
Report to: Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Date: 20 March 2020

Subject: **West Yorkshire Devolution**

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1. Purpose of this report

- 1.1 This report updates the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on matters related to devolution.
- 1.2 This report allows an opportunity for Overview and Scrutiny Committee to discuss the deal and the future role of the Committee in scrutinising the work of the Combined Authority.

2. Information

Background and main Issues

- 2.1 On 19 December 2019, the Leaders of West Yorkshire and York councils and the Chair of the Leeds City Region Enterprise Partnership wrote to the Prime Minister highlighting the opportunities and challenges for the region across key areas with specific requests for Government support on devolution, skills, transport, tackling the climate emergency and development of mass transit proposals.
- 2.2 The letter to the Prime Minister also identifies reaching a devolution settlement as an “urgent priority” and sets the goal of making significant progress, “with a view to agreeing a way forward” which can be announced in the Government’s first budget. The letter states:

“Our urgent priority is to secure the benefits of devolution for all our communities. This is a vital part of completing the devolution map across the country and will enable us to drive economic growth, tackle the climate emergency and regenerate, strengthen and level up our towns.”

We seek to build on the progress made following your speech in Rotherham supporting Yorkshire-wide collaboration and opening up negotiations on a possible Leeds City Region agreement, alongside making progress towards devolution for all parts of Yorkshire. We ask that these productive discussions continue, with a view to agreeing a way forward that can be announced in your Government's first budget."

2.3 West Yorkshire Leaders met with the then Exchequer Secretary, Simon Clarke MP and then Northern Powerhouse Minister Jake Berry MP on 29 January 2020, where it was agreed that formal negotiations would begin to create a devolution deal for the City Region.

2.4 Leaders met again with the now Minister of State for Housing, Local Government and Communities, Simon Clarke MP, on 27 February to continue discussions.

Devolution deal agreed

2.5 A devolution deal between West Yorkshire and Government was announced by the Chancellor of the Exchequer at the 11 March 2020 Budget. The deal is the biggest of the devolution deals agreed so far and includes:

- £38 million per year for 30 years into West Yorkshire Investment Fund with significant freedoms to spend on local priorities
- Government commitment to work with West Yorkshire to develop modern mass transit system through access to a new five-year integrated transport settlement
- £317 million to invest in public transport, cycling and walking through Transforming Cities Fund with local flexibility on delivery
- A £25 million fund to support the development of a British Library North in Leeds
- Control of the £63 million annual Adult Education Budget for West Yorkshire
- £500,000 of Government funding to support master-planning in Bradford City Centre to maximise regeneration opportunities from Northern Powerhouse Rail
- Funding for the next stage of development of the outline business case for Leeds station redevelopment.
- £3.2 million to support the development of a pipeline of housing sites across West Yorkshire.
- £200,000 Government funding for collaboration at a Yorkshire-level through the Yorkshire Leaders Board

2.6 The West Yorkshire Devolution Deal document includes references to future scrutiny arrangements and is expected to be published by the government shortly but could not be included in this pack as it had not been made public at the time of publication. It will be appended to the agenda pack as a supplement and sent to scrutiny members as soon as it is published. A further verbal update will be given at the meeting.

3. Financial Implications

- 3.1 The devolution deal will result in at least £1.8bn of additional Government investment coming to the region.

4. Legal Implications

- 4.1 The devolution deal requires endorsement by each of the constituent councils, followed by a statutory process including consultation.

5. Staffing Implications

- 5.1 The devolution deal is likely to have an impact on the staffing arrangements at the Combined Authority.

6. External Consultees

- 6.1 No external consultations have been undertaken. The statutory process to bring the deal into force requires a public consultation,

7. Recommendations

- 7.1 That the Overview and Scrutiny Committee note the report and consider the role of the Committee in the context of the West Yorkshire devolution deal.

8. Background Documents

None.

9. Appendices

None – the West Yorkshire Devolution Deal document will be appended as a supplement to this agenda pack and sent to committee members when made available by the government.