

NORTH EAST DEVOLUTION

NALC Annual Conference
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North East Combined Authority

Background

- ▣ Idea of a North East Combined Authority (NECA) first discussed in 2013.
- ▣ Consisting of seven local authorities:-
County Durham, Gateshead, Newcastle, North Tyneside, Northumberland, Sunderland and South Tyneside.
- ▣ Combined Authority Order made in April 2014.

- ▣ North East Leadership Board (NELB) is the strategic decision-making body of NECA
- ▣ Membership of 8 (one Leader/Elected Mayor) from each constituent local authority and a non-voting North East Local Enterprise Partnership Member
- ▣ “Ambition to create the best possible conditions for growth in jobs, investment and living standards, to make the North East an excellent location for business, to prioritise and deliver high quality infrastructure and to enable residents to raise their skill levels and to benefit from economic growth long into the future.”

Contact with Parish and Town Councils and local electors

- ▣ Very few parish councils in the most populated areas of the NECA - none in North and South Tyneside, 1 in Sunderland and 6 in Newcastle area. County Durham has 103 parish councils and Northumberland 126. Large pockets unparished
- ▣ Public meetings held across the region to discuss the formation of the NECA.
- ▣ Very little specific contact requested with parish and town councils in County Durham or elsewhere

- ▣ The Leaders of both NECA and Tees Valley Unlimited attended a parish council North East regional event in March 2015.
- ▣ It was suggested at this event that there may be a role for parish and town councils as part of the Scrutiny arrangements for NECA.

Current Position

- ▣ Durham County Council held a poll of electors this year to gauge electors appetite for the North East Devolution Agreement.
- ▣ Members of the Leadership Board reached a majority decision on 6 September 2016. The decision was not to publish and consult on the Governance Review and Scheme at that stage.
- ▣ The North East devolution deal fell through as assurances were sought from government on the current programme of European Funding and suitable successor funding post 2020

- ▣ Discussions regarding North East devolution are now on hold following a Government announcement on 8 September 2016 that the region's deal has been withdrawn.
- ▣ Although current devolution talks have stalled, work continues in a number of areas, including the work of the Health and Social Care Commission and projects relating to Transport, Employability and Inclusion and Economic Development and Regeneration

- ▣ Although nothing is concrete yet it is understood that Newcastle City Council, North Tyneside Council, and Northumberland County Council have started talks to possibly secure a deal for their area
- ▣ Having said that if the European Funding situation is resolved the NECA “deal” may be revived. Devolution of powers and resources to region remains a priority for the Leaders and Elected Mayor who are keen to work with Government and local partners to achieve the ambition of a stronger regional economy with improved opportunities for residents and businesses.

Local Devolution with Durham County Council

- ▣ Local Government Review in 2009 -
Eight councils to one Unitary Authority.
- ▣ Current austerity measures mean DCC has
to save in the region of £250m or over 40%
of it's budget.

- ▣ 2012 saw the large scale asset transfer of community buildings which saw them retained for community use.
- ▣ This involved 120 community buildings – one of the largest projects of it's kind in England.
- ▣ 98 Community Buildings remain in community use.
- ▣ Retaining a sustainable network of locally controlled buildings.

- ▣ DCC invested £2.15m leading to savings of over £11.25m savings over a ten year period.
- ▣ Parish Councils involved in 7 of these schemes

Experience gathered from this led to the

Durham Ask

- ▣ Working with the VCS and P&TC's to look at the transfer of council facilities and services to community ownership through long term leases or purchase of asset.
- ▣ Around 100 expressions of interest with approximately 40 transfers undertaken to date.
- ▣ Mainly Childrens Centres, Youth Centres nature reserves and tracts of land
- ▣ Eight parish and town councils involved.

Delivering Differently

- ▣ Delivering Differently - a DCLG initiative to look at and examine different ways of working between principal authorities and parish councils.
- ▣ A bid was submitted to DCLG resulting in £90,000 of funding being provided.
- ▣ DCC provided match funding of £60,000
- ▣ Identifying different ways of working in partnership to improve ways of working.
- ▣ Final report to be produced for DCLG includes case study, report commissioned by DCC and cost benefit analysis.