

Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) for Policies, Procedures and Services

Initial Analysis

Proposal name	Approval of the Order to establish the West Midlands Combined Authority		
Directorate	Chief Executive		
Service	n/a		
Responsible Officer	Paul Sheehan		
Proposal planning start	July 2015	Proposal start date (due or actual)	1 June 2016

1	What is the purpose of the proposal?	Yes / No	New / revision
	Policy	Yes	New
	Procedure	No	
	Internal service	No	
	External Service	No	
	Other - give details		
2	What are the intended outcomes, reasons for change? (The business case)		
	<p>The main objective is to establish a combined authority in the West Midlands. The aim is to have improved governance across the region, with an increased effectiveness and efficiency of transport and economic regeneration and development. All prospective members of the CA have been working together through formal Programme Boards, Shadow Boards, Workshops and other meetings in order to plan for the creation of the CA.</p> <p>As set out in the West Midlands Authorities' Statutory Governance Review:</p> <p><i>'A Combined Authority would be the most appropriate governance model for the local authorities to act together to deliver their economic development, regeneration and transport functions. This stronger governance will deliver a more joined up strategic approach. It will bring together policy interventions in transport and in respect of the key economic drivers that will deliver enhanced growth. By working this way, members of a Combined Authority can deliver shared strategic priorities that are best addressed at a scale above local boundaries.</i></p> <p><i>The area has a good track record of collaboration between local authorities and with the Local Enterprise Partnerships on issues that affect the area covered by the local authority areas of Birmingham, Coventry, Dudley, Sandwell, Solihull, Walsall and Wolverhampton – referred to as the "West Midlands". However, the governance needs to change if the West Midlands is to demonstrate stronger, more efficient and more effective delivery of economic</i></p>		

development, regeneration and transport responsibilities.

To do this, a Combined Authority needs the means and flexibilities to tailor the delivery of national scale interventions to address local issues. To support this there needs to be clear and effective governance arrangements in place with a long term strategic focus.'

As set out in the West Midlands Combined Authority Launch Statement, the working principles are as follows:

1. *We are committed to collaborative working on the creation of a Combined Authority at the heart of a Midlands Engine covering the geography of the three LEPs*
2. *The prize is strong economic growth for the West Midlands as part of a Midlands Engine and a rebalancing of the UK economy*
3. *Growth requires smart investment, investment will be focused where the biggest outcome for the Combined Authority can be achieved*
4. *Our pursuit of growth will be accompanied by an agenda of innovation and public service reform that will reduce the overall level of public spending*
5. *We are committed to collaborative working with the private sector as the primary driver of economic growth and will work with them in establishing the economic priorities of the West Midlands Combined Authority*
6. *All communities will benefit from growth, but not necessarily at the same time or in the same way*

The overall driving principles are in growth, jobs and skills and this will impact on those protected by the Equality Act. It is particularly important to emphasise principle 6, that all communities will benefit, although not necessarily in the same way or at the same time. Workstream leads recognise that in order to benefit all, issues must be looked at in terms of the impact they will have on different characteristics.

The Combined Authority will:

- facilitate closer partnership working;
- increase the effectiveness and efficiency of the relevant functions and improve outcomes for local people through a co-ordinated approach to tackling the area's priorities;
- improve the exercise of statutory functions through stronger centralised evidence collection and analysis function;
- lead to an improvement in the economic conditions of the area;
- bring together the Integrated Transport Authority functions with Economic Development and Regeneration.

A Combined Authority is the most appropriate option because:

- The West Midlands is a functional economic market area.
- West Midlands sits within a broader and even better defined functional economic market area covered by three Local Enterprise Partnerships.
- It will help that West Midlands is to address the complex and inter-related issues which have held back its growth.
- National and international evidence suggests that dealing with regional issues is best achieved at a regional level.

	<p>In the absence of improved governance, the West Midlands risks lagging behind areas which have taken this step and will not meet its ambition to support the re-balancing of the UK economy. The establishment of the region's Integrated Transport Authority (ITA) demonstrated the desire to work together on strategic issues. However, this does not provide a legal link between decisions made in relation to economic development/regeneration and transport. By joining up governance in a more transparent and effective decision making process, decisions will be made in a more effective and efficient way. Any new governance arrangements must eliminate time consuming bureaucracy in the making of strategic decisions for the benefit of the region.</p>		
3	Who is the proposal potential likely to affect?		
	People in Walsall	Yes / No	Detail
	All	Yes	Residents of the West Midlands region
	Specific group/s	No	
	Council employees	Yes	
	Other	Yes	Businesses in the West Midlands region Visitors to the West Midlands region
4	Evidence, engagement and consultation		
4.1	<p>There is a national appetite to devolve powers to the regions. Combined Authorities have already been created in Manchester, West Yorkshire, South Yorkshire, Liverpool and the North East. Devolved powers include transport, skills and housing. The Cities and Local Government Devolution Bill gained royal assent in January 2016</p> <p>The creation of the combined authority aims to improve economic outcomes across the region, through increased investment and more effective use of devolved powers. Protected groups are often disproportionately economically disadvantaged, so an improvement in employment and reduction in deprivation would advance the equality of opportunity for these groups. Furthermore, increased powers and a linked up approach to transport will enable a combined authority to improve transport services to protected characteristic groups. Often protected groups feature disproportionately in isolated areas of the region and an improved transport offer will further their opportunities.</p> <p>A public consultation was undertaken between 18 January and 8 February 2016 asking all stakeholders (public, businesses partners) what their views were of the establishment of the Combined Authority with 1907 responses received. See appendix 4 of the 7 March 2016 Cabinet Report</p> <p>There was no strong evidence that suggested there is public concern that the proposal is being operated in a discriminatory manner; however the public consultation survey results did not break down responses by different equality protected characteristics.</p>		

	<p>Other combined authorities (e.g. Liverpool City Region – Sept 2013) have undertaken initial equality analysis on the creation of a Combined Authority, taking a similar approach to the West Midlands. The Combined Authority will conform to equality and diversity policies in the same manner as the constituent local authorities.</p> <p>At this stage of the development of the CA, it is proposed not need to carry out any further analysis.</p>
4.2	<p>Future work and monitoring</p> <p>Any policies enacted by the combined authority will undergo further equalities analyses that will to adhere to the general duty requirements of the Public Sector Equality Duty of the Equality Act</p> <p>The Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) of the Equality Act requires those bodies subject to it to have due regard to proposals when they are deciding upon them. Since the Combined Authority is not yet a legal entity, decisions to participate in one fall to local authorities that will become part of the Combined Authority.</p> <p>Once in place, the legal responsibility for complying with the Equality Act falls upon the Combined Authority. In advance of the establishment, authorities will work collaboratively to comply with the Equalities Act.</p> <p>The CA Programme Team, in consultation with the West Midlands Local Authority Equality Network (WMLAEN), are developing an approach to embed equalities across the work of the Combined Authority which will be signed off formally at the Programme Board later this year. This approach will ensure a consistent approach to each major initiative of the CA being assessed and monitored in order to meet the Public Sector Equality Duty.</p>