



WEST MIDLANDS
COMBINED AUTHORITY

Summary of engagement analysis on proposals for a West Midlands Combined Authority

October 2015



Development of proposals for a Combined Authority in the West Midlands

Engagement with and feedback from neighbouring authorities, key stakeholders and the public was key to shaping and defining the Combined Authority proposals. This was particularly the case with shaping the Combined Authority through engagement with neighbouring authorities and the three Local Enterprise Partnerships that cover the area: The Black Country, Greater Birmingham and Solihull and Coventry and Warwickshire.

Early in the development of proposals for a Combined Authority, Leaders of the seven metropolitan authorities set out the ambition to collaborate across the three LEP area. This was carried out through Leaders, Chief Executives and LEP representatives of the three LEP area, attending regular Combined Authority meetings. Individual meetings with our advisors to understand individual authority's perspectives were also carried out.

This engagement and collaboration shaped the Combined Authority proposals and has culminated in five districts, at least one from each County comprising the three LEP area (Staffordshire, Worcestershire, Warwickshire), and the three LEPs, joining the West Midlands Combined Authority as non-constituent members.

The wider engagement approach taken was similar for six of the seven Metropolitan authorities. Coventry City Council's approach was additional to the one detailed in this report and was as a result of a greater degree of local concern over the potential establishment of the Combined Authority and calls for a referendum on the issue.

Coventry City Council's approach is briefly detailed in the latter section of this report and their engagement and consultation summary link is available on their website¹.

Engagement across the West Midlands

Engagement across the West Midlands Metropolitan area involved:

- Writing to a representative sample of 465 stakeholders, comprising key private sector employers, public sector bodies and third sector organisations;
- The establishment of an online survey to collate the views of stakeholders during August and early September 2015;
- Attendance of the LEPs and authorities within the three LEP area, and economically linked authorities, to regular Combined Authority meetings;
- Opportunities for the public to provide feedback through contact details on the West Midlands Combined Authority website and through usual Council channels;

¹ <http://democraticservices.coventry.gov.uk/documents/s25784/Devolution%20and%20Economic%20Growth%20-%20Scheme%20for%20Setting%20Up%20a%20West%20Midlands%20Combined%20Authority%20-%20Appendix.pdf>

- Holding a West Midlands Combined Authority Parliamentary event, briefing MPs beforehand, attendance at both the Conservative and the Labour Party Conferences, proposing and supporting the LGA Devolution event and facilitating the Law Society event.
- A number of formal and informal briefings with the business and third sector communities, including the Chambers of Commerce and Sustainability West Midlands.

Online engagement analysis

An online survey was completed by 305 respondents and had free text fields for general comments together with 8 questions in respect of a Combined Authority in the West Midlands and:

- the efficiency and effectiveness of transport and economic development/regeneration;
- the impact on local communities, and
- the prospective of more joined up working with Local Enterprise Partnerships.

The survey asked 9 key questions, of those respondents who were happy for us to share responses (285, 93% of respondents), a summary is detailed below:

Question 1 - Please indicate whether you agree with the following statements:

West Midlands Combined Authority	Agree		Disagree		Don't know	
	Responses	%	Responses	%	Responses	%
It will improve transport in the region by making it more efficient	173	62%	64	23%	40	14%
It will improve transport in the region by making it more effective	169	62%	61	22%	43	16%
It will improve economic development and regeneration in the area	185	67%	62	23%	27	10%
It will provide greater opportunity for growth and prosperity	189	68%	63	23%	24	9%
It will make the way the region works more efficient	167	60%	74	27%	33	12%
It will not have an adverse effect upon the identity of the local community in our area	130	47%	112	40%	33	12%
It will not have an adverse effect on the interests of the local community in our area	129	47%	101	36%	46	17%
It provides a platform for better, joined-up working with Local Enterprise Partnerships	190	69%	61	22%	24	9%

% are rounded and so may not add up to 100%.

Better, joined up working with Local Enterprise Partnerships

The most popular statement agreed with by respondents was around the West Midlands Combined Authority providing a platform for better, joined-up working with local enterprise partnerships (69% of respondents). This was agreed with by nearly 90% of respondents in Birmingham, but only 45% in Dudley – though this was still the most popular statement amongst Dudley respondents.

Improving economic developments and regeneration in the area

The next area where there was most agreement on the impact of the West Midlands Combined Authority was around improvements to economic development and regeneration (67%) and growth and prosperity (68%). This was felt most strongly in Birmingham (86% and 87% respectively) and least in Dudley (41% and 43% respectively - though the two issues were 2nd and 3rd when responses were ranked from most to least agreed with).

The positive impact on growth and prosperity was ranked the highest statement agreed with in Wolverhampton, and 2nd in both Sandwell (83% agreed) and Dudley (43% agreed). This issue was ranked no lower than 4th in all areas. The positive impact on economic development and regeneration was ranked highest by two local authorities – Solihull (78%) and Walsall (77%). Again, this issue was ranked no lower than 4th in all areas.

Impact on interests and identity of local community

The statement most significantly disagreed with related to the impact of the West Midlands Combined Authority upon the identity of the local community (40%) and the interests of the local community in areas (36%). Regarding local identity, this was the most significant issue for four of the local authority areas – Wolverhampton (34%), Sandwell (31%), Coventry (30%) and Birmingham (20%). Regarding the impact on local interests, this was the most significant issue for two of the local authority areas, with 69% of Dudley respondents and 39% of Solihull respondents reporting they did not agree that there would be no impact on local interests. However, it is important to understand this in context – more people felt there would be no adverse impact in every local area, except in Dudley.

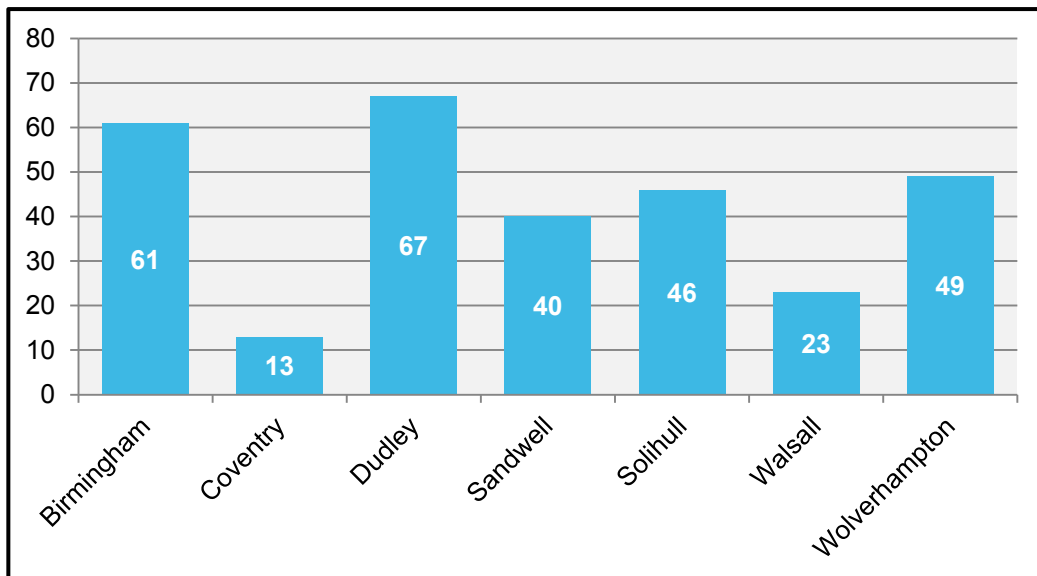
‘Don’t know’ responses received

The highest area where respondents ‘didn’t know’ if they agreed or disagreed was around how the West Midlands Combined Authority would impact upon the interests of the local community within an area (17%), followed closely by the impact on the efficiency and effectiveness of transport in the region (14% and 16% of respondents). This is in the context of over 60% of respondents agreeing with the statement that there would be a positive impact on these areas as a result of the West Midlands Combined Authority.

Question 5 - Are you happy for the content of your response to be shared with Government?

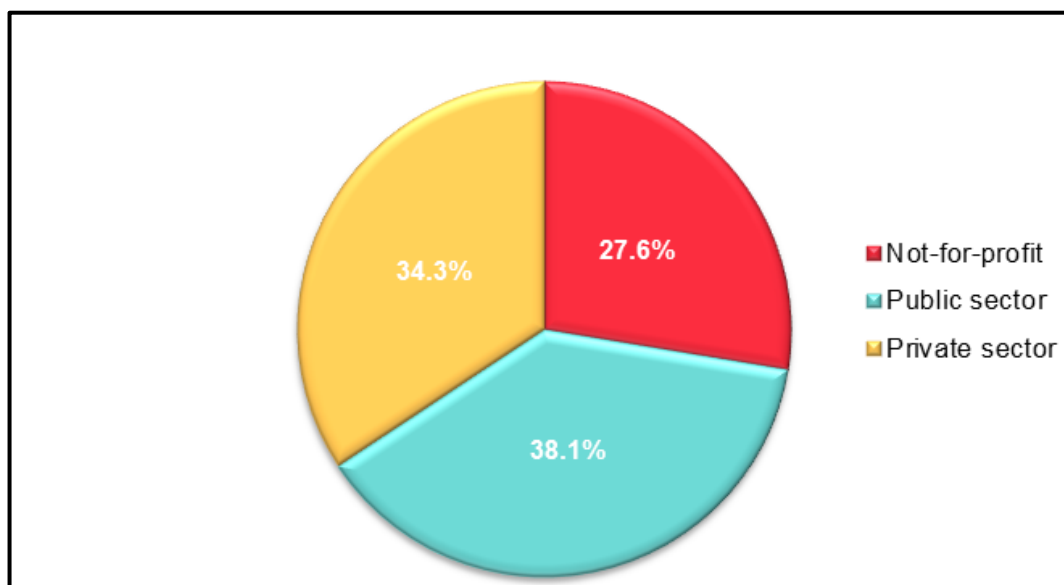
93% of respondents said they would be happy for the responses to be shared with Government. This is reflected in figures detailed in this report.

Question 6 – Which local authority are you and your organisation most closely associated with?



Please note: Coventry's figures are to be read in conjunction with their individual engagement and consultation (link is provided on page 2 of this report) as the low response rate may be due to the availability of other opportunities to give feedback through the local engagement programme.

Question 7 – What type of organisation are you?



Sector responses

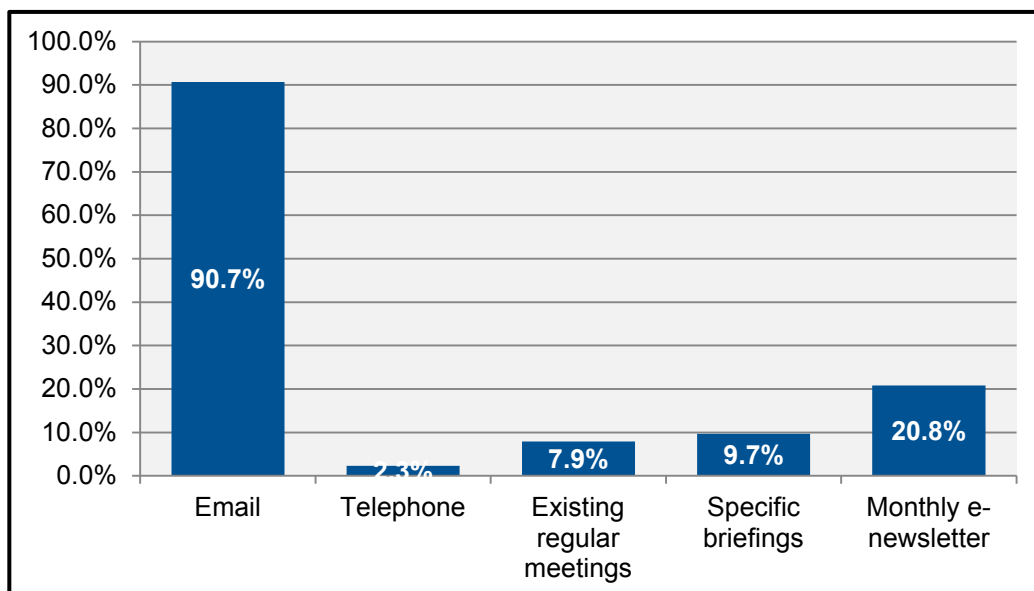
239 respondents answered question 7; 66 organisations skipped the question. Of those that responded and were happy for us to share their answers, respondents were as follows:

- Public sector organisations - 38%
- Private sector - 34%
- Not-for-profit - 27%

The average 'agree' rate to the statements posed in question 1 was highest amongst public sector respondents at 71%, followed by the private sector (63%) and then not-for profits (50%). Patterns for agreeing with question 1 statements are broadly similar across the three groups and with the overall survey response rate.

The most popular statement agreed with was around the platform for better, joined up working with Local Enterprise Partnerships by the public sector (82%) and private sector (72%). Amongst not-for-profits, more people disagreed with than agreed with the statements around the impact on the identity and interests of the local community.

Question 8 and 9 - Would you like to be kept informed of the development and events related to the combined authority, how would you like to be kept informed?



Engagement in Coventry

In the run up to and following Coventry City Council's agreement in principle to form a Combined Authority covering the three LEP, there was widespread media coverage of the issue and a lively debate locally on the implications of joining a Combined Authority.

Some residents feared that the move could see Coventry losing its identity and sovereignty as a major English city and become part of a larger council dominated by Birmingham, losing the city's historic links with Warwickshire. Two petitions were started calling for the issue to be put to a referendum.

In response and recognition of the concerns raised in Coventry, a widespread programme of engagement and consultation ran from July – September 2015,

The process involved:

- Supply of factual information to ensure there were less misunderstandings about the role and power of a combined authority.
- Establishing a "Citizen's Panel" – a representative group of residents from across the city provided with detailed reports and information and with the remit to call in external expert witnesses for questioning and discussions.
- Face to face engagement, including discussion and debate at July ward forums, throughout the city and open to all residents. Public debates/panel discussions to include politicians, business leaders, academics and residents and drop-in sessions for the public at a key city centre location to allow people to talk to council officers and councillors informally about Combined Authority.
- Digital and social media, including a dedicated web engagement portal that contains all public information and used council social media channels (Facebook, Twitter, YouTube etc.). Social media engagement included active two way conversations and debates with the public.
- Print and broadcast media interviews with key Coventry politicians and live web forum debates.

The summary of Coventry City Council's engagement and consultation activities on proposals for a West Midlands Combined Authority is appended to this report.

Additional submissions of support

Appended below are letters of support for the Combined Authority proposals, one from the three Chambers of Commerce that cover the West Midlands Combined Authority area and one from the three LEP chairs, contained within the 'Launch Statement. Broad support is highlighted in this report, complemented through positive feedback from the wider events/briefings held and provides essential insight to informing communications strategies.



29th July 2015

Cllr Roger Lawrence
Leader of the Council
Wolverhampton City Council
The Civic Centre
Wolverhampton
WV1 1SH

Dear Leader

As leaders of the three West Midlands' Chambers of Commerce, we are writing to offer our wholehearted support for the visionary West Midlands Combined Authority.

The statement of intent from the seven metropolitan authorities and the three Local Enterprise Partnerships provides a powerful basis for a successful Combined Authority.

We would now like to add formally the weight of the three leading business support organisations in the area, representing the private enterprise that will be vital to the success of Combined Authority.

We do believe that the Chambers should be collectively built into the engagement process going forward. The recent growth in our respective LEP areas was private-sector led and it is important that this continues.

Businesses in our regions see this as a tremendous opportunity to put the Black Country, Coventry, Greater Birmingham and Solihull at the heart of an economic revolution so it is important that strong collaboration between the private and public sectors is maintained and built upon.

By working together, we can deliver the jobs and growth that are vital to the economic development of the region.

As you have pointed out, the achievement of the goal of the Combined Authority will require new ways of working between the local authorities and the three LEPs and the private sector.

We look forward to helping to make that work by being at the heart of the Combined Authorities' development and its future.

Perhaps it would be fruitful to arrange talks between yourselves and representatives of the region's Chambers of Commerce to drive this process forwards.

We greatly look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'MA' followed by a flourish.

Margaret Corneby
Chief Executive
Black Country Chamber of
Commerce

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Louise Bennett'.

Louise Bennett
Chief Executive
Coventry & Warwickshire
Chamber of Commerce

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Paul Faulkner'.

Paul Faulkner
Chief Executive
Greater Birmingham Chambers
of Commerce



Combined Authority – Statement of Intent

We write as the Chairs of the Black Country, Coventry and Warwickshire and Greater Birmingham and Solihull Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) to welcome your Statement of Intent to create a Combined Authority embracing our collective LEP areas. We recognise that this is an important step to enabling further economic growth at a faster pace for our areas whilst undertaking necessary public sector reform and, in due course, achieving further devolved powers from Government.

We believe there is already a strong economic foundation on which to build the Combined Authority, based on recent private sector led growth in our respective LEP areas. The economic statistics show that we are beginning to address many of the issues that have previously held back this region. This recent success has been based on a very strong collaboration between the public and private sectors, which has included the joint setting of strategic objectives and the development of innovative and cost effective delivery models.

STEWART TOWE, CBE
Chair, Black Country LEP



We have developed enduring partnerships and the Combined Authority offers us a further and exciting opportunity to show the country how public and private sectors working together can deliver jobs and growth. Maintaining this collaborative approach as the Combined Authority develops is a key principle for our collective success. Furthermore, a private sector that is the focal point of our future economic development decisions will allow effective interventions to be created that address the barriers to business growth and competitiveness. Jointly, we must work together to ensure that we gain greater economic outcomes than we can achieve as individual LEPs working collectively. In doing so, we should look to tackle the stubborn issues that remain within our economy, such as improving the levels of productivity and worklessness.

We are committed to work with you to assess and deliver this "economy plus" model and would be pleased to lead in the creation of an overarching Strategic Economic Plan (SEP) for the Combined Authority, based on a refreshing of our current SEPs and reflecting the benefits that can be achieved through a greater combining of our efforts. This will be a key document for the Combined Authority, which will clearly establish the economic and investment priorities for the future. Our approach will be based on a detailed economic analysis, an honest appraisal as to where

JONATHAN BROWNING
Chair, Coventry & Warwick LEP



further opportunities for improvement lie, and the development of innovative joined up solutions for further private sector growth and investment and public sector reform that will underpin our future dialogue with Government.

We are pleased that, as Metropolitan Authorities, you have begun to engage with the District and County Authorities that make up our full LEP areas. Gaining the full commitment of all our local authorities should now be a top priority. We believe that a Combined Authority, including all of these partners, is critical to achieving maximum economic growth. We will continue to work with you to facilitate this full and nationally unique economic partnership.

In conclusion, we are pleased that the Metropolitan Authorities have come together to create a Statement of Intent around the formation of a Combined Authority. We look forward to working with you to evolve this further such that, working across our full LEP geographies, we create jointly an economy that is the strongest outside London and contributes fully to the Government's vision of a wider "Midlands Engine for Growth".

ANDY STREET
Chair, Greater Birmingham & Solihull LEP

