

Scrutiny Committee

10 February 2016

Development of Devolution Proposals

Direction of Travel

Summary

1. This report considers how Suffolk County Council is working with its local public service partners to proactively influence and negotiate with Government to develop a robust proposal for devolution which will secure the best possible outcomes for Suffolk residents.
2. The report provides a “snapshot” of the position at the point of its publication, but, in light of the fast pace of this work, there may be further developments which have taken place since this time which are not reflected in the report. An update on any further developments will therefore be provided at the meeting.

Objective of Scrutiny

3. The objective of this scrutiny is to consider progress on the development of Devolution proposals and how this work is being taken forward.

Scrutiny Focus

4. The scope of this scrutiny has been developed to provide the Committee with information to come to a view on the following key questions:
 - a. What progress has been made on the passage of the Cities and Local Government Devolution Bill?
 - b. What is the current national picture of development?
 - c. What powers, responsibilities and freedoms are Norfolk and Suffolk asking for through their devolution deal and why have these been chosen?
 - d. Why is it important that Suffolk pursues devolution? What are the advantages, what are the potential benefits to the people of Suffolk, and what does it seek to achieve in terms of outcomes?
 - e. How is this work being led and developed?
 - f. What progress has been made to date?
 - g. What feedback has been received from Government to date?

- h. What are the arrangements for ensuring due diligence and assessing risk associated with any new devolved powers?
- i. How will arrangements for “double devolution” be developed?
- j. What is the process for developing appropriate governance arrangements?
- k. What assessment has been made of the implications of changes in local government funding mechanisms?
- l. What need or requirement is there for consultation or engagement with stakeholders and the wider public and when might this take place?
- m. What is known about the timescales for these developments?

How does this relate to County Council priorities?

- 5. Our ambition: ‘By 2028 we want Suffolk to be recognised for its outstanding environment and quality of life for all; a place where everyone can realise their potential, benefit from and contribute to Suffolk’s economic prosperity, and be actively involved in their community.’ Source: Suffolk’s Community Strategy 2008-2028 ‘Transforming Suffolk’.

Suffolk County Council’s Corporate Priorities	Link to this Scrutiny
Raising educational attainment and skill levels	✓
Supporting the Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) to increase economic growth	✓
Maintaining roads and developing Suffolk’s infrastructure	✓
Supporting those most vulnerable in our communities	✓
Empowering local communities	✓

- 6. All scrutiny items should consider how well they are delivering against the County Council priorities and Suffolk’s Community Strategy.
- 7. Having considered the information, the Committee may wish to:
 - a. make recommendations to Suffolk Public Sector Leader’s Group;
 - b. make recommendations to Devolution workstreams;
 - c. identify topics which may warrant further scrutiny;
 - d. request further information.

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Background

8. Government introduced the Cities and Local Government Devolution Bill to Parliament on 28 May 2015. Since then, the County Council has been working with partners to explore the potential for devolved arrangements in Suffolk.
9. Devolution presents an opportunity to local areas to take on new powers over local health services, transport planning, skills and economic development – along with the funding to back them up. Local powers will allow the joining up of public services, to create a system which is affordable and improves outcomes for local people.
10. In September 2015 (17 September County Council and 15 September Cabinet) it was agreed to pursue devolution negotiations with Government on the basis of the Expression of Interest developed with public sector partners in Suffolk.

Main body of evidence

Evidence Set 1 has been provided by Chris Bally, Assistant Chief Executive, Suffolk County Council, in response to the key areas for investigation, and is appended to this report.

Glossary

NA(LEP) – New Anglia (Local Enterprise Partnership)

Supporting Information

Cities and Local Government Devolution Bill, January 2016:

<http://services.parliament.uk/bills/201516/citiesandlocalgovernmentdevolution/documents.html>

17 September 2015, Suffolk County Council, County Council meeting item 8: 'Developing Suffolk's devolution proposal' and item 8 appendix A: 'Expression of Interest'
http://committeeminutes.suffolkcc.gov.uk/searchResult.aspx?qry=c_committee~~County%20Council

15th September 2015, Suffolk County Council, Cabinet meeting item 12: 'Developing Suffolk's devolution proposal' and item 12 appendix A: 'Expression of Interest'
http://committeeminutes.suffolkcc.gov.uk/searchResult.aspx?qry=c_committee~~The%20Cabinet

4th November 2015, The East: releasing the potential of Norfolk and Suffolk devolution brochure: <http://www.newanglia.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/Devolution-Brochure-FINAL-Nov-2015.pdf>

Greater Manchester Combined Authority, devolution agreement November 2014:
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/devolution-to-the-greater-manchester-combined-authority-and-transition-to-a-directly-elected-mayor>

Cornwall devolution agreement, July 2015:
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/cornwall-devolution-deal>

Sheffield City Region Combined Authority devolution agreement, October 2015
https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/403161/FINAL_Sheffield_City_Region_Devolution_Deal.pdf

North East Combined Authority devolution agreement, October 2015
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/north-east-devolution-deal>

Tees Valley, devolution agreement, October 2015

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/tees-valley-devolution-deal>

West Midlands November 2015 <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/west-midlands-devolution-deal>

Liverpool City Region November 2015

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/liverpool-devolution-deal>

Durham County Council's consultation on devolution:

<http://www.durham.gov.uk/article/7145/North-East-devolution---what-do-you-think>

West Midlands Combined Authority consultation:

<http://www.westmidlandscombinedauthority.org.uk/news/consultation-starts-for-west-midlands-combined-authority/>

Leicester and Leicestershire Combined Authority consultation: <http://llca.org.uk/>

House of Commons library briefing paper 06649 'Combined Authorities' October 2015

<http://researchbriefings.parliament.uk/ResearchBriefing/Summary/SN06649#fullreport>