

# Single Assurance Framework

November 2025



West Midlands  
Combined Authority

## VERSION CONTROL SHEET

Version No.	Date	Approver	Update
V3.0	September 2022	WMCA Board	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review to update SAF, to include Appendices on Housing, AEB, and Transport, removal of duplication.</li> </ul>
V4.0	September 2023	WMCA Board	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Clearer highlighting of Governance role and approvals</li> <li>Inclusion of Socio-Economic Duty</li> <li>Updates to Inclusive Growth Framework</li> <li>Inclusion on Modern.gov for Approvals</li> <li>Change from Statutory Officers Panel to Designated Sign-off meeting.</li> <li>Changes in approval from SLT to Executive Board</li> <li>Updates to Adult Education Budget Programme</li> <li>Inclusion of checks and balances</li> </ul>
V5.0	October 2025	Delegated to Statutory Officers for approval  (WMCA Board decision Sept 2025)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>URLs updated; contact mailboxes added inc. Growth Plan</li> <li>Terminology of 'Approvals' updated to 'Decisions'</li> <li>Inclusion of Health Checks</li> <li>Assurance processes revised for Integrated Settlement</li> <li>MoU assurance requirements incorporated</li> <li>Mayor's role description updated</li> <li>ARAC and Oversight and Scrutiny Committees expanded</li> <li>Nolan Principles added</li> <li>High-level organogram added</li> <li>Value for Money statements revised</li> <li>Transport Projects section updated following DfT input</li> <li>Adult Education Budget Programme section revised including DfE input</li> <li>Inclusion of the Virements Policy</li> </ul>

This Framework will be reviewed, as a minimum, annually as per requirements, and amended in response to Government or organisational changes. Every effort will be made to ensure individual users of this Framework, and other key stakeholders are made aware of changes when they occur. The next scheduled review is scheduled to be completed within the next 12 months.

Advice and guidance regarding this policy Framework can be obtained from the West Midlands Combined Authority's Programme Centre of Excellence: [ProgrammeAssuranceandAppraisal@wmca.org.uk](mailto:ProgrammeAssuranceandAppraisal@wmca.org.uk)

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# 1. INTRODUCTION

HM Treasury define Assurance Frameworks as 'An objective examination of evidence for the purpose of providing an independent assessment on governance, risk management, and control processes for the organisation.'

The aim of this document is to set out how the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) will spend or invest public money responsibly, both openly and transparently, and achieve Value for Money (VFM). It provides a proportionate and consistent approach for the application and approval of all funding opportunities and the initiation, development and delivery of projects, programmes and activity that places a financial liability onto the WMCA that is not classed as Business as Usual (BAU).

## 1.1 The Purpose of the Single Assurance Framework

This document outlines:

- The WMCA response to the [English Devolution Accountability Framework](#)
- The respective roles and responsibilities of the WMCA Mayor, the Mayoral Combined Authority (MCA) and other elements of the decision-making
- The key processes for ensuring accountability, probity, transparency, legal compliance, managing risk and VFM.
- How potential investments will be assured, appraised, prioritised, approved and delivered.
- How the progress and impacts of these investments will be monitored and evaluated.

The Single Assurance Framework (SAF) sits alongside the following WMCA governance and policy documents:

- [WMCA Constitution](#)
- [Financial Regulations](#)
- [Single Commissioning Framework](#)
- [Investing With Us](#)
- Strategic Risk Management Framework (*to request a copy, contact [riskteam@wmca.org.uk](mailto:riskteam@wmca.org.uk)*)
- [Annual Business Plan, including Aims and Objectives](#)
- [West Midlands Growth Plan](#) outlines the West Midlands regional priorities, the annual business plan is WMCA internal working plan to deliver the overall Growth Plan.
- [Inclusive Growth Framework](#). The Assurance Framework has been written to ensure that projects are developed to deliver inclusive growth priorities
- Health and Equity Impact Assessments (*to request a copy, contact [equalitiesteam@wmca.org.uk](mailto:equalitiesteam@wmca.org.uk)*)

The SAF has been developed in response to the [English Devolution Accountability Framework](#). It applies to all existing and new funding and projects that place a financial liability onto the WMCA. It provides consistency of approach and standards for programme assurance, appraisal and decision-making. It also enables a proportionate approach to be applied for the development of business cases. In updating the SAF annually, and in between annual reviews where there are major changes to the processes or the [English Devolution Accountability Framework](#), the updated

SAF will be sent to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) for approval. It will then be uploaded to the Internet and Intranet for use.

The SAF is a set of systems, processes and protocols designed to provide an evidence base and independent assessment of the governance, risk management, and funding processes of a funding or grant applications. It enables WMCA to monitor, measure and scrutinise how well Policy Aims are being met, and risks are being managed. It also details processes to be implemented that will help to ensure an adequate response if risks or performance go into exception.

WMCA also operates according to:

- Local Government Accountability System within the [MHCLG Accounting Officer System Statement 2025 - GOV.UK](#)
- [Annual Local Government Finance Settlements](#)
- [LGA Medium-Term Financial Strategy: 2025/26 – 2029/30](#)
- [HM Treasury: International Guide to Developing the Programme Business Case](#)
- [The Green Book](#): Appraisal and Evaluation in Central Government
- [Orange Book](#) (guidance on establishing the concept of risk management)
- [Magenta Book](#) (guidance on what to consider when designing an evaluation)

The SAF provides assurance to the Departmental Accounting Officer by explaining how funding granted or devolved to the WMCA is allocated, and that there are robust local systems and controls in place which ensure resources are spent with regularity, propriety and value for money. The S73 Officer (Chief Finance Officer) is responsible for ensuring that best VFM is achieved. WMCA publishes its audited accounts annually on its website ([Annual Accounts](#).)

Within WMCA, the SAF is a valuable tool to enable the WMCA to deliver successful projects and explain the clear rationale through the development of business cases, detailing how objectives will be delivered, using HM Treasury Green Book principles.

## 2. ABOUT THE WEST MIDLANDS

### 2.1 The Mayoral Combined Authority

WMCA is a Mayoral Combined Authority and is an accountable public body established under [Section 103](#) of the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009. It was set up on 16 June 2016, with the mission of improving the quality of life for everyone who lives and works in the West Midlands. Its functions were provided or delegated to it by the following Orders:

- The West Midlands Combined Authority Order 2016
- The West Midlands (Functions and Amendment) Order 2017
- The West Midlands Combined Authority (Business Rate Supplements Functions and Amendments) Order 2018
- The West Midlands Combined Authority (Adult Education Functions) Order 2018

As and when Government officially devolves further powers to the Combined Authority, to deliver against new policy and agenda, this will be reflected in the SAF.

### 2.2 Future Devolution

The English Devolution and Community Empowerment Act (EDCEB) will bring a series of structural, governance, and functional changes to the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA). These may include:

- A new designation as an Established Mayoral Strategic Authority (EMSA)
- A move to a simple majority vote at Board meetings (currently a complex voting system dependent on the matter under consideration)
- Possible transfer of the Fire and Rescue Service and the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner
- New powers for the Mayor to appoint commissioners
- Retention of distinctive powers in relation to anti-social behaviour; smoking enforcement; air quality; education; road safety; permit schemes; and roadworks.

The Bill includes seven areas of competence as follows:

- Transport and local infrastructure
- Skills and employment support
- Housing and strategic planning
- Economic development and regeneration
- The environment and climate change
- Health, well-being and public service reform (new)
- Public safety (new)

### 2.3 Regional and Local Leadership

The leadership of the WMCA disseminates from the Mayor and the seven constituent local authorities, who have full voting rights. These are:

- Birmingham City Council
- Coventry City Council
- Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council

- Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council
- Solihull Metropolitan Council
- Walsall Metropolitan Borough Council
- City of Wolverhampton Council

There is also non-Constituent representation from Local Authorities outside of the West Midlands Constituent areas which can sign up for more than one Combined Authority. They are:

- Cannock Chase District Council
- North Warwickshire Borough Council
- Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough Council
- Redditch Borough Council
- Rugby Borough Council
- Shropshire Council
- Stratford-on-Avon District Council
- Tamworth Borough Council
- Telford and Wrekin Council
- Warwickshire County Council
- Warwick District Council

WMCA's leadership model brings together a directly elected Mayor, the Leaders of the seven constituent councils, and a broad network of regional partners. This structure allows the organisation to act with a clear mandate while maintaining strong local accountability.

The Mayor chairs the Combined Authority Board and is responsible for the strategic direction of the region. Richard Parker was elected Mayor in May 2024, following two previous terms since the role was created in 2017. The Mayor leads regional engagement with government, chairs the Investment Zone and Devolution Boards, and works with Leaders and Chief Executives to agree priorities and track delivery.

WMCA also works closely with neighbouring councils, NHS and education partners, anchor institutions, businesses and community groups. These partnerships are part of the wider leadership system that supports regional delivery.

Since 2024, regular strategic meetings between the Mayor, Leaders, Chief Executives and the West Midlands Growth Company have become the core leadership forum. These sessions have moved beyond operational updates to focus on shaping shared priorities and strengthening collective ownership of decisions.

The transformation programme has reinforced this shift. Each of the six devolution pillars is now led by a Metropolitan Chief Executive, supported by subject matter leads and programme teams. This approach creates clear accountability and helps join up decision-making between councils, WMCA officers and partners.

Formal decisions are made through the Combined Authority Board and its delegated boards. These are supported by the Single Assurance Framework, modern committee systems, and a 12-week planning cycle that allows earlier engagement, clear briefing and better challenge. This cycle has improved the quality of decision-making and made discussions more productive.

Mayoral surgeries, member briefings and councillor development sessions keep elected members engaged and informed. A dedicated Member Engagement team, unique among combined authorities, supports councillors with forward plans, scrutiny coordination and ongoing feedback.

A staff-led Pulse Survey helps track how leadership behaviours are experienced across the organisation.

WMCA's leadership model supports strong regional delivery. It combines political leadership, operational discipline and wider system partnership to align ambition and action across the region.

## 2.4 Purpose and Values

Together we are making the West Midlands the best place to live, work and visit.

Our values and the behaviors that underpin each of our values are being:

- Inclusive
- Innovative
- Collaborative
- Driven

The WMCA behavior framework allows us to easily identify the behaviors that drive successful performance and enables us to deliver our technical expertise effectively. Defining how we do our tasks is particularly important in establishing common ground around work practices. It provides a clear behavioral link to our Strategic Plan and Staff Charter, i.e. clarifying how we are expected to behave in delivering the priorities set down in key corporate documents.

The WMCA does this through its [Inclusive Growth Framework Fundamentals](#), which focuses all types of investment – public, private, capital, revenue, time, attention – on the same set of social and environmental missions.

This is expressed through the six WMCA Aims and Objectives which are operationalised through the annual business planning process.

When WMCA refreshes its near-term strategy, it consults with stakeholders.

## 2.5 WMCA Strategic Priorities and Outcomes

The [West Midlands Growth Plan](#) is the region's shared strategy for the decade ahead. It sets out how we will create more jobs, better homes and stronger places, while tackling inequalities and achieving net zero targets. The Growth Plan Outcomes (as aligned to the Trailblazer Devolution Deal and the Three-Year Strategic Plan):



## 2.6 Public Engagement on Defining WMCA's Strategic Priorities

The Growth Plan also includes a commitment to evolving the WMCA's Resident Assembly. The WMCA has facilitated a Resident Assembly since 2022 to involve residents in the development of its policies and programmes, with an initial focus on the environment. We will be evolving the Resident's Assembly to support the development of the region's Spatial Development Strategy. Thereafter, we will explore additional opportunities to involve residents in other developments on the horizon

The “golden thread” is the mechanism that ensures strategic coherence from the West Midlands Growth Plan through to delivery on the ground. It starts with our shared regional goal of higher living standards across the region, which are then translated into the WMCA Three-Year Strategic Plan (TYSP), which sets out the medium-term priorities and outcomes of our delivery, structured around the six devolution pillars. These pillars act as the bridge between the region's overarching ambitions and the practical actions required to achieve them, by teams across the WMCA. The ‘golden thread’ is completed by the WMCA Rolling Annual Corporate Plan (RACP), which operationalises these priorities into annual programmes, budgets and performance measures on an annual basis. In practice, this alignment ensures that every decision, investment and partnership is directly traceable back to the region's long-term goals, with clear accountability and a shared evidence base running throughout.

### 3. GOVERNANCE AND DECISION MAKING

#### 3.1 The Mayor

The WMCA Mayor has a manifesto of commitments on which they were directly elected by the electorate across the West Midlands constituent areas. The Mayor executes certain powers and functions that are devolved to the WMCA by Central Government, to deliver their manifesto of commitments to constituents.

The Mayor is the Chair of the WMCA Board and the Investment Zone Board. The Mayor provides leadership in terms of proposing a Mayoral budget and as part of the Board in agreeing the revenue and capital budgets for WMCA and ensuring the appropriate use of these budgets. All Mayoral functions are listed in the [WMCA Constitution](#).

To deliver the vision set out in his manifesto, the Mayor has organised his work around four clear priorities:

- Jobs for everyone – Investing in jobs, skills, training and apprenticeships, reducing youth unemployment, and ensuring everyone has a job that pays well.
- Homes for everyone – Building social and affordable homes and creating vibrant communities so that everyone will have a place to call home.
- Growth for everyone – Helping businesses grow, supporting innovation and creativity, and making sure everyone benefits and the environment is protected.
- Journeys for everyone – Connecting communities and making travel easier, safer and more affordable for everyone.

Each of these priorities is backed by CA policy and a clear focus on outcomes.

##### 3.1.1 Mayoral Taskforces

When Richard Parker was elected as Mayor in 2024, he sought to streamline decision making at the WMCA. Following consultation and feedback from local authority leaders, the decision was taken in June 2024 to remove portfolios and all advisory and thematic boards and panels. In place of these, the Mayor created four new taskforces aligned to his Mayoral Priorities:

- Jobs for Everyone
- Homes for Everyone
- Growth for Everyone
- Journeys for Everyone

Each taskforce member is part of the Mayor's Council of Experts and is not considered an independent voice of business. Instead, members are expected to:

- Provide expert advice and challenge policy development.
- Lead short-term projects to accelerate delivery.
- Promote inclusive, community-driven solutions.
- Collaborate across sectors to shape regional strategy

A review was also undertaken by the Chief Executive of Sandwell Council in relation to the Race Equalities Taskforce with a new Chair and new terms of reference having now been agreed.

Members of the Mayor's Taskforces are listed on the [Council of Experts](#) site.

## 3.2 The WMCA Board

The WMCA Board is the legal and accountable body for funding devolved to the WMCA. It is responsible for a range of functions including transport, housing, skills, economic development, and regeneration functions including post 18 education and training across the West Midlands region.

The Board sets strategy, approves devolution deals, determines transport strategy and spending priorities, allocates the annual budget (including the Integrated Settlement), and takes very large investment decisions.

The WMCA Board exercises all its powers and duties in accordance with the law and the Constitution and agrees policies and delegated responsibilities to conduct its business. ([WMCA Constitution](#))

The membership of the WMCA and the WMCA Board is set out in the West Midlands Combined Authority Order 2016. Since 2016, the only change to this membership has been the inclusion of Warwick District Council as a non-constituent member of the Board.

1. **Constituent authorities (full voting):** Birmingham, Coventry, Dudley, Sandwell, Solihull, Walsall, Wolverhampton.
2. **Non-constituent members (reduced voting):** Cannock Chase DC, Rugby BC, Stratford-on-Avon DC, Nuneaton & Bedworth BC, Redditch BC, Tamworth BC, Warwickshire CC, North Warwickshire BC, Shropshire Council, Telford & Wrekin Council, Warwick DC.
3. **Observers (no voting):** West Midlands Police & Crime Commissioner, Chair of West Midlands Fire & Rescue Authority, TUC.
4. The WMCA also works closely with neighbouring councils, universities, the NHS, business and civic partners across the wider West Midlands

Two delegated boards operate within the decision making framework:

- The Investment Board makes (or recommends) investment decisions across funds managed for the CA (e.g., brownfield and land funds), typically within a defined financial range.
- The Investment Zone Board oversees development and delivery of the West Midlands Investment Zone, aligning sites, incentives and compliance with government policy and technical guidance.

No WMCA Board member has a casting vote. If the vote was equal the decision would not be made.

Financial delegations allow Executive Directors, with Section 73 and Monitoring Officer consultation, to incur eligible expenditure within set limits to maintain delivery pace.

Our governance is supported by scrutiny and audit committees, a Single Assurance Framework aligned to national guidance, and maturing portfolio and risk disciplines that connect every decision to outcomes, milestones and value for money.

### 3.2.1 Recruitment of New Members

Members of the WMCA Board are appointed by the Constituent and Non-Constituent Authorities designated by the Orders establishing the WMCA. Members must be elected Members of their appointing Authority and must be replaced if they are no longer elected Members.

Members of other Committees of WMCA are nominated by their Authority and appointed to Committees by the WMCA Board.

### 3.2.2 Induction

The WMCA is in the process of developing a formal Member Development Strategy and a structured approach to developing both Members appointed to board/committees but also the wider 470 Constituent Councillors within the region. This work is being led by the Member Relationship Manager who has been in conversation with the LGA in relation to joining up work with the WM Member Development Group.

All elected are offered annual induction training covering the senior management structure and their roles, the governance structures including the SAF, how the combined authority is funded, risk, and the annual aims and objectives.

### 3.2.3 Code of Conduct

The Code of Conduct for members is set out within the [WMCA Constitution](#), and reminds members that they act on behalf of the whole region's interest and not just their particular area of the region. The Nolan Principles of Public Life ([Nolan](#)) provides a framework for the members and officers of WMCA. The public is entitled to expect the highest standard of conduct from all employees who work for the Authority. The Code helps to lay down guidelines for employees that will help maintain and improve standards and protect them from misunderstanding and criticism.

The seven principles of the Nolan Principles are illustrated below:



Training is carried out on a regular basis for staff in relation to the Code of Conduct and at all Corporate Induction sessions. All declarations of Interest and the Register of Gifts and Hospitality are kept updated and reviewed by the Monitoring Officer.

Training and guidance are also updated every year support WMCA employees during the pre-election period of heightened sensitivity.

There is an expectation that all staff and Board members adhere to the [WMCA Fraud and Corruption Policy](#).

### 3.2.4 Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

The WMCA Board, its sub committees and statutory committees are made up of elected representatives nominated by both Constituent and Non-Constituent Authorities. As such, the Combined Authority does not have direct control over the Board's composition. However, the Combined Authority is committed to fostering a Board that reflects the diversity of the West Midlands population. It therefore supports efforts by Constituent and Non-Constituent Authorities to ensure their appointed representatives are representative of their communities.

The membership of the WMCA Board can be viewed at: [Committee details - WMCA Board](#)

### 3.2.5 Renumeration

On 9 June 2023, WMCA Board agreed a member allowance scheme following recommendations from the independent remuneration panel:

#### West Midlands Combined Authority Members Scheme of Allowances 2024 / 25

- Mayor - £100,035
- Deputy Mayor - £21,060
- Chair, Overview & Scrutiny Committee - £10,003
- Constituent Member, Overview & Scrutiny Committee - £3,159
- Chair, Task & Finish Group - £2,500
- Chair, Transport Delivery Overview & Scrutiny Committee - £10,003
- Scrutiny Champions - £5,001
- Constituent Member, Transport Delivery Overview & Scrutiny Committee - £3,159
- Chair, Task & Finish Group - £2,500
- Chair, Audit, Risk & Assurance Committee - £10,003
- Constituent Member, Audit, Risk & Assurance Committee - £3,159
- Chair, Task & Finish Group - £2,500

## 3.3 Governance

WMCA governance includes local authority style checks and balances to ensure that standards in public life are maintained, value for money delivered, the voice of business included in decision making and that there is a strong culture of local scrutiny embedded across the organisation. These checks and balances include an Audit, Risk and Assurance Committee, and two Overview and Scrutiny Committees as laid out in sections 3.4 and 3.5 of this document and the [WMCA Constitution](#).

The Audit, Risk and Assurance Committee seeks to ensure that value for money is achieved by reviewing and scrutinising the WMCA's financial affairs (including devolved funds), and the report and all feedback from the external auditors in relation to the annual accounts. The WMCA's scrutiny function to meet the standards set out within the scrutiny protocol's 18 key principles. Training is carried out for elected members on these three committees at the start of the municipal year and includes instruction on how members are expected to uphold the Seven Principles of Public Life. See section 3.5 for further information.

### 3.4 Audit, Risk and Assurance Committee

WMCA has established an Audit, Risk and Assurance Committee (ARAC) in accordance with the requirements of the Combined Authorities (Overview and Scrutiny, Access to Information and Audit) Regulations 2017. ARAC provides an independent and high-level focus on the audit, assurance and reporting arrangements that underpin good governance and financial standards, providing independent assurance to the WMCA on the adequacy of the risk management framework and the internal control environment. It also provides an independent review of the governance, risk management and control frameworks and oversees the financial reporting and annual governance processes.

Membership of the Committee includes seven constituent authority councillors, four non-constituent authority councillors representing Shropshire, Staffordshire, Warwickshire and Worcestershire, and one Independent Member. The Independent member is also the Chair of the Committee.

The remit of the Committee includes:

#### **Financial Oversight**

- To examine and evaluate the financial management and decision-making of both the Authority and the Mayor.

#### **Governance and Risk Assurance**

- To assess the effectiveness of the Authority's and the Mayor's arrangements for risk management, internal controls, and corporate governance.

#### **Value for Money**

- To review how efficiently, effectively, and economically resources are utilised in delivering the functions of the Authority and the Mayor.

#### **Reporting and Recommendations**

- To produce reports and make recommendations to the Authority and the Mayor based on reviews conducted under Standing Orders 11.1(a), 11.1(b), and 11.1(c).

#### **Ethical Standards**

- To uphold and promote high standards of conduct among the Mayor, Members, and co-opted Members of the Authority.

#### **Sub-Committee Functions**

- To establish Sub-Committees with delegated authority to:
  - Consider investigation reports
  - Conduct hearings and impose sanctions
  - Review decisions by the Monitoring Officer not to pursue complaints (upon request by the complainant)
  - Review findings of non-compliance with the Code of Conduct and any resulting actions (upon request by the subject Member)

#### **Dispensations**

- To grant exemptions to the Mayor, Members, and co-opted Members from the requirements concerning interests as outlined in the Code of Conduct.

The Programme Assurance and Appraisal team provide a quarterly report to the meeting reviewing the quality of submitted Business cases, any exceptions to the process, and Change Request analysis.

Further details are provided at [ARAC Details](#)

### 3.5 Overview and Scrutiny

Following the introduction of the Scrutiny Protocol as part of the English Devolution Accountability Framework, the WMCA have developed a formal checklist with scrutiny members from both committees. This check list is periodically reviewed and updated to demonstrate compliance with the protocol to MHCLG as part of the Single Assurance Framework. The Scrutiny Protocol outlines 18 key principles of good governance for institutions with devolved powers. It aims to foster a sustained culture of scrutiny, improve transparency, and ensure value for money in decision-making. The work of the scrutiny function is also documented and published in a joint annual report with the Audit, Risk and Assurance Committee. This annual report details performance, monitoring, public engagement and the questions and answer sessions carried out with the Mayor.

WMCA has strengthened the relationship between scrutiny and audit, aligning with Principle 18 of the protocol. Mid-year reviews and shared data analysis are now standard practice

WMCA has two statutory overview and scrutiny committees as set out in the Combined Authorities (Overview and Scrutiny Committees, Access to Information and Audit Committees) Order 2017.

#### 3.5.1 Overview and Scrutiny Committee

The Overview & Scrutiny Committee (OSC) is a statutory body tasked with holding decision-makers to account and improving the quality of decisions made by the Mayor, WMCA Board, and its committees. The OSC does not consider matters relating to transport, these matters are reserved for the Transport Delivery Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

It makes recommendations to improve governance and outcomes across the region and analyses strategic issues relevant to the region's priorities to ensure their alignment.

The committee includes councillors from both constituent and non-constituent authorities, with representation proportionate to population and political balance. Members are nominated by their councils but are expected to focus on regional strategic priorities rather than local interests.

The membership of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee is:

- Birmingham City Council x 3
- Coventry City Council x 1
- Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council x 1
- Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council x 1
- Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council x 1
- Walsall Metropolitan Borough Council x 1
- City of Wolverhampton Council x 1
- Association of Black Country Authorities x 1
- Non-Constituent Authorities x 4

Further details are provided at [Committee details - Joint Overview & Scrutiny Committee](#)

### **3.5.2 Transport Delivery Overview and Scrutiny Committee (TDOSC)**

The Transport Delivery Overview and Scrutiny Committee is also statutory body tasked with holding decision-makers to account and improving the quality of decisions made by the Mayor, WMCA Board, and its committees in relation to transport matters.

In June 2025, WMCA Board members called for a comprehensive and independent review of the transport scrutiny function. The remit for the review included considerations around refreshing the existing model and retaining the two-scrutiny committee model, creating a single WMCA-wide scrutiny committee, and establishing a single scrutiny committee along with a re-formed Strategic Transport Board. The outcome of the review is still under consideration

The membership of the Transport Delivery Overview and Scrutiny Committee is:

- Birmingham City Council x 7
- Coventry City Council x 3
- Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council x 2
- Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council x 2
- Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council x 2
- Walsall Metropolitan Borough Council x 2
- City of Wolverhampton Council x 2
- Shropshire, Staffordshire, Warwickshire, Worcestershire (4 members representing the non-constituent councils within each county area)

Further details are provided at [Committee details - Transport Delivery Overview & Scrutiny Committee](#)

### **3.5.3 Mayoral Question and Answer Sessions**

The two Overview and Scrutiny Committees meet jointly in Mayoral Q&A sessions to hold the Mayor to account.

Mayoral Q&A sessions are structured forums where elected members and senior officers engage directly with the Mayor to scrutinise decisions, challenge policy proposals, and seek clarity on strategic priorities. These sessions are a key component of WMCA's commitment to transparency and democratic accountability, aligning with the Scrutiny Protocol and the English Devolution Accountability Framework.

The sessions typically focus on either policy development and delivery, or budget proposals and financial planning.

### 3.5.4 The Scrutiny Protocol

The below provides a detailed progress update on the implementation of the Scrutiny Protocol for the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA). It outlines how the WMCA has addressed key principles designed to enhance scrutiny effectiveness, including member engagement, political and geographical balance, training, decision scrutiny, and stakeholder relationships.

#### **Key Principle 1 - A Pool of Members**

The WMCA treats all committee members, including substitutes, as a single body with equal access to induction and training to ensure effective engagement. For 2024/25, named substitutes are not formally appointed, but members can arrange appropriate substitutes from the same political party when necessary. This informal substitute process has worked well to date, supporting meeting quoracy and wider member engagement.

#### **Key Principle 2 - Politically Balanced Membership**

Membership of the WMCA's scrutiny and audit committees reflects the political proportionality of the region. Appointments are made by ruling political groups at local authorities, and while the WMCA must accept these nominations, it strives to maintain political balance across committees as far as reasonably possible.

#### **Key Principle 3 - Geographically Balanced Membership**

The committees maintain geographically balanced membership to ensure representation across the WMCA area, facilitating a strategic perspective that balances local and regional considerations.

#### **Key Principle 4 - Appointing a Chair**

Chairs of scrutiny committees are appointed from political parties different from the Mayor's to maintain independence and objectivity. Since 2024/25, chairs are selected by their respective Overview & Scrutiny Committees rather than the WMCA Board, supporting a culture of non-partisan, evidence-based scrutiny.

#### **Key Principle 5 - Sustained Appointments Made on Interest and Skills**

Appointments to scrutiny committees are based on members' experience, interest, and skills, supported by role profiles shared with appointing authorities. Multi-year appointments are encouraged to ensure continuity and retention of knowledge. Annual reminders are sent to local authorities emphasizing these principles.

#### **Key Principle 6 - Well-Resourced Training**

The WMCA provides well-funded training, including inductions, knowledge briefings, and topic-specific sessions such as on the Spatial Development Strategy. These sessions enable members to develop informed, evidence-based questions and strengthen their scrutiny roles.

#### **Key Principle 7 - Inviting Technical Expertise**

Senior officers present reports and provide expertise at committee meetings. External subject experts are invited as needed, for example on air quality and transport issues, enhancing the quality of scrutiny.

#### **Key Principle 8 - Remuneration and Status**

Non-constituent members serving on WMCA scrutiny and audit committees are not remunerated, with advice given to member authorities to consider remuneration. Informal engagement occurs between scrutiny chairs, the Mayor, and Chief Executive, with formal six-monthly meetings under review.

## **Key Principle 9 - Holding the Mayor and Institution to Account**

The committees hold the Mayor and WMCA Board accountable primarily through Mayoral Q&A sessions, which are jointly held by overview committees and preceded by member briefings. Following governance changes, portfolio leads no longer exist, but scrutiny continues to engage through these sessions. Enhanced finance training supports financial scrutiny.

## **Key Principle 10 - Participation in Pre-Policy and Pre-Decision Scrutiny**

Half-day work programme planning sessions facilitate early member engagement in policy development and pre-decision scrutiny. Examples include scrutiny input into the Affordable Homes Programme and Transport Delivery oversight. Scheduling adjustments are considered to improve pre-decision scrutiny effectiveness.

## **Key Principle 11 - Provision to Call In**

The call-in process is fully embedded in member induction and publicly available. It is actively used for Delegated Sign-off Decisions. Scrutiny chairs attend key WMCA Board and Investment Zone Board meetings to enhance oversight.

## **Key Principle 12 - Regular Performance Monitoring**

Performance monitoring reports are regularly scheduled and considered by scrutiny committees to track progress against key strategies and targets without dominating the work programme.

## **Key Principle 13 - Robust Work Programming**

Work programmes are developed through collaborative half-day planning sessions at the start of each municipal year, involving members and officers. While effective for the Overview & Scrutiny Committee, further improvements are needed for the Transport Delivery Overview & Scrutiny Committee.

## **Key Principle 14 - Focused Task & Finish Exercises**

Task & finish reviews are conducted with a focus on agility and member-led scope, supported by annual process reviews. In 2025/26, the WMCA adopted a more flexible approach and incorporated AI tools to enhance outcomes and engagement.

## **Key Principle 15 - Strong Relationships with Stakeholders**

The WMCA has strengthened collaboration with constituent local authority scrutiny committees through joint work programme discussions and the appointment of a Membership Relationship Manager. Public engagement remains limited; efforts include a dedicated Twitter account and recording meetings for YouTube to increase transparency and interest.

## **Key Principle 16 - Regular Self-Evaluation and Reflection**

Reflection on scrutiny effectiveness has occurred informally but will move toward formal mid-year reviews for scrutiny and audit functions to support continuous improvement and forward planning.

## **Key Principle 17 - Access to Data, Research, and Analysis**

Committees utilise WMCA data and reports, such as the State of the Region report, to inform evidence-based scrutiny. The absence of an established Office for Local Government (Oflog) limits external data analysis, though existing Local Government Association data is used.

## **Key Principle 18 - Strong Relationship with Audit Committees**

Scrutiny and audit committees collaborate through informal engagement between their chairs and shared reporting. The WMCA published its first combined Scrutiny and Audit Annual Report in 2023/24. Formalising this collaboration and creating a Combined Authorities Audit Chairs Forum are supported.

### **3.6 Investment Board**

WMCA has established an Investment Board as a committee of the WMCA Board, which makes investment and financial decisions to proposals between £5million and £20million. The financial delegation between £1million and £5million is made at the Designated Sign-off Meetings. The Investment Board also provide guidance to the WMCA Board for investment and financial decisions above £20million.

The Membership of the Investment Board is:

Voting Members:

- One representative from each constituent authority x 7
- One representative for the non-constituent authorities collectively x1

Non-Voting Members:

- One representative from West Midlands Development Capital x 1

Further details are provided at [Committee details - Investment Board.](#)

### **3.7 Investment Zone Board**

The Investment Zone Board acts in the same manner as the Investment Board, covering the place based economic activity in the West Midlands and the Employment Committee acts as an advisory body to the Economy, Skills and Communities Directorate.

The Membership of the Investment Zone Board is:

Voting Members:

- Mayor of the West Midlands x 1
- One representative from each constituent authority x 7
- One representative from Warwick District Council x 1
- One representative from Warwickshire County Council x 1

Non-Voting Members:

- Representatives of the universities and other stakeholders involved in the investment zone may be appointed as non-voting members on the board.

Observers:

- Chair - WMCA Overview & Scrutiny Committee

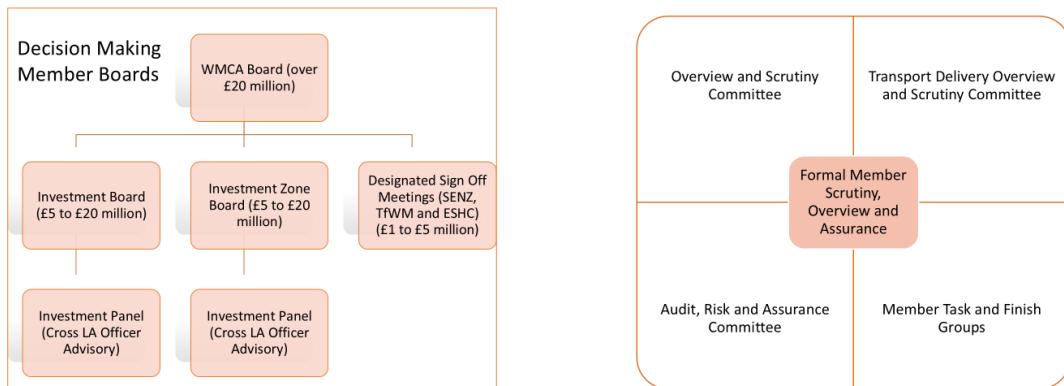
Other stakeholders may be invited to attend as observer members as deemed necessary.

Further details are provided at [Committee details - Investment Zone Board.](#)

### 3.8 The Formal Member Committee Governance Structure

The following diagram below shows the current Board and Committee structure

# Formal Member Committee Governance



### 3.9 Political Oversight Groups

A new approach to political engagement is also being used in relation to significant areas of work such as bus reform where a Political Oversight Group has been established to provide strategic political oversight and advisory input into the Bus Reform program. The group will support transparency, collaboration, and political alignment across TfWM and Local Authorities. A Political Oversight Group is also in place to oversee the Spatial Development Strategy.

### **3.10 Statutory Officers**

### 3.10.1 Head of Paid Service

It is the role of the Head of Paid Service, also known as the Chief Executive, to ensure that all the authority's functions are properly co-ordinated as well as organising staff and appointing appropriate management.

The duties and responsibilities of the post include:

- The statutory responsibilities of the Head of Paid Service to manage the budgets and funding allocations available to the Combined Authority, in partnership with the s73 officer
- Overall responsibility to ensure that all officers involved in the use of public funds, at all times put in measures to ensure that VFM is maximised
- Leading the Executive Directors to deliver the strategic direction for the Combined Authority as outlined by West Midlands Combined Authority Board
- Co-ordinate strategy, development and delivery ensuring a joined-up partnership approach to deliver the aspirations of the West Midlands Combined Authority
- Ensure the champion the delivery of the strategic priorities of the Combined Authority and put in place the resources necessary to achieve this. efficient and effective implementation of WMCA's programmes and policies across all services and the effective deployment of the authority's resources to those ends

- Advise the Combined Authority, its Board meetings on all matters of general policy and all other matters upon which his or her advice is necessary, with the right of attendance at all Board meetings and other meetings as appropriate
- Advising the elected Mayor on the delivery of strategic priorities
- Represent the Combined Authority at local, regional and national level in partnership with the Mayor
- Act on advice given by the Monitoring Officer on any situations that could put the Combined Authority in jeopardy of unlawfulness or maladministration or protect the Combined Authority against any reputational risks.
- Be responsible for all negotiations with Government regarding outcomes and outcomes delivery
- Ensure that staff have the capability to deliver successful programmes
- Ensure that internal processes are fit for purpose and adhered to.

### 3.10.2 Section 73 Officer

The WMCA Executive Chief Finance Officer fulfils the role of the Section 73 Officer, in accordance with Section 73 of the Local Government Act 1985, extended in Section 114 of the Local Government Finance Act 1988 – England and Wales.

The responsibilities of the Chief Finance Officer reflect those documented are documented in the CIPFA published document [The Role of the Chief Financial Officer in Local Government | CIPFA](#) It details five Principles:

- The Chief Financial Officer in a local authority is a key member of the leadership team, helping it to develop and implement strategy and to resource and deliver the authority's Policy Aims sustainably and in the public interest
- The CFO in a local authority must be actively involved in, and able to bring influence to bear on, all material business decisions to ensure immediate and longer-term implications, opportunities and risks are fully considered, and alignment with the authority's overall financial strategy
- The CFO in a local authority must lead the promotion and delivery by the whole authority of good financial management so that public money is safeguarded at all times and used appropriately, economically, efficiently, and effectively
- The CFO in a local authority must lead and direct a finance function that is resourced to be fit for purpose
- The CFO in a local authority must be professionally qualified and suitably experienced.

In WMCA the Chief Finance Officer is a member of the Executive Board and has oversight of and an ability to influence all major decisions of the Authority. The Chief Finance Officer has ensured that the Authority has robust systems of internal controls and appropriate separation of duties to ensure the legality and probity of financial transactions.

These processes are set out in the Financial Regulations and Contract Standing Orders and other policies such as the Money Laundering Policy and the [WMCA Fraud and Corruption Policy](#).

All reports to Boards and Committees include the financial, legal and risk implications of proposals. The Chief Finance Officer and the Finance Team review all reports before they are presented to the WMCA Board or other decision-making Committees.

### 3.10.3 Monitoring Officer

The Director of Legal and Governance has been appointed as the WMCA Monitoring Officer and discharges the functions in relation to WMCA as set out in section five of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989. Their responsibilities regarding the Assurance Framework are:

- Providing advice on, and maintaining an up-to-date version of the Constitution and ensuring that it is widely available for consultation by members, employees, and the public
- After consulting with the Head of Paid Service and Chief Finance Officer, report to the Authority if they consider that any proposal, decision, or omission would give rise to or has given rise to unlawfulness or maladministration. Such a report will have the effect of stopping the proposed decisions being implemented until the report has been formally considered by the WMCA Board
- Ensuring that decisions, together with the reasons for those decisions and relevant officer reports and background papers are made publicly available as soon as possible
- Advising whether decisions are within budget and policy framework and whether any decisions or proposed decision constitutes a key decision
- Providing advice on the scope of powers and authority to take decisions, maladministration, financial impropriety, probity and budget and policy framework issues to the Mayor, members and officers, and generally support and advise members and officers in their roles.

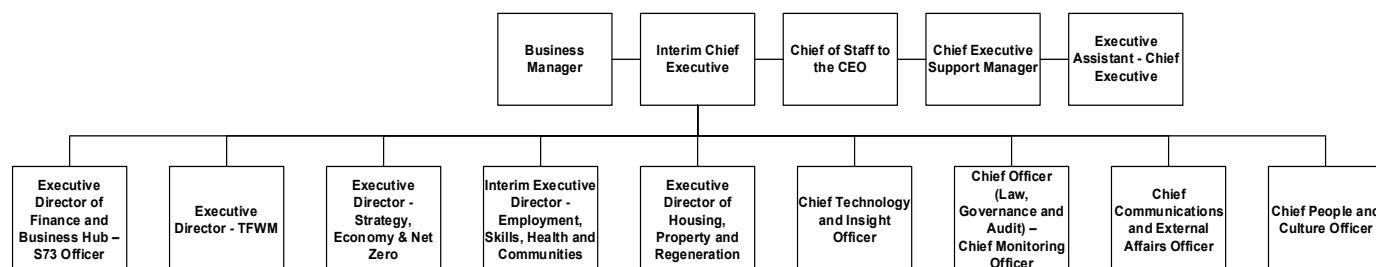
Contributing to the promotion and maintenance of high standards of conduct, The Authority has delegated to the Monitoring Officer powers to deal with matters of conduct and ethical standards in accordance with the requirements of the Localism Act 2011:

- Discharging the functions under any enactment (whenever passed) of a Monitoring Officer, proper officer, or responsible officer, concerning the Authority's legal affairs and arrangements, including compliance with the law.

The Monitoring Officer and the Legal Team should review all reports to ensure that legal implications are correctly identified before they are presented to the WMCA Board or other decision-making bodies.

### 3.10.4 Executive Board

To deliver Mayoral Priorities and the Strategy, the Executive Board consists of the following officers. Executive Directors are responsible for their Policy Areas, as designated in their titles. They are supported by other Directors, who have operational roles.



**TFWM (Transport for West Midlands)** works with the following partners to create a world-class transport system for the West Midlands:

- 7 local authorities

- Network Rail
- Highways England
- Department for Transport
- Bus and train operators

**Employment, Skills, Health and Communities** has the aim for every resident and business to reach their full potential in skills, health – physical and mental health, economic growth, and well-being. Their portfolio covers Productivity and Skills, Economy and Innovation and Health and Wellbeing

**Housing Property and Regeneration** work with a broad range of partners to enhance delivery and unlock investment across the West Midlands housing and land portfolio, including our constituent and non-constituent Local Authorities, the Department for Housing, Communities and Local Government, Homes England, Registered Providers, developers and investors operating in the West Midlands.

**Strategy Economy and Net Zero** lead on ensuring growth benefits everyone, including vulnerable communities to build a fairer, greener and better-connected region. It leads on addressing Climate Change in the Region, including Retrofitting Homes.

### **3.10.5 Programme Assurance and Appraisal**

Programme Assurance and Appraisal are part of the Legal and Governance Directorate and are independent of the Directorates, and the Local Authority partners submitting projects. The team are Green Book Practitioners and provide assurance to Business Cases – (BCAT – Business Case Assessment tool to assess maturity), and Risk and Investment Appraisals to guide decision makers.

### **3.10.6 Internal Audit**

Internal Audit for WMCA is provided by the in-house Internal Audit service and forms part of the Internal Audit and Information Governance Team, which sits within the Legal and Governance Directorate. Internal Audit operates independently of all operational services within the organisation. The independent and objective assurance provided by Internal Audit forms part of the three lines of defence model which the WMCA follows in its Strategic Risk Management Framework.

The annual Internal Audit Plan is developed to consider management's assessment of risk against key organisational objectives and priorities. The plan considers the strategic risks of the organisation, as contained within the Strategic Risk Register, Internal Audit's own independent risk assessment, the internal control environment and is informed through discussions with Senior Management to discuss potential areas of concern, including consideration of risks within their area of control.

All devolved funding funds is subject to established financial management arrangements and subject to Internal Audit in accordance with the Accounts and Audit Regulations (2015) and in compliance with the mandatory Global Internal Audit Standards. This provides independent and objective assurance regarding the effectiveness of the WMCA's risk management, control and governance processes.

## 3.11 Related Processes and Procedures

### 3.11.1 Inclusive Growth

The Inclusive Growth Framework is in place to ensure that WMCA delivers inclusive growth, “a more deliberate and socially purposeful model of economic growth – measured not only by how fast or aggressive it is; but also, by how well it is created and shared across the whole population and place, and by the social and environmental outcomes it realises for our people.”

This requires all WMCA activities to consider the [eight fundamentals of inclusive growth](#), ensuring all projects, programmes and investments reflect a commitment to social, economic and environmental missions.

### 3.11.2 Equality, Diversity and the Socio-Economic Duty

A procedure is in place to ensure that WMCA and its constituent authorities will take into consideration section 149 of the Equality Act, ensuring that any project considers:

- Part/Section 1 where "An authority to which this section applies must, when making decisions of a strategic nature about how to exercise its functions, have due regard to the desirability of exercising them in a way that is designed to reduce the inequalities of outcome which result from socio-economic disadvantage"
- The need to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation, and other conduct prohibited by the Act
- The need to advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not
- The need to foster good relationships between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

### 3.11.3 Whistleblowing

WMCA has adopted a [Whistleblowing Policy](#) to enable and encourage employees to raise concerns about wrongdoing by the Authority, the Mayor Officers or contractors without fear of reprisal or detriment. Concerns should be reported via [Contact Us](#).

### 3.11.4 Complaints Procedure

A [Complaints Procedure](#) is in place to ensure that any complaints relating to the arrangements, processes or decision making associated with a project is dealt with fairly and effectively.

### 3.11.5 Gifts and Hospitality

A Gifts and Hospitality policy is in place to ensure that no WMCA Member or WMCA officer receives remuneration or expenses in relation to its activities, other than their salary and in accordance with policy which has a procedure in respect of declaring gifts and hospitality.

### 3.11.6 Registration and Declaration of Interests

WMCA Board and Committee Members are required to make a declaration of any interest they have in an item of business at Meetings of the Board. Officers are required to declare any interests they have in contracts. The Declarations of Interest are listed under each member of each

committee which can be found here [Committee Structure](#). In addition, elected Local Authority members will have completed their Local Authority's Register of Interest. Where Members have a prejudicial interest in an item of business the WMCA Members Code of Conduct requires that they should leave the meeting while the item is considered.

### **3.11.7 Freedom of Information**

A [Freedom of Information](#) (FOI) procedure is in place to manage requests related to the activities of the WMCA. Appropriate data protection arrangements are in place within this process.

### **3.11.8 Treatment of Risk**

Our Strategic Risk Management Framework (SRMF) provides the process and structures for undertaking risk management at the WMCA in accordance with HM Treasury Orange Book. The SRMF supports the consistent identification, assessment, monitoring and escalation of risks across Directorates, to provide visibility at strategic, operational, programme and project levels.

To request a copy of the Risk Management Framework contact [riskteam@wmca.org.uk](mailto:riskteam@wmca.org.uk).

The SAF has an important role to play in ensuring that risk is managed appropriately by supporting the application of the SRMF across all SAF Projects and Programmes.

### **3.11.9 Transparency**

The WMCA is subject to the same Transparency Code that applies to Local Authorities. [Transparency](#). The WMCA website ([wmca.org.uk](http://wmca.org.uk)) contains a comprehensive set of information and there are links to key documents, referenced within this document.

A Mayoral update is distributed to stakeholders throughout the West Midlands informing them of current and planned WMCA activity and how they can get involved. WMCA has a continuous communications strategy, including using social media to provide the public and stakeholders with updates on activity. Stakeholders and the public can contact the WMCA via the website [Contact Us](#) and by responding to social media posts. A [Calendar](#) of events is available on the WMCA website detailing the dates of all key meetings. Where there is a requirement as a condition of funding, WMCA will ensure that Government (and other funders) branding is used in any publicity material.

### **3.11.10 Inviting Applications for Funding**

WMCA publishes its tender opportunities via an e-tendering portal called Bravo solution, further details and links can be found on the [Procurement](#) section of its website. Opportunity and award notices are also published on the Government portal in line with public contracting regulations.

In addition, the Housing, Property and Regeneration Directorate has devolved housing and land funds to develop housing and regeneration projects in the West Midlands through equity, loan and grant. Developers and Investors who are interested can contact WMCA at [invest@wmca.org.uk](mailto:invest@wmca.org.uk). More details can be found on [Investing with us](#), [Commercial Development Funding - WMCA CIF - FDC](#), [West Midlands Innovation Programme – Innovation Alliance for the West Midlands](#) also offer opportunities, for Innovation Funding.

### **3.11.11 Publishing Meeting Minutes**

The schedule of meetings for the calendar year is published on the WMCA website. The notice of meetings, the agenda and the accompanying papers for formal Board and Committee Meetings are published five clear working days in the advance of the meeting. WMCA includes its Forward Plan in the Agenda of the Board and Overview and Scrutiny Committee Meetings.

Where papers contain commercially sensitive information or are subject to one of the exemptions under the Local Government act 1972 Schedule 12A or the Freedom of Information Act 2000, they are categorised as a private item and are not published. The Monitoring Officer will give advice regarding whether the item should be classified as private, but Members must decide to go into private session unless a confidential item has been declared confidential by the Government in which case it must be taken in private.

Draft minutes of meetings are published as soon as practicable after the meetings on the WMCA website. All WMCA Board minutes are signed at the next suitable meeting and published.

### **3.11.12 Publishing Decisions**

WMCA publish a Forward Plan of key decisions that will be taken by the WMCA at least 28 days before the decision is made to enable members of the public the opportunity to view and comment upon them. Details of all key decisions made by the WMCA are recorded within a log accessible at: [Decisions](#). The WMCA maintains a live Activity Register to support the Executive Board, this is in addition to a Contracts register which provides details of all contacts and agreements signed by the WMCA.

## 4 THE SINGLE ASSURANCE FRAMEWORK: PROJECT LIFECYCLE PROCESS

### 4.1 Introduction to the Single Assurance Framework (SAF)

The SAF is designed to be used as guidance to project developers and sponsors to understand the processes associated with the application and the route to decision of all external funding opportunities. Where financial liability is placed onto the WMCA, the SAF is applicable throughout the four stages of the project or programme lifecycle: initiation, development, decisions and delivery. The SAF provides consistency of approach for Assurance, independent Appraisal, and smart decision-making across all funding pots. Furthermore, it allows proportionality to be applied for the development of business cases via defined development routes. The SAF does not apply to projects or programmes that are defined as corporate, continuous improvement or BAU activity.

#### 4.1.1 A Corporate Project

A corporate project is created to address an internal business need, benefitting the organisation, for example, a change to the operating systems of the organisation. Risk Management should be considered with risks reviewed as part of activity. Once a corporate project is completed, it may become BAU. A Corporate Project should aim to address Corporate Aim 6. (Develop our organisation and be a Good Regional Partner). A corporate project can go through the Change Gateway, a sub-group of CMT (Corporate Management Team) where specialists in Finance, Projects, Digital & Data and Human Resources where applicable will review and support the strengthening of the business case and the identified benefits including whether the resources, both financial and people, are in place to deliver.

#### 4.1.2 A SAF Project

Projects and Programmes which follow the SAF are focussed on achieving positive outcomes for the local community. They are typically funded by external sources such as devolution deals and bid applications/grant awards from Central Government, for example, the [Integrated Settlement](#) deal, (see Section 5.6 for the Virement process which establishes how funds are re-allocated to programmes ), the City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement (CRSTS) and the Investment Programme, where the WMCA is the accountable body. The SAF is applied flexibly and proportionately, dependent upon the level of risk associated with a Project or Programme. The SAF enables an independent assessment and appraisal of an investment opportunity. Programmes and Projects following the SAF route should aim to address one or more of the Corporate Aims (1 to 5).

The SAF process enables accountability, including public engagement, probity, transparency, legal compliance and VFM to be applied, and includes processes for oversight of projects, programmes and how the progress and impacts of these investments will be monitored, reported on and evaluated.

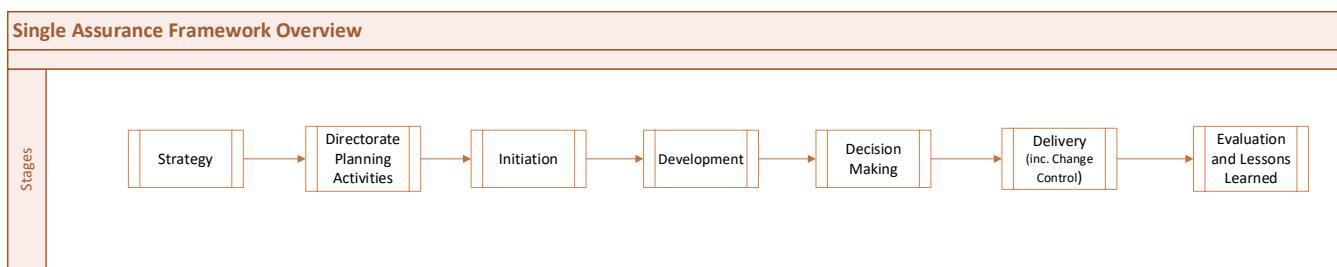
The SAF has been developed to ensure:

- Significant financial and governance protections exist for the stewardship of public funds
- Delivery of high standards of project development, decision-making, delivery and oversight
- The independent Risk and Investment Appraisal Report on each business case provides impartial advice to the relevant decision-making bodies to inform the decision-making process. These decision-making bodies are outlined in 4.12. The Investment Board and WMCA Board include local authority representation. Business representation. Members that can be found at: [Committee details - Investment Board](#)

- Where appropriate independent technical advice is sought before going to the appropriate decision-making authority
- Trust is built in the organisation's officer expertise
- That consistency, controls and clarity are embedded to deliver confidence in the WMCA's decision-making and ability to deliver
- Political and reputational risk is effectively managed
- Additional funding is secured into the region, by driving continuous improvement of the quality of external funding applications/submissions.

The SAF sets out the appropriate process for the risk and investment profile of a Project or Programme and incorporates guidance on business case and supporting project management documentation required together with the standards and criteria that need to be met to help drive effective project management. Out of Directorate second line of defence assurance and appraisal processes are also incorporated within SAF processes together with additional guidance and templates to drive consistency of approach. These are available on the [Single Assurance Framework](#) internet page and on the intranet.

The following diagram provides an overview of the SAF process.



## 4.2 Value for Money

A key objective of the SAF is to support WMCA in making investments that represent the best Value for money (VFM). All business cases seeking a decision are assessed against HM Treasury Green Book and the 5-case model.

As part of the Economic Case of all business cases, project/programme leads are required to demonstrate that a full options appraisal has been undertaken, and that viable options have been included that meet strategic aims and project/programme objectives. In addition, an appraisal of project benefits will be included to help determine the preferred option.

In overview, the requirement is:

1. Identify the problem, and
2. Identify the objectives needed to solve the problem in the strategic case
3. Determine the best VFM option that meets those objectives.

The analysis of options will lead to a value for money statement and rationale being provided detailing why the preferred option has been selected.

A minimum of four viable options are required to be assessed as part of this appraisal process, and the approach is expected to be proportionate dependent upon the value, risk and complexity of the project.

Any Transport projects are required to follow this methodology and DfT supplementary Transport Analysis Guidance (TAG) to demonstrate they represent VFM, as part of the SAF and an additional

Transport-specific appendix complements the suite of business case templates and guidance to ensure transport-related Department for Transport requirements are captured and satisfied.

For other delivery directorates, programmes and projects are also developed using Green Book guidance (but not TAG), which acknowledges there should be a balanced judgement when selecting the preferred option based on the Net Present Social Value, the BCR and the level of risk involved. Any unvalued costs, risks and non-monetised benefits will also feature in the options analysis and selection of the preferred option.

The review of Green Book that reported with the June 2025 spending review, set out actions for a future update, including one to clarify the role of BCRs in decision-making, making clear that Green Book does not endorse arbitrary 'BCR thresholds', and that "a BCR less than one does not automatically constitute poor value for money." Available at: [Green Book Review 2025: Findings and Actions](#).

### **4.3 Pre-Initiation**

The development of project ideas, and external funding opportunities are Directorate-led and co-ordinated/managed using Strategic plans, Directorate Activity Registers and the External Funding Application Register. Appendix 5.7 details the External Funding Application Process. This process ensures that the Section 73 Officer and the Executive Board are aware of all potential applications for funding ensuring risks, any conditions of funding, and the resources needed to deliver a project or programme of activity are considered, (with a decision given to proceed) should the application be successful.

### **4.4 Purpose of The Annual Plan**

The WMCA Annual Business Plan demonstrates how organisational objectives, Directorate plans and programme and project activity support overarching economic strategies, demonstrating a 'golden thread' approach. The purpose of the Annual Business Plan is to:

- Articulate the WMCA priorities for the year so that partners and stakeholders understand the key areas of focus
- Provide a strategic context for the WMCA as an organisation so its plans and operational activity are aligned to the overall vision and priorities
- Enable oversight and review of performance against priorities. It helps to demonstrate how High-Level Deliverables (HLDs) contribute towards delivering the overarching WMCA Policy Aims.

### **4.5 In-Year Proposals for the initiation of Projects/Programmes**

Partner organisations may submit in-year Project/Programme Project Initiation Documents that are not included within the current Annual Plan. These will still be considered by the appropriate delegated authority.

## 4.6 New Funding Opportunities

During the year, there may be further unexpected funding opportunities that need to be pursued because of new or changes to existing Government initiatives and priorities or where there is a need to address emerging priorities. Initially, these opportunities will be discussed at Directorate level and progressed through Executive Board meetings. Where these instances emerge, they will be incorporated within the Directorate Activity Register and enter the SAF Initiation stage. Where necessary and appropriate, processes will be expedited to ensure that funding can be accessed quickly.

## 4.7 SAF Stage 1: Initiation

The Initiation stage is the first step to developing a Business Case, a proposal, idea or ambition.

Project initiation, like the project development process that follows, is a Directorate led process. Any new opportunity should articulate/agree its strategic fit, development route to be followed, affordability/funding requirements and a Health and Equity Assessment. Directorates should engage the following subject matter experts when developing a PID:

- Finance Representative/Business Partner
- Legal Business Partner
- Procurement Business Partner
- Programme Assurance & Appraisal Team Representative

When a project proposal is developed, the project is also added to Directorate Activity Registers for discussion at Directorate Pipeline Meetings. The decision to proceed is made according to the delegated authorities.

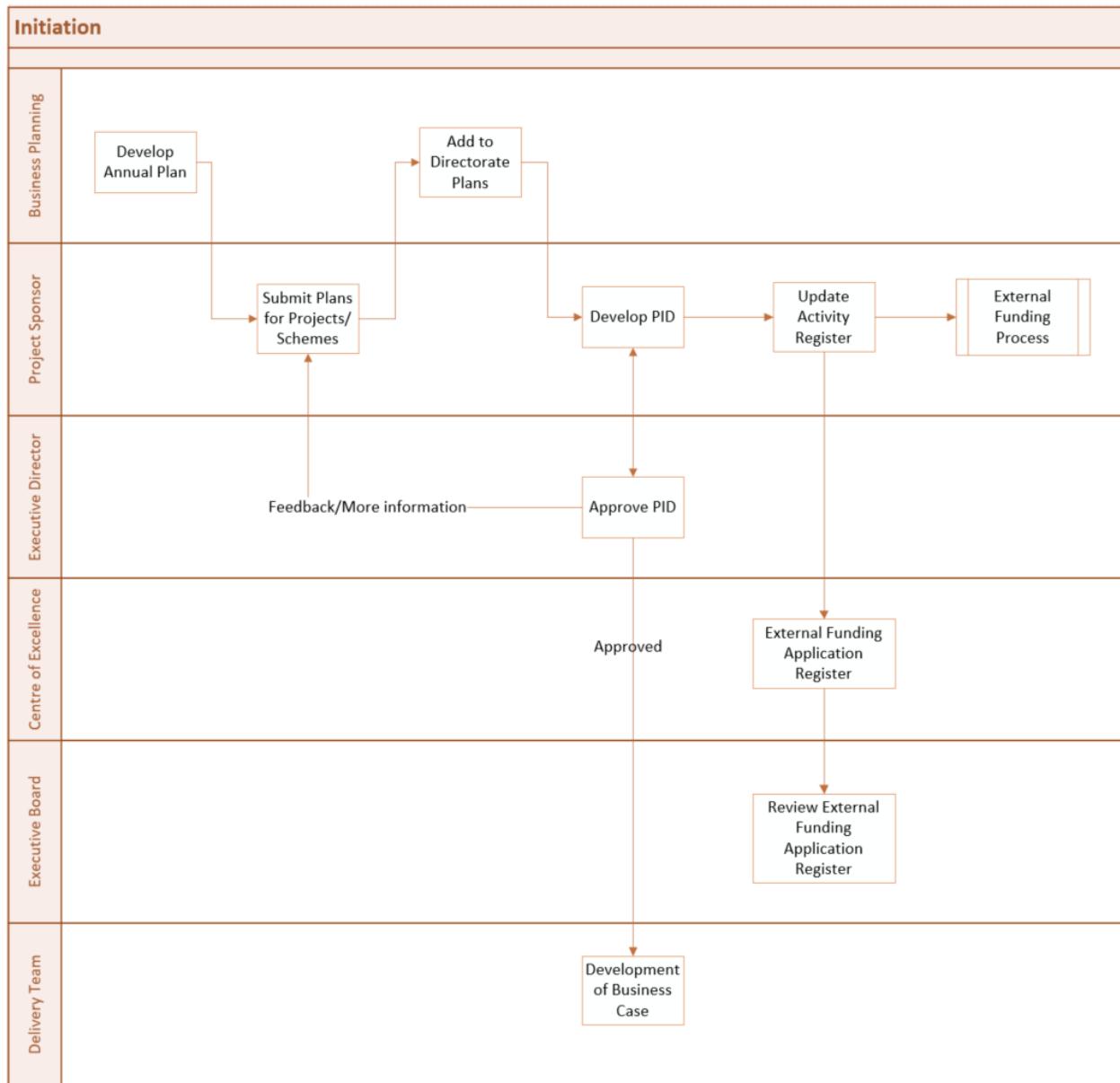
The project proposal will either:

- Enter the strategic planning stage, if it is an in-year submission not included in the Annual Business Plan. In such circumstances the Executive Director can accept the principle of the proposal and submit it to the strategic planning process for consideration for inclusion in future Annual Plans, or,
- Be rejected/deferred.

A decision to reject will be taken if:

- It is decided that an Annual Business Plan item is no longer deliverable.
- Or a strategic fit exists due to changes that have occurred since it was added to the Annual Plan
- If an in-year submission is not deemed to fit strategically with the WMCA's Strategic Objectives.

The project initiation proposals must be completed and have received Finance (S73) decision, before moving to the development stage. The decision to proceed also mandates any initial (seed) funding to complete any feasibility study and/or development of the project.



## 4.8 Directorate Pipeline Meetings

Each Directorate records its own project activity on the Directorate Activity Register. Directorate project leads log projects that are in one of the stages of development and delivery and, whether external funding is being bid for, or being offered by the sponsoring Government Department. The Directorate Meeting is held with the Programme Assurance and Appraisal's Centre of Excellence (CoE), along with other teams such as Finance Business Partners, Procurement and Business Improvement Team members. External Funding Applications, grants or projects are reviewed to ensure that the project developers have the information/templates they need to develop the project. The CoE will also provide indicative dates of the stages that the project will go through to decision.

If a business case crosses several Directorates/Portfolios, then CoE should advise on who the lead Directorate is.

## 4.9 SAF Stage 2: Development

The Development Phase follows Initiation; this is the stage where the relevant business case(s) is/are developed, and where out of Directorate assurance activity takes place prior to the business case progressing onto the decision stage. This stage needs to be repeated whenever a business case is developed and requires decision. Support and guidance through this stage is provided by the Programme Assurance and Appraisal team. The CoE will provide guidance on the business case development route of a project is, i.e., the number and type of business cases to be completed.

The business case is developed by the sponsoring Directorate or external delivery partner, ensuring that its content meets the required standard defined within WMCA guidance ([Templates and Guidance](#).) All WMCA business case templates and guidance incorporate HM Treasury Green Book requirements and capture how the scheme will support WMCA Policy Aims and Objectives. The business case sponsor is required to demonstrate within the business case how the scheme will meet any funding conditions and/or delivery milestone dates/requirements. Where the sponsors/delivery partners are external to the WMCA, they will be supported through the process by the lead Directorate within the WMCA. The sponsor is responsible for engaging subject matter experts from key enabling services in the development of their business case:

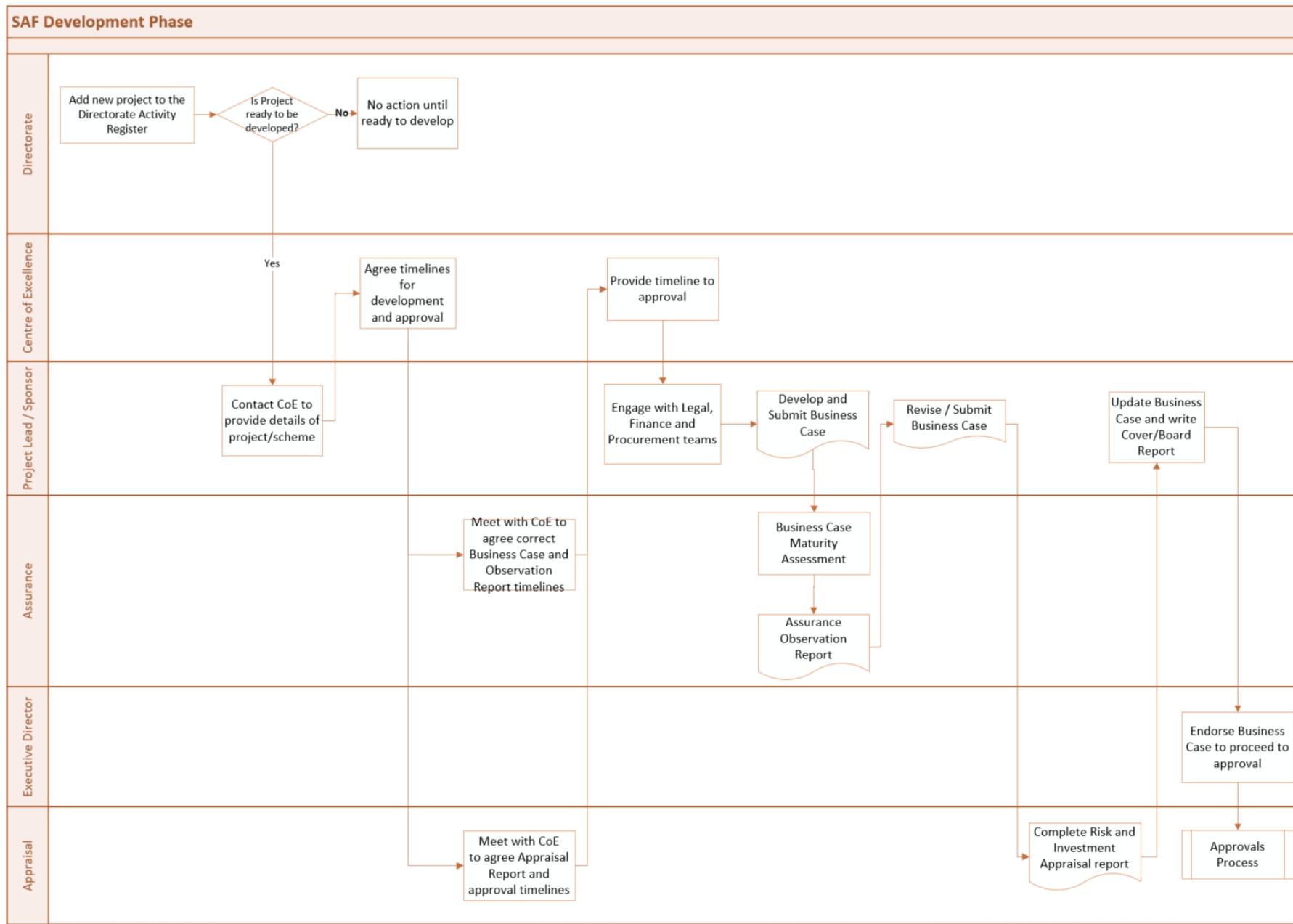
- The Finance Business Partner should review/input/provide assurance of the Financial Case
- The Procurement Business Partner should review/input into the Commercial Case to ensure an appropriate procurement strategy is developed
- The Legal Business Partner should review content/input into the Commercial Case to ensure any funding agreements and/or contractual arrangements are developed appropriately
- Technical input may be required for subject matter experts within delivery directorates (e.g., specific input for transport and active travel schemes). The Delivery Directorate and/or CoE will advise on the engagement required.

The Programme Assurance and Appraisal team, via the CoE should be engaged prior to the development of a business case, to ensure an appropriate development route and timeline through to decision is agreed.

The lead Directorate is responsible for ensuring they, any partners, or the sponsor meet deadlines, engage the appropriate subject matter experts and technical appraisers and adhere

to required formats when developing a business case. The Programme Assurance and Appraisal team can provide advice on the requirements of the SAF if needed, at the start of and during the Business Case development stage. Sponsors must ensure their business case is developed and is aligned with any external development and assurance requirements (driven by Government Departments), with the aim to eliminate duplication of effort. Where projects are funded through multiple funding streams, the proportionate SAF approach will be agreed by the appropriate delegated authority and implemented.

Early engagement with the Programme Assurance and Appraisal Team is key to ensure any recommendations will be addressed and business cases can be updated within the timescales agreed.



## 4.10 SAF Stage 3: Decisions (Governance)

To achieve better decision making, the SAF looks to enable:

- The appropriate initiation process that drives strategic fit
- The proportionate business case development process that meets national and WMCA standards of best practice development
- Expertise within Directorates to be used to develop required business cases
- Out of Directorate/second line of defence assurance principles and processes to be implemented to the maturity of business cases and undertake risk & investment appraisals
- Support to focus Board considerations and inform the decision-making process.

The Assurance Observations Report is produced following the maturity assessment and shared with the Business Case author who then will update the business case, and submit the refreshed one to the programme Assurance and Appraisal team who will conduct an independent out of directorate summary Investment Risk and Appraisal Report. This report will be shared as part of the decision-making process highlighting the key risks and opportunities associated with the business case.

The process enables:

- Decision-makers at all levels to base their decisions upon objective, evidence-based out of Directorate findings and recommendations- in turn driving better decision-making
- Increased Executive Director ownership and delegation
- Increased Statutory Officer ownership and oversight
- Increased levels of Assurance and Appraisal team support to Panels and Boards
- Decisions based on proportionate financial delegation i.e., a request of £50,000 will not be scrutinised to the same level of a request for £5million, unless the risks are considered high or reputationally damaging
- The time taken to reach an approval decision being reflective of the level of financial ask.

The business case route is dictated by delegated decision authority/ decision level or the value of the Project. The decision process begins after successful progression through WMCA's development stage.

### 4.10.1 Key SAF Documentation

The level of decision required is determined by the level of financial commitment. The following diagram provides an overview of the documentation is needed depending on the decision route:



Further details regarding the purpose of each business case can be found in Appendix 5.5

## 4.11 Risk & Investment Appraisal

All decisions are required to undergo an independent Risk & Investment Appraisal of a business case that is designed to provide the sponsor/Directorate assessment. The independent Risk & Investment Appraisal is undertaken by Programme Investment Appraisers within the Programme Assurance & Appraisal team, its purpose is to provide a report identifying the risk and opportunities profile to help inform decision-makers. A proportionate approach is applied to the level of Appraisal completed in lieu of the financial ask; a one-day Summary Appraisal is completed for items under £1million whereas a five-day comprehensive Appraisal Report is created for items over £1million.

The Risk & Investment Appraisal involves analysis of information within a business case, providing an objective perspective on:

- Analysis of content across HMT's 5-case model as outlined within the Green Book
- Review and verify the evidence base/content of the Economic Case for accuracy
- Analysis of Net Present Social Value and Social Impact
- Analysis of risks and opportunities associated with delivery/cost/time/funding
- Analysis of financial, regulatory, investment, reputational and other risks and proposed risk mitigations as outlined within the WMCA's Strategic Risk Framework.

The report will set out the following impartial advice to inform the decision makers:

- An assessment of the level of risks and opportunities in approving that Business Case
- Observations on how the level of risk could be mitigated, including cost, including the post mitigation risk level.

## 4.12 Decision Levels

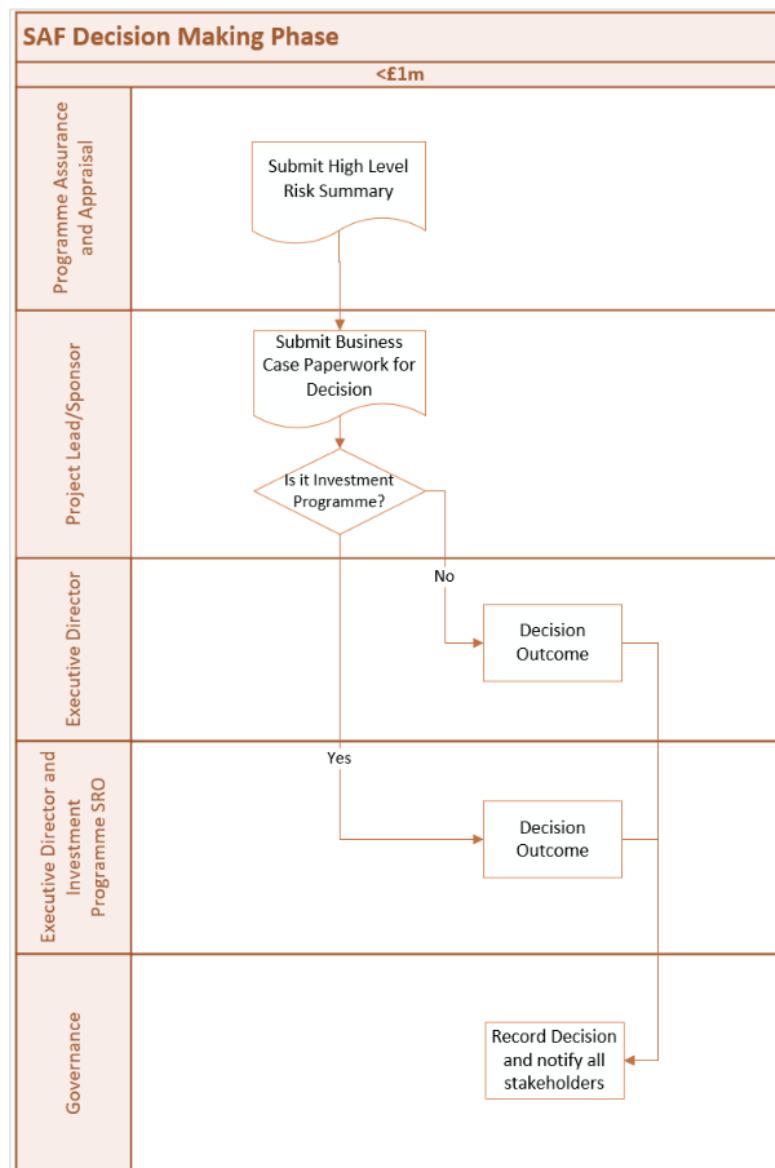
### 4.12.1 Decisions Up to £1million

For Project / Programme decisions, the relevant Executive Directors have delegated decision for business cases up to the value of £1million.

For Investment Programme decisions, the relevant Executive Director will also require the approval of the Investment Programme Senior Responsible Officer (SRO).

A high-level independent Risk and Investment Appraisal Report is completed to inform the decision-maker of the key risks, opportunities, and decision recommendation to inform their decision. This Report is submitted to the Executive Director alongside sponsor owned documentation such as the Business Case and any required appendices. Decisions taken by the Executive Director are captured in a log held in the Directorate.

The Project Lead/Sponsor will communicate the decision to Enabling Services and any external applicant (if applicable). This will ensure effective mobilisation of the project.



## 4.12.2 Decisions Between £1million - £5million

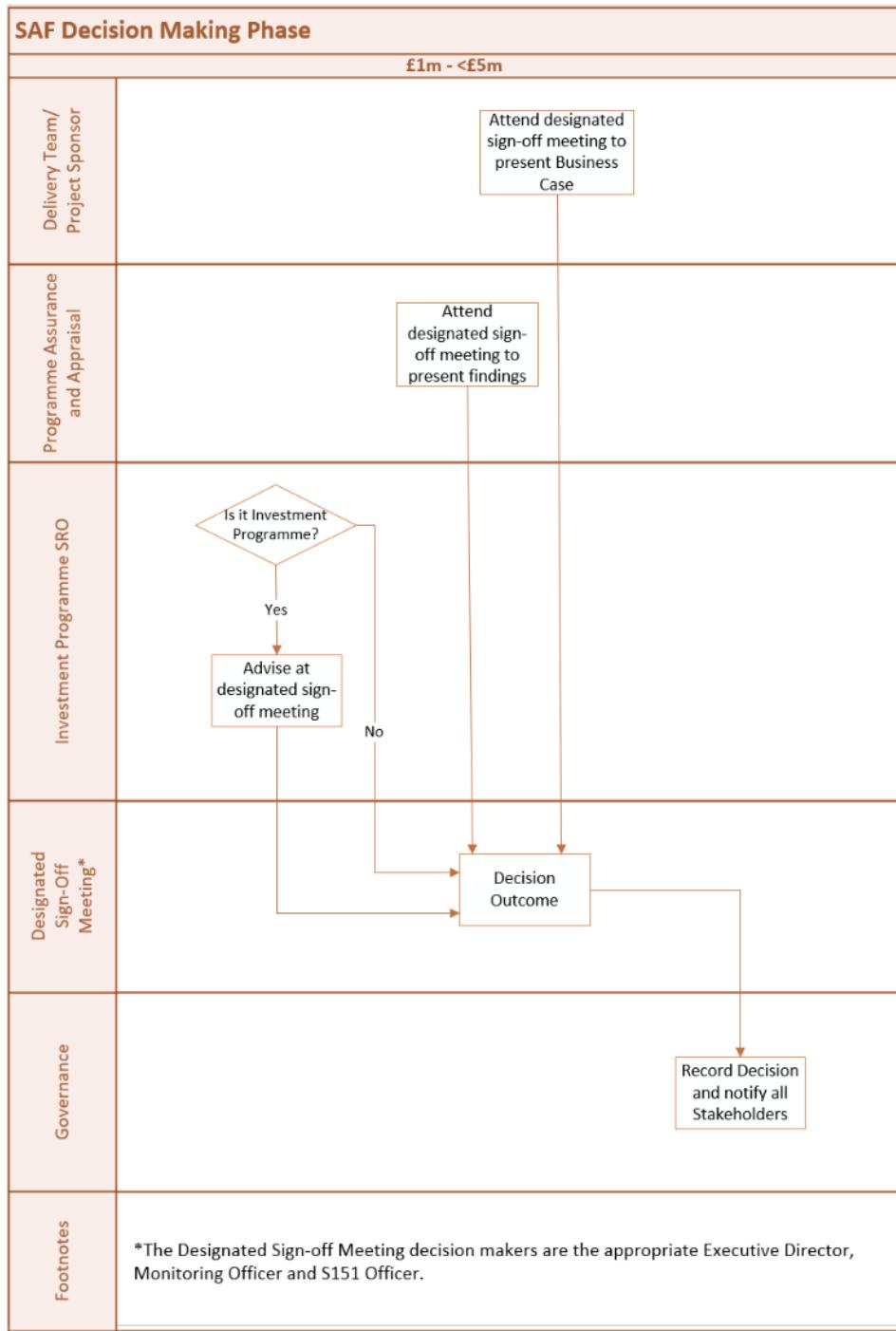
These are Key Decisions and as such must be published on the WMCA public facing website at least 28 days before the decision is due to be made.

For these, Programme and Project paperwork will be submitted via the Modern.Gov platform including a covering report. Appraisal will upload the independent Risk and Investment Appraisal report ahead of the meeting where the decision will be made.

The Project Sponsor will submit Project paperwork, including a Cover Report. In tandem, the Appraisal Team will submit an independent Risk and Investment Appraisal Report. Decisions between £1million and £5million are reviewed and outcomes of decisions made at the Designated Sign-Off Meeting, which consists of the following WMCA Officers:

- Relevant Executive Director
- Chief Finance Officer (Section 73 Officer)
- Director of Legal and Governance (Monitoring Officer)
- Project Lead/Sponsor (for the section of the meeting for the project requiring a decision)
- Appraisal representative (to advise risks, opportunities and recommendation based on the outcome of appraisal activity.)

Non-Investment Programme funded business cases and decisions only require Designated Sign-Off Meeting consideration: however, Investment Programme funded business cases and decisions also require the involvement of the Investment Programme Senior Responsible Officer who, in such circumstances, will attend the meeting to provide input into the decision-making process. The independent Risk and Investment Appraisal Report highlights the key risks for consideration. Governance will record the decision taken (with any conditions) and will communicate it to the Project Lead/Sponsor and other teams who have supported the project. If the Delivery Partner is external, the Project Lead/Sponsor will communicate the decision to them.



#### 4.12.3 Decisions Between £5million and £20million

These are Key Decisions and as such must be published on the WMCA public facing website at least 28 days before the decision is due to be made.

For these, the Project Lead/Sponsor will submit all Programme and Project paperwork via the Modern.Gov platform including an Investment Board covering report. Appraisal will upload the independent Risk and Investment Appraisal report at least 6 clear working days ahead of the Investment Board Meeting.

Decisions above £5million are above the levels of officer decision delegations and must therefore be considered and outcomes made by Boards consisting of regional political representatives (from local authorities.) Decision-makers are asked to consider the Business Case and the independent Risk & Investment Appraisal Report when deciding.

The Project Lead/Sponsor attends the meeting to present the Business Case and answer any queries. The Appraisal representative attends to highlight any key risks, opportunities and their recommendation to the decision-makers.

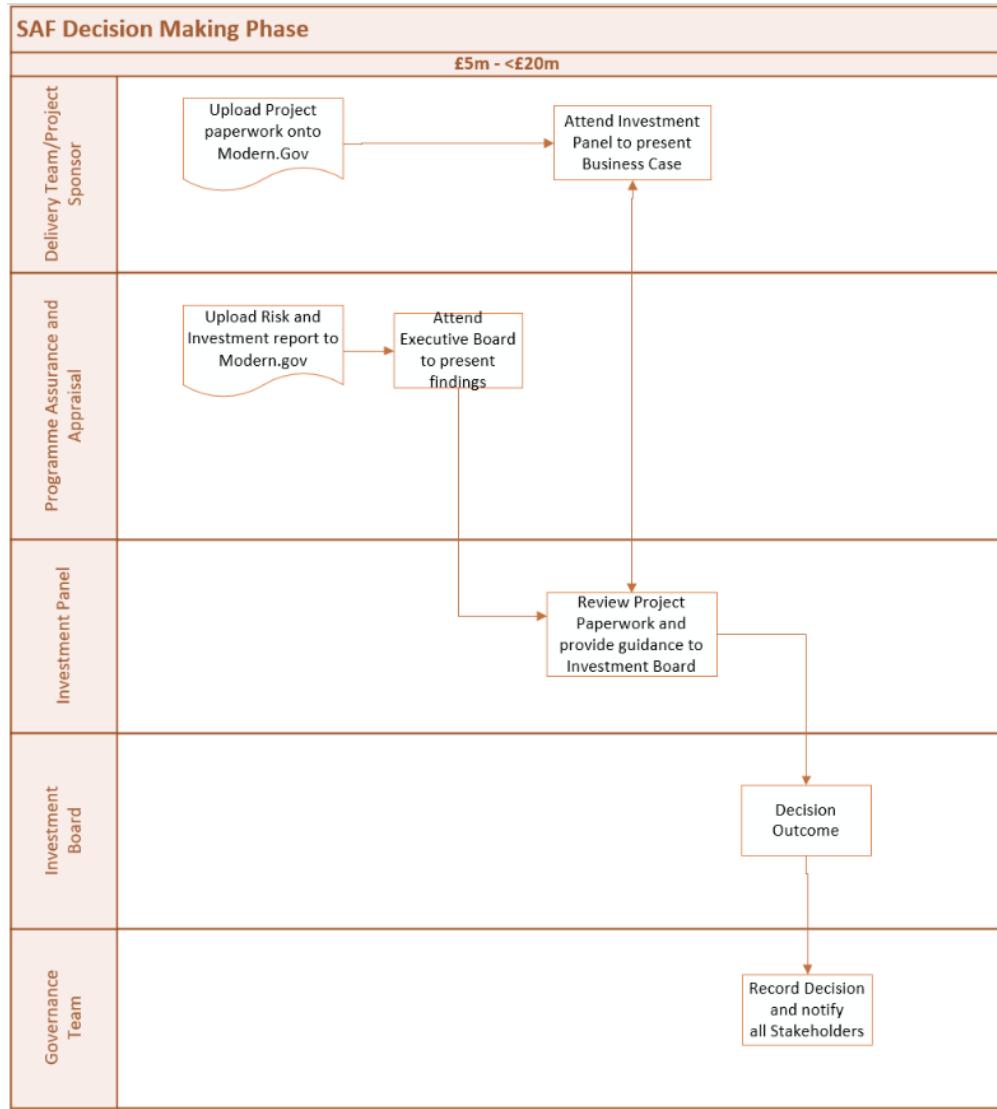
To support decision-making boards, and the Investment Panel will review business cases and supporting documentation to support effective decision-making by:

- Identifying key lines of enquiry for the Investment Board to focus on
- Validating and challenging business case content
- Validating and challenging external review of the business case
- Validating and challenging the quality and robustness of business case content
- Ensuring a consistent approach to challenging HM Treasury's 5 case elements within Business Cases
- Examining the Risk and Investment Appraisal to understand key risks, opportunities and recommendations.

The Investment Panel will provide the Investment Board with a recorded discussion for each proposal, noting observations to consider, including the strengths and weaknesses of a proposal, observations on the level of investment risk and providing any recommendations for improvement or to mitigate risks. This may lead to additional conditions to be added to funding agreements, conditions for withdrawal of support, additions to M&E plans.

The Investment Board includes local authority and independent business sector representation including being chaired by a local authority representative.

Governance will record the decision taken (with any conditions) and will communicate it to the Project Lead/Sponsor and Enabling Services. If the Delivery Partner is external, the Project Lead/Sponsor will communicate the decision to them.



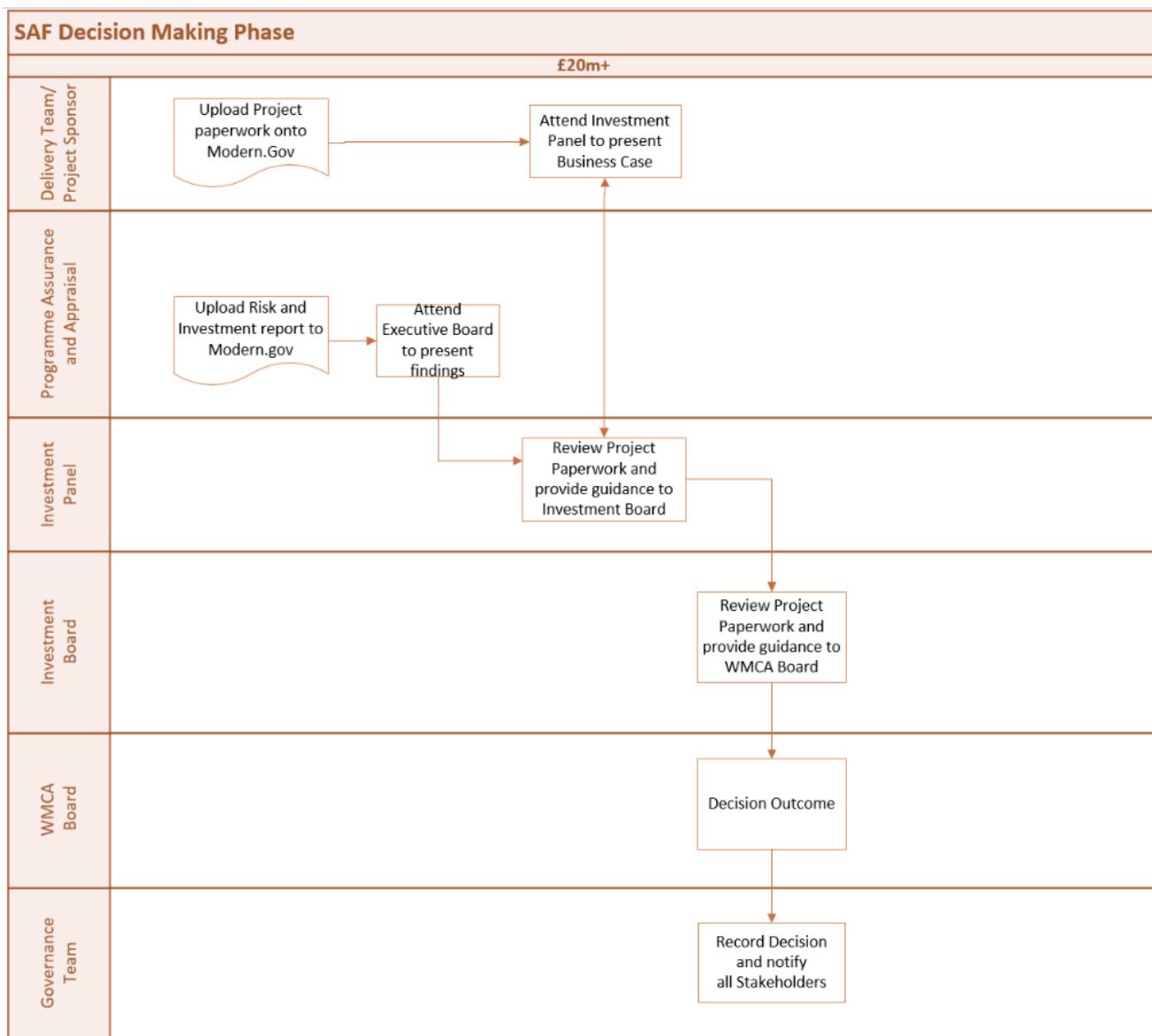
#### 4.12.4 Decisions of £20million and Above

These are Key Decisions and as such must be published on the WMCA public facing website at least 28 days before the decision is due to be made.

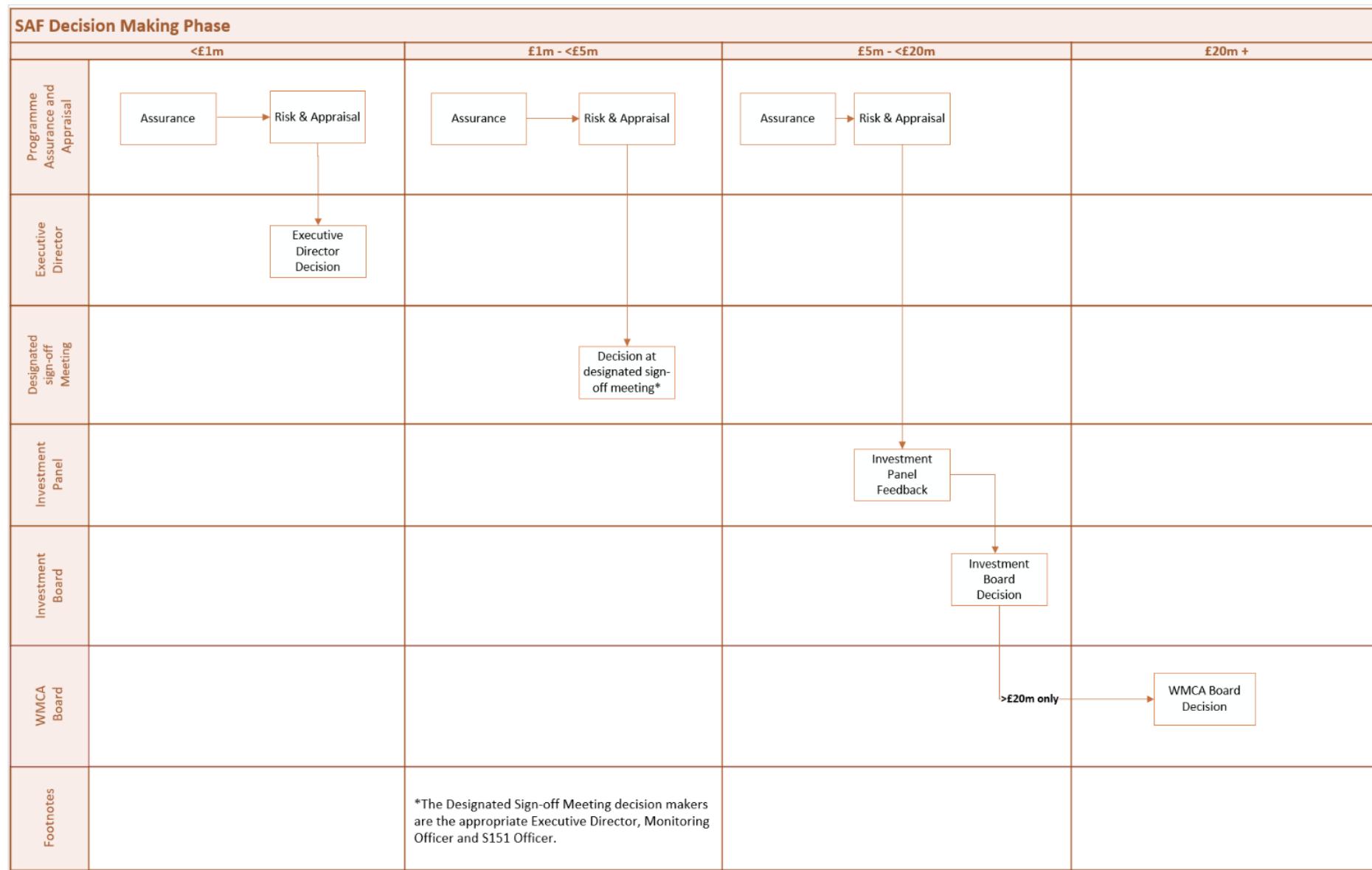
There is an additional role for WMCA Board in approving Programmes and Project decisions that are above £20million. For these, Programme and Project paperwork will be submitted via the Modern.Gov platform including the Board Report and Appraisal will upload the final Risk and Investment Appraisal report at least 6 days ahead of the WMCA Board Meeting. The proposal will first be considered by the Investment Board who will then make recommendations to the WMCA Board.

The WMCA Board membership includes local authority representation and it's terms of reference are laid down in the [WMCA Constitution](#).

Governance will record the decision taken (with any conditions) on Modern.Gov and will communicate it to the Project Lead/Sponsor and Enabling Services. If the Delivery Partner is external, the Project Lead/Sponsor will communicate the decision to them.



## 4.12.5 Summary of Project / Programme Decision Routes



## **4.13 Subsidy Control**

WMCA will ensure that all projects comply with Subsidy Control law (formerly State Aid).

Subsidy is where a public authority provides support to an enterprise that gives them an economic advantage, meaning equivalent support could not have been obtained on commercial terms. This could include, for example, cash payment, a loan with interest below the market rate or the free use of equipment or office space.

Subsidies should be given in the public interest, to address a market failure or equity concern.

To minimise these risks and increase the likelihood that subsidies achieve positive outcomes, the UK subsidy control regime regulates subsidies given in the UK to prevent any excessively distortive or harmful effects. Subsidy control considerations will be made with the advice of relevant professionals in accordance with guidance.

## **4.14 Management of Contracts**

Following decision, the Legal Team will send out a Funding Offer Letter, which includes the following: Project Name, Applicant, Maximum Funding Contribution (£), with details regarding when payment was to be issued, (usually connected to milestones), what is Eligible Expenditure, Commencement and Completion dates. Contracts are managed within the individual Directorates to provide a link to the outputs and outcomes of the projects/programmes.

## **4.15 Monitoring and Evaluation**

The WMCA Performance Management Framework has been developed in accordance with HM Treasury's Magenta (Guidance for Evaluation) and Green (Guidance on Appraisal and Evaluation) Books. The overall approach to monitoring and evaluation is underpinned by the following key principles:

- Robust internal controls providing a second line of defence
- Adequate resources are in place and detailed in the business case
- Monitoring requirements are locally defined, proportionate and reported to the Executive Board in a consistent fashion
- Baseline information is consistent across key projects and programmes
- Basic process evaluation is conducted internally, and more detailed evaluation is commissioned
- Data is collected once and used many times to inform other critical documents, such as the Annual Business Plan.
- Lessons learned are used to inform future projects and programmes.

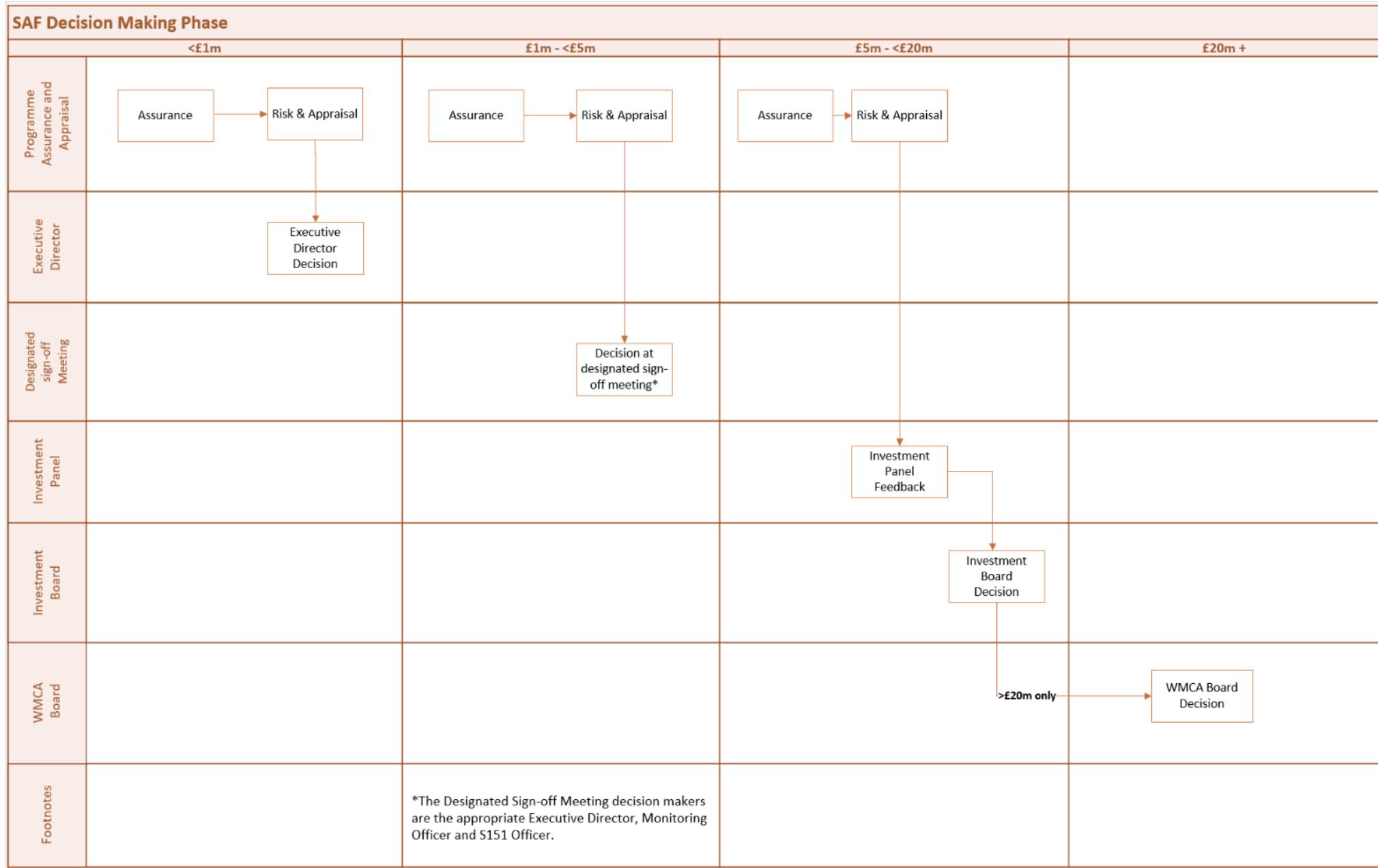
All projects that go through the SAF, will have an effective monitoring and evaluation M&E plan in place which will form a key part of the business case. This will help assess the effectiveness and impact of investing public funds, and the identification of best practice and lessons learnt that can inform decisions about future delivery. Logic chains will guide the collection of data from individual projects during both stages of M&E and will be designed to ensure that it meets the requirements of WMCA and the Government.

This framework aims to ensure that these commitments are delivered by setting out the approach, principles, role and responsibilities for the monitoring and evaluation of projects and programmes both in the Devolution Deal and within any wider Combined Authority activity.

MCAs' delivery of the agreed outcomes will be overseen by a Programme Board that will be chaired by MHCLG senior officers and attended by the MCAs, HMT senior officials, and senior officials from other government departments (OGDs) that have devolved funding in the Integrated Settlement. The Programme Board will act as the default point of contact for the MCAs on all delivery questions, concerns, and conversations, with other bilateral conversations with OGDs about delivery of the Integrated Settlement taking place only under exceptional circumstances, or as part of streamlined working level conversations with MHCLG. HMG will agree a Terms of Reference (ToR) for the Programme Board with the MCAs and publish this as an annex to this MoU before the start of the next SR period.

## **4.16 Change Requests**

Decision routes should always be led by the delegation amount; therefore, Change Requests decisions do not need to be made by the 'original decision maker' i.e., if there is a decision outcome made by WMCA Board it does not need to go back to Board. The reason for this is that the outcome of the original business case was made by Board and to be sighted on a minor change could delay project progress and cause further time delays whilst awaiting the next meeting. On the occasion the change is deemed contentious, for example, where the scope of the original approved project has changed dramatically or by more than of 10% (generally measured by output quantity). In such instances, the decision will be made by the original approver.



## 4.17 Evaluation/Project Closure

Investment Programme Projects are evaluated in two stages. The first stage is led internally by the WMCA's Investment Programme Monitoring and Evaluation Team and comprises the production of a Project Closure and Lessons Learnt Report in accordance with HM Treasury's Green and Magenta Books. It reviews the milestones and success factors of the project vis-à-vis its proposed Delivery Plan:

- To confirm outstanding issues, risks and mitigations, recommendations, and proposed course of action to resolve them
- Outline outstanding tasks and activities required to close the project, and
- Identify project highlights and best practice for future interventions.

As part of the funding agreement, the WMCA is required to undertake 5-year Gateway Reviews to assess the impact delivered by our investments led by an independent National Evaluation Panel.

The purpose of the National Evaluation Panel is to evaluate the impact of locally appraised interventions on economic growth in each locality to inform the Gateway Review and Ministerial decision-making on future funding.

## 5 APPENDICES

### 5.1 Transport Projects

Transport projects developed through SAF are expected to be compatible with WMCA's Local Transport Plan (LTP), the Functional Strategy for transport (which includes the key Integrated Settlement Outcomes for Transport) and the relevant Place Based Strategy for the location of the scheme. They should also be compatible with the overarching Programme Business Case for the stream of funding being accessed.

Individual projects will need to complete a SAF business case template and associated [Transport Additional Appendix](#).

Projects retained by DfT or requiring external scrutiny (including those with a value over £200m) will adopt NISTA guidance regarding independent assurance i.e. stage gate reviews at key milestones in the project life cycle. In these instances, Integrated Assurance and Approvals Plans will be developed with external 3<sup>rd</sup> line of defence bodies (e.g. DfT) to demonstrate independent external assurance of retained schemes.

It is expected that the work carried out to enable these documents to be completed will have been carried out in accordance with DfT guidance, especially any analytical work.

DfT guidance includes but is not limited to the documents listed below. In addition, relevant HM Treasury guidance (including the Green Book, Orange Book, Aqua Book and Magenta Book) should also be consulted.

- [Transport Business Case Guidance](#) (*DfT guidance explaining how the Green Book and supplementary guidance is used when developing transport-specific business cases and to inform spending decisions*)
- [Value for Money Framework](#) (*DfT framework for completing VFM assessments and communicating these assessments to decision-makers*)
- [Transport Analysis Guidance \(TAG\)](#) (*DfT supplementary guidance that provides information on the role of transport modelling and appraisal*)
- [Analytical Assurance Framework](#) (*DfT framework specifying analysis produced and used within DfT*)

Any Business Case will clearly articulate how the project/programme will be monitored and evaluated following DfT guidance and with reference to any frameworks or strategies produced by WMCA and TfWM,

To provide the additional context and evidence required for decision, updated plans, strategies and documents and responses to key questions within the [Transport Additional Appendix](#) across the five-case model will also be submitted with the

business case. This appendix provides a ‘checklist’ of information which should be provided either within the DfT business case or as separate documents.

Within the [Transport Additional Appendix](#), there is a table showing the questions completed at each stage of the business case cycle. This does not preclude early completion if the information is available. Information entered in previous stages should be retained and updated where necessary.

To ensure that the scope of the business case meets the requirements of relevant funding streams, Transport for West Midlands (TfWM) project leads/stakeholders will ensure that project business cases will be developed and delivered in accordance with DfT requirements and standards. The Programme Assurance and Appraisal Team will apply a flexible and proportionate approach to its activities for transport business cases (whilst ensuring DfT requirements are always met) to retain the benefits of local assurance in terms of speed of decision making, where appropriate.

The Programme Assurance and Appraisal Team will independently assure and appraise the projects at development and during delivery through business case maturity assessment, risk and investment appraisal, change control or Programme Assurance Health Checks to ensure that the project meets strategic and funding requirements (refer to 4.1.2.)

## **5.2 Housing Projects**

For the Housing, Property and Regeneration led projects) regardless of funding streams will be subject to the SAF. The programmes and projects for funding streams awarded pre-2023 will be required to develop an Annual Programme Business Case. The Programme Business will be updated to include new funding streams with their associated outputs. This will also be subject to the SAF. Individual projects aligned to a Programme Business Case will be required to produce a Business Case, which will also follow the SAF.

Individual Housing, Property and Regeneration projects will also be subject to the [Single Commissioning Framework](#) which is an internal Directorate framework defining governance and decision-making prior to SAF. Any Expressions of Interest submitted will be assessed by internal Directorate experts, external advisers and legal and finance business partners to ensure they meet key WMCA priorities and suitability criteria, before being invited to apply. Applications are also subject to scrutiny by the same team, to ensure that the project meets funding and strategic requirements, including a Red Book valuation, development appraisal and other supporting studies, for example, cost assessment, remediation studies.

## **5.3 Adult Education Budget Programme**

An overarching Skills Programme Business Case has been developed which provides a framework and overview of the Programme including the following confirmed funding received.

Adult Skills Fund
National Skills Fund 'Free Courses for Jobs'
National Skills Fund 'Skills Bootcamp'
Multiply (to end March 2025)
UK Shared Prosperity Fund

This Programme Business Case confirms the Economy and Skills Directorate's objectives for the next five years and will support future planned funding and unknown funding opportunities which the West Midlands Combined Authority receives. Any activity/projects/opportunities arising from this funding will be articulated in business cases that will evidence how they will contribute to the overarching Programme's objectives (and conditions of DfE funding).

All business cases developed by the Directorate are subject to existing SAF processes.

This programme of activity is closely monitored and managed and is subject to an annual audit process and reporting.

Monitoring and Evaluation arrangements are implemented to manage performance with outputs reported regularly at the monthly Delegated Sign Off (DSO) meeting. This is attended by Executive Director of Skills, Health and Communities, the S73 Officer, Director of Law, Governance and Audit and the Head of Programme Assurance and Appraisal. Should performance be considered to fall below what has been planned and agreed, corrective action will be taken, including the option of undertaking an Assurance 'Health Check.'

## 5.4 Programme Assurance Health Check Plan

The Programme Assurance and Appraisal Team implement an annual 'Health Check' Plan across WMCA. The Projects and Programmes that form part of this annual plan are determined through an ongoing assessment of risk and performance.

The purpose of the Health Check is to give confidence to senior managers and decision-makers on a project or programme's performance and ability to achieve its objectives/positive outcomes. A Health Check helps drive continuous improvement and focus on key lines of enquiry around the following categories:

- Client and Scope
- Organisational Capability & Culture
- Stakeholder Engagement & Communication
- Risk Management
- Planning & Scheduling
- Health & Safety, Social Responsibility, Sustainability
- Governance
- Supply Chain
- Solution
- Finance
- Performance

An Assurance Observations report is produced which includes any findings and recommendations for improvement. Progress against agreed recommendations will be followed up at an appropriate time to provide confidence that progress/improvement is being made.

## **5.5 SAF Templates**

### **5.5.1 Project Initiation Document (PID)**

The PID is a high-level planning document that will be completed and approved during the Initiation Stage to gather outline information which validates the strategic fit of the intended intervention such as alignment to WMCA Objectives and Aims, potential risks and target benefits. The document will also be used to agree the Business Case development route and provide assurance that key stakeholders at the WMCA have been sighted on the proposal from the outset (Finance, Legal, Procurement and Executive Director).

### **5.5.2 Business Justification Case (BJC)**

The BJC is a single stage business case that is available for schemes that require less development. To use a BJC, projects must not be novel or contentious so options analysis is reduced, where firm fixed prices are available, they should be evidenced from historical delivery. A specific procurement phase is not required as pre-competeted procurement arrangement can be utilised.

### **5.5.3 Programme Business Case (PBC)**

The PBC is produced when a strategically linked series of projects requires authorisation to progress. A programme is a series of planned measures, related events and co-ordinated activity in pursuit of an organisations long term goals. The PBC will outline the programme projects dossier including the indicative timeline, costs and the overarching management strategies.

### **5.5.4 Project Case**

The PC is produced for projects seeking lower level of spend and follow on from a previously approved Programme Business Case. There should be clear alignment to the PBC within the Project Case in terms of how the outputs contribute to the Programme benefits and outcomes.

### **5.5.5 Strategic Outline Case (SOC)**

The SOC or the Strategic Outline Business Case provides the strategic rationale for the intervention and identifies the critical success factors. The preferred option is derived via an options analysis to demonstrate how optimum VFM and social value will be achieved. Stakeholders will understand the robustness of the proposal and the future direction of travel including an updated whole life cost estimation.

### **5.5.6 Outline Business Case (OBC)**

The OBC determines VFM and prepares for the potential procurement by ascertaining affordability, the procurement proposal and funding requirement. At the conclusion of the OBC

stage consent should be able to be established for the procurement phase of the project to go ahead or not.

### **5.5.7 Full Business Case (FBC)**

The FBC enables the procurement of the VFM solution, contracting the appropriate deal and planning for successful delivery. At the conclusion of the FBC all dimensions of the five-case model will have been completed and be fully matured including a finalisation of all management arrangements. Key to this is firm fixed and accurate costs, Monitoring & Evaluation arrangements and delivery capability.

## **5.6 Integrated Settlement Virements Process**

### **5.6.1 Reconciliation of Published Settlement to Grant Determination**

HMG will publish details of the Authority's Integrated Settlement showing funds that are part of the settlement, and the quantum split between capital and revenue funds. The Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) allows the Authority to move funds between capital and revenue and between function pillars within agreed thresholds. The current MoU document can be found at the following link:

[Memorandum of Understanding for the "Trailblazer" Single Settlements for Greater Manchester and West Midlands Combined Authorities - GOV.UK](#)

HMT rules mean that if cash is given as capital it cannot be used as revenue therefore the grant determination letter must assume that the maximum allowance in the MoU for conversion of capital to revenue is exercised. This does not mean that the Authority must exercise the flexibility but ensures that it can. There is no such restriction on revenue funds.

The following steps are therefore required with receipt of each grant determination and at the start of the financial year.

1. Perform a reconciliation between the published settlement and the grant determination letter to provide assurance that the cash received is as expected. This should reconcile at pillar level and CDEL/RDEL level not just at total settlement. This should be filed with the grant determination letter.
2. Grant income will be loaded into Business World as per the published statement. This will be reconciled and include in the first month end reporting pack of the financial year.
3. A reversing journal will be posted that adjusts the grant income per the grant determination reverses back to the published statement. This will then provide a clean starting position in the ledger.

### **5.6.2 Processing Virements Related to Business Case Decisions**

1. When a Finance Business Partner becomes aware of business case proposal that looks to utilise the funding flexibilities, they should discuss with the Head of Finance Business Partnering and Strategic Planning, and the Financial Planning team to ensure that the programme can accommodate the proposal.
2. If a business case looks to exercise the funding flexibilities it will require specific sign off decision from the S.73 Officer. This sign off is to ensure that the S.73 can fulfil their reporting statement duties for the Integrated Settlement and is only in respect of the funding flexibility. It does not overrule any financial decision delegations set out in the Constitution.

3. Once a business case has received full approval, a virement form will be completed by Finance. The form will be completed by the Accounting Pool and signed off by the Finance Business Partner.
4. This form will be submitted alongside notification of the decision. It will be sent to Financial Planning & Co-ordination Manager.
5. Once Corporate finance checks have been completed the virement journal will be posted by Financial Planning.

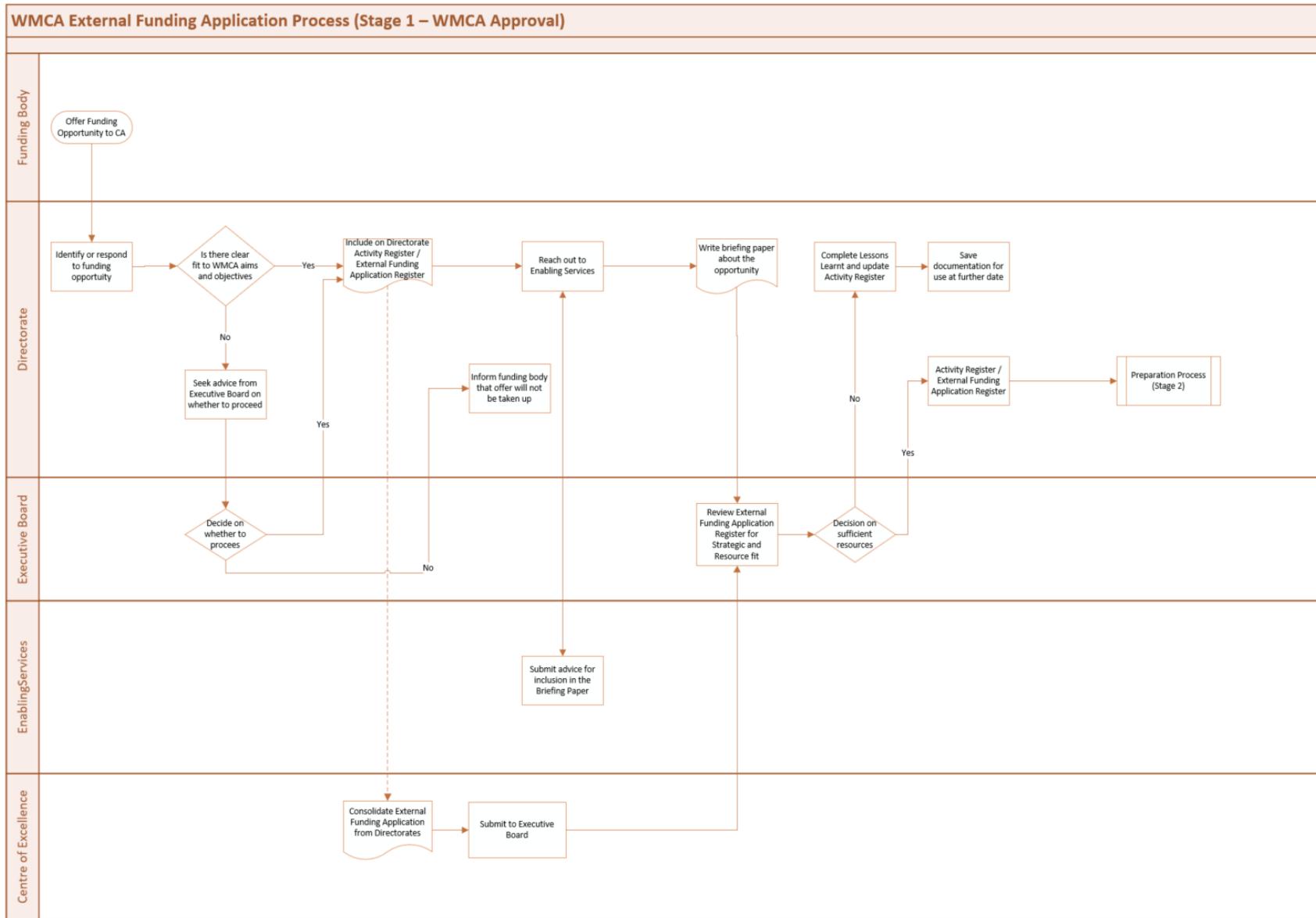
### **5.6.3 In Year/In Flight Project Virements**

1. When a Finance Business Partner becomes aware of change request proposal that looks to utilise the funding flexibilities, they should discuss with the Head of Finance Business Partnering and Strategic Planning, and the Financial Planning team to ensure that the programme can accommodate the proposal.
2. If there is an intention to use flexibilities for in flight programmes, then this will trigger a requirement for a change request. The change request will require specific approval sign off from the S.73 Officer. This sign off is to ensure that the S.73 can fulfil their reporting statement duties for the Integrated Settlement and is only in respect of the funding flexibility. It does not overrule any financial approval delegations set out in the Constitution.
3. Once a change request has received full approval, a virement form will be completed by Finance. The form will be completed by the Accounting Pool and signed off by the Finance Business Partner.
4. This form will be submitted alongside the decision approval. It will be sent to Financial Planning & Co-ordination Manager.
5. Once Corporate finance checks have been completed, the virement journal will be posted by Financial Planning.

### **5.6.4 Reporting**

Reporting on the use of flexibilities will be incorporated into month end reporting pack presented at the Day 5 and 6 meetings. It will also be reported in the EXB reporting monthly to ensure the Executive are sighted. Use of flexibilities will also be reported to MHCLG via Programme Board reporting.

## 5.7 External Funding Process



## WMCA External Funding Application Process (Stage 2 – Preparation)

