

JOB DESCRIPTION

JOB TITLE:	Head of Strategic Investments and Planning
MANAGED BY:	Director of Finance, Investment and Commercial (S73)
GRADE:	Head of Service Level 3

ROLE OVERVIEW

As Head of Strategic Investments and Planning, you will act as the senior organisational lead and subject matter expert for the creation and implementation of overarching investment strategies, ensuring investments align with overall business objectives and maintaining the bridge between strategy and execution, focusing on maximising returns while managing risk for sustainable growth.

Reporting to the Director of Finance, Investment and Commercial, this is a key senior role in the West of England Mayoral Combined Authority's finance and investment function. Supporting the delivery of the further devolution of powers and funding to the Authority, with a key focus on Integrated Settlement, delivery of the Investment Strategy and planning in line with Mayoral priorities.

The West of England Combined Authority has an ambitious growth strategy. The cost of delivering this is far greater than the grant arrangements in place. We need someone to think about how we use alternative means of finance to deliver this. This role will need to work with the various delivery teams (place, transport) to identify a strategic programme of investments that allow us to implement the growth strategy.

You will provide authoritative strategic advice to the Mayor, Chief Executive, Corporate Leadership Team and Committees on high-impact investments where there is often no established precedent. This includes identifying and evaluating strategic investment appraisal options, assessing implications and risk, ensuring robust governance arrangements are integrated into and aligned to organisational principles and corporate strategy.

This is a senior role that will require highly developed networking, advocacy, oral, written and presentation skills and self-motivation with ability to prioritise and manage a workload over extended periods. Interpersonal skills and the proven ability to establish positive relationships with staff at all levels, and external organisations, groups and individuals, which generate confidence, respect and trust is an essential aspect of the role.

THE ROLE

The West of England Combined Authority (the MCA) is seeking to appoint a Head of Strategic Investments and Planning. This role, reporting to the Director of Finance, Investments and Commercial will take a lead on shaping and delivering the Authority's Investment Strategy, pipeline and portfolio supporting our investment ambitions.

This role requires a high level of drive on strategic growth initiatives and supporting long-term value creation aligned to the organisation's funding platform and devolution of the Combined Authority landscape, and significant experience of providing strategic advice to Mayors, Combined Authorities and Unitary Authorities senior officers.

This role will also require a strong understanding of public sector financial needs and products, with a network that will help ensure you identify opportunities to strengthen the strategic investment position of the MCA. You will be confident in developing investment appraisal proposals that will be considered by the Mayor, Committee and organisational leadership.

You will be responsible for developing and overseeing our long-term strategic investment opportunities, as well as lead the process for agreeing new areas of an investment pipeline, leading deal execution, including active modelling, setting up specialist finance models for e.g. land value capture and business rate retention, vigorous due diligence and effective negotiations.

You will act as the senior organisational lead for the delivery of strategic investments and corresponding opportunities, ensuring that corporate and delivery teams are rapidly mobilised, equipped and guided to deliver outcomes at pace. This includes leading horizon-scanning activity, identifying new opportunities for regional advantage, and coordinating the MCA's response to national investment strategy variations and fiscal events.

You will work closely with the Director of Finance, Investments and Commercial, taking responsibility for new areas of work as they emerge, and as directed by the Director.

You will provide strategic advice to the Mayor, CEO and CLT on emerging opportunities the region may want to consider; government priorities and the challenges or opportunities this may create for the MCA. The role holder, working in collaboration with colleagues, will provide CLT, the CEO, the Mayor and Committee with options to consider strengthening the strategic investment position of the MCA.

KEY RESPONSIBILITIES

Strategic Leadership and Planning

- Act as the organisational authority for the identification and principal advisor to the Director of Finance, Investment and Commercial on the deployment and delivery of investment opportunities, planning arrangements and performance of a balanced portfolio aligned to the Mayor's agenda, devolution progression, Integrated Settlement readiness and wider organisational priorities.

- Translate the West of England Combined Authority's Investment Strategy into a proactive multi-year investment programme.
- Lead on the identification, development and evaluation of complex strategic investment options and negotiations, advising the CEO, Mayor, CLT and Committees on choices that carry significant organisational, political, financial and reputational implications.
- Lead on the development and establishment of the Future Places Fund, a blended strategic investment fund using MCA borrowing and Local Government pension investment to drive forward comprehensive regeneration in the region's growth zones.
- Lead on investment modelling & pricing and accountable for the robustness of the outputs of external fund managers, public-private partnerships (PPPs), and joint ventures (JVs) with the private sector.
- Provide clear strategic direction, pace and assurance across investment initiatives, ensuring alignment with corporate priorities and robust governance arrangements.
- Ensure compliance with the MCA's Assurance Framework, funding conditions, and statutory requirements including the reflection of financial risk assessment of the investment plans and identifying mitigation and measures to manage risk where appropriate.
- Provide strategic leadership for continuous service improvement that embraces key priorities and initiatives, including through the professional development of the team and the staff.
- Take responsibility for resolving novel, ambiguous and politically sensitive challenges where there is limited precedent and competing stakeholder interests.

Corporate Influence and Strategic Assurance

- Act as a trusted senior adviser to the Director of Finance, Investments and Commercial, taking delegated responsibility for emerging strategic investment priorities and acting as an extension of Director-level strategic capacity where required.
- Lead a coordinated, organisation-wide approach to strategic investment activity, ensuring clarity of roles, responsibilities and decision-making across the WECA.
- Handle highly sensitive and confidential matters with appropriate political awareness, judgement and discretion.
- Ensure that risks to investment, reputation and strategic objectives are identified early and actively managed, escalating issues appropriately to senior leadership.
- Develop linkages and coordinated working both within the finance/investment service and with other delivery areas of the West of England Combined Authority and key stakeholders (HM Treasury and Department for Levelling Up and others) to ensure that the investment services contribute to the development and delivery of statutory requirements and key priorities. Representing the MCA in negotiations with government, private investors, and regional partners subject to Section 73 officer approval.

Decision-Making, Accountability and Risk

- Accountable for the quality, coherence and timely delivery of strategic critical investment programmes.
- Exercise delegated authority from the Director of Finance, Investments and Commercial to progress strategic investment initiatives, resolve issues and make judgements within agreed parameters, escalating only where decisions exceed delegated limits.
- Ensure all public sector-related investment activities are in compliance with local regulations and internal risk management protocols.
- Responsible for identifying, assessing and managing strategic, political, reputational and delivery risks arising from investment decisions, ensuring appropriate mitigation and escalation.
- Ensure that advice and recommendations provided to the Mayor, CLT and Committees are evidence-based, balanced and reflect the wider organisational and regional implications.
- Deputise for the Director of Finance, Investment and Commercial where appropriate.

PERSON SPECIFICATION

ESSENTIAL

Qualifications and Knowledge

- Bachelor's degree in Business Administration, Public Policy, Economics, Finance, or a related field.
- Background in Corporate Finance, Transaction Services, Private Equity and Investment Banking.

Experience

- Direct experience in managing large portfolios, including asset allocation, risk management, and performance monitoring across various asset classes.
- Proficiency in complex financial analysis, valuation, and building robust financial models.
- Proven ability to lead investment teams, develop investment strategy, and drive strategic vision.
- Significant experience of working in a complex stakeholder environment at a senior level and can demonstrate ability to develop and maintain effective relationships.
- Understanding of public finance, pension fund regulations (if applicable), ESG integration, and fiduciary duties specific to government entities
- Significant experience or working with and advising senior officers and elected representatives.

Skills and Competencies

- A strategic mindset, with the ability to identify critical issues and formulate programmes of work that respond to investments and planning and to oversee their effective implementation.
- Strong commercial judgement and a rigorous analytical approach.
- Ability to provide strong strategic leadership and direction to ensure the effective performance management, motivation and development of staff.
- Excellent interpersonal skills and the proven ability to establish positive relationships with staff at all levels, and external organisations, groups and individuals, which generate confidence, respect and trust.
- Ability to present investment and financial data and/or information in a format easily understood by managers and members of a non-finance background.
- Ability to quickly identify potential medium- and long-term investment opportunities across a varied and multi-asset portfolio.
- Highly developed networking, advocacy, oral, written and presentation skills.
- Self-motivated with ability to prioritise and manage your workload over extended periods, producing accurate work within deadlines.
- High levels of integrity, discretion and professional credibility.
- Ability to develop trusted partnerships within the organisation and with wider partners and oversee the delivery of comprehensive, professional and solution-focussed advice.

This role is politically restricted.

DESIRABLE

Qualifications/ Knowledge and Experience

- Master's degree or equivalent.
- Direct experience of working in a Combined Authority.