

Report of Chief Executive

Report to Full Council

Date: 23rd March 2016

Subject: Devolution

Are specific electoral Wards affected? If relevant, name(s) of Ward(s):	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Are there implications for equality and diversity and cohesion and integration?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Is the decision eligible for Call-In?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information? If relevant, Access to Information Procedure Rule number: Appendix number:	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No

Summary of main issues

1. This report is intended to update Members on matters in the Leeds City Region Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) and through the West Yorkshire Combined Authority (WYCA).
2. The main issues described in this report are from the latest public WYCA meeting in February.

Recommendations

3. Members are asked to consider the content of this paper and action that might be needed from Leeds City Council as a result.

Purpose of this report

- 1.1 This report is intended to update Members on matters in the Leeds City Region LEP and the West Yorkshire Combined Authority.
- 1.2 Specifically this report provides details of the latest public combined authority meeting in February.

2. Background information

- 2.1 Following cross party agreement this is the fifth report to Full Council to provide an update to Members on the work of the WYCA and Leeds City Region LEP.
- 2.2 Devolution remains a central discussion for the city region and announcements have been made elsewhere of deals agreed with central Government prior to the March 2016 budget by Greater Manchester, Sheffield City Region, the North East, Teeside, Liverpool and West Midlands. The WYCA has been working with other partner authorities to draw up proposals for a further devolution deal to the one agreed in March 2015. A proposal has been submitted to the Treasury and negotiations continue regarding the freedoms and flexibilities of a possible deal.

Main Issues

- 2.3 As well as devolution, the following items were discussed at the Combined Authority meeting on the 4th February 2016.

2.3.1 Business Flood Recovery Fund

The meeting supported establishing a Business Flood Recovery Fund, to be used to support businesses in the process of returning to their pre-flood level of operation.

WYCA approved £3.6 million from the 2016/17 Growth Deal in addition to £1.4 million recommended by the CA's Investment Committee for the fund to help SMEs across Leeds City Region.

The fund is now open to businesses in the region, with grants of between £5000 and £100,000. Funding will be aimed specifically at supporting businesses with critical capital investment requirements.

2.3.2 Growth Deal Approvals

This item was an update to transport projects being progressed as part of the gateway stages for Growth Deal schemes. These projects are being developed through West Yorkshire Combined Authority's £1bn, 10-year Transport Fund Programme. Over £7.5 million of funding was approved at the meeting for projects that are designed to accelerate growth and create jobs in the city region.

The key projects within Leeds are:

- Leeds City Centre Gateway 1

- Rail Station Car Parks (including Horsforth and Morley stations in Leeds)
- Detailed designs and planning work to improve traffic at Leeds' Armly, Gyrotory and M621 junctions 3 and 4 (part of a wider package of improvements designed to remove most traffic from City Square, enhance access to the rail station and ensure that Leeds is 'HS2-ready').
- Improved links to Leeds Bradford Airport.

2.3.3 Budget and Business Plan for 2016/17

The outline of the WYCA business plan and revenue budget for 2016/17 was approved at the meeting. This year's budget covers the full extent of the CA's activities.

This document highlights the key areas of the budget, including:

- Concessionary travel
- Subsidised bus services
- Passenger services
- Rail costs
- Policy and delivery
- Strategic priorities – to respond to the Buses bill and devolution bill.
- Economy

The business plan is still being developed, however, sets out a number of key actions including:

- Agreeing and implementing a second-stage devolution deal
- Deliver the growth deal and Transport Fund projects
- Supporting the work on improving transport

This item further notes that WYCA will be carrying out organisational realignment to fully integrate teams that have come together under the Combined Authority.

2.3.4 Rail North and Transport for the North

Following the awarding of Northern and Trans Pennine franchises on the 9th December 2015, an update was given on new franchises that will commence on the 1st April 2016.

The new working arrangements will see WYCA work in partnership with Rail North and the Department for Transport.

After the passage of the Cities and Local Government Devolution Act, Transport for the North is set to become a statutory organisation enabling the north of England to draw down powers and resources from central government to deliver improvements to transport.

WYCA is leading on two work-streams:

- Local Strategic Connectivity
- Integrated and Smart Travel

2.3.5 Refresh of the Leeds City Region Strategic Economic Plan

This item discussed updates on the progress of the revision of the Strategic Economic Plan agreed in September 2015. The aim is for the final version of the revised plan to be approved at the next meeting on the 5th April.

The central focus of the plan will be good growth measured against growth & productivity, employment, earnings, skills and sustainability.

This item further discussed the work to update the economic evidence base underpinning the strategic Economic Plan.

A programme of engagement with business, wider public sector stakeholders and members of the public took place throughout February. This work will continue to reflect emerging policy, particularly around further devolution.

3. Corporate Considerations

3.1 Consultation and Engagement

As this report is providing an update from a WYCA meeting, there hasn't been any specific consultation and engagement.

3.2 Equality and Diversity / Cohesion and Integration

There are no specific implications for this report.

3.3 Council policies and Best Council Plan

The Best Council Plan priorities refer to aspects of the WYCA work and are undertaken in that context.

3.4 Resources and value for money

There are no specific implications for this report.

3.5 Legal Implications, Access to Information and Call In

There are no specific legal implications arising from this report.

3.6 Risk Management

There are no specific implications for this report.

3.7 Recommendations

Members are asked to consider the content of this paper and action that might be needed from Leeds City Council as a result.

3.8 Background documents¹

None

¹ The background documents listed in this section are available to download from the Council's website, unless they contain confidential or exempt information. The list of background documents does not include published works.