

Principal Council update:

As expected following the bid from West and East Sussex and Brighton and Hove, the Deputy Prime Minister has announced that Sussex will be one of the places on the Devolution Priority Programme and that the Government will be moving to consult on the formation of a strategic combined authority and elected mayor.

Also included in the announcement is that WSCC, and other authorities on the list, will not be holding elections this year. A joint statement was put out from the three Sussex Authorities:

Greater powers for Sussex come a step closer with government backing for devolution

An opportunity to gain new powers and investment for Sussex has moved a step nearer with the government's agreement to make the area a priority for devolution.

Following an expression of interest from the leaders of Brighton & Hove City Council, East Sussex County Council and West Sussex County Council, ministers have approved proposals to create a mayoral strategic authority for Sussex, made up of an elected mayor and two members of each constituent authority, with strategic powers for transport, public safety, health, environment and climate change, housing, economic growth, skills and jobs.

As well as unlocking new powers and investment for the region, it would give the people of Sussex a stronger voice in how national decisions affect them and enable more decisions to be taken locally.

The government will now begin a consultation to seek the views of people and organisations in Sussex.

All three of Sussex's upper-tier local authorities – Brighton & Hove City Council, East Sussex County Council and West Sussex County Council – agree that devolution could unlock new funding and give people a stronger voice over national decisions which affect them and greater power to steer major projects across the area.

It follows the Government's White Paper on English Devolution published in December which outlined its aim to bring more decision-making down from Westminster to local communities.

Cllr Paul Marshall, Leader of West Sussex County Council, said: *“This is fantastic news for the whole of Sussex and West Sussex in particular. A mayoral authority will give our communities greater influence in the big decisions that affect the region, such as our highways, housing, and economic growth, plus much-needed long-term financial stability.*

“I'm pleased the government has accepted us on to its priority programme, meaning we can unlock these benefits sooner rather than later. There is much to do, but please be assured we will continue our focus on delivering essential services and putting the needs of our residents first.”

Cllr Keith Glazier, Leader of East Sussex County Council said: *“I believe this is excellent news for the people of Sussex because it's an opportunity for more decisions to be made locally and for greater investment here. I'm pleased the government has recognised our potential to prosper and develop together.”*

Cllr Bella Sankey, Leader of Brighton & Hove City Council, said: *“This is an historic and exciting moment for our region. I am optimistic and ambitious about devolution because of the direct benefits I know it will bring to all communities in Sussex. It will mean that more money is directly invested in our area and that better transport, affordable housing and skills and job creation can be accelerated.*

“I'm looking forward to meeting with residents, businesses and partners to ensure that all of our communities have the opportunity to shape the future.”

Alongside devolution, as part of local government reorganisation, the government is asking for proposals for unitary councils in all parts of Sussex, moving away from the two-tier model of county and borough or district councils.

There are no immediate changes to the operation of local authorities in Sussex or the services they provide.

A consultation on the proposals for a *Mayoral Combined Authority* for Sussex and Brighton is now open until the end of the day on Sunday 13 April.

The consultation specifically asks about:

1. The proposed geography
2. Governance arrangements
3. Supporting the economy
4. Improving social outcomes
5. Local government services
6. Improving the local natural environment
7. Supporting the needs of local communities and reflect local identity

Full details of the consultation can be found on the gov.uk website here:

[Sussex and Brighton devolution - GOV.UK](#)

Further information is available in the government press notice here:

[Devolution Priority Programme consultations launch - GOV.UK](#)

The Chief Executive has recently written to the District Council to ask whether some Burgess Hill assets of the District may be open for a discussion as to transfer to the Town Council as part of the reorganisation. The Chief Executive of the District has replied to acknowledge the request, but stated that these would not be considered in the short or medium term. The email was initiated on the basis that any new unitary authority will be a larger geographical area and there are some assets that may benefit from being transferred to more local control. Of course, there has been no scoping as to the cost to this Council to take on any assets, it was speculative in order to put in to the mind of the District that the Town Council may be interested in some locally held assets in the longer term. The identified areas were a mix of larger held lands like Nightingale Meadows and small parcels such as the grass in front of St Johns Church. Should the District come back later to discuss this further, it will be brought back to Council for discussion.

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