

# Report to Budget and Corporate Scrutiny Management Board

**22 November 2023**

<b>Subject:</b>	WMCA Update – Devolution Deal
<b>Director:</b>	Laura Shoaf – Chief Executive – WMCA Ed Cox – Executive Director Strategy, Economy and Net Zero
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## 1 Recommendations

- 1.1 That the Board considers and comments upon the paper presented by the West Midlands Combined Authority on the Devolution Deal.

## 2 Reasons for Recommendations

- 2.1 To consider the Devolution Deal and the impact on Sandwell.

## 3 How does this deliver objectives of the Corporate Plan?

	Best start in life for children and young people	The scrutiny function supports all of the objectives of the Corporate Plan by seeking to improve services for the people of Sandwell. It does this by influencing the policies and decisions made by the Council and other organisations involved in delivering public services.
	People live well and age well	
	Strong resilient communities	
	Quality homes in thriving neighbourhoods	



	A strong and inclusive economy	
	A connected and accessible Sandwell	

#### 4 Context and Key Issues

- a. The deal contains over 190 different commitments. Sandwell will benefit from the impact of the deal on the region as a whole, as well as from benefits that may be specific to Sandwell. WMCA is committed to working in partnership with its local authority partners, including Sandwell MBC, as we implement the deal, which was ratified at WMCA Board on 13 October 2023.
- b. **The deal gives Sandwell MBC 10-year certainty over its ability to retain business rates growth.** The current rolling 100% business rate retention pilot could cease at any point. The deal therefore increases Sandwell MBC's financial certainty.
- c. **The deal offers Sandwell MBC the opportunity to identify Growth Zones.** Sandwell is taking the opportunity to identify Growth Zones, where 100% of business rates will be retained for 25 years without reset. This will support Sandwell MBC to catalyse regeneration across the borough.
- d. **The deal provides £60 million for the Wednesbury to Brierley Hill Metro Extension.** This funding, as well as government's commitment to CRSTS, will support the delivery of the Metro extension, which will help regenerate Sandwell and connect its residents and businesses to jobs, services and opportunities. It also helps secure additional benefits from Sandwell MBC's local contribution to the programme.
- e. **The deal gives the region £100 million for town centre and estate regeneration and to support the delivery of complex housing sites, which is accessible to Sandwell MBC.** This is additional to the commitment to give the region more control over the Affordable Housing Programme, working with Homes England.



- f. **The deal gives the region new partnerships with Government in policy areas that are a priority for Sandwell** – skills and employment support services, housing, culture, digital infrastructure and economic development. They will bring policymaking closer to Sandwell and offer opportunities to tailor policy to Sandwell's circumstances.
- g. **The single settlement:**
- a. **Will enable Sandwell Council to contribute to the development of place-based strategies across the region.** The strategies will bring together transport, housing, skills, net zero and local growth funding, to increase inclusive economic growth in targeted places across the region.
  - b. **Will give Sandwell Council more influence over funding decisions.** Through their role on WMCA Board, the Leader of Sandwell Council will gain significantly more power over how funding devolved into the single settlement is prioritised across the region.
  - c. **Will give the region significantly more flexibility over funding decisions.** WMCA will be able to select and fund projects to address the challenges we face with respect to levelling up, working towards an outcomes framework that will be jointly agreed between WMCA and government.
  - d. **Will increase certainty over the funding we receive through the single settlement.** The settlement will offer a multi-year block grant, lasting for each Spending Review period, as opposed to the patchwork of 1- and 2-year grants we currently receive – strengthening our ability to do long-term economic planning across the region.
7. **The deal gives the region more flexibility over Skills Bootcamps, Free Courses for Jobs and future adult skills funding than any other area of England.** This means skills funding can better serve the needs of Sandwell residents and be more closely aligned with current and emerging needs within the local labour market.



8. **People in Sandwell will face fewer barriers to using public transport as a result of the commitment from government to integrate different modes of transport.** This will open up economic opportunities for people and businesses in Sandwell. The deal also provides the region with the opportunity to have greater oversight of funding support for bus operators with the devolution of the Bus Services Operators Grant (BSOG).

## 5 Implications

<b>Resources:</b>	The Devolution Deal with see significant investment within Sandwell.
<b>Legal and Governance:</b>	The proposals are subject to consideration by the West Midlands Combined Authority and their governance arrangements.
<b>Risk:</b>	The risk elements will be considered by the WMCA and mitigated where possible.
<b>Equality:</b>	There are no equality implications arising.
<b>Health and Wellbeing:</b>	There are no health and wellbeing implications arising.
<b>Social Value:</b>	The proposals will help transport links and enable more people to travel to work.
<b>Climate Change:</b>	There are no implications arising.
<b>Corporate Parenting:</b>	There are no implications arising.

## 6 Appendices

Appendix 1 – West Midlands Deeper Devolution Deal – Thematic Summaries

## 7. Background Papers

[West Midlands Deeper Devolution Deal – Sandwell Cabinet Report](#)

