

West Midlands Combined Authority

Bromsgrove District Council will consider whether to join the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA).

Last year, after public consultation with our residents, we decided not to formally consider it as a Council as we felt there wasn't enough information about the Combined Authority and we wanted to look elsewhere, locally, to see if there was another deal on the table, which it doesn't seem in the short term there will be. It is clear that Government are now working on larger geographic footprints than single counties without a mayoral model. The Worcestershire Leaders have recently met to consider next steps and we agreed that many of the things contained in the Worcestershire devolution document we can and will continue to pursue.

We will continue to work together to see what can be done without a devolution deal and assess whether a different configuration or arrangement could achieve our desired outcomes whilst continuing to monitor the progress of those deals already agreed and the evolving position of the Government on deals outside of the City Mayor model.

We have been approached by the Chairman of the Shadow West Midlands Combined Authority as to whether the Council wants to consider becoming a Non Constituent Member of the WMCA. The WMCA has progressed significantly and is the biggest Combined Authority in the country and is growing. It includes the seven constituent councils of Birmingham, Coventry, Dudley, Sandwell, Solihull Walsall and Wolverhampton plus the three Local Enterprise partnerships (LEPs).

The WMCA launched its Statement of Intent in July 2015 and since then has been joined by Cannock, Nuneaton & Bedworth, Redditch, Tamworth and Telford and Wrekin Councils.

Non-constituent membership provides the opportunity for collaboration across the region, a seat at the table to engage with and influence the direction and priorities of the Combined Authority. Non-constituents play a full role in the business of Combined Authority Shadow Board.

Stratford and Shropshire County have also now voted to be part of the WMCA and will join officially later in the year. Warwickshire are voting later this month (May) with a recommendation to approve. Other non constituents are the Police Crime Commission and West Midlands Fire Service.

Together the partnership works together to move powers from Whitehall to the West Midlands and our locally elected politicians who know this region best. Individually councils will deliver local services and retain their identity and sovereignty but on the big decisions will have the resources to work together.

WMCA's first devolution deal (DD) was signed in November and was the largest one nationally to date and will unlock over £8bn of investment over a ten year period and see, in essence, 500,000 new jobs, developed skills, better transport, improved housing and crucially public sector reform for the region.

DD highlights include:

- The £4.4bn HS2 Growth Strategy to ensure maximum economic benefit from the HS2 investment. This will include the HS2/UK Central interchange, Curzon Master plan, expansion of the metro network to the Black Country and HS2 stations, UK Central infrastructure package, including new transport links to Coventry and enhancing the HS2 supply chain.
- Additional transport investment of £1,670m to support the UK Central Coventry scheme, other transport investment and highways maintenance of the key route network.
- A £500m housing investment fund (mainly locally funded). This will support the development of new homes
- A £200m land remediation fund. This will enable brownfield land to be brought back into use for housing and employment
- A £1bn Collective Investment Vehicle (locally funded) to help companies invest and grow.
- A £50m Innovation Centre
- A £30m employment, education and skills programme

The WMCA is also a key partner of the Government's Midlands Engine ambition which will bring together partners to work more closely to achieve greater regional economic growth and productivity improvement. The Engine will cover 86 local authorities and 11 LEPs and covers 17.9% of the UK population, with an economy worth £222bn. It also contains two core cities, 11.5 million citizens, 27 universities and three international airports.

This is why we think it is worth considering again.