

**Response to scrutiny recommendations made to the West Yorkshire Combined Authority by the Strategy and Performance Scrutiny Board (Calderdale Council)**

**Review: "[West Yorkshire....and beyond - Calderdale's Council's contribution to the West Yorkshire Combined Authority \(2018\)](#)"**

**Finding 4 – The reporting lines are complicated ...**

**Recommendation 3: "WYCA should examine its decision-making structures to ensure that they are as clear and as simple as possible. It should ensure that any revised structures are made publicly available and are widely communicated."**

This particular finding and recommendation were based upon a structure diagram provided to Members by Calderdale officers to show the different points at which both officers and Members from Calderdale have an interface with the Combined Authority. Although a useful guide for that purpose and for demonstrating the numerous touchpoints between the two authorities, the diagram does not exemplify the formal decision making or committee structure of the Combined Authority and may therefore inadvertently have implied a more opaque structure than is the case.

In fact, putting aside the necessary technical appraisal activity conducted by officer working groups, the actual formal decision making process of the Combined Authority is relatively straightforward. Committee arrangements (including terms of reference and membership) are all published on the Combined Authority's web-site, and updated when revised. However, it is recognised that publication of a diagram depicting the formal decision making structure of the CA and its committees would provide a useful addition to evidence the interplay between the different groups, and it is proposed to publish this going forward.

In addition, the Leeds City Region Assurance Framework (published on the web-site) provides an overview of the Combined Authority and the LEP's governance arrangements. The Assurance Framework is kept up to date and reviewed annually, with the current review due to be completed by the end of February 2019. As part of this review, the Combined Authority will consider how the presentation of governance arrangements may be improved, for example, by the inclusion of a current structure chart.

The Combined Authority keeps its decision-making structure under review, with a view to promoting efficiency and transparency, and ensuring that the decision-making structure is fit for purpose. The Head of Legal and Governance Services carries out a review of governance arrangements each year, with changes to the structure approved by the Combined Authority at its annual meeting, (and exceptionally during the municipal year), further to informal consultation with Leaders and Chief Executives from all constituent councils and any other relevant Members.

By way of example, further to the annual review of governance arrangements, at the last annual meeting, the Combined Authority amalgamated the informal Planning

Portfolios Board with the Land and Assets Panel, (now the Place Panel). Also, in response to a request from Members, the Combined Authority formally appointed an Inclusive Growth and Public Policy Panel, replacing the informal Inclusive Growth Group.

### **Finding 5 – Keeping Councillors Involved:**

**Recommendation 4:** “WYCA should review its protocols to ensure that decision-making processes become fully transparent.”

**Recommendation 5:** “WYCA should ensure that it is clear when Members are taking decisions and when decisions are delegated to officers.”

The Officer Delegation Scheme sets out standing delegations to Combined Authority officers. It is approved each year at the annual meeting, and is published on the Combined Authority’s web-site. Any key decision taken by an officer must be formally recorded and published.

In relation to schemes, the Leeds City Region Assurance Framework provides for a bespoke approval path to be approved by the Combined Authority (i.e. Members) for each scheme. The bespoke approval path for a scheme specifies the decisions to be delegated to the Managing Director within specified tolerances. The extent of the delegation to the Managing Director varies, depending on the type, scale and complexity of each scheme and is set by Members on a scheme by scheme basis.

Inevitably, this approach effectively precludes a prescriptive general description of officer delegations in relation to the approval process for schemes. However, approval of a bespoke approval path for each scheme promotes efficiency, by ensuring that Members’ input is secured appropriately.

The Assurance Framework also sets out officers’ role in decision-making in relation to grant applications under various funding streams.

As part of the annual review of the Assurance Framework, the Combined Authority will review how it presents governance arrangements, including decision-making by officers and Members. How the proposed bespoke approval pathway for each scheme is presented in relevant committee reports will also be reviewed, with a view to making this clearer.

**Recommendation 6:** “WYCA should establish an effective information process and structure which will enable local Members to comment and contribute when an issue affects their ward.”

Calderdale Council agreed (in its response to recommendation 7) that their Chief Executive will ensure that ward members are aware of issues in their own wards that are being considered by the Combined Authority. We agree with this approach and will assist Calderdale Council in this process.

## Finding 9 – Looking west as well as within West Yorkshire

**Recommendation 13:** “WYCA should identify those activities that would benefit from collaboration with neighbouring areas, in particular Greater Manchester and East Lancashire and develop clear strategies for developing such collaboration.”

Roger Marsh, Leeds City Region LEP Chair (and Combined Authority Member), also chairs the ‘Northern Powerhouse 11 (‘NP11’)’. NP11 is a recently formed, government-funded board consisting of the Chairs of each of the 11 LEPs in the North of England. Its remit is to consider issues and develop strategies and programmes that cut cross regional boundaries amongst Northern LEP and Combined Authority areas. The West Yorkshire Combined Authority provides secretariat and policy support to the NP11 and supports pan-northern, cross-boundary cooperation where it makes sense to do so.

## Finding 10 – Scrutiny Committee – in WYCA and in Calderdale

**Recommendation 14:** “WYCA should take the opportunity of the appointment of a scrutiny officer to review the effectiveness of their scrutiny arrangements”

A dedicated scrutiny officer role was recruited in May 2018 and the Overview and Scrutiny Committee resolved to direct the Scrutiny Officer to begin a review of current scrutiny arrangements at its July 2018 meeting.

## Finding 11 – Meeting in places other than Leeds

**Recommendation 16:** “WYCA should arrange occasionally to hold its meetings and committee meetings in towns and cities other than Leeds.”

The Combined Authority has in the past held its main Combined Authority meeting at the headquarter offices of each of the West Yorkshire and York councils, however for logistical reasons this proved to be quite difficult and Members resolved not to continue the practice. It may be possible, during the planned refurbishment of Wellington House in 2019/20, to hold meetings in our district council partner’s offices and this will be explored.