



Board Meeting

Date	20 January 2017
Report title	Appointment of Combined Authority Returning Officer
Cabinet Member Portfolio Lead	Councillor Bob Sleigh – Chair of the WMCA
Accountable Chief Executive	Martin Reeves, Chief Executive WMCA Email Martin.Reeves@coventry.gov.uk Tel 024 7683 3232
Accountable Employee	Robert Connelly, Head of Electoral Services, Birmingham City Council Email Robert.connelly@birmingham.gov.uk Tel 0121 303 2443
Report to be/has been considered by	None

Recommendation(s) for action or decision:

The Combined Authority Board is recommended to:

1. Appoint the Returning Officer for Birmingham as the West Midlands Combined Authority Returning Officer (designate).
2. Agree a budget allocation of £4m for the conduct of the election.
3. Agree that no staff employed by a Local Returning Officer shall be paid less than the voluntary living wage.

1.0 Purpose

1.1 The purpose of the report is to enable the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) to appoint a Combined Authority Returning Office in respect of the Combined Authority mayoral election on 4 May 2017.

1.2 To agree a budget allocation for the mayoral election on 4 May 2017.

2.0 Background

2.1 The draft Combined Authorities (Mayoral Elections) Order 2017 provides that each Combined Authority must appoint one of its officers or one of the officers of a constituent council to be the Combined Authority Returning Officer (CARO). If the latter this will normally be a Local Returning Officer.

2.2 The CARO will have overall responsibility for the election of the mayor and may, for example, give to a Returning Officer of a constituent member directions relating to the conduct of the election. In addition, the CARO will be responsible for accepting nominations and coordinating the regional result.

2.3 The relevant statutory instrument regarding the conduct rules is currently awaiting formal approval by parliament. As such until the order is formally made any appointment of a CARO is as a CARO designate. The CARO's appointment will formally take effect on the making of the appropriate statutory order.

2.4 DCLG has stated that the costs of the election will be met by the Combined Authority (CA) which again is in accordance with the draft regulations.

2.5 Estimated costs of the election for the WMCA have been estimated based on the "maximum recoverable amounts" allocated to the various voting areas in respect of the Police and Crime Commissioner election and EU referendum held in 2016.

2.6 These costs are determined by central government and subject to parliamentary approval via the appropriate statutory orders and will be in the region of £3.4-£3.9m, which includes an element for services provided by the relevant Local Returning Officer and CARO. Each Local Returning Officer shall be allocated a proportion of the proposed budget, again based on the allocation for the Police and Crime Commissioner election and EU referendum.

2.7 In addition to the above costs there is a need for a separate candidate booklet costs for which are estimated to be approximately £200,000.

2.8 It is also proposed that each LRO should ensure that no staff employed by them should be paid less than the voluntary living wage which from April 2017 will be £8.45 per hour. Whilst this will have the effect of increasing the cost of the election, the overall costs should still be within the estimate as set out in paragraph 2.6.

3.0 Wider WMCA Implications

3.1 There are no foreseen wider implications for the WMCA or for non-constituent areas.

4.0 Progress, options, discussion, etc.

4.1 There are no other options other than to appoint a CARO and provide a sufficient budget to allow Local Returning Officers to undertake their statutory role and ensure that the election is fair, transparent and that everyone has confidence in the result.

5.0 Financial implications

5.1 An allowance of £4.0m will be included within the 2017/18 Budget proposals

6.0 Legal implications

6.1 The combined authority has a statutory duty to appoint a CARO for the Mayoral Elections and failure to do so will mean the Mayoral election cannot be held.

7.0 Equalities implications

7.1 No equality implications are foreseen.

7.0 Other implications

7.1 None are foreseen

8.0 Schedule of background papers

8.1 None

9.0 Appendices

9.1 None. However the appropriate orders relating to the Police and Crime Commissioner election and EU referendum can be found at:

<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2016/514/contents/made>.

<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2016/419/contents/made>