



**Norfolk/Suffolk
proposed deal:
Public consultation**

8 July – 23 August 2016

Background

The day after the Scottish Referendum in September 2014 the Prime Minister announced a 'devolution revolution' for all of the United Kingdom. Devolution is the redistribution of power and funding from central to local government.

The Government continued to develop the "Northern Powerhouse" and devolution deals across several northern cities, based on a model of closer co-operation amongst existing councils.

Last September, Norfolk and Suffolk independently put in devolution bids. The Government then asked for a joint bid and suggested that the two counties worked with Cambridgeshire and Peterborough.

In his budget speech in March 2016 the Chancellor proposed a devolution deal for East Anglia. The draft deal covered the New Anglia Local Enterprise Partnership and all the county and district councils in East Anglia, with the exception of Cambridge City Council.

Following further reflection on what would be best for local people, it was decided to pursue two distinct devolution deals - one for Norfolk and Suffolk and one for Cambridgeshire and Peterborough.

The proposed Norfolk and Suffolk Devolution Deal was published on 17 June 2016. Since then, all of the councils in Suffolk, along with Norfolk County Council, Broadland District Council, the Borough Council of King's Lynn and West Norfolk and South Norfolk Council have endorsed the deal.

Some councils in Norfolk have decided not to go ahead with a combined authority at this stage. They are Breckland Council, Great Yarmouth Borough Council, North Norfolk District Council and Norwich City Council.

The deal involves having an Elected Mayor for Norfolk and Suffolk and a combined authority - where councils join together to make collective decisions on matters that affect the whole area.

Why we are consulting

Councils in Norfolk and Suffolk have undertaken a Governance Review to look in depth at the most effective way to deliver economic growth and public sector reform. The Governance Review concluded that a Mayoral Combined Authority would best deliver these outcomes so we have published proposals for how a new combined authority could work, called a Scheme of Governance.

We now have to ask local people, businesses and organisations what they think of the Scheme of Governance. We will send the consultation responses to the Secretary of State, who will look at these alongside the Governance Review and the draft Scheme of Governance. They will then decide whether a Mayoral Combined Authority for Norfolk and Suffolk can be set-up.

Our proposals

You can read the full Governance Review and Scheme of Governance online at www.eastangliadevo.co.uk

The devolution deal

Devolution could mean greater control locally over decisions that impact on all our lives – decisions about Norfolk and Suffolk, made in Norfolk and Suffolk.

The proposed deal could mean control of more than £750m of funding to improve Norfolk and Suffolk, enable us to create 95,000 jobs by 2026, deliver around 200,000 homes over the lifetime of the deal and provide the skills that employees and businesses want.

New powers and responsibilities could include:

- Writing a plan for deciding where new housing and development should take place across Norfolk and Suffolk, and deciding how £130m of funding is spent to support building new homes, including some affordable homes
- Coordinating the work being done to improve flood defences and protect the coastline, to make sure problems aren't just shifted from one area to another
- Creating a transport plan for Norfolk and Suffolk that helps to better coordinate road, rail and bus services
- Deciding how the budget is spent for maintaining and improving all roads in Norfolk and Suffolk
- Deciding on the best way to roll-out smart ticketing for bus and rail travel across Norfolk and Suffolk

- Reviewing post-16 education and training in Norfolk and Suffolk to make sure that it is providing young people with the skills that employers need
- Deciding how funding is spent on apprenticeships and training to make sure that our workforce has the skills that employers in Norfolk and Suffolk need
- Deciding how funding is spent on infrastructure projects, such as improving broadband or transport, to support economic growth and create jobs in Norfolk and Suffolk
- Joining up health and social care services so that they better support people, reduce pressure on Accident and Emergency and prevent avoidable hospital admissions
- Working with the Government to design a new programme to support those with a health condition or disability and the long-term unemployed back into work
- Reviewing all land and property held by the public sector and creating a list of land available for development in Norfolk and Suffolk.

A new Combined Authority

In Norfolk and Suffolk devolution would mean setting up a combined authority. This is where councils join together to make collective decisions on new responsibilities devolved from central Government that affect the whole area.

The Combined Authority would be made up of an elected member from each of the councils in Suffolk, along with a member from Norfolk County Council, Broadland District Council, South Norfolk District Council, the Borough Council of King's Lynn and West Norfolk and a representative of the New Anglia Local Enterprise Partnership, to represent the views of businesses.

The Combined Authority Area would cover Suffolk and the Broadland, South Norfolk and King's Lynn and West Norfolk council areas.

The new Combined Authority would not replace any of these existing councils, or any of the existing town or parish councils.

The proposed agreement would also create the role of a mayor, who would be directly elected by all residents living in the Combined Authority Area.

The new Combined Authority wouldn't be just another layer of local government. It would take on new responsibilities from Whitehall, not duplicate them.

Councils would continue as they currently do, to provide services for their own areas. District/Borough/City councils would still take planning decisions on specific sites and approve Local Development Plans.

County Councils would still be the Highways Authorities with responsibility for repairs and maintenance. The Combined Authority would only be involved with strategic transport decisions.

Finance and funding

The Combined Authority would manage various budgets. This would include £750m from Government to invest in infrastructure, economic growth and jobs (£25m a year for 30 years) and a total of £130m to invest in housing (£30m would be available specifically for Norwich and Ipswich). The Combined Authority would also receive a single budget for public transport guaranteed for four years, replacing the numerous annual budgets that Government currently provides. This would provide longer term certainty on funding than is currently possible.

In addition the Mayor could talk to local businesses about increasing business rates to fund important infrastructure projects like new road or rail links. The Authority could also look at new ways of funding infrastructure from the money they receive from housebuilders.

There should not be major costs associated with the Combined Authority. At least initially it will draw on the expertise and capacity that already exists within the participating local authorities. In combined authorities the following roles are required to meet their legal obligations:

- Head of Paid Service: The Head of Paid Service is required to report to the Combined Authority on staffing resources and arrangements for proper management of these resources when appropriate.
- Monitoring Officer: The Monitoring Officer is required to report on unlawful decisions or omissions which are or which are proposed to be taken.
- Chief Finance Officer: The Chief Finance Officer is required to report where a decision is proposed that will result in unlawful expenditure or which will result in a loss or deficiency or expenditure outside the authority's available resources.

Any additional staff or resources needed depend on the functions that are devolved to the Combined Authority.

It is too early to say how many staff the Combined Authority would employ but it is likely that it would be staff transferring from, or still working within, existing authorities, rather than additional appointments.

There would not be a new Combined Authority headquarters building as we are committed to using our existing buildings.

The Elected Mayor and decision making

The Government has been clear that places need an elected mayor to access the funding and powers. Registered voters in the Combined Authority Area would vote for the Mayor in an election in 2017.

The directly elected Mayor cannot make decisions alone and would require the support of a certain number of members of the Combined Authority to progress their proposals.

Some decisions, such as asking the Government for new powers and how much the authority would cost to run would require a majority of the members of the Combined Authority to agree. That majority must include the directly elected Mayor.

Existing Mayors in Norfolk and Suffolk would not be affected by the directly elected Mayor.

Accountability

Locally, the Mayor will be held to account by voters, with elections every four years. There would be an overview and scrutiny committee, made of up representatives from each of the councils involved. These would be entirely separate from the members of the combined authority. This committee would have the power to ask the Mayor, Deputy Mayor and Members to come along to their meeting to answer questions. They could also review any decisions that the Combined Authority made.

There would also be an Audit Committee that would keep an eye on the Combined Authority's finances. There will be five yearly 'gateway assessments' by Government (HM Treasury) to look at the impact of investments on the economy.

Who we are consulting

We are consulting all Norfolk and Suffolk residents and relevant stakeholders on the draft Scheme of Governance.

How we are consulting

This is an open consultation that anyone in Norfolk and Suffolk can respond to. You can give us your views:

- Online at www.eastangliadevo.co.uk
- Email: HaveYourSay@norfolk.gov.uk
- On this paper consultation document – returning it to Freepost Plus RTCL-XSTT-JZSK, Norfolk County Council, Ground floor - South Wing, County Hall, Martineau Lane, Norwich NR1 2DH. **You do not need to use a stamp.**

However, if you want to help the council save money please use a stamp and send to this address: East Anglia Devolution, Norfolk County Council, Ground floor - South Wing, County Hall, Martineau Lane, NR1 2DH

Please note: in order to keep costs down, Norfolk and Suffolk County Council are working together to coordinate this consultation and are using our existing contact addresses and telephone numbers.

We also want to reach out to residents in order to make sure our feedback is representative of residents across Norfolk and Suffolk. To do this we will be carrying out a telephone survey which will enable us to reach those who may not respond to a formal consultation.

Business is a key part of devolution so we are also taking extra steps to gather views from local businesses by conducting some telephone interviews.

Finally, the councils and partners will also make representations to the Secretary of State reflecting any responses they receive directly from stakeholders.

When we are consulting

Our consultation opens in the week commencing 4 July and will run until 23 August.

How we will feed back to you

We will publish our consultation report on our website at www.eastangliadevo.co.uk

How the final decision will be made

We will feed back the consultation responses to the Secretary of State at the start of September 2016. The Secretary of State will look at these alongside the Governance Review, the draft Governance Scheme and any other views that have been sent to them to see if the proposed devolution proposals will improve services for the participating areas in Norfolk and Suffolk. If the Secretary of State thinks that their tests have been met they would talk with the councils involved and then make an order, if Parliament approves, to set up a new Norfolk and Suffolk Mayoral Combined Authority.

How our proposals will affect people in practice

Devolution in Norfolk and Suffolk will have implications for how we deliver services in the future. As such it is important for us to make sure we understand what this means for people in practice – particularly people with ‘protected characteristics’, such as disabled or older people, lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people, Black, Asian and minority ethnic people and younger people. The process we use to work this out is called an equality impact assessment.

We have carried out an initial assessment of the proposals, which has identified a range of equality issues to be considered as part of Devolution. When public

consultation is complete we will develop the assessment further, to ensure that it addresses any issues raised by residents or which have been identified through further evidence gathering.

Where you can go for more information

You can find out more about devolution at www.eastangliadevo.co.uk