

**Westminster Social Policy Forum conference:
Next steps for devolution and growth in the Midlands**

Timing: Morning, Friday 12th December 2025

*****Taking Place Online*****

Draft agenda subject to change



- 8.30 Registration
- 9.00 **Chair's opening remarks**
Senior Parliamentarian
- 9.05 **Devolution and growth in the Midlands - considerations for policy and implementation**
Senior academic
Questions and comments from the floor
- 9.25 **Local leadership and use of new powers**
Senior representative, local authority
- 9.35 **Priorities for enhancing growth and public service delivery - implementation, infrastructure, transport, public health and skills**
implementation priorities for WMCA and EMCA | impact of the English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill | national decision-making structures and local powers | enhancing regional connectivity and integrated transport systems | changes to major rail schemes, including HS2 | upgrading and delivering new infrastructure | reducing health inequalities and improving population health | green skills pathways and addressing regional skills gaps | priorities for Transport for City Regions funding | funding and predictable long-term settlements | insights from West Midlands experience as a trailblazer combined authority
Dr Mubasshir Ajaz, Head, Health and Communities, West Midlands Combined Authority
Senior representative, transport
Senior representative, skills
- 9.50 Questions and comments from the floor
- 10.10 **Delivering the East Midlands Vision for Growth - priorities for investment, innovation and inclusive economies**
Mayor Claire Ward, Mayor, East Midlands; and Chair, East Midlands Combined County Authority
Questions and comments from the floor
- 10.40 **Chair's closing remarks**
Senior Parliamentarian
- 10.45 Break
- 10.55 **Chair's opening remarks**
Senior Parliamentarian
- 11.05 **Priorities for supporting housing delivery - addressing planning constraints, affordability and infrastructure challenges**
new spatial planning powers and capacity | Local Growth Plan targets | partnerships with developers and housing associations | addressing sector skills shortages | planning reform | building costs, quality and environmental standards | delivering required social infrastructure | Planning and Infrastructure Bill implementation and impact | affordability requirements | certainty for developers amid structural and election cycle changes | aligning national funding programmes and devolved investment strategies
Maria Dunn, Acting Assistant Director, Planning, Birmingham City Council
Gerraint Oakley, Chief Growth and Development Officer, Platform Housing Group
Senior representative, developer
Questions and comments from the floor
- 11.45 **Achieving Industrial Strategy Zone benefits - driving regional growth and international trade**
Tom Newman-Taylor, CEO, East Midlands Freeport
- 11.55 **Delivering inward investment to support economic development**
Julia Beck, Chief Strategy and Impact Officer, UK Export Finance
- 12.05 **Next steps for building regional strengths - investment, innovation, clusters and supply chains**
mayoral growth priorities | inward investment and alignment with National Wealth Fund and UK Export Finance | research and innovation capacity, university-business partnerships and developing spin-outs | job creation and boosting regional productivity | Industrial Strategy Zone growth, Investment Zones and Freeports | monitoring outcomes | developing regional clusters and supply chains | economic security and cyber resilience | cross-regional collaboration | inclusive growth | green skills | impact of Green Book reforms
Jason Longhurst, Head, Sustainable Investment and Partnerships, Prologis; and Chair, South Midlands Business Board
Paresh Patel, Regional Secretary, East Midlands, Unite the Union
Senior representative, research
- 12.20 Questions and comments from the floor
- 12.45 **Devolved powers in the Midlands - measures in the English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill and local government finance reform**
Senior representative, policy
Questions and comments from the floor
- 13.10 **Chair's and Westminster Social Policy Forum closing remarks**
Senior Parliamentarian
Harry Nelson, Westminster Social Policy Forum