

Birmingham City Council

Coordinating Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Date 14 October 2022

Subject: Trailblazer Devolution Deal

Report of: Cllr. Brigid Jones, Deputy Leader
Richard Brooks, Director of Strategy, Equality and Partnerships

Report author: Mary Crofton, Cabinet Support Officer

1 Purpose

- 1.1 To update the Committee on the Trailblazer Devolution Deal

2 Recommendations

- 2.1 Members note the report and agree any comments / recommendations.

3 Appendices

- 3.1 Appendix 1 – Update on Trailblazer Devolution Deal

Update on Trailblazer Devolution Deal

Cllr Brigid Jones, Deputy Leader and WMCA Portfolio Holder for Levelling Up
Richard Brooks, Director of Strategy, Equality & Partnerships



Levelling Up and a Trailblazer Devolution Deal

Appendix 1

- We published our Levelling Up Strategy in November 2021, well before the Govt's February Levelling Up White Paper.
- As part of the government's White Paper the West Midlands was identified as one of two areas with a new 'trailblazer devolution deal' (the other is Greater Manchester).
- This can potentially help deliver our ambitions for the city including Levelling Up – but there are risks.
- It's the best current opportunity since first deal in 2015 to secure more powers and funding for the region.
- A process with the WMCA to identify a set of proposals to put to government has been ongoing since the spring.
- There is a large degree of uncertainty about the process, with the change of Conservative Party leadership, but the current assumption is that it will continue.
- However, there will almost certainly be a shift in priorities in government with its new focus on increasing the pace of economic growth and a stronger emphasis on lower taxes and deregulation.

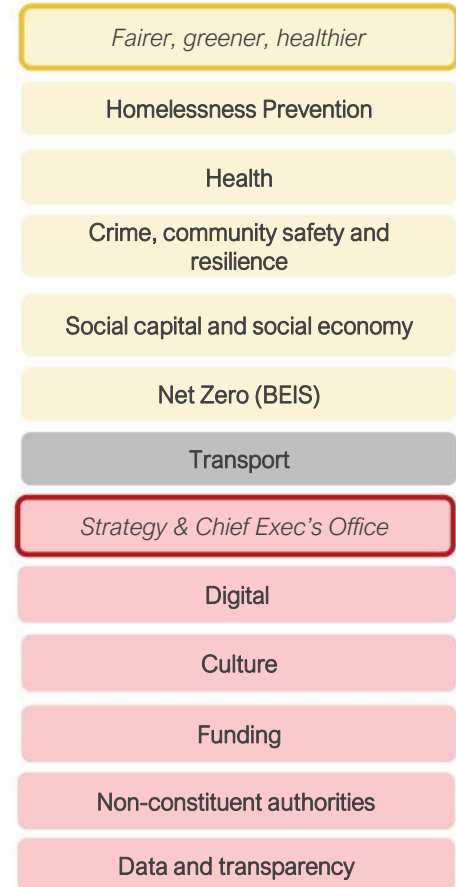
WMCA process

- No formal deadline, and change of Govt introduces further uncertainty.
- A complex process with 20 workstreams (see right) all including local authority engagement.
- Cycle of workstream 'position papers' continued until end August (see next slide).
- We made comprehensive comments on the whole package in September.
- A consolidated Levelling Up Growth Prospectus was launched by the CA at Conservative Party Conference on 4 October.
- Informal discussions with officials from several departments have been ongoing since May.
- But note no actual decisions are made on the proposals until CA Board agrees the package.

WMCA workstreams



Appendix 1



Levelling Up Growth Prospectus

Appendix 1

- Relates the proposals to achieving greater economic growth
- Highlights challenges and potential prizes for different parts of the region
- <https://www.wmca.org.uk/documents/levelling-up/west-midlands-levelling-up-prospectus/>



Our approach

Appendix 1

- Make proposals linked to our own Levelling Up Strategy, don't just respond to CA lead.
- Seek devolution to LA not just WMCA and not upwards from LAs to region.
- New powers must be accompanied by the relevant funding and resources or the power to raise them locally - no new unfunded responsibilities.
- New powers for the region should come to the CA not direct to the Mayor.
- The propositions need to be clear about both the benefits and the local authority role.
- **The bottom line: any deal must deliver benefits for the citizens of Birmingham.**

Scope of the proposals

Appendix 1

- Strengthening existing powers

- Housing and regeneration
- Transport
- Skills
- Retrofit
- Levelling Up Investment Zones

- Economic Growth

- Business support and innovation
- Trade and investment
- Local Area Energy Planning
- Industrial Decarbonisation
- Digital and Smart City Region

- Public Services and Pride in Place

- Digital inclusion
- Homelessness
- Social capital
- Health
- Culture
- Crime, community safety and resilience
- Climate adaptation and the natural environment

- Finance

- Proposals for localised funding

Key points from our comments to the CA

Appendix 1

CA level proposals we are broadly happy with:

- Transport
- Skills
- Trade and Investment
- Innovation
- Industrial decarbonisation
- Local Area Energy Planning
- Digital and Smart City Region
- Health
- Community Safety
- Finance and funding

Areas where we have raised concerns and proposed double devolution with a clearer LA role:

- Other aspects of Net Zero, including retrofit
- Housing, Planning and regeneration
- Business support
- Culture

Areas we think should be fully devolved to the local authorities:

- Employment support
- Homelessness
- Social economy

Areas where we have proposed additional powers for LAs!

- Transport
- Employment support
- Planning
- Business support
- Net Zero
- Homelessness
- Levelling Up Zones (East Birmingham model)
- Environmental regulation
- Local and community wealth building
- Community Power
- Whole Place health and wellbeing
- Fiscal devolution

East Birmingham and North Solihull Levelling Up Zone

- The Government has now offered “Investment Zones” focused on tax cuts and de-regulation.
- Work is ongoing to assess how this can be linked to our proposals and to prepare and EOI this week.

Our priority targets

Appendix 1

East Birmingham Levelling Up Zone (see next slide)

- Whole place model for public service funding - local government convening power or structure to bring public bodies and government departments and agencies together into an integrated whole place model and ability to pool budgets. Ability to create and fast track development and delivery vehicles & an enterprise zone for levelling up.

Greater control over employment support services

- Currently almost all delivered by DWP – hard to get access to the money but a big prize. We are testing some approaches in current Partnerships for People & Place programme

Net zero powers

- Defined role of local authority (and similarly for CA - see previous slides), powers and funding to achieve net zero. Lead LA role on retrofit and ability to join with other authorities and with the CA; powers and funding to move at pace and scale. Removal/curtailment of permitted development rights to prevent development non-compliant with net zero; additional enforcement powers.

National Govt has now started a process to develop 'Investment Zones' – we already have a model developed for a zone in East Birmingham and North Solihull

- We have been working with the CA and Solihull MBC since June on 'Levelling Up Zone' proposal.
- It combines new infrastructure (especially transport) with public service integration.
- Covers both East Bham and part of North Solihull – a huge scale of opportunity and need.
- BUT requires public investment funded by tax increment financing.
- AND the governance must work for both Bham and Solihull.
- High degree of uncertainty given new government.

