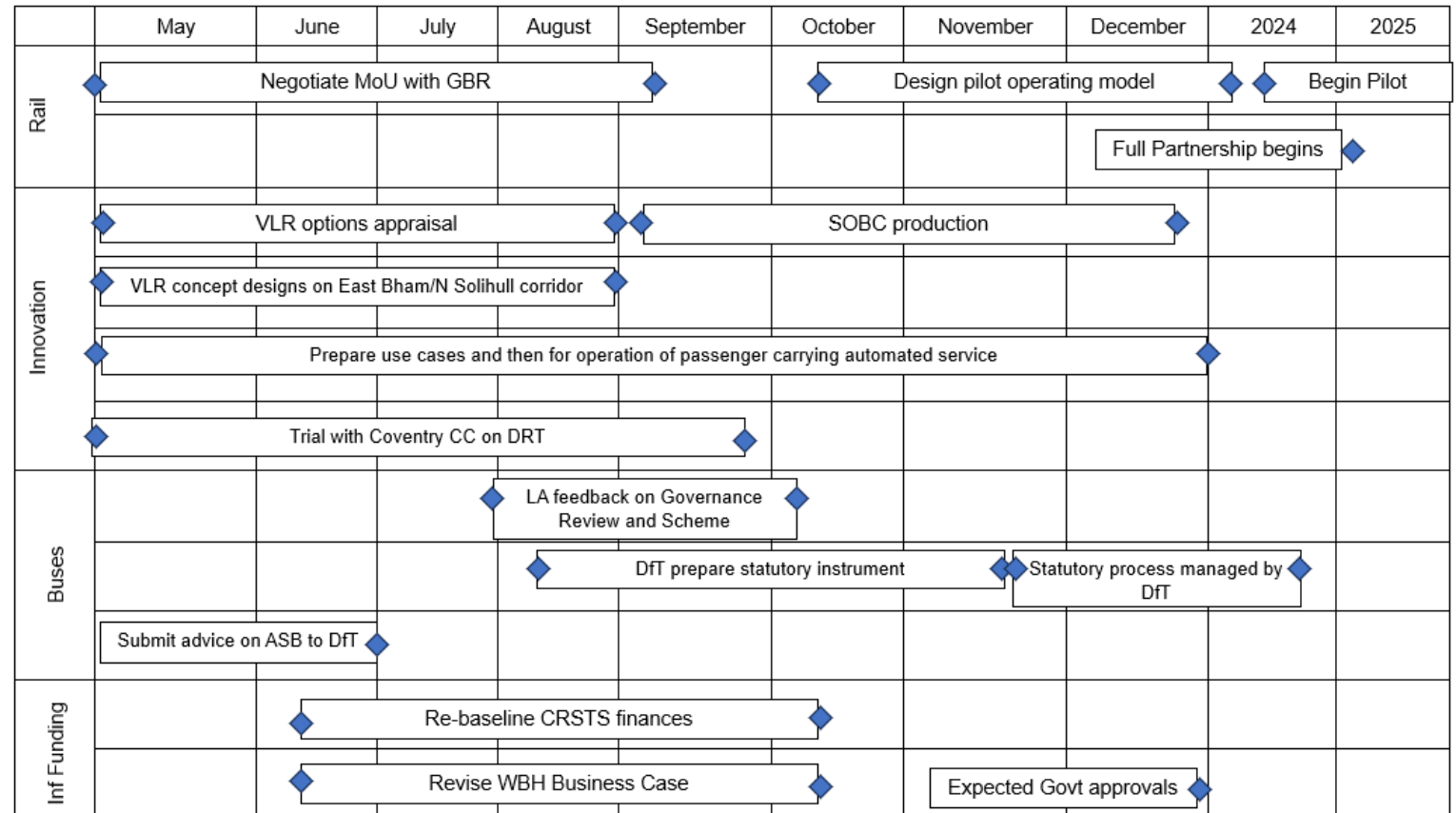
The deal will enable the region to test and demonstrate new, innovative technologies to drive behaviour change in transport usage, including through low-emission and autonomous vehicle trials.

What will be delivered?

Funding and sponsorship from the Department for Transport to develop proposals and evidence.

How will local authorities be involved?

The Senior Transport Officer's Group will support policy development, with strategic decisions taken by the Combined Authority Board.



Supporting clusters

Inclusive Growth Fundamental: Health and Wellbeing, Inclusive Economy

Exec Lead: Ed Cox

Digital

What will the deal achieve?

The commitments in the deal recognise West Midlands 5G's contribution to mapping and closing digital connectivity gaps in the region. The deal includes a commitment from government to engage with the WM Digital Infrastructure Leadership Group to accelerate broadband roll-out, provides funding to purchase devices to boost digital inclusion and provides funding for the Smart City Region project. This will introduce a network of sensors in healthcare settings to enable remote monitoring and the deployment of 5G technology to underpin remote health diagnosis.

What will we deliver?

- £4m fund for digital inclusion to roll out 20,000 devices;
- £10.1m for Smart City Region project;
- Greater high speed broadband coverage across the region.

How will local authorities be involved?

Accelerating broadband roll out will be coordinated by WM5G, but local authorities will be essential in managing the delivery of broadband through intelligence on forthcoming works and use of planning powers to deliver works.

The Smart City Region project will be project managed by WM5G and delivered by NHS partners in each local.

For digital inclusion, local authorities will take receipt of the purchased devices and distribute them to their networks of voluntary sector organisations, who, in turn, will distribute them to vulnerable residents.

Social Economy

What will the deal achieve?

Recognising WMCA's commitment to double the size of the social economy, the deal will enable WMCA to provide specialist business support to social economy organisations to grow their trading activity. It will also enable local areas develop their own circular, inclusive local social economies.

What will we deliver?

The £1.75 million Social Economy Business Support programme will provide an opportunity for social enterprises, community-owned businesses, co-ops and trading charities, the opportunity to gain the business skills and confidence needed to grow their businesses. This programme will provide incentive grants to encourage increased trading income, leading to more employment, volunteering and beneficiary impact.

The local place-based Cluster development will provide £50,000 each to 8 localities – one per constituent LA and one identified by Power to Change.

How will local authorities be involved?

For the Business Support programme, local authorities will be asked to help recruit participants from their area. For the place-based cluster development, local authorities will identify and offer their support for place-based economy clusters.

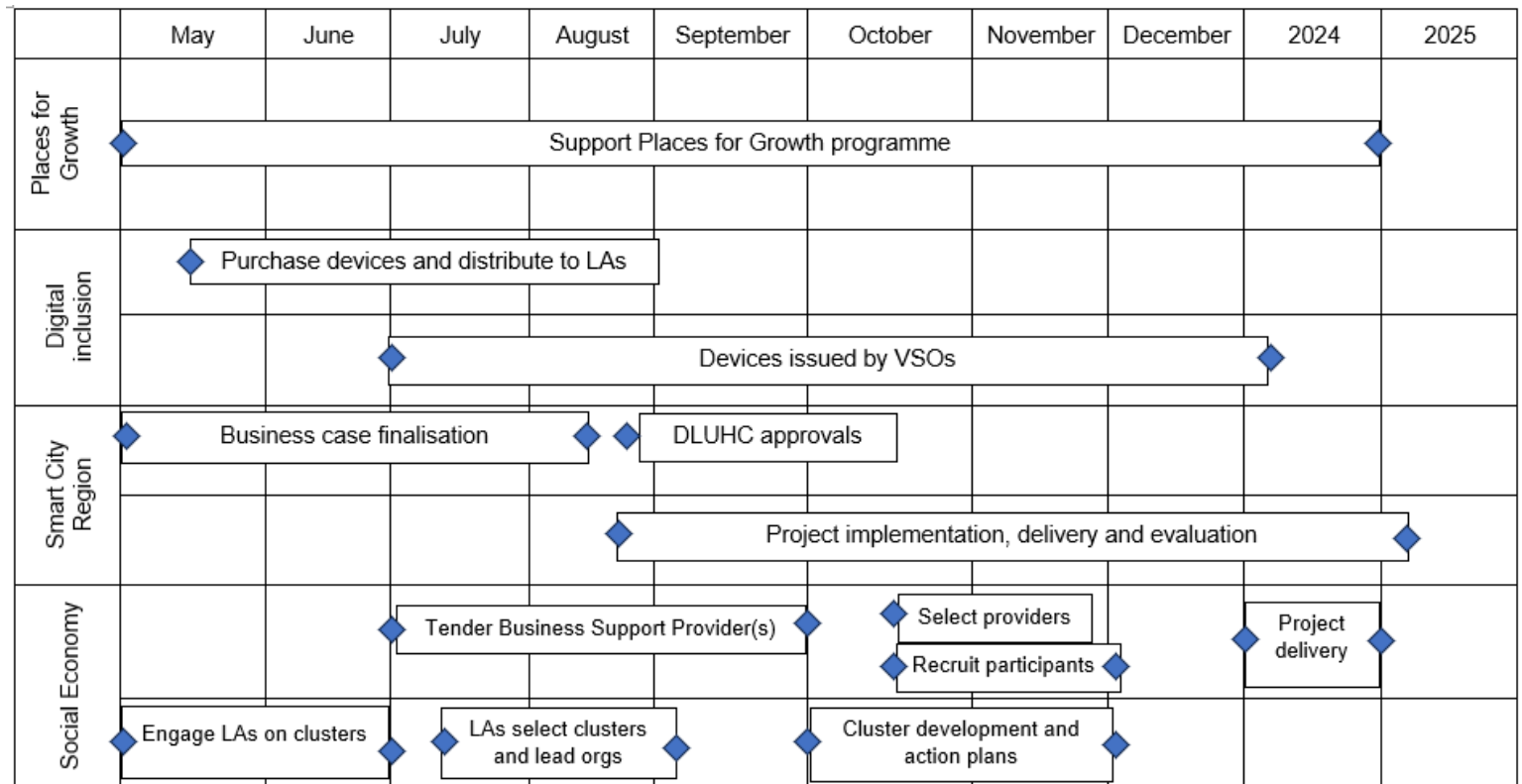
Places for Growth

What will the deal achieve?

In recognition of the region's growing skills clusters such as in transport and infrastructure a new West Midlands Fast Stream pilot will set a blueprint for establishing long term career pathways for people in the region by delivering a pipeline of civil service talent and skills

What will we deliver?

We will support Government to relocate 2,100 civil service roles to the West Midlands by 2025.



Net Zero and Environment

Inclusive Growth Fundamental: Climate resilience

Exec Lead: Ed Cox

Domestic retrofit and minimum energy efficiency standards

What will the deal achieve?

The deal secures a greater role for the region in measures that will support retrofit and net zero delivery through the devolution of retrofit and potentially other net zero funding. The deal also opens up the opportunity for local authorities to adopt additional powers to enforce tighter minimum energy efficiency standards (MEES); and commits to further work to bring more private investment into energy efficiency upgrades.

What will be delivered?

Aside from the delivery of retrofit and market enabling activity through the single settlement, the deal provides the opportunity to strengthen MEES with enhanced energy efficiency requirements, allowing the region to maintain its trajectory regardless of national policy decisions in this area. However, this needs to be considered within the context of adequately resourcing existing, as well as any additional, standards.

How will local authorities be involved?

The Local Authority Retrofit Officers Group meeting provides the opportunity to explore how these opportunities should be taken forward in partnership with LAs, with senior level engagement through the Net Zero Directors group.

Industrial decarbonisation

What will the deal achieve?

The deal will support efforts to increase businesses' energy efficiency and resilience to high energy costs, identified through the work of the Mayor's Industrial Energy Taskforce. The deal also re-affirms the greater role the region will be able to play in coordinating the roll-out of clean heat infrastructure, which will further support industrial and domestic heat decarbonisation.

What will be delivered?

The deal provides an additional £10.5m from DLUHC to compliment the £14.1m from DESNZ for businesses to undertake energy efficiency audits and invest in energy efficiency measures, agreed as a result of the groundbreaking work of the Black Country Industrial Cluster.

How will local authorities be involved?

The WMCA has worked with partners to align this funding with other publicly and privately funded programmes already in place, such as the recent Decarbonisation Net Zero programme tendered by WMCA using UKSPF funding. The WMCA will coordinate the monitoring and evaluation of the outputs delivered through these programmes.

Local Area Energy Planning

What will the deal achieve?

The deal encourages the WMCA to use its convening power and partnerships to drive local area energy planning across the region, and to use Energy Capital's expertise to inform approaches to energy system investment and management. This is backed in the deal by the expectation that National Grid will engage with the WMCA to ensure their investments will meet local needs and encouragement to engage with OfGEM on their future systems and network regulation workstream, focusing on network investment.

What will be delivered?

The WMCA will develop a Local Area Energy Planning programme in partnership with local authorities and industry across the region to provide partners with data, tools, expertise, resources and influence to support local area energy planning and investment. Collaborative decision-making structures are being established, which bring together private sector energy system investors, to consider energy infrastructure investment from a multi-vector perspective and feedback will be provided to OfGEM and government. This will ensure that the offer in the deal and its underlying intent are achieved.

How will local authorities be involved?

The Local Area Energy Planning-Coordination Group will oversee this programme, working closely with an industry Net Zero Infrastructure Delivery Panel. Additional workshops will be led by LAs to drill down into specific issues in specific areas. Energy Collaboration Days will also continue to be held monthly to enable joint working between energy officers across both the public and private sector.

Heat Zoning Network Pilot

What will the deal achieve?

Heat networks will be an important element of our energy infrastructure going forward and form important anchor projects in the delivery of local net zero solutions. The deal commits to heat network zoning as a national programme and identifies the WMCA and its constituent authorities as heat network zone coordinators (by 2025), with the ability to require buildings, within designated zones, to connect to heat networks.

What will be delivered?

Heat Network Zones are currently being scoped and piloted by Birmingham and

Coventry. This will lead to the identification of potential heat network zones across the region, supported by LAEP, providing the necessary scale to engage key partners, including commercial investors, to bring schemes forward that meet local needs. For the new role established by Government for Heat Zone coordinators, this role will be scoped with Local Authorities and resources sought to enable implementation.

How will local authorities be involved?

Where local authorities have the potential for heat networks, they will be approached directly to collaborate with the WMCA. LA's will remain central to the development and delivery of heat networks and associated zone(s) but may choose to work collaboratively with the WMCA to share resources and expertise to drive the delivery of these networks and zones.

Net Zero and Environment

Natural capital

What will the deal achieve?

The region will enable the region to attract more investment in natural capital schemes, supporting the development of the region's Local Nature Recovery Strategy.

What will be delivered?

£1m to the region through the Local Investment in Natural Capital (LINC) Programme to boost regional capacity.

How will local authorities be involved?

The Natural Capital Officers group is supporting the development of the LINC Programme and will work to develop and bring forward projects from the constituent authorities to the LINC project pipeline. The pipeline will attract significant private investment into the region to help delivery of our targets for nature recovery, climate adaptation and mitigation and connecting people with nature. This will be fed into both the Environment and Energy and WMCA Boards.

Air Quality

What will the deal achieve?

The deal provides £0.9m in capital funding to install air quality monitors across the region in areas where there are gaps in coverage. The data from these sensors will be fed into a web-based dashboard accessible to the public.

What will be delivered?

Air quality sensors and a live web-based dashboard.

How will local authorities be involved?

Officers working on air quality in the different local authorities will help decide where the low-cost sensors provided through this funding are located, ensuring that they are being placed in areas with no coverage currently. Data from the sensors will be published on an air quality web platform that will be developed in collaboration with local authorities through the West Midlands Environment Protection Group. This work will support the aims and outcomes identified in the West Midlands Air Quality Framework, currently out for consultation following consideration by the WMCA Environment and Energy Board.

	May	June	July	August	September	October	November	December	2024	2025	
MEES						LA engagement on MEES					
LAEP		LAEP development & implementation									
Industrial Decarb	DESNZ and DLUHC Develop Business Case										
						Project delivery					
Heat Zoning	Government to have established Heat Zoning Coordinators										
Air Quality	Develop Business Case										
			DLUHC approvals			Project delivery					
Natural Capital	Create and manage pipeline of investable projects										
		Create Natural Asset Register									
							Setup Fund				



Special Feature: Unlocking Regeneration through Levelling Up Zones

Challenge & Opportunity

The West Midlands has a strong track record of regenerating brownfield land, unlocking over 100 derelict, stalled and contaminated sites across the region and delivering thousands of new homes, workspaces and jobs.

However, the speed of delivery and breadth of outcomes that could be achieved have been hindered by the complexity, prescriptive measures and cyclical nature of funding streams.

The trailblazer deal presents an opportunity to overcome these barriers to high-impact regeneration.

How the deal addresses it

Through our pioneering Levelling Up Zones, the region will be able to bring together multiple regeneration levers – funding simplification, optimisation of publicly owned land and greater influence over affordable housing provision – and pursue a joined-up approach to the design and delivery of regeneration programmes, aligned to regional priorities and complementing existing activity.

As part of this package, the deal allows the region to establish areas that could attract 100% business rate growth retention for 25 years. This greater degree of revenue retention certainty will support local authorities to make longer-term, strategic investments in infrastructure and regeneration projects.

Taken in conjunction with the single settlement, the Zones represent a game-changer for the region, its financial position and the economic prospects of some of its most deprived communities.

Investment Zones

In addition, in March 2023 Government also announced the West Midlands as one of 8 Investment Zones – innovation-led economic clusters offering both tax incentives and business rate retention.

In the West Midlands, our approach will be to ensure Investment Zones complement and add value to Levelling Up Zones.

This will give the region an expansive toolkit to drive growth and investment across the region and build its comparative economic advantage over other parts of the country.

Why that's different from pre-deal

Instead of fragmented, output-driven funding approaches, the deal puts the region in a position to adopt a strategic and empowered approach to regeneration that meets the needs of, and opportunities for, local communities.

The package of measures will ensure the West Midlands is a beacon for private sector investment.

When things will happen

- Autumn 2023: Levelling Up Zone proposals are submitted to Government in line with the national Investment Zone programme;
- April 2024: It is anticipated that Levelling Up Zones – particularly those that contain business rate retention powers – will commence, aligned to the Investment Zone programme.



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Transforming Places

Inclusive Growth Fundamental: Affordable and Safe Places

Exec Lead: John Godfrey

Regeneration

What will the deal achieve?

The deal will give the region more influence over Homes England policy and funding decisions, ensuring different programmes align for maximum impact and better reflect our priorities; more influence over the disposal of government owned land in the region, to help unlock land assembly opportunities for regeneration schemes; and a flexible source of funding to support commercial, employment and mixed-use development on brownfield land.

What will we deliver?

A Strategic Place Partnership between Homes England, government departments and arm's length bodies; a Public Land Partnership with the Cabinet Office; and a £100m Single Regeneration Fund, which will deliver 4,000 homes across the region.

How will local authorities be involved?

The pipeline of sites for the Single Regeneration Fund will be co-produced by LAs and the Combined Authority. Projects will be approved via the existing SAF process, with local authority leaders and deputies approving funding via Investment Board.

Housing

What will the deal achieve?

The deal gives the region increasing levels of influence and direction over Affordable Homes Programme (AHP) funding and spending decisions, beginning with an Affordable Homes Partnership with Homes England between 2023 and 2026 and leading to the devolution of AHP to the region at the next Spending Review. In addition, the region will now, for the first time, be able to use AHP funds for estate regeneration purposes.

What will we deliver?

At least £200m, and up to £400m, will be spent in the region via the Affordable Homes Programme between 2023 and 2026. This delivery will inform the negotiations for the successor programme post-2026.

How will local authorities be involved?

Local authorities will be key in identifying suitable sites for AHP, informing the joint pipeline and supporting the delivery of sites through coordination of planning processes and social housing development plans. Local authorities are still able to bid for AHP funding separately and can leverage the region's improved access to Homes England to escalate and resolve issues.

Business rates retention and Levelling Up Zones (see special feature)

Exec Lead for BRR: Linda Horne

What will the deal achieve?

The deal provides local authorities with certainty that they will be able to retain 100% of their business rates for the next 10 years, a marked improvement on the one year rolling arrangement at present and estimated to be worth £450 million to the region. This certainty will help to underpin additional, longer-term investment decisions where business rates incomes are likely to be stable.

The deal also allows the region to bring together regeneration levers to drive joined up investment and regeneration in up to 6 Levelling Up Zones – including, for example, areas that could attract 100% business rate growth retention for 25 years – complementing the national Investment Zones programme.

What will we deliver?

Retained business rates would flow to local authorities. Once operational, the Zones would have local management structures with some outcome reporting to the Combined Authority.

How will local authorities be involved?

Constructive engagement across the region is already underway to co-design the designation of Levelling Up Zone sites, as presented to Board in August.

	May	June	July	August	September	October	November	December	2024	2025
Growth Zones	◆ Negotiate Zone criteria with DLUHC ◆									
	◆ Co-develop Zone proposals with LAs ◆		◆ WMCA Board approval for Zone proposals ◆							
			◆ negotiate interventions with DLUHC ◆				◆ Sites announced at assumed SR ◆			
SRF	DLUHC Bus Case to HMT ◆◆		Negotiate Fund T&Cs ◆◆		Funding begins for projects up to FY 25/26					
AHP	◆ Engage LAs to ensure pipeline is <u>uptodate</u> ◆									
	◆ Create joint AHP team with HE ◆◆		◆ Develop strategy, joint pipeline ◆◆						◆ Full devo of AHP from assumed ◆	
Partnerships	◆ Negotiate Strat Place Partnership, Public Land Reform, AHP agreements with Govt ◆◆									
					◆ Consult LAs on emerging proposals ◆◆			◆ WMCA Board approval ◆◆		
BRR	Negotiation with DLUHC on design of 10yr BRR ◆◆						◆ Scheme announced at assumed SR ◆◆			
	Consult LAs on DLUHC proposals ◆◆								◆ Beginning of 10 Year BRR ◆◆	

Pride in Place

Inclusive Growth Fundamentals: Affordable and Safe places, Connected Communities

Exec Lead: Ed Cox

Homelessness

What will the deal achieve?

The deal commits to further work between the WMCA, Homes England and DWP to secure investment and systems change to join up the homes and jobs agenda for young people across the region. Additionally, in Birmingham, investment has been secured to enable homeless families living in Temporary Accommodation to move into the private rented sector.

What will be delivered?

An expansion of the Live and Work model in additional localities across the region and a Rent Simplification pilot for young people in supported accommodation to enable transition into work. Birmingham City Council will use the £3.8m secured to lease good quality private sector accommodation for homeless families living in Temporary Accommodation.

How will local authorities be involved?

For the Live and Work expansion and Rent Simplification pilot local authority partners will be engaged regularly via the WMCA Homelessness Taskforce and the WMCA Homelessness Taskforce Members Advisory Group. The Rent Simplification pilot proposal is being developed in partnership with DWP and local authority benefits teams. As we progress the feasibility of the model and establish mechanisms for delivery, we will work with our local authority partners to establish how this could be delivered across local authorities within commissioned supported accommodation for young people. The investment to lease good quality private rented sector properties in Birmingham for homeless families, supporting Birmingham City Council's ongoing work to end the use of bed and breakfast accommodation for families, will be managed and delivered directly by Birmingham City Council and overseen by DLUHC.

Early Years

What will the deal achieve?

The deal invites engagement with government to explore pilot opportunities in relation to early years provision.

How will local authorities be involved?

The Combined Authority has encouraged the Regional Directors of Children's Services to take forward this opportunity.

Anti-social behaviour

What will the deal achieve?

The deal commits to further work between the region and Department for Transport (DfT) to explore how devolution could help to address anti-social behaviour on the public transport network. The deal also recognises the street-based anti-social behaviour issues facing local authorities.

What will be delivered?

Engagement between local authorities, the Combined Authority, central government and the Police and Crime Commissioner to explore ways to address these issues.

How will local authorities be involved?

Further engagement is needed to understand the policy options that could be available to the region.

Culture

What will the deal achieve?

The deal provides the means to coordinate and strengthen our cultural and heritage offer. The Regional Culture and Heritage Framework will align and maximise funding from arm's length bodies, such as the Arts Council, including opportunities for co-investment and greater collaboration. DLUHC will also fund a Cultural Infrastructure programme to extend, refurb and improve cultural venues to better support our places, communities and citizens.

What will be delivered?

- A new partnership agreement with between the region and the Department for Culture, Media and Sport and its arm's length bodies, to align different funding streams and a Regional Cultural and Heritage Framework to guide its work;
- £4 million capital funding to support regional culture projects, building on the £4.1 committed through the Commonwealth Games Legacy Fund for culture.

How will local authorities be involved?

- Local authorities will be engaged in the development of the Culture and Heritage Framework through the Local Authority Cultural Officers Group;
- Each of the seven constituent authorities will receive a grant through the Cultural Heritage Infrastructure Fund.

	May	June	July	August	September	October	November	December	2024	2025
Partnership Agreement	Develop Regional Culture and Heritage Framework									
	Develop Arm's Length Body Partnership Agreement and Forward Plan									
Cultural Infrastructure	Business case finalisation					DLUHC approvals				
							Project implementation, delivery, evaluation			
Homelessness				monthly discussions with DWP to consider simplifying benefits systems, develop and design pilot						
						Follow-up with Homes England on LAs and RPs' bid development				
	Support DWP developed Shared Outcomes Fund bid									



West Midlands
Combined Authority