



West
Yorkshire
Combined
Authority

Tracy
Brabin
Mayor of
West Yorkshire

Cllr Barry Anderson
Chair of Scrutiny
West Yorkshire Combined Authority
By Email

10 September 2025

Dear Cllr Anderson,

RE: Scrutiny Committee Conclusions and Recommendations, 2 May 2025

Thank you for your letter setting out the conclusions and recommendations from the Scrutiny Committee session held on 2 May 2025.

In line with our constitutional procedures, I'm responding to the recommendations the committee has made. A copy of this letter will be shared with members of the Combined Authority and all members of the Scrutiny Committee for their information.

Thank you for your continued commitment to the important role of scrutiny at the Combined Authority, and I look forward to attending the Committee again in future.

Yours sincerely,

Tracy Brabin
Mayor of West Yorkshire

Mayoral Response to Scrutiny Committee Recommendations, 2 May 2025

1. *Devolution communications and leadership: That the Mayor take ownership of, and a lead role in, comprehensively communicating devolution to councils, members and the public so they understand well and engage with it.*

The Mayor and Combined Authority takes the responsibility of proactively communicating about devolution to the people of West Yorkshire. Indeed, this forms a key element of the Combined Authority's Communications Strategy, which includes the following objectives:

- Raise positive awareness of devolution and the role of the Mayor and West Yorkshire Combined Authority with the public and business community
 - Increase the profile of the West Yorkshire Combined Authority and Mayor in the national media through greater engagement and taking a leadership role on key issues, such as Northern transport and fairer funding of public services
 - Deepen our alliance with our local authority partners through the West Yorkshire Plan and narrative so that we are speaking with one voice about the region and when approaching the government
 - Make the case that we are a trusted partner for further devolution, such as bus franchising and local ownership of rail, culture and skills through demonstrating the impact of our existing powers
2. *Tightening up councillor liaison: That the Mayor strengthen communication links between the mayoralty and councillors by establishing a direct, priority line of communication (i.e. email) for councillors to raise queries, casework and petitions – and a commitment to respond quickly and report efficiency quarterly as a KPI.*

Emails from members that come into the Mayoral Office – via Mayoral.Enquiries@westyorks-ca.gov.uk - are recorded and monitored on our casework system and flagged as Councillor enquiries. Priority is given to these responses. Responses that do not come into this inbox are not monitored and recorded in the same way. The Combined Authority will consult with members about whether an email separate to this for queries not directed to the Mayor is required.

3. *Improving councillor engagement: That the Mayor establish appropriate lines of communication, if technically feasible, so that councillors are made aware of Combined Authority projects and mayoral engagements in their areas for their knowledge, comment, support or participation.*

The Mayor attends one meeting of each local authority each year – at the discretion of each local authority – to provide an update on Mayoral and Combined Authority activities. A monthly update on Combined Authority activities, from the Mayor and Chief Executive, is circulated to

all members each month. If members do not receive this update, please let us know by emailing InternalCommunications@westyorks-ca.gov.uk.

When there are significant updates, the Mayor also hosts virtual meetings that all members are invited to attend, most recently in relation to the consultation on the Mayor's Local Transport Plan. Consideration is being given as to whether these sessions could be held more regularly to provide broader updates on the Combined Authority's programmes and projects.

4. *Evidencing "soft power" impact: That the Mayor maintain a monitor of the quantifiable outcomes arising from "soft power" activity (i.e. lobbying, trips, visits, interventions, convening etc) – to present in future reports to Committee for discussion and scrutiny.*

The Mayor provides regular updates on her activities to both the Combined Authority and Scrutiny Committee and will continue to do so.

5. *Engaging councillors in "soft power": That the Mayor to provide councillors and other committee members with a list of funding and policy asks being made to government and partners, so that interested local councillors can support efforts in the interests of West Yorkshire and the "place before politics" principle.*

The Combined Authority receives regular updates in relation to Government's fiscal events, such as Spending Reviews and Budgets, which summarises the priorities of the Mayor and Combined Authority. This approach will be continued. The Mayor regularly seeks to influence government decision making alongside local authority leaders and will continue to do so. The Mayor always takes a strategic approach to influencing government decisions, and has sought the support of wider members where this is deemed an appropriate approach to influence a decision.

6. *Monitor Mayor's public profile: That the Mayor undertake an evaluation of the mayoralty and Combined Authority's public profile to understand and bridge gaps in public participation and knowledge of decisions, activity and outcomes undertaken with their money, in their name.*

The Combined Authority could only reasonably accept this recommendation by conducting regular opinion polling of the West Yorkshire public. Regular, reliable opinion polling of this kind would have cost implications, and any decision to adopt this approach would need to be proven as value for money.

7. *Bridging the accountability gap: That the partnership principles agreed between the Combined Authority and Councils are revisited if necessary to provide flexibility for the Mayor to intervene in persistent, unresolved local issues with no clear 'owner' that have an impact on West Yorkshire as a whole (i.e. fly tipping at a key visitor entry point).*

The English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill sets out seven areas of competence that Mayoral Strategic Authorities – including the Combined Authority – are responsible for:

- Transport and Infrastructure
- Skills and Employment Support
- Housing and Strategic Planning
- Economic Development and Regeneration
- Environment and Net Zero
- Health, Wellbeing and Public Service Reform
- Public Safety

The Combined Authority continues to work with the five constituent authorities on the implementation of the powers and responsibilities of the Bill, and how we can use this to achieve the collective aims, ambitions and outcomes agreed by the Combined Authority.