



Department for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities

Rt Hon Michael Gove MP
Secretary of State for Levelling up, Housing & Communities
Minister for Intergovernmental Relations
2 Marsham Street
London
SW1P 4DF

Our Ref: MC2024/05635

Andy Street
Mayor of the West Midlands Combined Authority
16 Summer Lane
Birmingham
B19 3SD

1 March 2024

Dear Andy,

Thank you for your letter of 13 February regarding West Midland Combined Authority's (WMCA) response to the Technical Paper on Level Devolution Framework, which my Department published in November. I am delighted that, following your trailblazer devolution deal last March, WMCA continue to strive for more levers to deliver for the people of the West Midlands. This demonstrates both WMCA and the Government's ongoing commitment to devolution.

Given WMCA's trailblazer status and the work, which you rightly point to in your letter, already underway to implement both the Scrutiny Protocol and the enhanced scrutiny measures agreed in your trailblazer deal, WMCA is clearly eligible for Level 4 devolution. This letter acts as the Government's formal recognition of that and our intention to move forward on the points you have raised.

On gainshare review, as set out at Autumn Statement, the five-yearly review will be removed for mature institutions, like WMCA, subject to meeting the criteria. This includes ensuring that the Local Evaluation Framework is as robust as possible.

On Local Skills Improvement Plan boundaries, the Department for Education (DfE) have committed to reviewing the geographies of LSIPs in 2025, when the current round of LSIP funding ends, to help ensure they are aligned with the geographies of devolution where possible. I would encourage your officials to discuss this with their counterparts at DfE, with whom I know they are already engaging as part of the work to implement the trailblazer deal.

On remuneration of Portfolio Holders, as you acknowledge, given the likely need for primary legislation and the applicability beyond WMCA to other Combined Authorities, my Department will need to consider this, in slower time, alongside the other adjustments suggested. My officials will work with your officers and those of the other Combined Authorities to consider the options.

Finally, it was great to visit the Lockside development in Birchills to see firsthand how the old Caparo steelworks is being transformed into a 252-home estate featuring properties for sale, social rent and older people's housing. It is an exemplar of our joint ambition to provide more affordable housing and to use brownfield redevelopment first.

With every good wish,

RT HON MICHAEL GOVE MP
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