

Mayor Tracy Brabin
West Yorkshire Combined Authority
40-50 Wellington Street
Leeds
LS1 2DE

Rt Hon Michael Gove MP
Secretary of State for Levelling Up,
Housing and Communities
By Email

30 January 2024

Dear Secretary of State,

We are writing to present West Yorkshire Combined Authority's application for Level 4 Devolution. Although this does not meet the full ambition that we have for deeper devolution in West Yorkshire, we are pleased to take this step towards full trailblazer devolution with Government.

This latest step is vital in ensuring that future devolution for West Yorkshire meets our ambitions for inclusive growth, reflecting the size and diversity of authorities within the region, and the need to balance our uniqueness of place with our single functional economic area.

We are perfectly positioned to be the key driver of economic growth for the North of England and beyond and as one of the largest Mayoral Combined Authorities in the country, also responsible for the functions of the Police and Crime Commissioner, we have a strong track record of partnership working to deliver our ambitions and shared programme of objectives.

Over the last eight years, we have evolved – moving from a Combined Authority working with the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP), delivering the largest Growth Deal in the country, totalling in excess of half a billion pounds - to agreeing a historic Devolution Deal and being led by our directly elected mayor. Our success can be seen in the wide range of transport, economic development, housing and net zero programmes and schemes benefiting local people, businesses and places across West Yorkshire that have been delivered during this time.

Our success to date, coupled with our ambitious plans for the future in respect of mass transit, bus reform, skills and employment, demonstrates our ambition, long-term commitment and appetite for delivery whilst also creating the certainty and confidence that we will continue to develop and deliver pipelines of transformational, locally determined schemes for West Yorkshire well into the future.

This success is underpinned by robust governance, based around the principles of accountability and transparency. Our governance was reviewed and further strengthened in 2021 following our initial devolution deal, to ensure a robust committee structure and scrutiny approach was in place covering the breadth of the Combined Authority's work.

Our ambition, knowledge and collective expertise, together with our recognised track record is why West Yorkshire is a trusted national partner and as such we can confirm that we meet the eligibility criteria for Level 4 Devolution. We are also therefore pleased to confirm that:

- The elements of the Level 4 Framework, for which we are applying, are included at Appendix 1 to this letter.
- Where that element of the Framework requires new powers and functions, we will follow the procedures as set out in legislation for conferring these to a Combined Authority. We understand that this includes the requirement for public consultation.
- We would like to understand the Government's position on the inclusion of strategic planning powers and the strategic infrastructure tariff, two elements of our 2020 Deal which were not included in the Order laid before Parliament. We understood at the time that these powers would be conferred as soon as planning reforms were completed but as yet, these have not been forthcoming.
- We have identified an initial set of Technical Adjustments to Historic Statutes and Guidance, included at Appendix 2 to this letter, which we would like to explore further with Government and take forward as part of our Level 4 Devolution Deal.
- We understand that the speed at which commitments are implemented will depend on our ability to demonstrate we have met the readiness conditions Government has specified for each policy.
- We are committed to implementing the requirements of the Scrutiny Protocol by the end of June 2024 and reporting on progress within 12 months of the Levelling Up Secretary confirming Government's agreement to proceed.

Our application is subject to ratification of the deal by all partners and the statutory requirements referred to within this document, including the consent of all councils affected and parliamentary approval of the secondary legislation implementing the provisions of the Deal.

In progressing with a Level 4 Deal for West Yorkshire, we would also like to have further conversations with Government about the timescales outlined in the Level 4 Technical Guidance, particularly with respect to those policy areas which are linked to work currently underway on Trailblazer Deals in Greater Manchester and the West Midlands. We believe these timescales should be brought forward and confirmed at the earliest opportunity, not least because we are already progressing a number of these locally and will be to add value to discussions and work currently underway.

In addition, we would like to see the final year of the Brownfield Housing Fund programme devolved to the Combined Authority. This would allow us to respond to more opportunities to bring forward housing by removing the national constraints on scope and time.

As you are aware in May 2023, we signed off our bold [West Yorkshire Plan](#), which sets out our vision to be a place that works for all, an engine room of ideas where anyone can make a home. Our plan is underpinned by five ambitious missions, which will drive our work to 2040.

We recognise the value of working together and the benefits this brings. We know that we cannot realise our vision and missions in isolation and will continue to work in partnership with local partners and Government to deliver.

As a Mayoral Combined Authority, we are ideally placed to address the challenges our communities face and are committed to working in partnership with wider stakeholders across the region. For example, our strong working relationship with our Integrated Care Board partners to address wider system challenges specifically in respect to health put us in a strong position to lead the design and delivery of initiatives such as the WorkWell programme which closely aligns with our ambitions for Level 4 Devolution.

However, to enable West Yorkshire to realise its full potential and to enable our missions to be achieved, we will require more than is currently on the table. We will therefore be seeking to discuss the further powers, funding, freedoms and flexibilities for West Yorkshire we would want to see in place as soon as possible beyond this current offer.

Our wider propositions, include:

- Certainty, stability and **fairness in Local Government Funding**
- Further **devolution** of funding and powers, to include:
 - A **single settlement**
 - Support to continue delivery of the **integrated transport system** West Yorkshire needs including:
 - Revenue funding for buses

- Assurance of the Government's continued commitment to Mass Transit in West Yorkshire.
- Delivering strategic rail infrastructure to connect West Yorkshire.
- **Full devolution of all adult employment, skills and careers funding**
- Long-term flexible **devolved funding and powers for net zero**
- Long-term sustainable funding to ensure continued **support to businesses.**

We have detailed plans which sit behind our application and proposition and are happy to host you again in West Yorkshire to highlight our priorities for the region and discuss how we can work together for a better future.

We look forward to hearing back from you regarding this application and working with you to create a West Yorkshire that works for all.

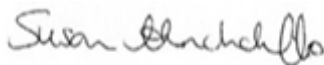
Kind regards,



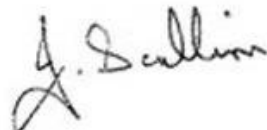
Mayor Tracy Brabin
West Yorkshire Combined Authority



Cllr James Lewis
Leader, Leeds City Council




Cllr Susan Hinchcliffe
Leader, City of Bradford
Metropolitan District Council



Cllr Jane Scullion
Leader, Calderdale Council



Cllr Cathy Scott
Leader, Kirklees Council



Cllr Denise Jeffery
Leader, Wakefield Council

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Elements of the Framework Applied For by West Yorkshire

Appendix 2 – Suggested Technical Adjustments to Historic Statutes or
Guidance – January 2024

Appendix 1 – Elements of the Level 4 Devolution Framework Applied for by West Yorkshire

Funding Simplification
Funding simplification
Removal of Gainshare Gateway Reviews
General Power of Competence
Skills & Employment
<i>Skills and Employment package – application for all elements.</i>
Housing & Land
Affordable Homes Programme
Housing quality
Mayoral development orders
Compulsory purchase powers
Public sector land
Resilience and contingency planning
Transport
<i>Transport package, with a focus on single settlement.</i>
Net zero, climate change and natural capital
Devolution of net zero funding pilot including buildings retrofit
Clean heat
Strategic energy system planning
Networks
Climate change and natural capital
Innovation, trade and investment
Trade and investment
Business support
Export
Partnership working
Innovation
Culture
Public Health
Health services
Technical adjustments to historic statutes or guidance
Access to powers previously devolved elsewhere

Appendix 2 - Suggested Technical Adjustments to Historic Statutes or Guidance January 2024

Technical Adjustments and Level 3 Standardisation

The following are an initial outline of suggested Technical Adjustments to Historic Statutes or Guidance that we would wish to explore with Government as part of our Level 4 Devolution Deal application.

This list is not exhaustive and as we progress through negotiations we would welcome the opportunity to identify additional adjustments.

1. Use of the Mayoral precept to support and pay for functions aligned to the wider general power of competence, for example bus franchising.
2. Change in responsibility for approval of roundabouts: This request would pass the powers of approval for roundabouts from the Secretary of State to West Yorkshire Combined Authority/Local Authorities.
3. The Office of Mayor and Local Authority Leaders (and potentially wider Local Authority Members) to attract a pension: Currently, the Mayor and Local Authority Leaders cannot access a pension. This is in contrast to other similar high-office political roles such as Police and Crime Commissioners.