

**Bath & North East
Somerset Council**



**South Gloucestershire
Council**

A West of England Mayoral Combined Authority Consultation Proposal

Produced by Bristol City Council on behalf of the three councils of the West of England

This proposal does not aim to pre-judge the outcome of Full Council decisions on 29 June. However, due to a required start date of 4 July 2016 for the public consultation, this proposal has been prepared in advance to ensure the consultation is in no way compromised by the short turnaround time available. The proposal would only be used if a decision is taken to proceed with the deal.

1.0 Introduction

The West of England Councils will decide on 29 June whether to move forward with the Government’s proposed devolution deal for the city region.

A scheme has been developed following a review of current and potential governance options in the West of England. The review concludes that a Mayoral Combined Authority could most effectively improve the exercise of certain statutory functions in the region, when compared to current arrangements.

Both the governance review and proposed scheme will be put forward with council papers ahead of the decisions on 29 June, along with a copy of this consultation proposal.

If the deal goes ahead, a six week statutory public consultation will be launched on 4 July to seek views on the proposed scheme of governance for the Mayoral Combined Authority.

If the public consultation goes ahead, the results would be submitted to the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government in late August 2016 - along with the decisions of the councils - to inform a final decision.

2.0 Terminology

West of England Devolution Deal - The proposed deal negotiated with Government by the three West of England Councils (Bath and North East Somerset, Bristol and South Gloucestershire)

Strategic Governance Review - The review of governance in the West of England which has informed the proposed scheme;

Mayoral Combined Authority - The potential scheme of governance, based on the conclusions of the Strategic Governance Review;

West of England Mayor or ‘Metro Mayor’ – Having a West of England Mayor to chair the Mayoral Combined Authority is a condition of the deal. The public would vote for a West of England Mayor in May 2017. The West of England Mayor would not replace Bristol’s directly elected Mayor or the leaders of Bath and North East Somerset and South Gloucestershire councils.

3.0 Timescale

Pending the outcome of the June council meetings x 3, the six week consultation would start on 4 July, closing on 15 August. The proposal will be included in the relevant council papers, deadline 20 June 2016.

NOTE: In early July Bristol City Council will be starting an early conversation to gather views from Bristol residents, partners and stakeholders on their priorities for council spending and saving. Supporting communications for this and the devolution consultations will be designed to ensure public and stakeholders understand the differences between the two exercises.

4.0 Objectives

The purpose of this proposed consultation is to seek views from the public on the establishment of a West of England Mayoral Combined Authority as a means of facilitating the receipt of devolved powers from Government, in comparison with current arrangements.

It will also seek views on the specific proposals contained in the scheme relating to:

- Decision making
- Place (transport and housing)
- People (adult education and skills)
- Business

5.0 Approach

Taking into account both regional and national objectives, the following approach is recommended:

- One consultation survey for all three authorities – this will demonstrate a joint approach and will ensure the same information and messages are communicated. It is also more efficient on a practical level.
- The consultation should be hosted on one microsite containing supporting information agreed by all.
- For efficiency, one local authority should lead (currently Bristol) in partnership with the other authorities and the West of England LEP.
- In the interests of accessibility, a ‘plain english’ summary of the Strategic Governance Review and proposed scheme should be considered.

In addition, these key principles should be adhered to:

- There should be a joined-up approach to communicating the consultation, reaching as wide and diverse an audience as possible.
- A range of consultation methods should be used to extend the reach of the consultation to ‘seldom heard’ groups and maximise response rate by using both paper and online surveys to allow people to respond in a way that suits them.

6.0 Equalities and diversity considerations

The proposed scheme specifies that the Mayor and the Combined Authority would be subject to the Public Sector Equalities Duty, created under the Equalities Act 2010.

With regards the consultation process, we will also ensure the following are undertaken:

- Language used throughout the consultation process must be clear and ideally ‘plain english’ to aid understanding by all.
- Hard copies of the survey made available with pre-paid envelopes and / or a collection point in libraries and other council and public locations. A hard copy will also be available from the Consultation Phone line on request.
- Consideration will be given to other formats including translations, braille, large format and audio.
- Communications activity, including media, should include a wide and diverse range of channels – to ensure it reaches all target audiences and stakeholders. This will include printed, online, digital and social media channels as well as face to face communications.
- Each council should seek a view from their own equalities teams regarding distribution and local contacts.

7.0 Audience/Stakeholders

NB: Representatives from West of England have been engaged during the pre-decision phase. In particular, delivery partners and influencers in business, education, transport and the voluntary sector were invited to provide input to the Strategic Governance Review.

Public

General public

Neighbourhood Partnerships

Area Forums

Community Networks

Special Interest Groups

Trade Unions

Town and Parish councils

Internal

Staff at all three councils, plus the West of England LEP

Voluntary Sector

Umbrella groups

Individual voluntary sector groups in each council area, with a focus on those operating in key delivery areas e.g. housing, skills, transport

Groups representing equalities and diversity interests

Business

West of England LEP

Businesses and representative business groups

Major hubs e.g Bristol Airport

Delivery Partners in key areas covered by the deal

Education – e.g universities, colleges, training providers etc

Transport – e.g Highways England, Network Rail, transport operators etc

Planning – e.g HCA, English Heritage, Natural England etc

Housing – e.g Housing Federation, Community Land Trust etc

8.0 Consultation methods

- A consultation microsite which hosts, or provides a link to, the full consultation survey (there must also be an option for people to request hard copies and / or collect hard copies and pre-paid envelopes in nominated locations e.g libraries)
- The survey should include both closed questions for quantitative analysis and some open questions for free comment.
- A communications plan (see below) would drive members of the public to the consultation via the media, plus a range of other local channels and networks. Self-selection would be the primary response method.
- We would also send a direct invite to all key stakeholders to participate by letter or email. This could include existing local networks e.g Neighbourhood Partnerships or the equivalent. (This could be managed locally, using joint messages and materials).
- We would consider ways to contribute to existing, planned meetings – rather than running cost intensive standalone events.

9.0 Consultation survey (Reminder: This is subject to councils' agreement to the deal)

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Bath & North East Somerset Council, Bristol City Council and South Gloucestershire Council have now voted to accept a £1 billion devolution deal from Government that would see the creation of a West of England Mayoral Combined Authority. It would bring new powers, funding and responsibilities to the region – so more decisions could be made locally, rather than nationally, about spending on regional transport, adult education and skills, for example.

We believe a West of England Mayoral Combined Authority would benefit the region in four key areas:

- Decision making
- Place (transport and housing)
- People (adult education and skills)
- Business

Tell us what you think about a West of England Mayoral Combined Authority and proposals across these four areas

This public consultation, on behalf of the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, is your chance to have your say on the creation of a West of England Mayoral Combined Authority. Your views will be shared with the Secretary of State in August 2016, along with the decision of council members, for a final decision to be made by central government.

[Page 2] **Decision Making**

A West of England Mayoral Combined Authority would receive powers from central government - it would not take powers from existing local authorities without agreement. It would be chaired by a West of England Mayor who the public would vote for in May 2017. The West of England Mayor would have control of spending on the region's transport, adult education and skills. They would not replace Bristol's directly elected Mayor or the leaders of Bath & North East Somerset and South Gloucestershire councils.

To make decisions, a majority of the members of a West of England Combined Authority, including a West of England Mayor, would be required to be present and voting. A West of England Mayor would have one vote, as would other voting authority members. A West of England Mayor would have to consult authority members on his/her strategies, which those members may reject if two-thirds agree to do so. Members of a West of England Mayoral Combined Authority would also be able to amend a West of England Mayor's spending plans if two-

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thirds agree to do so. A West of England Combined Authority, including a West of England Mayor, would be scrutinised and held to account by a West of England Overview and Scrutiny and Audit committee(s).

The only exceptions to this two-thirds principle are decisions made on the Joint Spatial Plan (unanimous vote required) and certain financial aspects (unanimous of the three councils).

The Mayoral Combined Authority must have the agreement of an individual authority where a planning or transport matter (for example) is likely to impact on that authority's specific geographical location.

Do you believe the proposed West of England Mayoral Combined Authority would benefit decision making in the region?

Mark 'Agree', 'Disagree' or 'Don't know' next to each statement

A West of England mayor would provide increased accountability and transparency for decisions affecting the region	Agree	Disagree	Don't know
The West of England Mayoral Combined Authority would strengthen the ways the West of England councils work together	Agree	Disagree	Don't know
The West of England Mayoral Combined Authority would improve strategic decision making, leading to more economic growth	Agree	Disagree	Don't know

If you would like to add anything about the impact of a West of England Combined Authority on decision making in the region, please share your comments here: [open comments box]

[page 3] **Place -Transport**

The proposed West of England Mayoral Combined Authority would be given further powers over transport, including the ability to franchise bus services and responsibility for a Key Routes Network of roads. It would also have the power to implement Clean Air Zones to help achieve air quality standards.

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Do you believe the proposed West of England Mayoral Combined Authority would benefit the region’s transport?

Mark ‘Agree’, ‘Disagree’ or ‘Don’t know’ next to each statement.

It would enable longer-term planning and allow for more ambitious schemes with a greater impact through guaranteed funding each year	Agree	Disagree	Don’t know
It would support the introduction of smart and integrated ticketing	Agree	Disagree	Don’t know
It would integrate public road and rail transport across the region making it easier to access employment	Agree	Disagree	Don’t know
It would integrate public road and rail transport across the region to speed up and reduce the environmental impact of longer journeys	Agree	Disagree	Don’t know

If you would like to add anything about the potential impact of a West of England Combined Authority on transport, please share your comments here: [open comments box]

[Page 4] **Place - Housing**

A West of England Mayoral Combined Authority would be given stronger strategic planning powers to speed up the delivery of new housing, including the delivery of the Joint Spatial Plan, enhanced compulsory purchasing powers, powers to determine cross-boundary infrastructure applications as a combined authority, and the setting up of Development Corporations put in place to facilitate building of houses on strategic sites.

Do you believe the proposed West of England Mayoral Combined Authority would benefit the region’s housing?

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Mark 'Agree', 'Disagree' or 'Don't know' next to the statement below.

It would improve planning processes and decisions so that the right houses are built in the right places

Agree Disagree Don't know

If you would like to add anything about the potential impact of a West of England Combined Authority on housing, please share your comments here: *[open comments box]*

[Page 5] **People**

A West of England Mayoral Combined Authority would have increased powers for spending on people's education, skills and employment in several ways:

- It would have control of the entire Adult Education Budget by 2018
- It would be responsible for the Apprenticeship Grant for Employers which incentivises employers to offer apprenticeships
- It would work with central government on the design of local careers and enterprise provision, such as the Careers and Enterprise Company and the National Careers Service.
- It would work with the Department of Work and Pensions to co-design the new National Work and Health Programme designed to focus on those with a health condition or disability and the very long term unemployed.

Do you believe the proposed West of England Mayoral Combined Authority would benefit people in the region?

Mark 'Agree', 'Disagree' or 'Don't know' next to the statement below.

It would ensure skills and training provision are more accurately tailored to local needs

Agree Disagree Don't know

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If you would like to add anything about the potential impact of the proposed West of England Combined Authority on people’s education and skills, please share your comments here: *[open comments box]*

[Page 6] **Business**

A West of England Mayoral Combined Authority would have increased control and resources for business including:

- Integrated and locally relevant inward investment and trade services, led by Invest in Bristol & Bath
- Support for developing the West of England Growth Hub
- Increased support for the Bristol & Bath Science Park and the Junction 21 Food Enterprise Zone,
- More local control over the use of EU funds

It would also be a member of the Local Enterprise Partnership ensuring a close working relationship with the business community.

Do you believe the proposed West of England Mayoral Authority would benefit business in the region?

Mark ‘Agree’, ‘Disagree’ or ‘Don’t know’ next to each statement

It would support innovation in key growth sectors	Agree	Disagree	Don’t know
It would boost productivity and growth through improved sharing of specialist knowledge and services	Agree	Disagree	Don’t know

If you would like to add anything about the potential impact of a West of England Combined Authority on business, please share your comments here: *[open comments box]*

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“On balance - do you believe that a West of England Mayoral Authority would benefit the West of England Region?

[Agree, Disagree, Don't know]

Is there anything more that you would like to know about the proposed devolution deal or West of England Mayoral Combined Authority?

[Open comment response]

[Page 8] **Some questions about you so we can understand who has taken part**

What is your postcode?

Please tell us who you are (tick all that apply)

Resident

Elected Member

Business

Education Provider

Trade Union

Voluntary Community Sector

Housing Association

Other

How would you describe yourself?

- Your Age Under 18 () 18 – 24 () 25-34 () 35-44 () 45-54 () 55-64 () 65-74 () 75 + ()
 Prefer not to say ()
- Your Gender Female () Male () Prefer not to say ()
- Your ethnicity White British () Other White () Black /Black British () Asian /Asian British () Mixed / Dual Heritage ()
 Any other ethnic group () Prefer not to say ()
- Are you disabled? Yes () No () Prefer not to say ()
- Do you have a religion or belief? Yes () No () Prefer not to say ()

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- Transgender Yes () No () Prefer not to say ()
- Are you lesbian, gay or bisexual () heterosexual (straight) () Prefer not to say ()

Please provide your name and address [Name and Address response boxes]

These details will only be used to check who has taken part. If you complete the survey more than once, your views will only be counted once.

10.0 Outline Communication Plan

The primary objective for this communication plan is to ensure as many people as possible have the opportunity to participate in the consultation. For this reason, special attention will be paid to the reach of our planned communications, the accessibility of the information used and our ability to reach a wide range of groups, including those who may not have regular online access. **NB: The below table shows the outline communications plan. Final details including dates for meetings with community/special interest groups are to be agreed.**

NOTE: The ‘Joint Comms Group’ referred to in the plan includes communication leads from Bath & North East Somerset, Bristol and South Gloucestershire councils. This group collaborates and co-ordinates on all communications related to the devolution deal.

Audience	Actions	Timescale	Materials	Who
Launch / Ongoing				
General Public	Add survey to Consultation Finder and equivalents	By 4 July	Final survey	BCC Consultation Team
General Public	Ask Bristol newsletter to 12,500 people	On 4 July	Short article + link	BCC Consultation team
General Public via Media	Pending devolution report approval by three councils – media statement reacting to decision and promoting consultation starting on 4 July.	On 29 June	Approved statement and updated Q&A	Joint Comms Group
General Public via Social Media	‘Next steps for devolution’ Push-out launch press release re consultation via social media in all three areas	On 1 July	Pre-agreed tweets	Joint Comms Group
General Public	Direct communication to equalities groups, neighbourhood partnerships (and equivalents).	w/c 4 July		Local contact based on joint messages.

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General Public via Media	Each council to consider further media engagement in local area e.g radio interviews / Q&As	w/c 4 July		Joint Comms Group
General Public	Article in Bristol's Our City newsletter	By 4 July	Short article + link	BCC PR Team
	Article in B&NES E-CONNECT	TBC	Short article + link	B&NES PR Team
	Article on South Gloucestershire News website	TBC	Short article + link	South Glos PR Team
General Public	Circulate electronic posters libraries, other council buildings and public locations (TBC) – ready for 4 July	By 1 July	Posters – electronic	Bristol Design / PR Team
General Public	After 29 June, arrange hard copy print by 11 July	w/c 4 July	Hard copy posters	Bristol Design / PR Team
Stakeholders – cross-region	Email with link to documents, for their response and to circulate through their own channels	w/c 4 July		To be agreed
Council and LEP Staff	Update on or before 4 July via internal news channels / screens etc	On 4 July	Short article / messages and links	Via Joint Comms Group
General Public	On Screen Promotion in Customer Service Points (and equivalents)	4 July to 15 August	Electronic Info	Joint Comms Group
General Public	Publicise microsite via all councils' channels.	4 July to 15 August	Links established	Joint Comms Group
General Public	Social media campaign for the 6 week period.	4 July to 15 August	To be agreed	Joint Comms Group
General Public/stakeholders	Press release reminding public/stakeholders to respond before consultation deadline	w/c 1 August	Approved media release	Joint Comms Group
General Public	Ensure paper copies of surveys available in libraries and / or customer service points (TBC)	11/07/2016	Paper surveys and pre-paid envelopes	Joint Comms Group