

General Members Meeting November 2025

Reviewing the ADEPT offer to Combined Authorities

Recommendation

To improve engagement with Combined Authorities, the Leadership Team recommends that we:

- Continue to promote the range of opportunities that ADEPT offers.
- Actively seek to recruit those combined authorities that are not yet members.
- Ensure our leadership development programmes reflect the dynamics of the changing local government landscape, possibly with specific cohorts or modules for those from combined authorities.
- Set up regular 1-2-1 calls with each combined authority place director involving the CEO / President / regional board chair.
- Initiate some work on identifying core leadership skills, where there might be gaps and how these could be addressed.
- Establish a separate group for existing combined authority place directors, potentially in partnership with UK Mayors Network, to share good practice and opportunities to collaborate.
- Bring together those place directors in the DPP who are working to establish new combined authorities to share intelligence and good practice; consider how we might also support incoming CEOs for the new combined authorities.

Recommendation

To better reflect the value of the membership benefits, we:

- Propose to make a one-off increase in the membership fee.
- Recommend a sliding scale of fee that reflects the population within the geography of the combined authority.

1. Background

Combined authorities (CAs) have had the opportunity to join ADEPT since 2018; the first to join was the West of England Combined Authority (WECA). There are now fifteen CAs; seven have been established within the past two years (see Table 1). Within the next two years, there will be another six CAs (i.e. from the Devolution Priority Programme areas) with more expected after the Devolution Bill is passed. The Government's stated ambition is for the whole of England to have CAs (to be renamed Strategic Authorities).

It is therefore timely to review the ADEPT offer to CAs. We currently have eight CA members, who have access to all the same services and opportunities as our local authority members.

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Membership services

- Networking, sharing intelligence & best practice, interface with central government via the regional boards, national subject boards, and technical working groups.
- Opportunities to attend / speak at national conferences, workshops, webinars such as the recent LGR / devo series where several CAs spoke.
- Option to join the Future Highways Research Group.
- Access to our highly valued and competitively priced L&D programmes: the Leadership Development Programme for aspiring place directors, the Leadership Pathway Programme for those earlier into their career, the PACE programme for executive directors.

Innovation & best practice

- Access to / participation in the DfT funded Live Labs programmes and Carbon Leadership Programme.
- Engaging with pilot projects such as the Gen Z recruitment campaign and the Digital Academy.

Policy influence

- Participation in national subject boards and technical working groups.
- Opportunities to be involved in policy projects, developing position statements, toolkits, best practice guides, etc.
- Inputting to formal responses on government consultations / inquiries / stakeholder groups etc.
- Regular interactions with government departments including DfT, Defra, DESNZ, MHCLG.

2. Feedback

We sought informal feedback from the West of England, Cambridgeshire & Peterborough and Tees Valley Combined Authorities on the ADEPT offer. In summary, the role of ADEPT as a convening and networking body is recognised and valued, as is the quality of events and the training offer. As with place directors within local authorities, everyone is time-pressured which can affect engagement. A particular nuance for CA place leaders is the priorities of their mayors, and the interactions between the mayors who now represent several political parties. It was noted that it was a challenging time to be establishing a new CA in a febrile political environment.

3. Current support

In 2017 a secretariat was set up within WECA to service what was then known as the M10. Now called the UK Mayors' Network, WECA continues to provide the secretariat whilst the chair role rotates around the mayors (currently chaired by Tracy Brabin). In recognition of its convening role, MHCLG has recently provided funding to WECA to recruit a head of secretariat. *NB: Hannah Bartram*

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has already met with Adwoa Osei, Head of the UK Mayors' Network, and they have agreed to meet every 6 months.

Feedback from the current WECA lead for the secretariat is that levels of engagement vary across the CAs according to their individual maturity, and increasingly, the political hue of each mayor. Some working groups have evolved organically - policy leads, finance & monitoring, skills, and environment – but these operate independently to the secretariat and there is no support network specifically for place directors in CAs.

The LGA has recently announced it is moving towards drawing up a firmer membership offer to CAs. There are no details on what that offer will encompass but could focus on issues such as governance, financial management and developing a positive culture. We are currently not aware of any support offer for officers. In addition, Core Cities is making its own pitch for “the merits of a tightly defined, urban focused mayors network”.

4. What more can ADEPT offer

Current levels of engagement with ADEPT are varied – occasional attendance at a regional board or subject board meeting, accessing the L&D programmes, providing updates or presentations when requested. To improve engagement, we would suggest that we:

- Continue to promote the range of opportunities that ADEPT offers.
- Actively seek to recruit those CAs that are not yet members.
- Ensure our leadership development programmes reflect the dynamics of the changing local government landscape, possibly with specific cohorts or modules for those from CAs.
- Set up regular 1-2-1 calls with each CA place director involving the CEO / President / regional board chair.
- Initiate some work on identifying core leadership skills, where there might be gaps, and how these could be addressed.
- Establish a separate group for existing CA place directors, potentially in partnership with the UK Mayors' Network, to share good practice and opportunities to collaborate.
- Bring together those place directors in the DPP who are working to establish new CAs to share intelligence and good practice; consider how we might also support incoming CEOs for the new CAs.

Membership fees

The current annual membership fee is £243. When CAs were first invited to join ADEPT, the membership fee was set at the same rate as that for Local Enterprise Partnerships. As the number and powers of CAs grows, it is timely to review the membership fee.

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We propose to make a one-off increase in the membership fee to better reflect the value of the benefits. Thereafter the fee will be subject to increase in line with inflation as indicated by the Consumer Prices Index (CPI) for September of the preceding year, which is the ADEPT policy.

We recommend a sliding scale of fee that reflects the population within the geography of each CA. This mirrors the approach we have for local authorities. The proposal for the membership fee for 2026/27 is:

- £1,000 for <1m population
- £1,500 for 1-2m population
- £2,000 for 2+m population

Hannah Bartram, Chief Executive, ADEPT

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Table 1: Combined Authorities & estimated populations

Combined Authority	Population (2025)	Mayor	ADEPT member
1. Greater Manchester MCA (2011)	2,900,000	Andy Burnham (Lab)	Caroline Simpson, CEO <i>Mark Atherton, Director of Environment</i> <i>Kevin Hargreaves, TfGM</i>
2. West Midlands MCA (2016)	2,900,000	Richard Parker (Lab)	Ed Cox, Interim CEO <i>Mark Corbin, TfWM</i>
3. West Yorkshire MCA (2014)	2,350,000	Tracy Brabin (Lab)	Ben Still, CEO <i>Liz Hunter, Director – Policing, Environment & Place</i>
4. East Midlands MCCA (2024)	2,200,000	Claire Ward (Lab)	Amy Harhoff, CEO <i>Edward Highfield, Executive Director - Place</i>
5. North East MCA (2024)	2,000,000	Kim McGuinness (Lab)	
6. Liverpool City Region MCA (2014)	1,550,000	Steve Rotherham (Lab)	
7. Lancashire CCA (2025)	1,550,000		
8. South Yorkshire MCA (2014)	1,400,000	Oliver Coppard (Lab)	
9. Greater Lincolnshire MCCA (2025)	1,100,000	Andrea Jenkyns (Reform)	
10. West of England MCA (2017)	1,100,000	Helen Godwin (Lab)	Stephen Peacock, CEO <i>John Wilkinson, Director of Homes & Regeneration</i> <i>Emma Blackham, Executive Director of Transport</i>

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Combined Authority	Population (2025)	Mayor	ADEPT member
11.Devon and Torbay CCA (2025)	953,000		
12.Cambridgeshire & Peterborough MCA (2017)	920,000	Paul Bristow (Con)	Rob Bridge, CEO <i>Judith Barker, Exec Director of Place & Connectivity</i> <i>Tim Bellamy, Assistant Director Transport</i>
13.York and North Yorkshire MCA (2024)	844,000	David Skaith (Lab)	James Farrar, CEO <i>Andy Kerr, Director of Economy</i>
14.Tees Valley MCA (2016)	678,000	Ben Houchen (Con)	Tom Bryant, CEO <i>Julie Hurley, Interim Director of Infrastructure</i>
15.Hull and East Yorkshire MCA (2025)	610,000	Luke Campbell (Reform)	