

DEVOLUTION & LOCALISM: ARE WE GOING FORWARDS OR BACKWARDS?

A SECOND DEVO DISCUSSION PAPER FOR CPRE AND NALC

BY LILLIAN BURNS



OCTOBER 2017

FOREWORD

The Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE) is a charity that works to protect, promote and enhance our towns and countryside to make them better places to live, work and enjoy. Amongst other things, we espouse 'smart growth' and its focus on the regeneration of urban areas as a means of taking development pressure away from the countryside. We also promote the sequential use of land (simply put, brownfield first). That said, contrary to what many of our detractors say, we do not object to most new development proposals and we do support well designed, well integrated developments in market towns and villages for which sustainable transport, school, health and green space provision has been made.

Along with the National Council of Local Councils (NALC), we are members of the Rural Coalition, a grouping of 12 bodies that subscribe to a vision for a living and working countryside in England. One of the coalition's key aims is to achieve rural proofing of all governmental/planning policies. Another is to ensure that decision-making, funding and delivery is devolved in a way that involves rural communities.

As must be apparent from this description of our ethos and ambitions, much of our work involves interacting with and lobbying government at all levels. Consequently, we (our professional staff and our active volunteers) need to understand the structures that exist in national and local government and who is responsible for what. This has become increasingly difficult in recent years. Last year one of our volunteers, Lillian Burns, (who is also a Parish Councillor), produced a round up of what was happening with devolution and localism. We and NALC circulated it widely within our organisations.

The Cities & Local Government Devolution Act of 2016 requires government to produce an annual report on devolution, setting out progress on devo deals. Whilst the National Audit Office has published its own analysis, 'Progress in setting up combined authorities', we do not appear to have yet had the devolution report we were expecting. Consequently, Lillian has now produced a 'devo update' to fill the gap and help professionals and volunteers alike understand where matters currently lie with local government reorganisation. Although this is primarily targeted at CPRE and NALC, if any of our members encounter local government professionals or elected Councillors who do not appear to be up to date with the rapid changes taking place, they are welcome to point them to this report on the CPRE and NALC websites.

TOM FYANS, CPRE Head of Campaigns & Policy

This latest personal think piece from Lillian Burns paints a comprehensive and illuminating picture of devolution in England, contributing some thought provoking ideas to the devolution debate.

What is clear from this snapshot is the devolution landscape is ever changing and, as Lillian points out, is becoming increasingly complicated for local government experts let alone residents to understand.

NALC believes that devolution, if properly embraced and managed, provides a great opportunity to reconnect government with communities, but only if there is maximum devolution – from Brussels to Whitehall, Whitehall to County Hall and from County Hall to village halls and neighbourhoods.

We are calling for devolution to enter a new phase of 'ultra localism', with England's 10,000 parish councils – as democratic, accountable and transparent grassroots bodies - at its core, helping to rebuild social cohesion and bridge the gap between government and communities by engaging with people directly in the neighbourhoods in which they live. Now, that would be proper devolution, and which residents could understand too.

JONATHAN OWEN, NALC Chief Executive

The views and opinions expressed in this report are those of the author. They do not necessarily represent the views of NALC or CPRE. Also, whilst every care has been taken to provide accurate information, it needs to be pointed out that validating some findings was difficult as most discussions around devolution are sub judice. All material is therefore offered in good faith with apologies in advance for any author's omissions or errors. LILLIAN BURNS E: BrLlIn@aol.com.

DEVOLUTION: A second discussion paper for CPRE & NALC

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PREFACE

A little over a year has passed since the first discussion paper/ 'think piece' on the devolution of governmental powers was produced, primarily for audiences within the **Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE)**¹ (<http://www.cpre.org.uk/news/item/4330-devolution-discussion-paper?highlight=WyJkZXZvbHV0aW9uIl0=>) and the **National Association of Local Councils (NALC)**² (<https://www.nalc.gov.uk/library/our-work/2125-cpre-devolution-report-july-2016/file>). It explained the concept of 'double devolution' as understood from a Local (Town and Parish) Council perspective and also as described by the deputy director of the Department for Communities and Local Government at the time. Namely, the passing down of some powers from government departments to new sub-regional Combined Authorities (CAs) and elected CA Mayors and to principal authorities and the devolving of some powers and responsibilities from principal authorities to Local Councils.

What has become increasingly apparent since then is that the term 'double devolution' means different things to different actors/ administrations /bodies. The national devolved administrations within the UK and also the Local Government Association (LGA) appear to regard double devolution as the passing of powers from the European Union to Westminster and to the devolved administrations of Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland and the passing on of powers from central government to the CAs and to principal authorities. If this is indeed what is generally now understood by that term, due to the consequences of Brexit having been more carefully considered, then it might be more apposite henceforth to think in terms of '**triple devolution**', especially when viewing the scene from the perspective of the first tier of local government – Town and Parish Councils.

However, this matter of how devolution is perceived from an over-arching perspective is only one of any number of complexities that exist. For instance, there is still no structural template for CAs – although one is being spoken about - and there is still no extant guidance for the production of spatial planning frameworks by the CAs, despite the fact that most will be statutory and despite two of them (Greater Manchester and West of England) being at an advanced production stage. Added to which, two tier Councils were asked by government to consider forming unitary authorities at the same time they were contemplating the formation of CAs – a request that has led to no end of infighting between County Councils and District Councils.

Also, there is no pattern to how principal/ local authorities have been passing on some of their responsibilities and services to Local Councils. This lack of any common 'modus operandi' combined with financial pressures at every level has created an increasingly acrimonious and confused local government scene.

There are conflicting opinions about how quickly or slowly devolution will move along and what it will look like in a few years' time but there is a general consensus that it will continue at every tier of government and that each tier is going to have to be increasingly nimble and imaginative in order to cope. This paper attempts to summarise where the devolution agenda stands and the key challenges ahead as of October 1st, 2017.

¹ The **Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE)** is a charity that campaigns for a beautiful and living countryside and for 'Smart Growth' at the national, regional, sub-regional and local level. It exists for the benefit of the nation and is concerned with land use across England, urban and rural. Campaigning is evidence-based, reasoned and authoritative.

² The **National Association of Local Councils (NALC)** is the nationally recognised membership and support body representing the interests of 80,000 local councillors serving on nearly 10,000 parish and town councils and parish meetings and it works in partnership with county associations that cover the whole of England.

INTRODUCTION – The increasingly muddled scene that is local government

There existed for some decades a state of affairs where an interested observer or regular interactor with local government (or even, for that matter, an elected member or officer of a principal authority) merely needed to be aware of which powers and services were the remit of (all) County Councils and which the remit of (all) District/ Borough Councils – whilst also being cognisant of the fact that the Metropolitan Boroughs had the powers of both institutions. There has been less widespread awareness of the full range of activities that Local Councils have the potential to offer because, until recently, only Town Councils and a small percentage of Parish Councils have taken on more than modest responsibilities. But the previous, only marginally complex, set-up, post the 1974 local government reorganisation, has been splintered into thousands of dissimilar pieces.

The waters first started to become muddled with the introduction of Unitary Authorities (similar to Metropolitan Boroughs) which were created outside the orbit of the conurbations, but the recent speed of change and the fact that templates and previously-understood ‘norms’ no longer apply to ‘who does what’ have led to an incomprehensible administrative landscape that would challenge an Einstein to comprehend.

Combined Authorities with and without Mayors and inquiries into devo deals and localism

Some changes at the local authority (LA) level have been more externally evident than others. Following mayoral elections on May 4th, 2017, there are now six Combined Authorities (CAs) in the regions with elected mayors at the helm: Liverpool City Region, Greater Manchester, Tees Valley, Peterborough & Cambridgeshire, West Midlands and West of England. Sheffield City Region was due to hold its mayoral election in May 2018 but this will not now happen. Cornwall and West Yorkshire have very different devolution deals but neither have a mayor. The expectation is that government will drop its requirement for all CAs to have mayors.

An independent inquiry into the CAs has said that they should be given far greater control over services and spending under new ‘social contracts’ with government and they should have more responsibility for spending on economic and public services. The year-long investigation, which reported in March 2017, was funded by Core Cities UK, Key Cities, the Local Government Association (LGA), London Councils, the Joseph Roundtree Foundation and PwC (Price WaterhouseCoopers). They came together as the **‘RSA Inclusive Growth Commission’** and recommended, amongst other things, that devolution deals should cover 10-year and not five-year terms and stressed the importance of central government establishing agreed common goals and standards to monitor progress on social contracts. They maintained their fiscal proposals could save £billions.

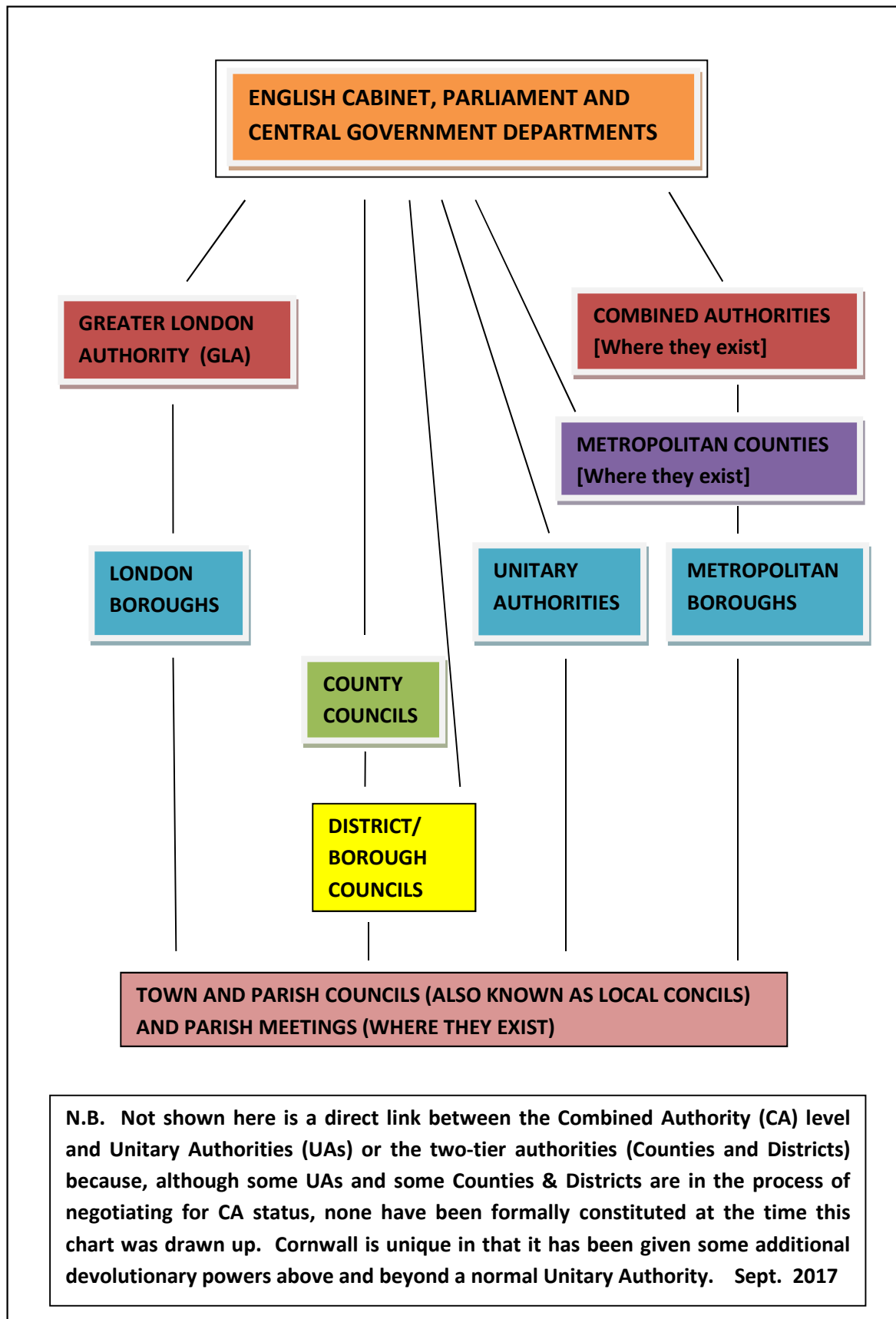
Another initiative has been the establishment of a **‘Localism Commission’** to gather evidence on localism by, **‘Locality’**, the national network of community-led organisations, and the charitable trust **‘Power to Change’**. Chaired by Lord Kerslake, former head of the civil service and president of the Local Government Association (LGA), the commission was launched in March concurrently with two consultations examining the themes of: (1) ‘The Localism Act & Community Rights’, (2) ‘Devolution’ and (3) ‘Civil Society & Community Infrastructure’. In their consultation response, NALC suggested closer co-operative working in future with Locality.

A mix and match of job amalgamations at every level and service sharing across borders

Peterborough City Council and Cambridgeshire County Council (CC), now both part of the same new CA, are set to share several corporate director roles. CA areas aside, however, any number of other cost-saving merger/joint working-type moves have been taking place all over England. Two more Suffolk Districts (Forest Heath DC and St. Edmundsbury BC), two Devon Districts (South Hams DC and West Devon BC) and two Somerset Districts (Taunton Deane BC and West Somerset DC), are working towards full mergers. According to **Paul Bradbury, Civica’s business development director**, 94% of LAs now share services with another authority. Such arrangements can and do cross former regional boundaries. Northamptonshire CC (East Midlands) and Cambridgeshire CC (East of England) joined with Milton Keynes Council to form a company, ‘Local Government Shared Services’, which has taken on Northampton BC, Norwich City Council and Northamptonshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust. And many senior officer posts are melding. In Yorkshire, Janet Waggett holds the roles of chief executive of both Ryedale DC and Selby D.C. and also that of assistant chief executive of North Yorkshire CC. Basildon BC, upon the retirement of their chief executive, made his post redundant, re-organised senior roles and appointed instead a managing director, corporate director and service director. Bournemouth BC made their Chief Executive post redundant and have appointed a ‘managing director and head of paid services’. Derbyshire CC has rolled three top management posts into one strategic directorship to save money.

CHART OF ENGLISH LOCAL GOVERNMENT STRUCTURE AT SEPTEMBER 2017

Fig. 1



To add to the cornucopia of mix and match senior posts and budgets being trialled around the country, there are now joint managing positions and commissioning arrangements being set up across local government and health bodies, eg. the North East Lincolnshire Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) have appointed the Chief Executive of NE Lincolnshire Council (Rob Walsh) to head a single leadership team over both bodies and Luton, Greater Manchester and Hull CCGs have agreed to merge their commissioning bodies with local authorities. These ongoing changes to administrative structures and the proliferation of alternative delivery set-ups/ arms-length bodies make it difficult for both local councils and non-governmental organisations which interact with local government to work with. It is equally disruptive for the Councils themselves and their efficient working.

Raging battles, financial tribulations and “a very messy environment”

Some moves to rationalise senior posts at principal authorities have caused open warfare. A proposal to reduce senior management from 17 to 12 at Lancashire County Council prompted much opposition. It included a plan to merge the posts of chief executive and the 151 officer which, in Lancashire’s case, would result in the removal of the incumbent chief executive who does not hold the necessary accountancy qualifications. A vote about this was due to take place as this report went to press. Lancashire dipped into its reserves to the tune of £83m in 2016/17 and plans to use a further £104m in 2017/18, leaving it with £160m. Whitehall has been asked to intervene. Meanwhile Birmingham City Council has already had the indignity of having an independent (special measures) panel imposed on it since 2015 by the DCLG. They were reaching the stage where they were on the point of withdrawing when a major dispute about waste collection erupted and led to the resignation of the Council leader. Many councils are increasing their borrowing limits eg. Torbay, which had a black hole of £5m, has just increased its borrowing limit from £50m to £200m. Latest DCLG figures reveal that Council reserves overall fell for the second year running in 2016/17, reducing by £1.1bn.

Within many two-tier authorities, disputes continue to rage between County Councils and Districts/ Boroughs about whether to go for unitary status or not and, if so, what it should look like. While bids for reorganisation to unitaries and/or Combined Authorities (CAs) which have been submitted to government are held up due to civil service capacity problems. Now the County Councils Network (CCN) is calling on government to offer its members across England devolved powers akin to those of the major cities. In **‘A New Deal for Counties’**, launched in July, the CCN backs proposals tabled by think tank **Localis** earlier in the year for the devolution of powers to strategic authorities including counties, and it points to the current “fragmented system” that has districts overseeing housing and counties managing infrastructure. By bringing them together in strategic planning arrangements, it maintains that counties and districts could plan for homes across an entire county.

The network argues that any reform must be adequately funded and points out that rural counties receive £291 less per person for key services than London. In the ‘New Deal’ CNN urges ministers to forge ahead with the fair funding review in the absence of business rates legislation, give more powers to health and wellbeing boards and review Local Enterprise Partnerships. It also calls on government to deliver the Conservative manifesto promise to remove the mayoral requirement for CA deals. Speaking before the general election, **‘Localis chief executive Liam Booth-Smith** said that the next government needed to set a “strategic direction” and proper mechanisms for councils who were operating in “a very messy and muddled environment”.

Throughout all these structural changes, initiatives and disruptions, Local Councils have been battling on doing their best to pick up services, buildings, parks and other open spaces and even car parks that principal authorities are offloading whilst having the threat hanging over them that, like principal authorities, they might be subject to capping if they increase their precepts too much in order to cope with these new responsibilities. This threat comes in the form of the DCLG actively considering extending ‘referendum principles’ to Local Councils. In other words, a Town or Parish Council wishing to raise its precept beyond a bar that the DCLG set (probably between 2% and 5%) would first of all have to hold a referendum of their residents to receive their approval. In effect, holding just one referendum would bankrupt most Local Councils.

Meantime, according to the chief executive of the Centre for Local Economic Strategies think tank, Neil McInroy, all LAs were thrown into a fiscal no-man’s land after the general election of June 8th 2017 when the Queen’s Speech failed to contain a Finance Bill that rolled out business rate retention from the financial year 2018-19. Current funding mechanisms are due to end then and no replacement is lined up. (See more in next section). And the six mayoral CAs are concerned about delays to the devolution of 19+ adult skills budgets (also due to start in 2018) which requires secondary legislation. All the while, the vast majority of the public remain blithely unaware of the turmoil within local government, although it holds consequences for them all.

COMBINED AUTHORITIES EXPLAINED

How and What

Combined Authorities (CAs) are legal bodies that enable a group of two or more councils to collaborate and take collective decisions. They are only formally established as statutory entities once the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government has lodged Parliamentary Orders following the request or the consent of the councils concerned. The Orders set out some of the powers made available to each area. Other responsibilities and powers which are non statutory may simply be transferred by government. The actual functions are determined by a combination of local choice and the outcome of negotiations with government. There are three key criteria that any proposal for a CA must meet:

- Will the CA improve the delivery of its functions in the area it covers?
- Will the CA help to secure effective and convenient local government?
- Does the proposed CA reflect local identity and the interests of local communities?

The core legislation relating to CAs is the Local Democracy, Economic Development & Construction Act of 2009 which was amended by the Cities & Local Government Devolution Act of 2016 but the Transport Act of 2008 is also relevant in respect of governance arrangements because they are based on those originally introduced for Integrated Transport Authorities and so is the Localism Act of 2011.

There are two types of CAs, those with an elected mayor and those without. Mayoral CAs have a number of powers to raise small quantities of additional funding. Elected mayors, who have to abide by the seven Nolan principles of public life, are able to raise a precept on constituent authorities' council tax bills. However, where the mayor is also the Police and Crime Commissioner (and able to raise a precept in that capacity), the funds must be kept separate. CAs also have the power to borrow money under the local government prudential borrowing scheme. (N.B. CA legislation does not allow for the creation of CAs in London).

A number of devolution deals permitted the local retention of 100% business rates. Also, elected mayors were to have had the power to raise an additional 2% levy on business rates but these powers were to have been introduced by the Local Government Finance Bill that fell due to the June 2017 snap general election. The Bill did not feature in the subsequent Queen's Speech. However, in mid September, Local Government Minister Marcus Jones gave a talk in which he said business rate retention was still being considered and also a DCLG consultation was launched on the local government settlement examining a wider right of mayoral CAs to raise funds in the same way Local Councils can, via a precept on top of Council taxes, and whether to cap this at 2%.

Structures and Boundaries

The CA mayors are obliged to appoint a deputy who must act if the mayor becomes incapacitated and a mayor who is also a Police and Crime Commissioner may appoint a deputy PCC mayor. The Order setting up that CA may confer functions solely on the mayor or the CA. The mayor is a member of the CA and chair of it and has one vote. However, the Orders specify that, in many cases, majorities in favour of a decision must include the vote of the mayor. This means member authorities cannot take decisions in the face of the mayor's opposition. The mayor may establish a 'cabinet' made up of local authority (LA) leaders. (The favoured modus operandi that has emerged has been for the leaders to each take on a specific portfolio). Also, as there is no 'Council' to hold the CAs and their mayors to account, they must set up at least one overview and scrutiny committee.

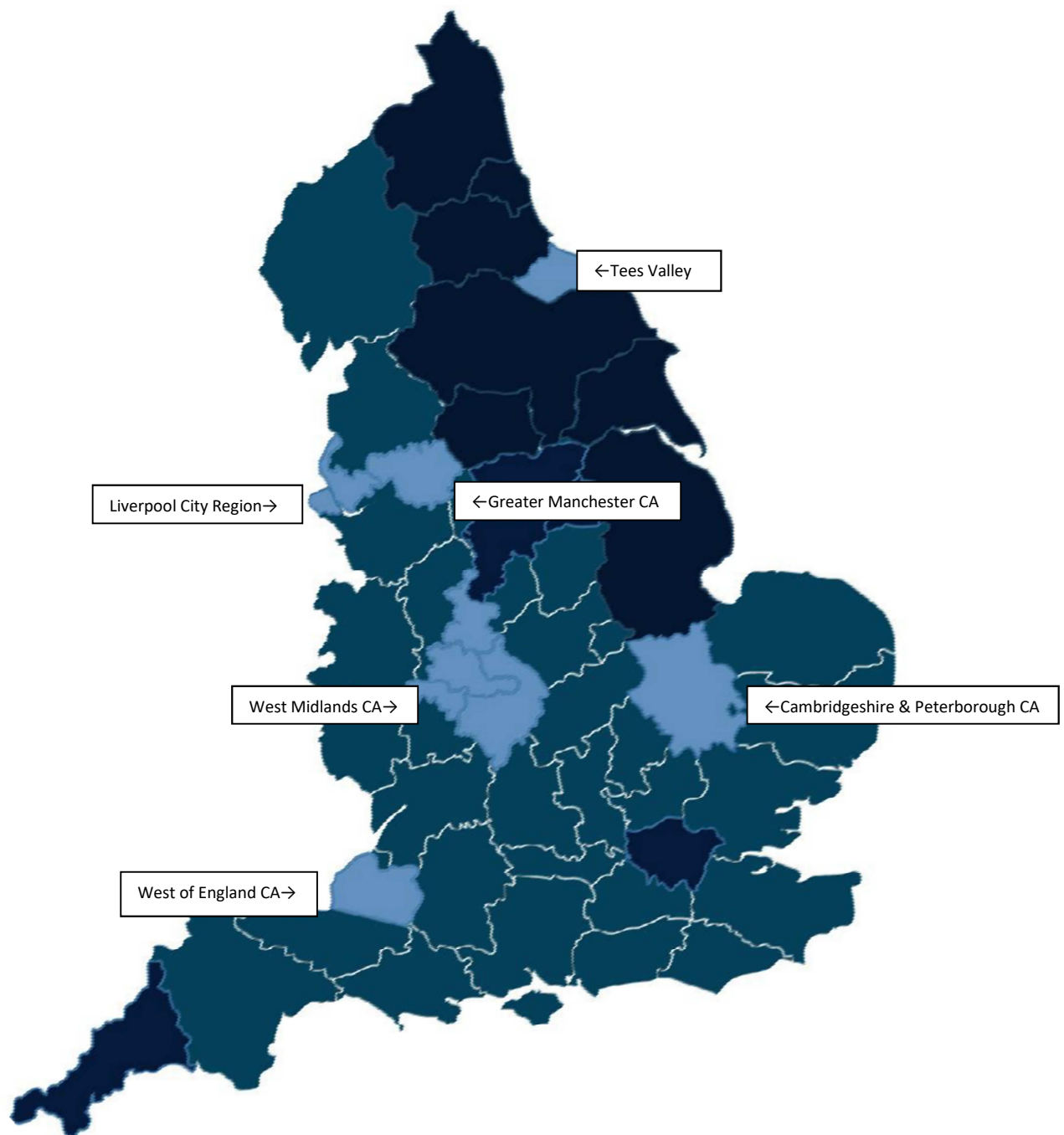
The opportunity for a CA not to have a mayor initially receded after Cornwall and West Yorkshire negotiated their devolution deals. (That said, Cornwall is not strictly a CA as its deal involves only the one LA). But non-mayoral CAs look like being back on the agenda. LAs may not be full members of more than one CA but can be a member of one and an associate of another. CA boundaries may not cross those of unitary authorities or districts but can cross county council boundaries. In the West Midlands, Cambridgeshire & Peterborough and the West of England, CAs do not share boundaries with Local Enterprise Partnerships, creating an obstacle to joint working. However, in many cases the LEP chair is a CA member, generally on a non constituent basis.

A National Audit Office (NAO) report, 'Progress in setting up combined authorities' (July 2017), noted that, whilst CAs had the potential to improve accountability, their introduction had added to England's already complex local government structure. Councillors were likely to have capacity issues with scrutiny functions and there was inconclusive evidence that these new entities improved decision-making or economic results. NAO chief Amyas Morse said that for the CAs to deliver real progress and not just become another 'curiosity of history' like the regional structures before them, they will need to show they can drive economic growth.

Fig. 2

The logo for DevoConnect, featuring the word 'devo' in a bold, teal, sans-serif font, followed by 'connect' in a smaller, teal, sans-serif font. To the right of the text is a graphic of concentric, semi-circular lines in a light blue/teal color, resembling a signal or a stylized 'O'.

Devolution Map



The DevoConnect Map shows (in light blue) the six mayoral Combined Authorities of Tees Valley, the Liverpool City Region and Greater Manchester (boundaries connected), West Midlands, Cambridgeshire and Peterborough and West of England.

DEVO ROUND-UP

GREATER LONDON (www.london.gov.uk)

The Greater London Authority (GLA), which was formed in 2000, is not a 'Combined Authority' (CA). It differs from the newly-created CAs in several aspects, notably that its 25-member assembly is directly-elected and it and the mayor operate more like a quasi-federal institution (with a £16 bn a year budget). In the CAs, only the 'Metro Mayors' as they have been dubbed have been elected directly via the ballot box.

Lobbying of central government by the **Greater London mayor, SADIQ KHAN**, and the GLA for more devolved responsibilities has ratcheted up in recent times as a result of Greater Manchester being awarded an unexpected level of powers, including over its health budgets, plus some criminal justice roles and the joint commissioning of employment programmes along with the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills.

Sadiq Khan invited the Finance Commission, a group of cross-party political and business leaders, to bring forward a set of devolution proposals. They produced the report '**Devolution: a capital idea**' in January 2017 which argued that by giving London greater power over its tax base and public services the city's leaders would be provided with stronger incentives to develop its economy and reform public services. The commission advised that London should have control over a wider range of taxes in exchange for a lower level of government grant, a move they claimed would bring London into line with other global cities.

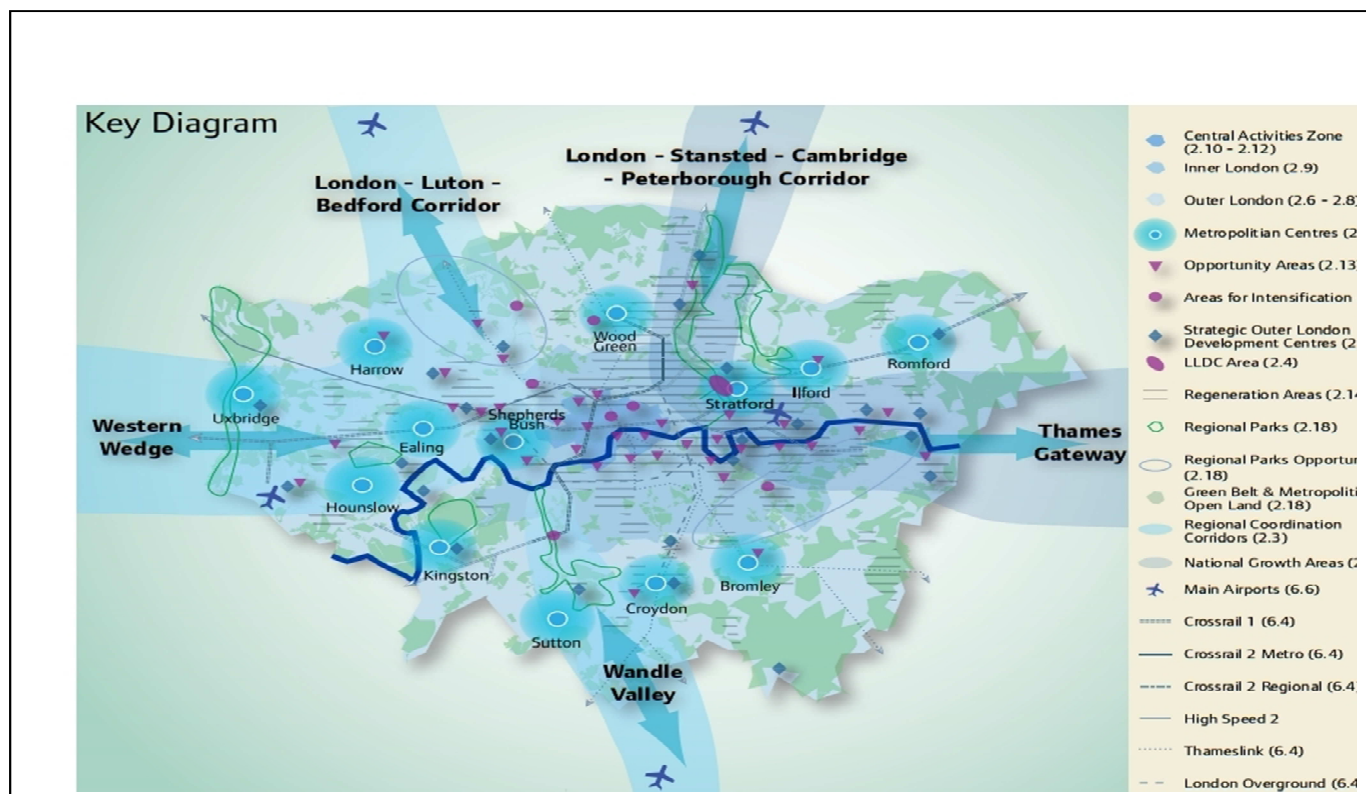
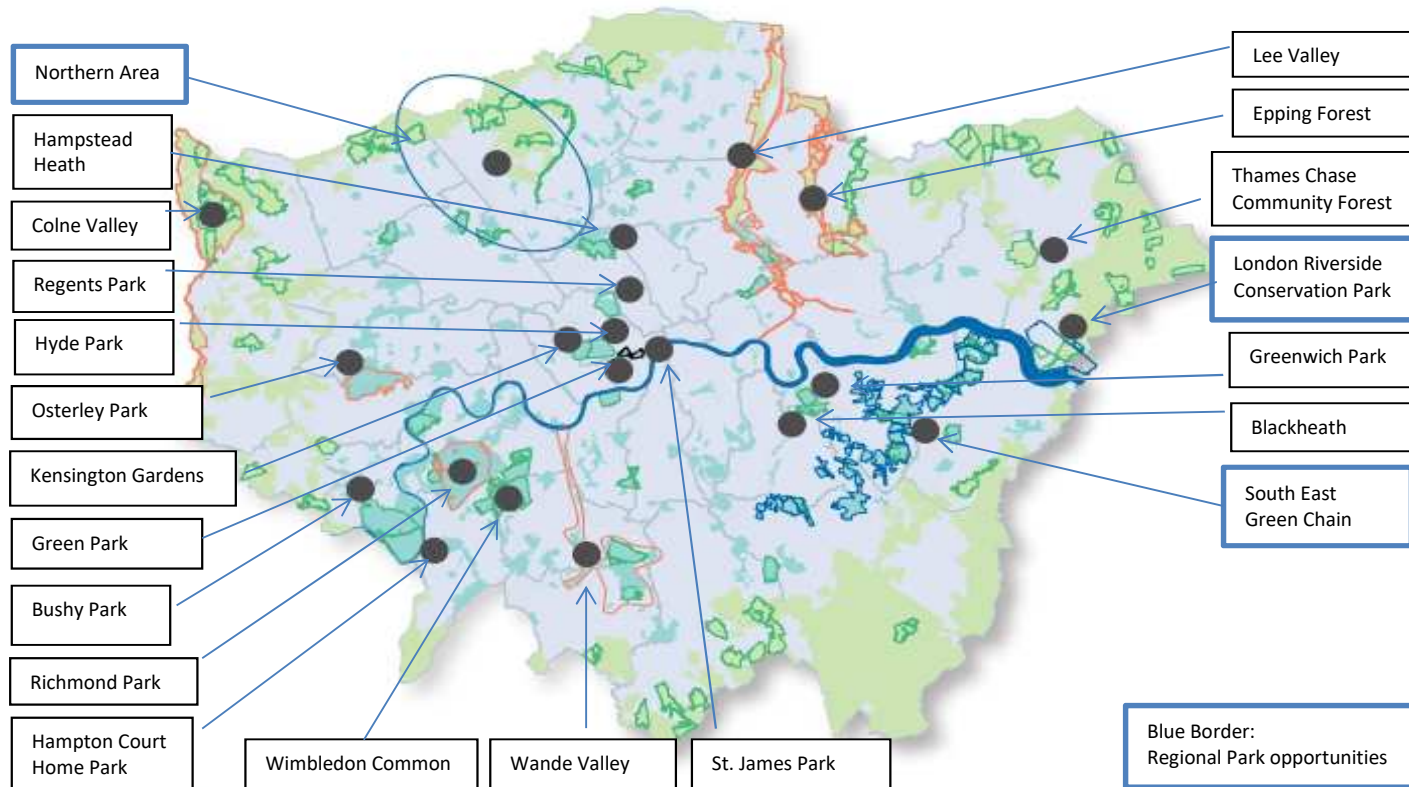
Recommendations included:

- The operation and setting of council tax should be devolved to London's government
- Short of full property tax devolution, the government should work with the London boroughs, the GLA and Transport for London (TfL) to develop a consultation paper on the objectives, principles and design options of a land value capture charge
- National and London government should jointly trial a land value tax pilot on undeveloped land
- Stamp duty on domestic and commercial properties – and related levies – should be devolved to London government and these taxes should be considered together
- London government should have permissive powers to develop new mechanisms for managing charges on property development
- Central controls should be removed from planning application fees, building control charges, land searches and licensing fees and such fees should be audited locally
- The GLA, TfL and London Councils with counterparts in the rest of the South East should (a) consider developing a strategic transport and infrastructure funding proposal for submission to government in time for the 2017 Autumn budget and (b) collect evidence for the National Infrastructure Assessment.

Sadiq Khan endorsed the recommendations, making the point in doing so that "London has the same population as Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland combined, but we have far less control over how our economy and public services are run".

In March the Chancellor, Philip Hammond, announced that a memorandum of understanding would see the government, the GLA and London Councils (a think tank that represents the capital's boroughs) working together to explore the benefits of – as well as the scope for – locally delivered criminal justice services, delivering health and social care and also action to tackle congestion. He also announced, as part of his budget pronouncements, that there would be discussions about a task force to explore piloting a new approach to funding infrastructure. A statement from Sadiq Khan, explained that the pilot 'Development Rights Auction Model' would provide funding for future projects, allowing them to be built quicker and with less reliance on government funding. The agreement also committed to exploring options for greater powers and flexibilities on business rates and greater influence over careers and employment services.

In mid July a report by the think tank **The Centre for London** called for all property taxes to be devolved to the Mayor of London in order to pilot reforms in a bid to protect the capital's economy post Brexit. The report also advised that the London Mayor should join with the mayors and leaders of the UK's other cities to create a Convention of City Leaders on Brexit to engage with the government to get the best deal for cities. The report, '**Open City, London After Brexit**' maintains that domestic property taxes, including council tax and stamp duty, are "outdated, regressive and perverse". It also calls for the devolution of education and child care, open access to higher education across the EU and the clarification of traditional trade arrangements.

LONDON PLAN: KEY DIAGRAM (<https://www.london.gov.uk/what-we-do/planning/london-plan>)**Fig. 3** (Chapter 2 of the London Plan as updated January 2017, page 86)**LONDON PLAN: STRATEGIC OPEN SPACE NETWORK** (Chapter 2, map 2.8, page.82)**Fig. 4** (Light green = Green Belt. Light green with dark green border = metropolitan parks)

The Greater London Plan

Currently **The London Plan** or 'The Mayor's Spatial Development Strategy' is the only regional/sub regional planning framework of its type in the country now that Regional Spatial Strategies no longer exist, but the other mayoral combined authorities will be following suit with their own versions. The London Plan is the shared responsibility of the Mayor of London and 32 London Boroughs plus the Corporation of the City of London. It sets out an integrated economic, environmental, transport and social framework for the development of Greater London over a 20-25 year period.

Producing the Plan is an iterative process. The first one was published in 2004, followed by two sets of alterations. A complete revision was published in 2011 and there have been four sets of alterations since then, the most recent in 2016. A full revision is now underway which will lead to a consultation on a new draft Plan in autumn this year, an examination in public before an independent planning inspector next year and the publication of a third London Plan in 2019. All local borough plans have to conform with the London Plan.

Also, following a consultation, Sadiq Khan has now released **Affordable Housing and Viability Supplementary Planning Guidance**. It aims to increase the level of affordable housing while speeding up planning decisions. It gives private land developers fast track approval if they provide 35% or more affordable housing without public funding, but they must build within two years to avoid detailed financial scrutiny.

The London Mayor's Draft Transport Strategy

The Mayor's Transport Strategy (MTS) is another statutory document which impacts on infrastructure and land use that the London mayor is responsible for. (Metro mayors also have transport as a major responsibility).

London, of course, was the first place in the country to introduce a congestion charge and the current mayor, Sadiq Khan, has announced his intention to introduce an 'ultra low emission zone' in the capital. It is arguable that both measures could probably only have been introduced by a mayor.

On June 21st 2017 the mayor launched a consultation on a new draft transport strategy. This will be the third such (the last was published in 2010) and it looks forward 25 years. Consultation closes on October 2nd, 2017.

Other Strategies and Devolution Aspirations

In 2015 central government signed a health and care devolution agreement with health and civic leaders from Greater London, setting in train a series of pilot projects across the capital. One of the London Mayor's strategies is a health inequality one but he also produces strategies for economic development, the environment, culture and housing and, in fact, a new draft housing strategy was recently published for consultation with plans to spend £250m on affordable housing. Sadiq Khan has also suggested that the government should appoint a social housing tsar. However, the Mayor and the London Councils want to see much greater levels of direct power associated with these and other aspects of life in Greater London.

The London Councils' website points out that London government controls only about 7% of the taxes it raises, compared to 50% in New York. It propounds devolving power to local areas and sets out its devolution ambitions not only for health and fiscal matters but also for employment support, skills, housing, criminal justice and infrastructure.

London has not given up yet on hoping to pilot a 100% business rates retention scheme. A draft prospectus outlining how it would work and be administered was due to be circulated around the London Borough this summer with a view to negotiating a deal prior to the chancellor's autumn budget, but the timing is very tight.

Returning to London – The First Tier of Local Government

In 1963 the Greater London Act, which abolished the administrative counties of Middlesex and London, also scrapped all Parish Councils that fell wholly within Greater London. However, the Local Government Public Involvement in Health Act of 2007 lifted the ban on parishes. Seven years later Queen's Park Community Council was the first entity under the new legislation to win the designation of Parish Council - from Westminster Council. Now moves are afoot in Hampstead where a locally resident lawyer is leading a campaign which is petitioning Camden Council to establish a Hampstead Parish Council. There will be more

MAYORAL COMBINED AUTHORITY OF GREATER MANCHESTER (www.greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk)

Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA) has negotiated an extraordinary raft of devolved powers and responsibilities, including control of a £6bn health and social care budget, that are not expected to be equalled by anywhere else outside Greater London. Now that an elected Mayor is in place in Greater Manchester, the scene is set for a power grab competition between him and the London Mayor.

The first Greater Manchester '**Metro Mayor**' election saw former MP **ANDY BURNHAM** (an ex health minister and ex culture secretary) elected. His first action was to appoint **Manchester City Council leader, Sir Richard Leese**, deputy mayor responsible for business and the economy and **Baroness Beverley Hughes**, former MP and home office minister, deputy mayor responsible for policing and crime on a day-to-day basis, although Burnham – who will look after transport, housing and police budgets – has the title of Police and Crime Commissioner. Portfolio roles agreed for each of the remaining nine GM leaders were as follows: the **Bury Council** leader (Cllr. Rishi Shori) to head up children and social cohesion, though Burnham made himself homelessness champion, **Tameside's** leader (Cllr. Kieran Quinn) to lead on finance and investment, the **Stockport** leader (Cllr. Alex Genotis) to champion the green/air quality agenda, **Bolton** leader (Cllr. Cliff Morris) as head of culture, arts and leisure, **Oldham's** leader (Cllr. Jean Stretton) over equality, fairness and inclusion, **Rochdale's** leader (Cllr. Richard Farnell) over the digital revolution, **Trafford** leader (Cllr. Sean Anstee) to head up skills, employment and apprenticeships, the **Wigan** leader (Lord Peter Smith) to oversee health and social care and the **Salford City** Mayor (Paul Dennett) to work with Burnham on housing, planning and homelessness.

Burnham is currently pressing government to deliver the devolution over skills that GM was promised. He is particularly keen to create a 'UCAS' system, making apprenticeships easier to access. He has also bid for homelessness funding and control of railway stations and wants more say over schools and welfare policy. **Prior to his election, Burnham was very critical of the Draft Greater Manchester Spatial Framework (GMSF) for the amount of Green Belt it sought to sequester and pledged a significant re-write, describing it as "unfair and disproportionate". The plan, which proposed almost a quarter of a million homes in GM over 20 years, was challenged by CPRE and many residents. It will be interesting to witness if Burnham achieves his aim as this plan was signed off by the 10 GM leaders – the key individuals he is going to have to work with on an ongoing basis. The detailed job of re-writing the plan has fallen to Salford City Mayor, Paul Dennett and the original timetable has now been changed. A second draft is promised for consultation in June 2018.**

Early pro-active moves by the mayor on the transport agenda were to lobby government along with the new Liverpool City Region mayor, Steve Rotherham, for better west-east rail links in preference to HS2 Phase Two and then, when the Transport Secretary, Chris Grayling announced the cancellation of rail electrification schemes in the north and the go-ahead for Crossrail 2, to loudly condemn him for a southern bias. On a more positive note, Burnham has pledged to redeploy the region's £300m housing fund to provide loans to kickstart developments and, once repaid, reinvest the money in areas outside the city centre. He has designated a £21m 'European Development Fund' for use in reducing pollution, promoting carbon-cutting projects and 'greening' Greater Manchester. And he appointed Olympic cycling champion Chris Boardman GM cycling and walking champion and kept a manifesto pledge by introducing a reduced public fares scheme (Get Me There) for 16-18 year olds. However, appointments to the GM scrutiny committees have still not been completed.

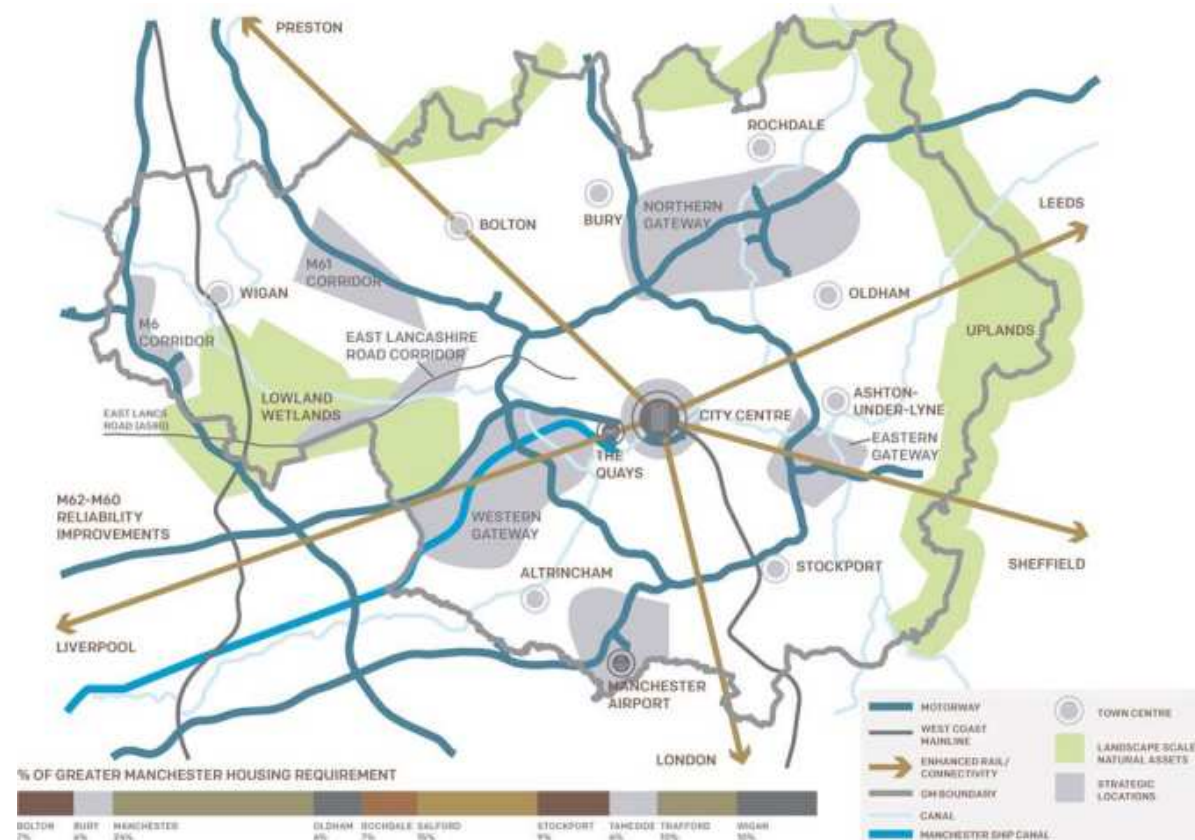
Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA) sums up its 'new powers' on its own website thus:

- *more control of local transport with a long term government budget to help us plan a more modern, better-connected network*
- *new planning powers to encourage regeneration and development*
- *a new £300m fund for housing: enough for an extra 15,000 homes over 10 years*
- *extra funding to get up to 50,000 people back to work*
- *incentives to skills providers to develop more work-related training*
- *extra budget to support and develop local businesses*
- *the role of the Police and Crime Commissioner being merged with the elected mayor*
- *control of investment through a new 'earn back' funding arrangement which gives extra money for the region's infrastructure if we reach certain levels of economic growth*

Health devolution is summed up as: "Greater Manchester now controls long term health and social care spending, ready for the full devolution of a budget around £6 bn". On justice devolution it says: "the government has agreed to give further freedom and flexibility to the Greater Manchester Combined Authority and the Mayor/ Police and Crime Commissioner around criminal justice and offender management".

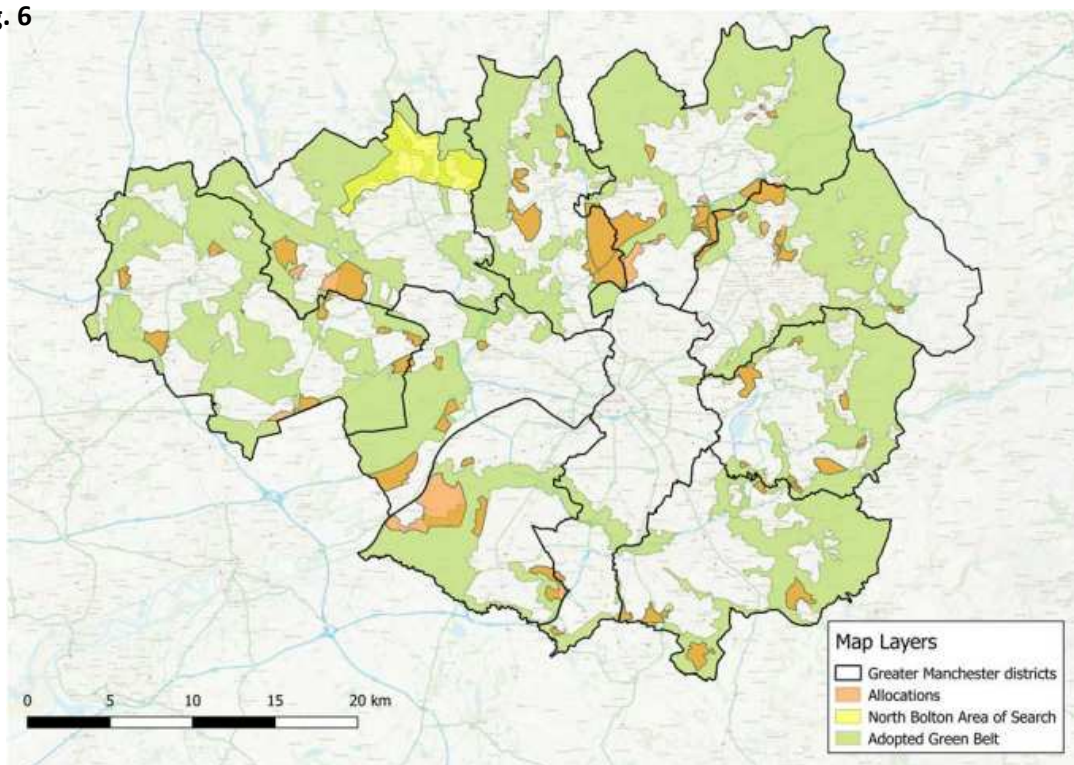
KEY DIAGRAM FROM THE DRAFT GREATER MANCHESTER SPATIAL FRAMEWORK (GMSF). (Ref. 'Vision and Strategy', page 13). Launched for consultation in Oct. 2016, it is under review. All the Combined Authorities will be producing a sub regional spatial plan of this type, most of which will be statutory. They will overlay the Local Plans of the individual local authorities

Fig. 5



PROPOSED GREEN BELT ALLOCATIONS IN THE DRAFT GMSF. (Ref. Green Belt Policy, page 77). Most sites have been controversial. The Plan is now being reviewed. A new draft is due in June 2018.

Fig. 6



LIVERPOOL CITY REGION MAYORAL COMBINED AUTHORITY (www.liverpoolcityregion-ca.gov.uk)

The first mayoral term in **Liverpool City Region Combined Authority** has got off to a very acrimonious start with arguments about who the deputy CA mayor should be and numerous high profile disagreements between the new **city region mayor**, ex MP **STEVE ROTHERAM** and the City of Liverpool Mayor, Joe Anderson. As of September, a deputy mayor had still not been appointed, although it is a requirement of the 2016 Cities and Local Government Devolution Act that there must be one, there are capacity issues around the Mayor's team and a permanent chief executive had not been appointed. And, there have been no announcements about the mayors key election promises: to develop an independent carers service for young people, create a 'pathways to excellence programme' to connect schools, universities and businesses, make apprenticeship applications easier, set up a housing summit and introduce a pilot scheme to address the region's housing needs.

However, the CA governance team has been appointed and that includes the mayor and the leader of Liverpool City as well as the leaders of Wirral, St. Helens, Knowsley, Sefton and Halton and the Police and Crime Commissioner (which is a separate post in Liverpool – unlike Greater Manchester), plus the head of the Local Enterprise Partnership (although the LEP post is non-voting). The Unitary Authority of Warrington and West Lancashire Borough Council are associate CA members and Merseytravel acts as the executive body that provides advice on transport to the CA although there is also a separate 26-member Transport Committee.

Portfolio appointments are: business and Brexit – the LEP member (Asif Hamid); economics development and culture – **Wirral Council** leader (Cllr. Phil Davies); energy and renewables – the leader of **Halton** (Cllr. Rob Polehill); housing and public service reform - the Mayor of **Liverpool** (Cllr. Joe Anderson); health, adult and children's services – **Knowsley Council** leader (Cllr. Andy Moorhead); skills and apprenticeships – **Sefton Council** leader (Cllr. Ian Maher); spatial planning, environment and air quality – **St. Helens Council** leader (Cllr. Barrie Grunewald); transport – **Liverpool City Council** leader (Cllr. Liam Robinson) and criminal justice – the Police and Crime Commissioner (Jane Kennedy). Steve Rotheram has taken responsibility for policy, finance and resources and digital innovation. Advisers have been appointed for higher education, social housing, the voluntary/ community sector, the natural environment, homelessness, mental health and the visitor economy. Also, Lynn Collins, TUC secretary for the North West, has been appointed as a 'Fairness and Social Justice Tsar'.

There is increasing concern over the fact that there has been no official consultation yet over a Spatial Framework for the city region, which is known to be fairly well advanced in its preparation. The fear is that it may skip the 'issues and options' stage and be launched as a draft strategy.

It is already apparent that the Mayors of Liverpool City Region and GMCA are working closely together. Their borders meet in any event but they are political colleagues and they clearly intend to speak with joint voices whenever suitable occasions arise. But their approaches are different. On July 14th, 70 days into his term of office, Rotheram launched a '100-day Plan'. It sets out more than 50 pledges and actions to be delivered across a broad range of policy areas. Among the key actions outlined in the plan were:

- Appointing an expert to head up the special purpose vehicle to deliver the Mersey Tidal Barrage
- Undertaking a rapid economic baseline review with a view to Liverpool becoming a leading tech city
- Creating a Fairness and Social Justice Advisory Board to have an impact across all aspects of policy
- Establishing a city region wide commission to bring about a skills revolution
- Introducing a free travel scheme for apprentices
- Taking significant steps towards becoming a zero carbon city and the likely adoption of clean air zones
- Embracing a 'housing first' approach to tackle homelessness and street sleeping

The CA website tells a tale of much funding success. It says: *"Since our formation in 2014 we have achieved great things. This includes securing £150m investment in 14 transport improvement schemes, £9m of Growth Deal funding invested in the Inter-national Festival for Business 2016 and Littlewoods Studios (state of the art film studios), £21.5m invested in over 30 projects to enhance or build new learning facilities and the identification of key housing and development sites".* Achievements for 2016/17 listed include securing a single investment fund of half a billion pounds over five years. An assurance framework was approved by government for a £30m 'gainshare' and wider investment pot and a £13.8m business support programme will be delivered through the Growth Hub and the European Rural Development Fund (ERDF). £72m was secured from the Local Growth Fund, skills capital projects worth £21.5m were delivered, £29m obtained for 'Ways to Work', a £3m local grant scheme to support apprenticeships and an area based business review was completed. In addition, One Public Estates funding was secured for a variety of key projects.

CAMBRIDGESHIRE & PETERBOROUGH COMBINED MAYORAL AUTHORITY (www.camspboroca.org)
[SEE 'STOP PRESS' ON PAGE 42]

Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority, which only came into being in March and comprises seven councils plus the Greater Cambridge & Greater Peterborough LEP, negotiated an £800m devolution deal.

The portfolio responsibilities agreed are: the **mayor, JAMES PALMER**, ex **East Cambridgeshire District Council** leader) – future devolution deals, securing investment and public service reform; **Cambridgeshire County Council** leader (Cllr. Steve Count) – strategic fiscal planning, investment strategy, budgets, monitoring; **Fenland District Council** leader (Cllr. John Clark) – employment, skills; **Cambridge City Council** leader (Cllr. Lewis Herbert) – strategic planning, supporting disadvantaged communities; **Peterborough City Council** leader (Cllr. John Holdich) – chairing the delivery group, tourism, working with the LEP; **Huntingdonshire District Council** leader (Cllr. Robin Howe) – economic & productivity strategy, chairing the Investment Group, international trade; **East Cambridgeshire District Council** leader (Cllr. Charles Roberts) – transport & infrastructure; **South Cambridgeshire District Council** leader, (Cllr. Peter Topping) – new homes and communities. The other CA member is the LEP chairman (Mark Reeve). The two deputy mayors appointed were Holdich (constitutional) and Howe (statutory). Within two weeks Mayor Palmer launched a 100-day manifesto making a raft of promises, roughly two thirds of which have been met. The promises were:

Transport & Infrastructure

- Conduct feasibility studies into an underground system for Cambridge and South Cambridgeshire, a light rail system, the extension of the M11 to the A47 and (along with the LEP) Wisbech Garden Town
- Commission business cases for the dualling of the A47 and the upgrading of the A10
- Work with Network Rail on rail priorities and announce initial funding for transport and infrastructure
- Publish the first CA Local Transport Plan and hold a future transport conference
- Engage with major delivery partners to boost digital connectivity

Employment and Skills

- Announce the next phase and funding for the University of Peterborough
- Meet with schools, colleges and Ofsted to discuss a flagship 'Into apprenticeships' policy, launch plans for a new Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Apprenticeship Hub and deliver 500 SME apprenticeships
- Develop a scheme to enable 2,000 people on Universal Credit into higher skilled health and care jobs
- Host an employment and skills summit for major employers in the area

Economic Strategy

- Develop a masterplan for St. Neots, Cambridgeshire's largest and fastest growing market town
- Commission work to achieve sustained economic growth in Greater Peterboro' & Greater Cambridge
- Establish an Independent Economic Commission & work with the LEP on post Brexit investment plans

Investment Strategy

- Launch the Cambridge and Peterborough Investment Fund, (worth £600m), publish the Investment Strategy and bring forward the first series of investments for the CA

Housing

- Announce the first wave of affordable housing schemes, launch the development of a strategy to accelerate the delivery of 100,000 new homes, commence a feasibility study into how off-site construction methods can be used to speed up housing delivery and promote Community Land Trusts
- Lead a conference for housing providers to discuss key issues including workforce capacity and skills

Strategic Planning

- Commission the sub-regional spatial plan and engage with utility providers to ensure their support for it, form a land commission to map assets and tackle disadvantage through mapping community needs

The apprenticeships policy and new homes strategy proved too ambitious for the timescale but Palmer added to his own list by announcing a local government structure review. However, he fell foul of the scrutiny committee which 'called in' a CA decision to double the staffing budget to £1.8m. and turned it down.

Unusually, Cambridgeshire and Peterborough CA have opted to produce a **Non-Statutory Spatial Plan** (NSSP). It will comprise two phases. Phase 1, due for completion by February 2018, will set out the existing strategies from the adopted and emerging local plans up to 2031/36, including strategic sites and associated infrastructure. It will also comment on the early work of the independent Economic Commission (Dame Kate Barker has been appointed chair). An important input to the NSSP at both stages will be the findings of the Land Commission which will map public and private land and identify barriers to development.

MAYORAL COMBINED AUTHORITY OF WEST MIDLANDS (www.wmca.org.uk)

Leadership of the **West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA)** comes from the mayor, the seven local authorities (LAs) which have full voting rights and the four Local Enterprise Partnerships, which do not have voting rights. There are also 10 LAs from across the West Midlands sub region that have reduced voting rights.

Although the WMCA is large in terms of land area, population and total numbers of LAs and LEPs involved, it is untested as a functioning entity. This is unlike Greater Manchester where the 10 Metropolitan Boroughs (originally known as the Association of Greater Manchester Authorities – AGMA) had a history of over 20 years of collaborative working and joint officers prior to becoming a CA. Consequently, WMCA's initial devolution deals have not been as extensive. But, because there is no established inner sanctum of council leaders for non governmental organisations (NGOs) to try and permeate, the early signs of potential involvement by NGOs is hopeful. Also, the West Midlands chose to elect a businessman – **ANDY STREET** – with no previous experience as an elected representative as their mayor, a move guaranteed to bring fresh thinking to the table.

Street, ex managing director of the John Lewis Partnership and chair of the Greater Birmingham and Solihull Local Enterprise Partnership from 2011 to 2016, has had experience as lead non executive director working with the DCLG but the worrying news for some is that, economically, he appears to be relying on the LEPs' strategic economic plans which were not formulated with environmental or social considerations to the fore.

As part of his election manifesto, Street announced 10 tests for the mayor's first 100-days in office two months before election day. His tests, with the achievements against them in brackets, were:

1. Agree action plans on housing, transport and jobs. (The WMCA website says these were achieved).
2. Launch quick congestion busting measures. (A congestion busting action plan has been launched and £6m. worth of government funding obtained from the National Productivity Investment Fund to tackle 10 projects).
3. Find mentors for 1,000 young people. (The Mayor's Mentors Scheme has recruited over 1,000 mentors).
4. Meet with the prime minister to discuss West Midlands' priorities. (Street has met twice with the PM).
5. Lead West Midlands business people on a trade mission. (There was one – to Toronto – in early August).
6. Hold a Brexit summit attended by Brexit ministers. (A junior minister attended an event at Aston University).
7. Hold his first mayoral 'Ask Andy' session with members of the public. (Two events held).
8. Set the date for the first Mayor's community charity day. (First event will be on June 23rd/24th, 2018).
9. Convene a faith leaders' summit. (Major's summit planned for November 2017).
10. Appoint executives to key roles. (Chief exec. was due to start in September. Head of finance appointed).

Arriving at his first 100 days on August 10th, Street was criticised for not achieving anything in respect of congestion and for failing to criticise the raising of tolls, by 7%, on the M6 Toll road and also for not having appointed directors to oversee the CA's skills and productivity or its housing and regeneration agendas. On the plus side, however, Street, who has had more meetings with government ministers than any other mayor, won approval to negotiate a new devo deal and witnessed Birmingham being chosen to host the 2022 Commonwealth Games – a driver for improvements and regeneration. He has set up a homelessness task force and appealed to business people to get involved with it and has vowed to establish a West Midlands Finance Commission to find new funding sources following the dropping of the government's promise to let mayors raise a levy for infrastructure projects. (One of the measures lost when the Finance Bill fell at the end of the last parliament). Nonetheless, Street says he believes many initiatives can still be delivered through existing financial mechanisms such as the region's 30-year investment fund, expected to be worth up to £1 bn.

WMCA portfolio holder appointments, announced in late June, were: wellbeing and HS2 – **Solihull Council** leader (Cllr. Bob Sleight), who is also deputy mayor; transport – **Wolverhampton** leader (Cllr. Roger Lawrence); skills and productivity – **Coventry** leader (Cllr. George Duggins); environment – **Dudley** leader (Cllr. Pat Harley); cohesion, integration and public service reform – **Sandwell** leader (Cllr. Steve Eling) and housing and land – **Walsall** leader (Cllr. Sean Coughlan). **Warwickshire County Council** leader, (Cllr. Izzi Seccombe), was made the portfolio holder for finance and investments even though his authority is a non-constituent WMCA member.

Spatial Framework: It is known that work had been underway on a WMCA spatial framework prior to the mayoral elections. It is not known where preparations stand or how high it rates in terms of priority with the new mayor. It is fair to say that the WMCA has a lot of catching up to do with the GMCA on its spatial plan. The WMCA website is not helpful on the subject. It alludes to the challenges of delivering sufficient housing and says the Land Commission has commissioned research to understand the factors affecting land supply.

MAYORAL COMBINED AUTHORITY OF TEES VALLEY (www.teesvalley-ca.gov.uk)

Tees Valley CA elected Stockton-On-Tees Councillor, **BEN HOUCHEN**, a local businessman and lawyer, as their mayor on May 4th. As in the West Midlands, this created a somewhat awkward political situation as Houchen (like Street) is a Conservative and all five council leaders who are constituent members of the CA are Labour. Houchen appointed Cllr. Bob Cook, the leader of **Stockton Council**, as his deputy, although the Tees Valley CA constitution ensures that the deputy mayor post will revolve annually around all the council leaders in the cabinet. There is also a sixth non-constituent member of the cabinet – the chairman of the Tees Valley Local Enterprise Board (Paul Booth). The cabinet portfolio responsibilities are: housing and regeneration – Cllr. Bob Cooke, transport – the **Darlington** leader (Cllr. Bill Dixon), education, employment and skills – the **Hartlepool** leader (Cllr. Christopher Akers-Belcher), investment and business growth – the **Redcar and Cleveland** leader (Cllr. Sue Jeffrey) and innovation, culture and tourism – the Mayor of **Middlesbrough** (Cllr. David Budd).

Like the West Midlands, the Tees Valley CA is working to the refreshed version of the strategic economic plan drawn up by the LEP. The Tees valley 30-year devolution agreement is worth over £450m. In addition, there will be a minimum investment of £464m. available for 2017-2021 - the five years covered by the first mayoral cycle. According to the CA website, the investment plan for this money includes:

- A quality jobs programme to support residents gaining new skills and create quality jobs
- A business growth programme to attract new businesses and help existing ones with growth plans
- Schemes to develop cultural assets and grow the visitor economy
- Transport investment to improve connectivity within and outwith Tees Valley
- An infrastructure programme to unlock sites for housing and business development

In addition, the CA has received £173m from the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), £12.59m of EU Youth Employment Initiative Funding and £1.1m from the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development.

On August 14th, 2017 Ben Houchen issued the following statement:

A message from the Tees Valley Mayor 100 days into office

- 1,300 new private sector jobs secured
- £240m of private sector investment announced
- £200m investment due from landmark Teesside Pension Fund deal
- £1.5m Apprenticeships Fund

"On May 4th a political earthquake hit the Tees Valley and I found myself at the centre of it. 100 days on I've really hit the ground running delivering my Plan for Growth".

Transport: *I am delighted to have put Teesside Airport back on the agenda. In the first three months we have had news of investment in the terminal to improve passenger facilities... I am currently pulling together a comprehensive set of options to take back control of our airport ... I have also launched a vision to transform our road network which includes a new Tees crossing and a northern bypass for Darlington*

Investment: *In the last three months since my election over £240m in private investment has been announced for the Tees Valley. Companies such as PD Ports, Quom, ErlkingKlinger, Biffa Polymers and Calor are making massive investments which is a huge vote of confidence in Teesside and its workforce. I have also reached a landmark deal with the Teesside Pension Fund for them to invest up to £200m in local projects ... The first mayoral Development Corporation outside of Greater London has been established*

Jobs: *... Since my election in May, there have been over 1,300 new private sector jobs announced in the Tees Valley. I've also launched my new £7.5m 'Routes to Work' scheme to help up to 2,500 of the most disadvantaged people find employment.*

Skills: *... My £1.5m Apprenticeships Fund prioritises proper vocational courses in key sectors ...*

Cleveland Police: *... One of my main election promises was to launch an independent commission into Cleveland Police... Nick Hurd MP, Minister of State for policing recently came to Tees Valley. I'm working with him to get this commission up and running*

A Voice for Business: *Private sector businesses are the lifeblood of our economy. I've visited at least two major employers every week ... this is just the beginning ... the fortunes of businesses will be transformed".*

STOP PRESS: Ben Houchen told a fringe event at the Conservative Party conference he is in discussion about a new devolution deal involving new freedoms to make existing powers work better. He called it 'Devo 1.5'.

MAYORAL COMBINED AUTHORITY OF WEST OF ENGLAND (www.westofengland-ca.org.uk)

A proud boast of this area is that it is unique outside of London as being a net contributor to the UK economy. It has one of the highest skilled workforces in England with almost 48% of people educated to degree level. Also, its businesses report fewer skills shortages than the rest of England. To maintain this status quo, it is investing £8.7m on higher education projects and working up other skills initiatives including a partnership with Future Quest which provides careers advice from volunteers working in the business community.

The West of England Combined Authority (WECA) comprises three unitary authorities. They are: **Bath and North East Somerset, Bristol City** (which, in common with a number of other LAs mentioned in the 'Introduction' is looking to reduce its senior management team and axe the post of chief executive as a cost-saving measure) and **South Gloucestershire**. **North Somerset Council** voted against the devolution deal in 2016 because of government's imposed requirement for CAs to have an elected mayor. Consequently, the first **mayor, TIM BOWLES**, a former South Gloucestershire Councillor, has focused much of his early efforts on building relationships. In an interview with 'Local Government Chronicle' he said he hoped North Somerset would "evolve" a desire to become part of the CA. The good news for rural Local Councils and environmentalists is that Bowles' declared priorities include easing development pressure on Green Belt, prioritising urban areas, using brownfield land first, opening rail stations and introducing smart ticketing.

The person appointed West of England deputy mayor was the leader of Bath & North East Somerset Council (Cllr. Tim Warren). The other two CA cabinet members are Marvin Rees, Mayor of Bristol, and Matthew Riddle, South Gloucestershire leader. At the first meeting of the CA cabinet, amongst the matters agreed were the terms of reference for a bus strategy and a key route network. An overview and scrutiny committee has been appointed for the CA, but it has not yet met and no permanent chief executive has yet been appointed.

WECA only came into being in February. Its devo deal included £1bn to deliver infrastructure to boost economic growth. Central government is to provide £30m a year towards an investment fund over a 30-year period, while other funds are expected to come from other sources. It is anticipated that the devolution of multi-year transport budgets will allow the delivery of transport projects with greater certainty. So far the CA has pledged £17m for four public transport and cycling schemes and the mayor is promising various feasibility studies, including one into driverless vehicles. In addition, £3.9 m of funding from the Department of Work and Pensions to run a two and a half year pilot scheme, starting in January 2018, (called the Health and Care Sector Progression Academy), is aimed at supporting up to 3,000 social housing tenants into secure and meaningful employment. And £4.5m of grant funding has been secured to help with delivering 253 homes.

In late July the CA launched a nine week consultation on its economic vision, along with the West of England LEP. The strategy discussion paper sets out plans for economic growth under three key tennets. These were: (1) Businesses that succeed, (2) World class skills for employment and (3) Infrastructure fit for the future. Consultation closed on September 27 and responses are being analysed. A final strategy is due late autumn.

West of England Joint Spatial Plan and Joint Transport Strategy

The West of England has been steadily moving forward with the production of a statutory sub regional spatial framework, one that will include a transport strategy. This means it will be somewhat akin to the former Regional Spatial Strategies.

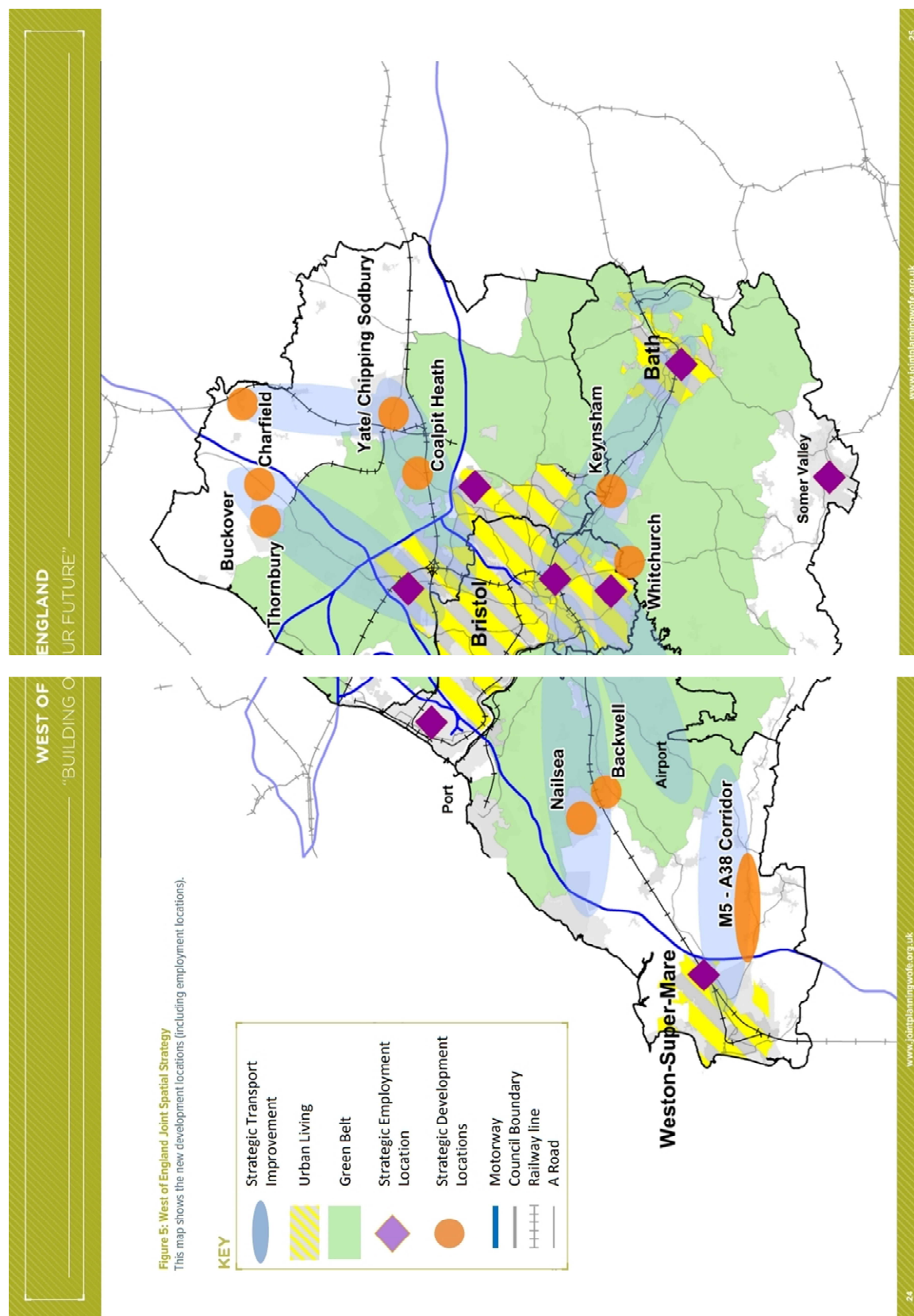
The West of England plan includes not only the three authorities which make up the CA but also North Somerset. There have been two consultations to date and the next move is expected to be the publication of the Draft West of England Joint Spatial Plan (JSP) and Joint Transport Strategy (JTS) in October to co-incide with the next meeting of the CA. It says on the WECA website: "Through an infrastructure fund of £900m and new powers for land assembly, joint ventures and the mayoral development corporations, the West of England Combined Authority will be able to support the delivery of the JSP sites and JTP infrastructure".

WECA leaders negotiated a delay to their planning powers to allow the JSP to pass through an examination in public and be adopted as a statutory instrument. This means that the West of England is on course to produce the first sub-regional plan of its type in England, now that Greater Manchester has agreed to halt its process to re-write its plan. Only after May 2018 will the WECA mayor take responsibility for a Spatial Development Strategy for just the CA Area. Following the adoption of the Joint Spatial Plan, North Somerset will continue to work closely partnership with the authorities whilst not being formally part of the CA.

Fig. 7

IMAGE FROM WEST OF ENGLAND 'TOWARDS THE EMERGING SPATIAL STRATEGY' CONSULTATION NOV/DEC 2016. The final draft (publication) version of the plan is due out this autumn (2017)

Image shows proposed new development locations (pages 24 & 25)



AN EDITOR'S COMMENTS ON MAYORAL TEETHING PROBLEMS: VIEW FROM A LOCAL GOVERNMENT COMMENTATOR

LOCAL TRANSPORT TODAY

[Reproduced by permission of the editor]

Local Transport Today (LTT) editor Andrew Forster used his editorial column in LTT edition 731 (September 15-September 28, 2017) to discuss the elected mayors' early days and the "muddled" transport management/ highway responsibility issues which have arisen in the West of England and in Peterborough and Cambridgeshire Combined Authorities.

Half Baked Mayors?

Andrew Forster

"As anyone who has been through organisational change knows, the process can take time to settle and mutterings of discontent are an inevitable part of the journey. So it is too early to cast definitive judgements on the performance of the mayors who were elected in May to lead six combined authorities (Liverpool City Region, Teesside, Greater Manchester, the West Midlands, the West of England and Cambridgeshire and Peterborough). There are, however, signs in some areas that all is not well.

From the Liverpool City Region came reports over the summer of tensions between city region mayor Steve Rotherham and Liverpool City Council's elected mayor Joe Anderson. Anderson, indeed, has stopped attending meetings of the city-region cabinet.

Governance in the West of England Combined Authority area appears very muddled. The CA was originally supposed to cover the four unitaries of Bristol, South Gloucestershire, North Somerset and Bath and North East Somerset but North Somerset withdrew from the discussions. So the mayor, Tim Bowles, leads a combined authority covering the remaining three councils. The CA is the local transport authority but the unitaries remain highway authorities.

Last month came the news that Bristol City Council was leading a study on behalf of all four of the unitary authorities into a light rail network for the conurbation. The CA apparently has no involvement in this work, even though it is the transport authority for three of them.

In the Peterborough and Cambridgeshire CA area there is the same awkward split of local transport authorities' responsibilities resting with the CA and highways with the county and unitary. But, in addition, Cambridge City Council is the custodian of the City Deal struck with government which includes a huge programme of transport improvements. How does this create the clean lines of accountability that George Osborne sought in championing the mayoral model?

In some places the signs are more promising. Andy Burnham enjoys a high profile as Greater Manchester's mayor; Andy Street in the West Midlands is making headlines. The question for the other areas is does everyone want to see the mayoral model succeed?"

A FINANCIAL AND LEGAL VIEW OF COMBINED AUTHORITIES AND LEPS

Grant Thornton and law firm Bond Dickinson have issued a benchmarking report on Combined Authorities. Recognising that it is early days and that the difficulties of introducing the new CA models should not be underestimated, they conclude that their performances to date are 'varied'. Nevertheless, they say early signs are emerging of their potential to innovate and drive success. One factor hindering them, however, was likely to be overlaps and "blurring of boundaries" with the responsibilities of the Local Enterprise Boards (LEPs). (<https://www.bonddickinson.com/insights/news/combined-authorities-signs-success-new-report>).

WITHDRAWN COMBINED AUTHORITIES: EAST ANGLIA & GREATER LINCOLNSHIRE

EAST ANGLIA

In March 2016 the Treasury, which had expressed its enthusiasm for an 'Eastern Powerhouse', published the East Anglia Devolution Agreement, which was reported on in the precursor to this document. This was withdrawn a year later in March 2017 when the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough CA came into being.

The East Anglia CA had a troubled lifespan. The starting point was in 2014 when councils in Suffolk and Norfolk separately bid to become CAs and were told by the DCLG they were too small to be considered independently and should talk to each other. They did and returned to government with a joint bid. They were then advised to talk with Cambridge and Peterborough City Councils and Cambridgeshire County Council. Cambridge City initially demurred. Eventually a tentative East Anglia deal did emerge, although it always seemed to be a concept government were trying to impose rather than an entity the LAs themselves wanted. But, in the end, the wider East Anglia CA failed to reach a conclusion and in autumn 2016 a consultation revealed the public favoured having two CAs in the region. After that, the Cambridge & Peterborough CA came quickly into being, but four of the 16 Councils in Suffolk and Norfolk, including Norwich City, voted against them becoming a CA. Suffolk has now expressed an interest, to government, in piloting a 100% business rate retention scheme.

GREATER LINCOLNSHIRE

Also in March 2016 the Chancellor announced a plan for a **Greater Lincolnshire CA** which involved £450m of funding and the devolution of a range of powers. The proposal, signed up to by 10 LA leaders plus the chair of the Greater Lincolnshire LEP, was also reported in the first round up on devolution deals. However, it proved to be a pre-emptive announcement. The deal failed when **Lincolnshire County Council** and **South Kesteven District Council** voted against it in October 2016. In November 2016 the Communities Secretary, Sajid Javid announced that the CA would not be going ahead. Next, Lincolnshire CC then proposed holding a referendum on a County Unitary but dropped the idea in February (2017) following a legal challenge from Lincoln City.

PENDING CA BIDS IN THE EAST MIDLANDS AND NORTH WEST & POSSIBLE ONES

LEICESTER/ LEICESTERSHIRE

Proposals to create a **Combined Leicester/ Leicestershire Authority** (where a shadow authority is in place) were put to the government for consideration late 2015. It is unknown where these stand. The bid's backers were the **City of Leicester**, the **County Council**, **all three District Councils (Blaby, Harborough and North West Leicestershire)**, **all four Borough Councils (Charnwood, Hinckley & Bosworth, Melton and Oadby & Wigston)** and the LEP. Now Leicestershire has indicated it would like to pilot a 100% business rate retention scheme.

LANCASHIRE

A **Lancashire CA** had seemed more or less on track, albeit that **Wyre Borough Council** never agreed to be part of it, but it has looked much more shaky since **Fylde Borough Council** formally withdrew support. Now **Ribble Valley Borough Council** have cooled on the idea. As a result, **Lancashire County Council** leader, Cllr. Geoff Driver, has called for assurances from the remaining local authorities that they are committed to the project. These are the **Unitary Authorities of Blackburn with Darwen and Blackpool**, plus **Preston City Council** and the **Borough Councils of Burnley, Chorley, Hyndburn, Pendle and Rossendale**.

CHESHIRE AND WARRINGTON

A **Cheshire & Warrington (or Greater Cheshire) Combined Authority** bid put together by the Unitary Authority leaders of **Cheshire West & Chester**, **Cheshire East** and **Warrington** failed to proceed when Warrington Borough Council voted against the idea. The main stumbling block was the government's insistence that there had to be an elected mayor. But, after considering other options, Warrington returned to the negotiating table with the two Cheshire UAs. It is unclear whether a new proposal has yet been put to government or not.

CUMBRIA

Aspirations for a CA in Cumbria initially came to nought but, as with Cheshire (and possibly Lancashire) might re-ignite now that the government is dropping the requirement for elected mayors outside of conurbations.

NON MAYORAL SUB REGIONAL UPDATE

MULTI FACETED & FRACTIOUS PICTURE IN THE NORTH EAST OF THE COUNTRY

NORTH EAST COMBINED AUTHORITY (www.northeastca.gov.uk)

A **North East Combined Authority (NECA)** originally came together as a legal body in 2014. It comprises seven councils: **County Durham, Gateshead, Newcastle City Council, North Tyneside, Northumberland County Council, South Tyneside and Sunderland City Council**. But formal devolution discussions regarding the wider North East were terminated following a government announcement on September 8th 2016 that the region's deal had been withdrawn. Two days earlier members of NECA's leadership board had decided not to move to the next stage in the devolution process because they had been unable to reach an agreement about the terms under which they were being asked to proceed. That said, joint working has continued on the Health and Social Care Commission and projects relating to employability and inclusion, economic development and regeneration and transport. Information about these and the leadership board is on the NECA website.

Meantime, **Newcastle, Northumberland and North Tyneside** have been involved in discussions (described as 'positive') with the DCLG about a smaller devolution arrangement than the original one but one which would not be incomparable in size with Cambridgeshire and Peterborough. The three North East Councils have a total population of about 800,000 and Cambridgeshire and Peterborough's population is a little over 840,000. **Also, moves are afoot by Northumberland County Council to create five 'Local Area Councils' – Tynedale, North Northumberland, Castle Morpeth, Ashington & Blyth and Cramlington & Bedlington – which would have the status of council committees and be able to take decisions on planning and highway maintenance.**

SHEFFIELD CITY REGION / SOUTH YORKSHIRE (www.sheffieldcityregion.org.uk)

Sheffield City Region was formed in 2015 with the following LAs as full members: **Sheffield, Barnsley, Doncaster and Rotherham**. Non-constituent members were: **Bassetlaw, Bolsover, Chesterfield, North East Derbyshire and Derbyshire Dales**. But, the formal devolution agreement was never officially sealed. The original devo deal on offer promised the area an investment fund worth £900m (£30m a year for 30 years) as well as a variety of powers including bus franchising. It was conditional on there being an elected mayor. The mayoral election should have taken place in May but was deferred until May 2018 after Derbyshire County Council brought a successful legal challenge against last summer's consultation on moving to the mayoral model. The consultation had also included plans for the (disconnected) Derbyshire District of Chesterfield and the (also disconnected) Nottinghamshire District of Bassetlaw to become full members, but that issue was finally resolved when both districts withdrew their membership applications recently. However, the entire proposition collapsed in September when Barnsley and Doncaster withdrew in favour of a Yorkshire-wide deal.

WEST YORKSHIRE COMBINED AUTHORITY (www.westyorks-ca.gov.uk)

The West Yorkshire CA was set up in 2014. It has a growth deal worth £1 bn. It comprises the five West Yorkshire Districts – **Bradford, Calderdale, Kirklees, Leeds and Wakefield** – plus **York City Council** as an associate member. (York does not have a boundary with any of the others). The business sector is represented by the Leeds City Region LEP. This CA has recently been debating rebranding around the Leeds name (ie. **Leeds City Region**), an irony in view of the latest development. (See immediately below).

A YORKSHIRE COMBINED AUTHORITY?

Since the devolution genie was let out of the bottle a few years ago, the reaction in Yorkshire has been multi-faceted and fractious. That said, deals were done as described above, but a push for a Yorkshire (and Humber) wide entity never went away despite ex 'Northern Powerhouse' minister, Andrew Percy MP, ruling it out. Now some 17 local authorities across the area historically known as 'Yorkshire' have called on the government to grant a devolution deal for the entire region – a move that threatens to undermine both Sheffield City Region's agreement and West Yorkshire City Region's future. Two of the signatories are full members of the Sheffield CA, ie. **Barnsley and Doncaster**, and four are members of West Yorkshire CA, ie. **Bradford, Calderdale, Kirklees and Leeds**. Other Councils which have signed the 'Yorkshire Devolution Declaration' are: **Craven, the East Riding of Yorkshire, Hambleton, Harrogate, Hull, North Yorkshire and Richmondshire**.

A MIXED BAG IN THE SOUTH WEST WITH SOME DISSENT

CORNWALL (www.Cornwall.gov.uk)

While Cornwall was allowed to become the first non-metropolitan areas to obtain a devolution deal, it did not have an elected mayor imposed on it against its wishes. That said, the powers that were officially devolved to it (agreed in 2015 but which became operable in 2016) were more limited than those that have been granted to the metropolitan areas. These included the integration of health and social care and some powers over education and social care, transport and business support and land. (Some of Cornwall's responsibilities are shared with the Isles of Scilly which is actually a Unitary Authority in its own right).

Although **Cornwall Council** is particularly pleased with its achievements under devolution with regards to bus services and new buses, as well in respect of the business support mechanisms it introduced, it particularly wants to see greater powers granted for housing and planning. In the meantime, it has just finished consulting on three important planning documents which are part of the Local Plan – the Site Allocations Development Plan, the Community Infrastructure Levy Draft Charging Schedule and the Minerals Safeguarding document.

Cornwall Council clearly sees itself as having embarked on a devolution journey and this was confirmed recently by its leader, Adam Paynter, when making his 'State of Cornwall' speech. The Council's devolution page on its website announces: 'Cornwall is committed to the principles of Localism and Devolution' and declaims: *"Cornwall is committed to delivering double devolution; transferring powers from London to Cornwall and to local communities and citizens"*. However, many Local Councils are becoming increasingly disenchanted.

Since agreeing its deal with central government, Cornwall, which is divided into 19 community network areas, has been steadily divesting itself of a range of powers and responsibilities to its Local Councils and community groups. These have encompassed control of a sea pool, sports clubs, parks and other green spaces including recreation grounds, historic and community buildings, libraries, visitor centres, play areas, car parks, public toilets, allotments, clocks and a pontoon. All to the financial advantage of Cornwall Council. St. Austell Town Council agreed the largest 'total place' devo package, one that unusually involved the transfer of some staff.

By 2019 Cornwall Council will have saved £196m, nearly one third of its net budget. During the same period it will receive nearly €530m of European funding to create economic growth. Cornwall, which like Liverpool and Tees Valley has been very successful in obtaining EU funding in the past, has been seeking reassurance that national government will make up for lost EU funding post Brexit, especially in view of the fact that – by 2020 – its traditional government grants will have reduced from £404m in 2010 to £57m. Nevertheless, despite being well aware of the challenges lying ahead, Cornwall has continued to lobby for more devolved powers for itself.

Understandably, other County Council and unitary areas have looked to Cornwall and asked for a similar deal to the one it obtained, or better, but up to Spring this year they were being told they must accept a mayor – a factor which has led to no end of dissatisfaction and bickering. However, prior to the last election, the Conservative manifesto changed tack on the issue. It said that it would no longer be a requirement for rural counties to have a mayor but the stipulation would remain in respect of Combined Authorities focused round major cities. The problem now is a different one – a logjam within the civil service which does not have the capacity to cope with devo deals on top of having to work out and negotiate a way through Brexit implications and being ordered to get stuck into the myriad implications that have arisen from the Grenfell Tower fire.

Also, apart from the difficulty in having serious two-way discussions with government about further devolution deals, Cornwall is having something of a battle with the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) which has suggested it should reduce the number of its principal authority councillors to 87 from 123 by the 2021 election. Cornwall Council believes the minimum number it can function effectively with is 99.

Suggestions that even more could be devolved to Town and Parish Councils have been rejected by Sarah Mason, Executive Officer of Cornwall Association Local councils (CALC). She told principal authority councillors at an informal workshop in July that devolution was not seen as a good thing by most parishes. It was viewed by the majority as Cornwall Council passing on responsibilities due to having insufficient funding to provide the services themselves. A major problem was finding sufficient numbers of people willing to be local councillors for no recompense when principal authority councillors are paid £14,000 a year. The larger Town Councils such as Newquay and Liskeard are still keen to take on more powers but the remainder feel unable to cope.

CORNWALL'S LOCAL PLAN ADOPTED IN NOVEMBER 2016: KEY DIAGRAM (page 99)

Fig. 8



DEVON & SOMERSET – HEART OF THE SOUTH WEST

Devon and Somerset County and District Councils, together with **Plymouth and Torbay Councils**, **Exmoor and Dartmoor National Parks**, three Clinical Commissioning Groups and the Heart of the South West LEP have been working towards obtaining government agreement for a Combined Authority. That said, there was a point at which it was understood Exeter City Council, Torbay Borough Council and Plymouth were considering an alternative bid. However, following the launch of a productivity plan in January, a ‘Green Paper’ – ‘Building Our Industrial Strategy’ – was published in March.

The **Heart of the South West** devolution bid has focused on the themes of economic growth, health, social care and wellbeing and infrastructure and local resilience. Following recent “encouraging noises” from government and a promise from them not to push for an elected mayor, a shadow joint committee has now been set up with the leader of Somerset County Council, Councillor David Fothergill, at the helm.

DORSET

The nine principal authorities in Dorset have examined a veritable ‘mix and match’ assortment of options for local government re-organisation. Reports by three highly regarded external organisations have been considered and public consultations have been held and analysed.

In the end, two thirds of the LAs decided to put a bid to government for two Unitary Authorities – one comprising ‘**Rural Dorset**’, ie. **East Dorset, North Dorset, Purbeck, West Dorset** and **Weymouth & Portland** as well as **Dorset County Council** – and one covering ‘**Urban Dorset**’, ie. **Bournemouth, Poole** and **Christchurch** as well as a part of **Dorset County**. This bid, entitled ‘**Future Dorset**’ and supported by a website of the same name, received the endorsement of Dorset County Council’s new leader, Rebecca Knox, shortly after her recent election – but it is not supported by Christchurch Borough Council or East Dorset District Council or Purbeck District Council. However, it does have significant support from Town and Parish Councils.

According to ‘Local Government Chronicle’ (August 31st 2017 edition), of the outstanding bids, the ‘Future Dorset’ plans stand the best chance of being approved in the short term due to there being the greatest amount of consensus amongst the councils involved (compared to other outstanding bids from other areas).

GLOUCESTERSHIRE AND A NEW COTSWOLD-WEST OXFORDSHIRE UNITARY

The ‘**We are Gloucestershire**’ county-wide devolution agreement of 2015 was backed by the six **District Councils, the County Council**, Gloucestershire Constabulary, the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner, the NHS Clinical Commissioning Group and the LEP. The bid that was pulled together at the time was based on the fact that Gloucestershire was a cohesive whole and it focused on more collaborative working between the partners and sought a range of new powers.

It was understood at one time that the bid may have come to grief - primarily due to government’s earlier insistence on an elected mayor. Whether this happened or not and whether it has been revived is unclear. However, in February this year, **Cotswold District Council** announced that it was favouring the concept of a new Unitary Authority based upon its own boundaries and those of **West Oxfordshire District Council** and was commissioning a feasibility study into the concept. This idea was roundly condemned by the leaders of the other principal authorities in Gloucestershire. (Also see ‘Oxfordshire’ in South East round up on the next page).

WILTSHIRE

In 2015 Wiltshire Council put a ‘**One Wiltshire**’ devolution bid to government in tandem with health partners and the police and crime commissioner, asking for more powers and envisaging closer collaboration with each other. **Swindon Borough Council** also, separately, expressed an interest in having more devolved powers.

Following the two separate expressions of interest, there were newspaper reports of talks between the two about joining together and making a combined bid. However, these were understood to have failed initially – partly due to political differences. (That said, the two LAs do work together on a number of platforms and through the Swindon and Wiltshire LEP). The current state of affairs is unclear.

A COMPLEX SCENE IN THE SOUTH EAST

HAMPSHIRE AND THE ISLE OF WHITE

Following a public consultation around Combined Authority possibilities or Unitary Authority options, which closed last September, **Hampshire County Council** decided not to pursue any option for a Combined Authority.

SOLENT MAYORAL COMBINED AUTHORITY

Separate to the **Hampshire County Council** consultation, the **Isle of Wight Council**, **Portsmouth City Council** and **Southampton City Council** sought to establish a **Solent Mayoral Combined Authority**. This received support at consultation and the cabinets of **Portsmouth City Council** and **Southampton City Council** both decided to proceed in principle in October 2016. Although the full Council of the **Isle of White** narrowly voted against a Solent CA in mid October, a few days later the Executive Committee resolved to press ahead in principle. However, in January 2017, the control of the Council changed and the new administration announced it did not support the proposal for a CA.

BASINGSTOKE, HART AND RUSHMORE

In January 2017 Districts in northern Hampshire announced they were exploring the possibility of creating a unitary authority, following lack of progress at the Hampshire County Council level. **Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council**, **Hart District Council** and **Rushmore Borough Council** indicated some support for a Combined Authority that covered only the 'Heart of Hampshire', not the whole county.

OXFORDSHIRE

Every Council in Oxfordshire now appears to agree that the time is right to move to unitary structure – but not on what it should look like. **Oxfordshire County Council** commissioned one study and the five district/ city councils commissioned a separate one in 2016, resulting in the County pushing for a single unitary and the districts all initially expressing support for three unitaries under a Combined Authority. But, in February 2017, **the Vale of White Horse and South Oxfordshire District Councils** changed their position and came out in favour of a single Oxford Unitary Council. **Cherwell, West Oxfordshire and Oxford City** have all subsequently again confirmed their opposition to such a plan and **West Oxfordshire** have been exploring the possibility of a Unitary Authority made up of themselves and **Cotswold District Council**.

BEDFORDSHIRE/ MILTON KEYNES

There have been discussions between **Milton Keynes**, **Bedford**, **Central Bedfordshire** and **Luton** local authorities. It is unclear where these currently lie.

BERKSHIRE

The six Berkshire Unitary Authorities of **West Berkshire**, **Reading**, **Wokingham**, **Bracknell Forest**, **Windsor & Maidenhead** and **Slough** (all former District Councils) rejected the idea of making a bid to become a Combined Authority over the government's initial insistence that CAs must have an elected mayor. Whether they will review that decision in the light of the removal of the requirement to have a mayor remains to be seen but they already share some services and have been developing plans to share more – and senior management.

BUCKINGHAMSHIRE

The principal authorities in Buckinghamshire have not been able to agree on a way forward. **Buckinghamshire County Council** has published plans to create a single county wide unitary and 19 community hubs. The four Districts published a report in October 2016 which concluded that a two or three unitary model provided the best opportunity to transform local government. Following on from that, the leaders of the four Districts met with Communities Secretary Sajid Javid in January 2017 and put to him proposals for two unitary councils – one representing the current area of **Aylesbury Vale** and the other consisting of **Chiltern**, **South Buckinghamshire** and **Wycombe District Council** areas. A decision is awaited from the DCLG.

KENT

There has also been no resolution within Kent. **Kent County Council** confirmed in April 2016 it was developing plans for a county-wide devolution deal focused on health and social care integration, education and skills, housing and economic growth. Unsurprisingly, however, as there are 13 principal authorities in Kent other than the County Council, there have been other possibilities being explored including a 'West Kent', an 'East Kent' and a 'North Kent' set up of some kind, although it would not necessarily be a unitary arrangement. **Dartford, Gravesham, Swale** and **Maidstone Borough Councils** have been looking at options for their area. Meanwhile the Borough Councils of **Tunbridge Wells** and **Tonbridge & Malling** and the District Council of **Sevenoaks** (which have been sharing services as the **West Kent Partnership**) have been having discussions.

Originally, **Canterbury City Council**, the **District Councils of Dover, Shepway** and **Thanet** and the **Borough Council of Ashford** were discussing a merger but **Ashford** pulled out over concerns about value for money and maintaining the lowest tax levels in the county. However, the remaining four have pressed on with the preparation of a business case for a merger that would not necessarily amount to the formation of a unitary authority. But their plans are in abeyance following the Chancellor's announcement that a 'Thames Estuary 2050 Growth Commission,' led by Lord Heseltine will "develop an ambitious vision and delivery plan for North Kent, South Essex and East London". The Commission is due to report in time for the autumn 2017 statement.

SURREY AND SUSSEX (3SC)

The **Three Southern Counties**, (or **3SC**), of **East Sussex, West Sussex and Surrey** have now formed a Leaders' Board to progress their devolution bid which consists of 100% 'buy in' as far as the principal authorities are concerned. It consists of the three County Councils, **23 District and Borough Councils**, three LEPs, two police forces, **East Sussex Fire & Rescue Authority**, the **South Down National Park** and 12 Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs). 3SC's bid covers infrastructure, housing and planning, skills, public service transformation, financial devolution and governance.

The 11 principal authorities in Surrey supporting the bid are the **Borough Councils of Elmbridge, Epsom & Ewell, Guildford, Reigate & Banstead, Runnymede, Spelthorne, Surrey Heath, Waverley** and **Woking** and the two Districts in the County Council area (also both supporters) are **Mole Valley** and **Tandridge**. The seven principal authorities in West Sussex behind the bid are the **Borough Councils of Crawley** and **Worthing** and the **District Councils of Ardur, Arun, Chichester, Horsham** and **Mid Sussex**.

3SC maintain that the combined gross added value (GVA) of the bid area is £63.5 bn (which is bigger than that of Wales, currently standing at £52 bn) and also bigger than the GVA of Greater Manchester CA area (£56 bn). Surrey has reached an agreement with government to pilot a 100% business rate retention scheme.

BRIGHTON AND HOVE CITY COUNCIL

Brighton and Hove City Council, which remained outside of the 3SC bid, has submitted its own **Greater Brighton Economic Board** devo bid. This includes **Adur, Lewes** and **Mid Sussex District Councils** and **Worthing Borough Council** plus Brighton and Sussex universities, the Coast to Capital LEP and the South Downs NPA.

ESSEX

Meanwhile, **Essex** has launched a 'Fairer Funding' campaign amid growing concern that County Councils are losing out to cities, pointing out that London Councils receive £593 per resident in government funding compared to £193 per head in Essex. Their leader, Cllr David Finch, says the situation is no longer sustainable.

UNITARY ASPIRATIONS IN THE EAST MIDLANDS

A new (Conservative) administration at **Nottinghamshire County Council** has declared that it would like to push for a Unitary Authority and devolve some powers to Town and Parish Councils.

Also, the leadership of **Northamptonshire County Council** is keen to see a unitary structure across the whole county, but **Wellingborough Borough Council** does not want any change and **Northampton Borough Council** wants to become a Unitary Authority in its own right. However, in the short term, Northamptonshire is more concerned with finances. It is seeking governmental permission to overspend its budget as long as it achieves balances within five years. The Council's net revenue budget for 2017/18 is £416m but its reserves only £12m.

MAKING THE CASE FOR WIDER REACHING DEVOLUTION & RE-THINKING IT

DEVOLUTION TO NON METROPOLITAN ENGLAND

In March 2015 the **Independent Commission on Economic Growth and the Future of Public Services in Non-Metropolitan England** produced a report on devolution which they pitched to government. '**Devolution to Non-Metropolitan England: Seven Steps to Growth and Prosperity**' warned that too much attention was being focused on London and the metropolitan areas and stated boldly: "Devolved powers to the English non-metropolitan areas (NMAs) is an idea whose time has come", going on to point out that Non-Metropolitan Areas (NMAs) account for roughly half of England's economy and population. (<https://local.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/devolution-non-metropolit-4cf.pdf>).

The report's recommendations were:

1. Give local partners the responsibility for managing and commissioning local skill services
2. Encourage investment in NMAs by supporting the locally-led promotion of foreign direct investment
3. Take decisions on spatial and transport planning at the level of the economic area through the grouping of boroughs
4. Establish council-led local development corporations to own land, fund and provide infrastructure
5. Adopt a strategy for digital infrastructure which radically overhauls the current model of funding
6. Review the decision-making process and funding for capital projects
7. Strengthen future governance arrangements in NMAs to reduce duplication and bureaucratic waste. (The commission asked for the boundaries of LEPs, police & crime commissioners and health and wellbeing boards to be reviewed and made compatible with the new local government geography).

The commission found that, from 2009 to 2013, NMAs put up a stronger economic performance than London and achieved three times the private job creation of metropolitan areas. Their report maintained that, given their head, NMAs could generate £8.7m for the economy. It pointed out that, of all the OECD nations, the UK has the most centrally controlled public finances, concluding that the status quo was not an option. It urged that, just as economic devolution was seen to be the answer for cities, so it must be the answer for NMAs.

The Commission took evidence from many principal authorities, academic institutions, LEPs, private companies and others and published its report just prior to the 2015 general election.

DEVOLUTION: A ROAD MAP

Shortly after the 2015 election, the government renewed its commitment to devolution and the Cities & Local Government Devolution Bill started its way through parliament. However, the **Local Government Information Unit (LGIU)**, a local democracy think tank, like the Commission above, wanted the government to go much further with fiscal devolution, especially in non metropolitan areas and counties. It produced '**Devolution: A Road Map**' (<http://www.lgiu.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/Devolution-a-road-mapFINAL.pdf>).

Like the Independent Commission report (above), it flagged up a statistic that only 2% of UK taxation is raised locally, compared with at least double that in France, Germany, the United States and Canada and also the fact that UK spending is dominated by central government which disposes of 73% of all public expenditure, compared to 35% in France and 19% in Germany. This makes decision-making feel remote to most people.

The 'Road Map' set out ways it believed devolution could be taken forward. It suggested:

- A system of accountable checks and balances overseen by parliament and responsive to local citizen
- Devolved powers to networks of towns and counties across the country, as well as cities, and
- A culture of collaborations between local authorities, sharing expertise and resources to better achieve outcomes for the public

And it proposed there should be five key 'tests' for devolution deals:

1. Benefit. Will a deal deliver real benefits to local people through growth or more sustainable services?
2. Probity. Will public services be spent legally, honestly and transparently?
3. Financial management. Will the return on spend be at least as effective as the current system?
4. Ethical standards. Will the benefits of the local deal be fairly distributed?
5. Governance. How will new arrangements ensure accountability and engagement?

MAKING DEVOLUTION DEALS WORK

In January 2016 the **Institute for Government** published **‘Making Devolution Deals Work’**, a report which also criticised the centralisation of English government. That said, it identified what it regarded as positives, such as the strong political leadership being shown in respect of devolution generally and the ‘Northern Powerhouse’. An important factor identified was the HM Treasury involvement up to that time in driving the deal-making process. But there was criticism of the short period allotted over the summer of 2015 for local authorities to come together and make CA bids. The report examined the devolution deals that were current and offered a framework/guide to help decision makers decide what powers to devolve and how they might devolve them. (<https://www.instituteforgovernment.org.uk/sites/default/files/publications/4681%20IFG%20-%20Making%20a%20Devolution%20final.pdf>).

The guide consisting of four sections: setting up a devolution deal making process, assessing local area readiness for devolution, assessing central government readiness for devolution and what they term ‘sense checking’ and understanding the implications for the systems that result from the devolution proposals. It is aimed at principal authorities and central government and the relationship between them.

REBOOTING DEVOLUTION

In February 2017, the **IPPR (Institute for Public Policy Research) North**, a dedicated North of England Think Tank, produced **‘Rebooting Devolution – a common sense approach to taking back control’**: (http://www.ippr.org/files/publications/pdf/rebooting-devolution_Feb2017.pdf?noredirect=1)

Their report bewailed the fact that only six CA mayoral elections were due to be held and devolution seemed to have stalled. But, at the same time, it expressed no surprise about the state of affairs, pointing to what it described were endemic problems from the start. It said: *“With no clear purpose, process or timetable, a culture of centralised thinking in Whitehall, and with intransigence on the part of too many local political leaders, it is apparent that once again the devolution rhetoric is failing to match reality on the ground”*. It went on to urge the regional mayors to combine with the London mayor and press for more powers. English mayors, it said, should have the kind of fiscal powers American mayors, German Federal states and French regions had.

The IPPR view was that *“devolution must be based on a series of clear and explicit principles concerning the geography and scale of devolution areas, a ‘menu’ or framework of the powers that could be devolved and a range of options for reforms to governance that are commensurate with the level of devolution an area is seeking”*. In order to re-boot the devolution revolution, it called on government to:

- Set out a statement of its vision and underlying principles, including any ‘red lines’ it sees on geography, powers and governance
- Provide a framework for devolution negotiations based on discreet ‘packages’ or stages and
- Set out a timetable for future developments with clear windows for negotiation and deal-making

UNDERSTANDING DEVOLUTION

The **New Economics Foundation (NEF)** also did a review of devolution earlier this year, which, although it focused on Greater Manchester, drew some important messages relevant to all English devolution. In **‘Understanding Devolution, a critical appraisal of the Greater Manchester deal’**, NEF spoke of the desperate need to rebalance regional economies, the concentration of wealth and decision-making in the capital and how many communities felt left out entirely (<http://neweconomics.org/2017/03/understanding-devolution/>).

This report argued that:

- Devolution needs broader economic policy change including a shift away from a model that continues to rely on a trickle down of dividends from the economic dynamo of London and the South East
- Fiscal devolution needs re-thinking. The report claims that the current approach of business rate localisation would make local government susceptible to economic fluctuations
- Devolution is still too top-down and many devolved mechanisms can be clawed back by central government if their growth requirement is not met
- Devolution deal-making undermines decentralisation because deals have been struck by the elite behind closed doors with minimal and post hoc public involvement. Devolution’s democratic deficit needs addressing through genuine upstream public participation

MAKING THE CASE FOR THE THIRD SECTOR AND CHARITIES TO BE HEARD

MAKING DEVOLUTION WORK FOR PEOPLE AND COMMUNITIES

Locality in partnership with the **National Association for Voluntary and Community Action (NAVCA)** published **'Making Devolution Work for people and Communities'** in January 2016 (<http://locality.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/Devolution-for-people-communities-1.pdf>)

The report maintained that the focus on economic growth throughout the devolution agenda to date had been too narrow; it had neglected the importance of building strong communities and of involving people and communities. It warned: *"Without the right principles driving the development of devolution – from initial deals through to implementation and beyond – the potential of devolution will not be realised. Instead, a top down approach to devolution and new layers of sub-regional decision makers could push influence, power and resources away from people and communities"*.

The report set out five key principles which ought to underpin it. They were:

1. Create a social economy
2. Ensure representation of the voluntary and community sector within new leadership structures
3. Ensure accountability through effective community engagement
4. Decision should be taken at the most local levels appropriate
5. Work closely with local organisations to deliver public services

More recently, as explained in the 'Introduction', **Locality**, along with the community business charity **'Power to Change'**, set up a Localism Commission to collect evidence about and take forward thinking on localism.

LOCAL NEEDS, LOCAL VOICES, BUILDING DEVOLUTION FROM THE GROUND

While others were calling for devolution to be re-booted, the **National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO)** was calling for a halt to devolution deals until it could be shown that the voluntary sector was being consulted on the devolution plans. In **'Local Needs, Local Voices, Building Devolution from the Ground'**, published in March 2017. NCVO urged both central and local government to do more to involve the voluntary sector and charities, but it also said that the charities themselves need to "up their game" and engage more proactively and collaboratively in order to get their voices heard (https://www.ncvo.org.uk/images/documents/about_us/media-centre/Local-needs-local-voices.pdf)

In their report, NCVO called for greater transparency in how devolution deals were agreed and it said that the government should publish minimum criteria for engaging with the charity sector. NCVO had carried out a consultation and 85% of the 249 respondents had said that their organisations had not had any input to devolution discussions. The report said: *"Our research strongly suggests that the vast majority of the voluntary sector is being sidelined in discussions around devolution in their area"*. It suggested that lack of awareness that devolution was even happening, lack of engagement by local government and lack of time and resource were the main barriers to engagement. NCVO said that frontline organisations were particularly likely to have been excluded from discussions where they could provide crucial additional insight.

The report recommended that HM Treasury and the DCLG should work with the voluntary sector to develop clear guidelines which reflect the five key principles already signed up to by Navca and Locality. (See above). And NCVO said that, as far as it was concerned, there had been far too much emphasis on economic development in devolution deals and this had been detrimental to the public services reform agenda.

In the forward to the report **Sir Stuart Etherington, NCVO chief executive**, said: *"Charities ... need to up their game. Power is rarely given; it must be seized. If we are to be listened to, then we must ensure that our message chimes with that of our beneficiaries, be evidence-based, offer solutions and speak as one"*. The report added: *"Both national and local infrastructure charities (including NCVO) should consider how they can ensure that the voluntary sector is better informed about devolution"*.

In launching the report, NCVO quoted their director of public policy and volunteering, Karl Wilding, as saying: *"So far devolution seems like a missed opportunity to involve many of those to whom it was intended to return power. If devolution just centralises power in town halls, then we're destined to continue the disillusionment and disengagement of old"*.

WHAT LOCAL GOVERNMENT'S REPRESENTATIVE BODIES ARE SAYING & DOING

LONDON COUNCILS

London Councils represents London's 32 Borough Councils and the City of London. The body claims on its website to have consistently been in the vanguard of the devolution debate *"backed by a track record that itself demonstrates how devolving power to the local level can deliver better results"*. The promise made is: *"London Councils will continue to work with the Mayor and the UK Core Cities Group to press for devolution"*, expanded upon with: *"Since the autumn statement, London local government and the Mayorhave been collaborating to establish a clear articulation of the case for further public services reform and devolution"*.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ASSOCIATION (LGA)

The **Local Government Association (LGA)** speaks on behalf of principal authorities and acts as an information resource for them. It strongly advises its members, (inc. the new CAs), to get their acts together as far as communications are concerned and ensure they inform, engage and involve residents, businesses and partners about what is happening. Its advice in the 'Devo Hub' on its website is at: (<https://www.local.gov.uk/our-support/guidance-and-resources/communications-support/devolution-communications>). Further advice on engaging with citizens is at (<https://www.local.gov.uk/topics/devolution/engaging-citizens-devolution>). It explains it developed its devolution advice in tandem with the New Economics Foundation. This includes: **'Combined Authorities: A Plain English Guide'** and **'Don't be left in the dark: Devolution and Mayors'**. It offers direct support to LAs setting up CAs on everything from establishing governance and accountability arrangements to Whitehall negotiations. But it is indicative of the sector's turmoil that four County Councils – Essex, Leicestershire, Lincolnshire and Surrey – have given notice of their intention to leave the LGA. They claim it favours Districts (denied by the LGA) and is not doing enough to fight government-imposed austerity.

COUNTY COUNCILS NETWORK (CCN)

The **County Councils Network (CCN)** represents England's **27 County Councils** and its **10 Unitary Authorities**. CCN has just released a study by Pixel Financial Management which shows that County Councils could end up with a £550m-£700m funding gap within 10 years of a fully retained business rates system being introduced. It has called on government to undertake a 'fair funding' review and give Counties 'a new deal' with powers similar to the major cities. (Counties were understandably dismayed, therefore, when Northern Powerhouse minister, Jake Berry, said recently devolution was about giving power to cities). CCN declares on its website: *"Counties retain a strong appetite for devolution deals that genuinely empower county areas and their communities. They stand ready and willing to work with government on driving down powers to local areas that are based on the scale and geographies of county areas. At the same time, renewed debates in the local government sector over potential structural reform has shone a light on how services could be delivered differently in the future"*. It goes on: *"The argument for devolution to County areas is compelling: CCN's recently commissioned report from Oxford Economics * shows that devolution of full public spending to county areas could create 1 bn new jobs in the next decade, generate 26 bn extra for the national economy and deliver £11.7 bn in saving per year over a five year period"*. (Figures based on a projected national economic growth of 2.7% pa, achieved through devolution to rural areas, compared to the current predicted growth of 1.9% pa).

* **'Understanding County Economies'** (Jul 2017) claimed devolving fiscal powers to Counties could re-balance the economy.

DISTRICT COUNCILS NETWORK (DCN)

The **DCN**, which represents **200 District Councils**, is behind an All Party Parliamentary Group report that calls for Districts to be given more freedom to collaborate with other Councils and Combined Authorities, arguing it would be helpful to devolution. On its website's 'Devolution & Public Services Reform' page it highlights *District Councils' track record in devising innovative solutions to transform public service. It says:*

"The 2015 report 'Building better collaboration: Improving collaborative behaviours in local government' published by the University of Birmingham's Inlogov centre showcased some of the innovative, district-led work that has made services work better for residents" and it sets out key principles for devolved local government:

- *Local solutions – there should be no 'one size fits all' approach to devolution models and governance arrangements ... Devolution models should reflect functional economic areas*
- *Double devolution/ Subsidiarity – devolved arrangements should be firmly rooted in the principle of subsidiarity so that the right decisions on delivery are made at the right level*
- *Finance must follow function – Local areas need increased financial freedoms and flexibilities"*.

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF LOCAL COUNCILS (NALC) VIEW ON DEVO & LOCALISM

The **National Association of Local Councils (NALC)**, which represents the interests of over 9,000 Town and Parish Councils, provides the secretariat for the All Party Parliamentary Group on Local Democracy which has held two hearings on devolution. NALC advocates that any government devolution plans must involve at the heart of them communities, neighbourhood and local (town and parish) councils. On the devolution part of its website it says: *"The frustration people and communities have with governance in this country is that it is too centralised. We need a call to action for more control to be handed to local areas, people and communities"*.

NALC published **'Devo Local'** in 2015 – its own version of a White Paper for empowering and strengthening local democracy (<http://www.nalc.gov.uk/library/publications/1798-devo-local-12-nov-2015/file>). In 'Devo Local' NALC asked for 'Stronger Local Democracy' which it argued could be achieved with:

1. More measures to support the formation of new local councils, including the 'community right of appeal', and – for principal authorities – mandatory referenda and mandatory governance reviews
2. The introduction of a local democracy programme aimed at encouraging more people to become local councillors, making it easier to stand and serve and the establishment of a local democracy fund
3. A stronger standards regime that lets local councils impose sanctions for code of conduct breaches
4. The production of a local councils improvement strategy to provide a good governance framework, community engagement and council improvement, along with government investment and support

Making the case for 'More Powers' to put local communities in the driving seat, it sought the following:

1. The role of local councils in the planning and licensing system should be strengthened through a statutory 'right to be consulted' and 'right of planning appeal'
2. NALC and the LGA to work together to promote examples of joint working and devolution and the government should introduce a new 'right to engage' to help local councils work more equitably
3. The government should promote greater use of the power to innovate and review the Localism Act
4. Review outdated laws governing local councils and give new powers to deliver local services
5. Give communities and local councils the powers to adopt new governance models

"Simply put, we must ensure we put the local in devolution", it said, seeking 'Fairer Funding' through:

1. Renewed government action to ensure council tax support funding is passed on to local councils
2. Referenda principles should not be extended to local councils
3. Reforming business rates to allow local councils a 5% share to support local economic development
4. Ensuring communities benefit from development through stronger measures to give local councils a share of the Community Infrastructure Levy, New Homes Bonus and underground exploration funding

'Devo Local' was followed by **'Devo Plus'** earlier this year, a toolkit which looked at what types of devolution are possible and where it is taking place and which sought to help Local Councils get to grips with devolution in a practical way. Amongst the examples of good practice it flagged up were: **Gloucestershire's 'Big Community Offer'** and **Oxfordshire's 'Oxfordshire Together'**. The toolkit also contained local devolution case studies, examined some legal aspects of devolution and it re-iterated the principles set out in 'Devo Local'.

In 2017 NALC responded to Locality's call for evidence on **'The Future of Localism'**. Its reply to the question 'What are the current and future risks and opportunities for localism and decentralisation?' was:

"There is no pattern to decentralisation, either at the Combined Authority level or at the local council level. Already the scene is confusing and there is a danger it will become more so. At the local council level, key concerns are on fair funding, eg. double taxation (where funding does not follow function for new responsibilities), the growing role of local councils in service provision and the impact of this on the precept couples with the uncertainty of precepts being capped through crude and expensive council tax referendums. Many of these fears are greatest for small councils, most of whom currently only employ part time clerks and have limited capacity and resources.

There needs to be an evaluation of where decentralisation and localism is going and how it can happen in a sensible and affordable way. In short, there needs to be a culture fostered of much closer working between VCS, principal authorities and local councils ... as part of a reinvigorated support programme. In parallel there needs to be a review of funding into the local government sector, including more radical localisation of business rates to include a share for local councils to support their work on local economic development, along with parity if investment in improvement and development programmes for local councils as for principal councils".

VIEW FROM POLICY COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN, NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF LOCAL COUNCILS

Replicated here is an article from NALC's Autumn 2017 Local Council Review (LCR) magazine:

COUNCILLOR RODNEY JACKSON, CHAIRMAN OF NALC'S POLICY COMMITTEE, OUTLINES THE KEY THOUGHTS AND OBJECTIVES BEHIND ITS PROSPECTUS FOR ULTRA-LOCALISM

"For those of us who eat, sleep and breathe local councils, we know only too well why our tier of government is important. We see the positive impact on our communities on a daily basis. We get it. But it's a relentless task banging that drum to ensure that the government understands, that it sees the value of our tier of local democracy and that it recognises local councils are a solution to some of the problems.

England's 10,000 local councils are perfectly placed to be the frontline in rebuilding community cohesion on divided Britain and addressing the issues of austerity and local public service delivery. As democratic, accountable and transparent grassroots bodies, local councils can bridge these gaps by engaging with people directly in the neighbourhoods in which they live, to rebuild community and make decisions about and invest in local economic, environmental and social prosperity.

'Ultra-localism' is in fact the only way to rebuild community and local services in an age of division and austerity. This is the big idea in our refreshed manifesto – building on Communities in Control and 'Devo Local' – which the Policy Committee is developing to set out NALC's offer to the government. However, to truly grasp this opportunity, local councils will in return need the support and help of the government, especially to build capacity and increase engagement.

So, what is it that local councils offer to the government and communities?

- They provide democratic local leadership which is accountable, open and transparent and builds community cohesion and resilience.
- They are fiscally responsible, through engaging and communicating with residents and businesses about investing the precept or small share of council tax in local priorities, services and projects
- They work in partnership with principal authorities, businesses, local groups and others to improve the quality of life and wellbeing and enhance the cultural, economic and social prosperity of the area.
- They plan for the future by protecting and enhancing local assets and services, place shaping to meet housing and other development needs
- They ensure that local councils are well run, becoming more efficient and effective, driving up standards of practice and behaviour and learning from others.

Seal of approval

But we need the government to recognise this offer and the power of ultra-localism to deliver cost-effective and engaging community building, placing local councils in a key delivery role to rebuild communities. Here are the four things we will be calling on the government to work with us on:

Firstly, to empower communities, such as greater support for the creation of local councils; 'community proofing' powers repatriated from the EU which could be localised; more say over planning, licensing and highways and improved powers in the Localism Act.

Secondly, to build capacity and support for councillors, including encouraging more people to become councillors; reform to the standards and allowances regime and work with the sector to deliver the National Improvement Strategy.

Thirdly, more devolution and engagement, so encouraging joint working between principal councils and local councils; to support onward devolution of services and improve links with directly elected mayors of combined authorities, the police and crime commissioners and clinical commissioning groups.

And finally, flexible and diverse funding such as no precept capping, rate relief on public conveniences, a share of business rates, enhanced developer contributions for community infrastructure and projects, greater use of community shares, crowdfunding, loans, charging, trading and grant funding.

Given the significant challenges facing the government and the country, local councils have never been more important and their offer more compelling. And we will be banging that drum even louder to ensure it is not just us who get it".

WHERE NEXT FOR LOCALISM? – THE KEY QUESTION FROM NALC AND THE LGC

For the second year in succession, the **National Association of Local Councils (NALC)** and **Local Government Chronicle' (LGC)** collaborated on a special publication which was a supplement in both LGC and Local Council Review. Research was conducted amongst Local Councils and the resulting report, **'Where next for localism'** published this summer. It took a deep look into what was happening on the devolution scene (extracts below).

Local Government Chronicle

LGC research: Parishes step into breach as austerity bites

4 JULY, 2017 BY RACHEL DALTON

Parish and town councils are taking on services to fill gaps as principal authorities cut provision, LGC research reveals

In our survey of parish clerks, deputies and elected members, supported by the National Association of Local Councils, just under half of respondents said their council had taken on an additional service in the past year.

Most said this extra service was within public realm (47%), with others stepping in to support housing and planning (18%), property management (14%) or transport (10%). The research also revealed more parishes were supporting 'big ticket' services such as economic growth and regeneration (14%) and health, wellbeing and social care (10%).

LGC's research forms part of our special report on parish and town councils supported by NALC. The report includes case studies of parish work on health and wellbeing, economic growth, housing and planning and devolution to parish level.



Local Government Chronicle's second special report on Town and Parish Councils, produced in partnership with the National Association of Local Councils (NALC), was published in July 2017. In the foreword, NALC chair Sue Baxter described the devolution scene as "disjointed and confusing". She invited government to think positively about Local Councils because:

- As the first tier of local government, local councils can help provide local solutions to mitigate any negative fallout from Brexit. They can contribute to local public service delivery during a time of austerity.
- As democratic, accountable and transparent grassroots bodies, local councils can bridge the gaps, build community cohesion and make the right economic, environmental and social decisions for their areas
- There is an opportunity now for local councils to fulfil their localist potential but, to do so, they need government support with stronger local democracy, fair funding, more powers and capacity building

The report featured case studies of parishes that have taken on services from principal authorities and it examined the challenges and the pluses.

Under the heading **'Believing in Localism'**, Cllr. Philip Atkins, Vice Chair of the County Councils Network (CCN) and leader of Staffordshire County Council, looked forward to the CCN *"setting out our offer to government: ambitious devolution settlements to us to grow our economies, build houses and deliver services for our residents"* and he provided best practice examples of what he termed "locality governance arrangements":-

- + **In Wiltshire** the county unitary has set up 18 Area Boards to devolve powers and a budget of £2.4m last year with parish councillors and stakeholders making decisions over highways, health & other local priorities.
- + **In Staffordshire** eight cabinet community support members had been appointed to champion parish councils and residents working together
- + **In Buckinghamshire** the community had taken over the running of a local landmark and tourist attraction, the Brill windmill

Cllr. Atkins said it was because of this belief in localism that the CCN advocated against a Local Councils tax cap; it would have gone against the principle of devolution and put future partnership working at risk.

The 'Comment' article by **Local Government Chronicle** editor, **Nick Golding**, in the 'Where Next for Localism?' special report of this summer made the case for devolving power. It is reproduced in full here:

Empower local councils to shape their own destiny

England's decision makers are both remote and irresponsible. That much was clear even before the Conservatives lost their parliamentary majority. The obvious solution to this lack of local empowerment is devolution: give local areas power to take the decisions that will shape their destiny. While principal or Combined Authorities should often be the recipients of powers previously held centrally, it is often when the former bodies pass their own powers down to local councils that residents gain the greatest feeling of empowerment.

The average population size of a top-tier council is little short of 350,000; the size of a medium-sized city. When councils can seem remote, it is necessary to consider whether they really engage with local communities and fail to properly consider the principal of subsidiarity – passing power down to the lowest possible level. Local identity is a complex thing. While one's county or city might feature prominently in allegiances, people often identify most with their market town, village or immediate neighbourhood. Units of governance of this size might lack the economies of scale, required for instance to run social care or children's services departments, but they are sufficiently local to give residents a genuine input into how to tackle some really thorny issues.

LGC's survey with the National Association of Local Councils of parish clerks and local councillors shows the enthusiasm at the lowest tier of government both for grappling with thorny issues and becoming involved in the provision of services cut back by larger councils. Nearly half of respondents' local or parish councils delivered housing or planning services; a growing number are delivering some form of health or wellbeing service. To use one important example, if younger people cannot afford to live in the village in which they grew up but residents are instinctively distrustful of development, maybe it's time for the parish to decide how to balance this sensitive issue when locating new homes.

Double devolution – from the centre to principal authorities to local councils – seems a wise response to so many of the difficulties in which the nation finds itself. Sad to relate, only a sixth of respondents believed the government is enthusiastic about such localism. When the government now has diminished ability to respond to national needs, it might just find empowering local residents at the lowest level of representative democracy could remove some of the unmet need and disconnection”.

DEPARTMENT FOR COMMUNITIES & LOCAL GOVERNMENT (DCLG) GUIDE TO COMMUNITY RIGHTS

The **DCLG** has published, under Open Government Licence v.3, '**You've got the power**', a guide to help communities work out for themselves which of the existing mechanisms to choose to make things happen in their localities (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/youve-got-the-power-a-quick-and-simple-guide-to-community-rights>). (August 2017). It primarily consists of a simplified chart aimed at kickstarting thinking:-

What do you want to do?

Have ideas about how your neighbourhood or community should develop?

Local places such as pub, shop or community centre closing?

Want to raise money for local community projects?

Think you could run a public service better?

Want to run your community with your neighbours?

Is there a building that your community needs constructing?

Could you improve the way housing is managed?

Think you could run a community-led housing development?

Could you make better use of vacant/underused land or buildings?

What's the solution?

- Neighbourhood Planning
- Community Right to Build
- Community Infrastructure Levy
- Asset of Community Value
- Community Right to Bid
- Community Asset Transfer
- Community ownership or management
- Community shares
- Crowdfunding
- Community Right to Challenge
- Establish a parish council
- Establish a forum (if you don't have a Parish Council or local authority)
- Write a neighbourhood plan
- Community-led buildings
- Right to Build Order
- Right to Manage
- Community-led housing
- Community Right to Reclaim Land
- Compulsory Purchase Order

AND AT THE OTHER END OF THE SCALE FROM LOCALISM

Local Transport Today reported on how a Northern 'Transport Summit' held in Leeds in August went beyond talk of a 'Northern Powerhouse' and turned into a call for the establishment of:

A COUNCIL FOR THE NORTH

Report replicated in full by permission of the editor.

Northern Transport Summit ends with call to create a 'Council of the North'

Mark Moran 24 August 2017

"A body representing political, business and other leaders should be set up to speak with one voice for the North, a transport summit held in Leeds has agreed. The **Northern Transport Summit** of business and political leaders was called after transport secretary Chris Grayling cast doubt over long promised improvements to Northern railways.

The case for a new representative forum was included in a statement signed by: Judith Blake, leader of Leeds City Council; Andy Burnham, Mayor of Greater Manchester; Julie Dore, leader of Sheffield City Council; Nick Forbes, leader of Newcastle City Council; Sir Richard Leese, leader of Manchester City Council; and Steve Rotherham, Metro Mayor of Liverpool City Region.

The new forum, which is being dubbed by some as a "**Council of the North**", would bring the Northern perspective to long-term issues such as Brexit and transport funding. It would also make the case for further devolution of power from Westminster to the North of England. A new pan-Northern body could also have a critical role to play in forthcoming Budget and Brexit discussions.

The summit also called on central government to honour promises it has made to the North to improve rail infrastructure. The delegates pledged to build a broad-based campaign, working with Northern MPs, to win Parliamentary backing for its demands.

Last month the government announced that it was scrapping the planned electrification of railway lines in Wales, the Midlands and the north of England. Then, days later, the transport secretary gave backed proposals for Crossrail 2, a new line linking north-east and south-west London. On the day of the Northern Transport Summit, Grayling wrote an opinion piece in The Yorkshire Post saying council leaders should "take control" of their own transport networks.

The summit also came one day after civic leaders, businesses and former Chancellor George Osborne called on the government to back East to West Northern Powerhouse Rail, connecting the cities of the North, in Autumn's budget. In a letter to the Prime Minister, business and civic leaders said that the investment in Northern transport is 'not only fundamental to the success of the Northern Powerhouse, it is fundamental to the success of the entire country.

Mayor of Greater Manchester Andy Burnham said. "This unprecedented gathering of Northern political and business leaders sends a clear message: the North is getting organised and ready to get its voice heard more loudly than ever before. It is time now for the North to pool its political influence and show a real willingness to use it, like London, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland have been doing in recent times. Westminster has failed the North of England but in the past we have struggled to speak with one clear voice on its unfair decisions. With the change in the Parliamentary arithmetic, we have a chance to win more support for our cause.

"By working together with our council leaders, businesses and MPs – alongside trade unions and the community and voluntary sector - we can ensure a strong voice and a fair deal for the North. If we get this right, a new 'Council of the North' could mark a real change to the politics of our country."

"The North's huge economic potential is being held back by an outdated, expensive and slow transport system. The idea of 'Northern Powerhouse' driving forward a rebalanced UK economy in the 21st century, was supposed to right this wrong, and is still strongly supported. A successful North means more jobs, a stronger tax base, better inward investment opportunities and greater success for business for the whole of the UK. But none of this will be realised unless there is substantial new investment in modern transport infrastructure linking the great cities of the North.

"Recent statements by the transport secretary have sent worrying messages that this essential investment may not be delivered in full, with some key commitments dropped, or substantially delayed. We believe that people across the North have waited long enough for transport services on a par with other parts of the country. The disparity between transport in the North of England and London must now be addressed.

Northern Transport Summit statement continued ...

"Therefore, this summit calls on the government to:

- honour in full commitments already given to deliver improvements to rail services across the North, including full electrification, track and signalling improvements on key commuter routes and the upgrade of hub stations and to remove uncertainty about this at the earliest opportunity
- prioritise its manifesto commitment to deliver new west-east rail infrastructure reaching across the North, work with Transport for the North to set out a clear timetable for its delivery in the Autumn Budget, develop an appraisal process to support it, and provide evidence that this timetable will not be adversely affected by decisions to fund other large infrastructure projects elsewhere in the country; and set out a fairer distribution of transport funding – road and rail, revenue and capital - across all regions of the country.

"Finally, at a time when crucial long-term decisions are about to be taken, not just on transport but also on the country's relationship with the EU, this summit agrees to establish a representative and accountable forum of sectors including political and business leaders, trade unions, voluntary and community sector, and universities to enable the voice of the North of England to be properly and effectively represented on issues of common concern.

"This summit agrees to update all Members of Parliament on the conclusions of today's discussion and will work with them to build a broad-based campaign, and seek Parliamentary endorsement of our calls on the government, including a debate when Parliament returns."

Signed by

- Julie Dore, Leader of Sheffield City Council
- Andy Burnham, Mayor of Greater Manchester
- Judith Blake, Leader of Leeds City Council
- Nick Forbes, Leader, Newcastle City Council
- Sir Richard Leese, Leader of Manchester City Council
- Steve Rotherham, Metro Mayor of Liverpool City Region"

TAKING BACK CONTROL IN THE NORTH

The call for an accountable forum in the form a '**Council of the North**', made up of political and business leaders as well as representatives from trade unions, the voluntary and community sector and universities, was originally championed by think tank IPPR North. They published '**Taking Back Control in the North**' in March this year. This was described as an 'essay' by its author, Ed Cox, Director of IPPR North.

In his paper Ed Cox discusses the importance of getting the scale of democratic institutions right for a global platform and he reminded readers of the existence of the 'Northern Way'. This was devised by the three former Northern Regional Development Agencies, long before the 'Northern Powerhouse' was thought of and covered the same area. It was much discussed as an economic entity in the Regional Spatial Strategies and the Regional Economic Strategies that covered the North West, North East and Yorkshire and Humber Regions.

Writing in the 'Local Government Chronicle' edition of September 14th, 2017, Sarah Longlands, senior research fellow for the IPPR (**Institute for Public Policy Research**), said their work had shown there were a number of advantages in having regional and sub-regional entities collaborating in the way envisaged by a 'Council for the North'. A key one was that it substantially strengthened the north's negotiating position. She pointed out that the UK was one of the few developed countries that lacked a regional tier of government and argued that a strong regional institution, with an awareness of local context, could help to better direct economic development and strategic infrastructure decisions than a London-based civil service.

In addition to promoting a Council for the North, Sarah Longlands also took the opportunity to again put forward the concept of a **Northern Citizen's Assembly**, an entity first promulgated in 'Taking Back Control in the North'. Similar bodies are made much use of in Ireland and in Canada, she explained, suggesting that a Northern Citizen's Assembly should comprise 252 people randomly chosen by sortation [the drawing of lots]. Its main role would be to scrutinise the policies of the council as well as those of central government.

NORTHERN POWERHOUSE MINISTER: DEVOLUTION IS NOT THE ONLY GAME IN TOWN

Interviewed by a Sunderland newspaper on a visit to the city in August, Jake Perry, the Northern Powerhouse minister, appeared to be attempting to dissuade local authorities from overly focussing on devolution. He was quoted as saying: *"Devolution is not the only game in town and what we've seen with the Tees Valley and hopefully with the north of the Tyne deal is that all the areas around those devolved mayors and mayoralities get the benefit of it. No area of the north will be left behind in the Northern Powerhouse"*.

The minister's remarks were taken as a potential policy switch by the 'Municipal Journal' (Aug. 30, 2017). They sought a view from the County Councils' Network devolution spokesman, Cllr. Martin Hill who, as leader of Lincolnshire CC, was involved in failed negotiations for a mayoral CA. He said: *'Devolution needs to be nation-wide, otherwise there's a risk it will only be something that will be given to city areas, with the exception of one or two. If devolution is shown to work in some areas there's no reason why it couldn't be rolled out in all areas'*.

SECRETARY OF STATE: DEVOLUTION DEALS SHOULD GO WIDER AND DEEPER

The 'Municipal Journal' (MJ) secured an exclusive interview with the Secretary of State for the Department for Communities and Local Government, Sajid Javid, immediately prior to parliament going into recess for the party conferences this September. He appeared to be giving out a different message to his minister. He was quoted by MJ's Heather Jameson as saying: *"I want to talk to areas that want to do more devolution deals"*.

However, he identified party politics as leading to many of the problems that had been encountered to date. He said this applied to the collapse of the North East deal. But he praised Greater Manchester and the West Midlands, holding them up as exemplar regions that have *"embraced devolution"* despite the politics. The MJ quoted him as saying: *"I want to see what further powers can be given to those areas that are using those existing powers sensibly, but also I would like to see how we can go wider"*.

Javid also confirmed during the interview that the government were committed to business rates retention. He was quoted as saying: *In our manifesto we committed to councils keeping more of the money that they raise and we are now working on what's the best way to take that forward"*. He recognised that councils had *"stepped up to the plate"* in dealing with their share of austerity and endeavoured to give reassurance about future financing. He said the government would publish the local government finance settlement draft by the end of the year. In the meantime, he said, he was very conscious of the demands of local government and their need to have confidence in their revenue. He described local authority interaction with businesses as *"a mixed picture"*. Some LAs had done *"quite incredible things to attract new business"* but others could do much more. He felt the same about Local Enterprise Partnerships about whom he had commissioned a review.

Sajid Javid is due to be the keynote speaker at NALC's annual conference and AGM at the end of October. Local Councils wait to hear with interest his views on devolution as far they are concerned and on capping.

..... AND THE LATEST CONTRIBUTION TO THE DEBATE FROM COUNTIES AND DISTRICTS

Either side of its double page spread on the interview with the Communities Secretary, the MJ also gave the Counties and the Districts an opportunity to express their views. Cllr. Paul Carter, County Councils Network Chairman, quoted the Northern Powerhouse minister saying that *"devolution is about giving control to the cities"* and complained that county devolution discussions did not appear on the radar. He wrote: *"This not only marginalises the 48% of this country's residents who live in counties, but risks failing UK PLC at the very time every part of the country needs to pull its weight. This year has seen three major reports containing evidence to support the importance of county devolution and the contribution to the economy – IPPR, Localis and latterly Oxford Economics (OE). The OE report offers the most compelling argument for county devolution"*.

Ian Miller, chief executive of Wyre Forest District Council, acted as spokesman for the District Councils. He called for certainty and sustainable funding, pointing out that 72% of the 201 District Councils face negative revenue support grant by 2019-20. Districts, as planning authorities, needed incentives for growth, he said, calling for the government to implement the 20% increase in planning fees which was delayed from July as a staging post towards the localisation of planning and licensing fees. He made a case for removing capping/referendum limits for council tax and allowing councils to set discounts and he went on: *"The sabre-rattling on parish councils is not helpful: any limitation of their tax raising powers will frustrate localism"*.

CONCLUSIONS

A perplexing picture in which over-stretched Councils are expected to be successful ‘businesses’

Not many individuals dipping into a report of this nature will have the level of interest in local government structures to read it from cover to cover. But, even those who only read the introduction, the sections related to parts of the country where they have a particular interest, a few other odd bits where a heading has caught their eye and this conclusion cannot but feel somewhat banjaxed at the state of affairs that is evident.

In a difficult financial environment when central government funding is being withdrawn, principal authorities have been forced to consider major structural changes and a totally different ethos – one that requires them to push for economic growth. These processes have been even more stressful and difficult than they needed to be because of a lack of formal guidance, changing advice from the centre and a lack of certainty about outcomes. Unsurprisingly, the current scene is confusing and acrimonious – with many tears before bedtime.

Principal authorities have been even more perplexed since the Queen’s Speech on June 21st 2017 because it made no mention of the Finance Bill which was suspended in the previous parliament when the General Election was suddenly called. They have, quite rightly, been asking how on earth they are supposed to produce forward business plans if they don’t have crucial basic information about incomes.

All that principal authorities do know for certain is that they are losing the revenue support grants which have been their mainstay for many years and that they are now expected to function more like private enterprises and seek new income streams from any legitimate source they can.

The minefield of trialling business rate retention – and the importance of a needs-based grant

Being dangled by government in front of hard-up principal authorities’ eyes is a superficially attractive promise of funding emanating more directly from business rates. But how this would work is still unclear – especially as the business rate income for most areas of the country would be lower than the revenue support grant.

The system that has been in operation has seen the Treasury collecting business rates from all over the country and sharing it out using a formula which has ensured that the wealth generated in London is distributed around the whole country and that poorer areas receive the most support.

It was decided, as part of the devolution process, to trial the retention of 100% local business rates in some parts of the country – Greater Manchester, Liverpool, West Midlands, West of England and Cornwall and this is still going ahead. The current pilot areas have agreed a ‘no detriment’ clause, guaranteeing that they will be no worse off than they have been under the revenue support grant scheme. (Greater London has also been pushing to trial a 100% business rates retention scheme for 2018-19 and it is thought this will go ahead).

In early September, the DCLG launched a prospectus asking new areas – especially rural ones – to consider taking part in a one-year trial of 100% business rate retention. Councils wishing to participate (and two or more can come together to express an interest if they so wish) were asked to apply by the end of October. Leicester, Suffolk and Surrey are early frontrunners. There will be an announcement in December alongside the Local Government Finance Settlement to say which areas will be given permission to go ahead with the experiment. But this latest initiative still does not help the vast majority of local authorities who are competing with each other to attract new businesses, who have no history of entrepreneurial endeavours and over half of whom are dipping into reserves to make ends meet. They are sharing ever more services and officers in an attempt to save money and shedding ever more services and buildings in the direction of Local Councils.

Researching the information for this update on local government devolution, re-organisation and funding, it was sobering to discover how little interest there is in the subject at the national media level, despite the fact that its impacts will be and are being felt everywhere. Outside of specialist publications aimed at members of the local government sector, there was nothing which looked at what is going on through the different levels of government. It is not difficult finding articles about specific newsworthy aspects such as the mayoral elections but little beyond that. A rare find was a fairly detailed Guardian article of April 25, 2017. This was a report of a research exercise into the cost-saving cuts being made to services by principal authorities and their need for a basic grant (<https://www.theguardian.com/society/2017/apr/25/spending-on-council-services-in-england-fell-3bn-in-past-five-years-study-bin-collections-local-government>).

CONCLUSIONS, CONTINUED

Perceptions and reality in local government

In the introduction to this paper, there was a reference to a fear amongst Town and Parish Councils that 'referendum principles', which already apply to principal authorities, would be extended to them (and potentially bankrupt them). For the benefit of unfamiliar readers, it is worth explaining that the Coalition government imposed a cap of 2% on the amount council taxes can be raised by local authorities. If they wish to go beyond that level, they must hold a referendum and get the backing of the majority of their residents. In order to hold down their taxes, therefore, principal authorities have been backing away from delivering non statutory services, keeping open public buildings and maintaining parks for community use. By doing so, they have been able to boast (and most have done so in their local media and newsletters) that they are holding down Council taxes. But the fact of the matter is that they are providing far less services for the money.

Earlier this year the government backed away from capping local councils (primarily as a result of lobbying from NALC) but they said they would review the idea again later this year. Local Councils find this threat perplexing and demoralising at a time when they are being expected to raise their game exponentially and at a time when many are also struggling to carry out Neighbourhood Plans and interact with Local Plan processes. Not only do local councils feel put upon but they also feel they have no voice. Why are their recommendations on planning matters allowed to be ignored? Why aren't Parish Councils allowed a third party right of appeal in planning applications? Why is there no seat at the table of the Combined Authorities for a representative from the Local Council sector? Why don't more principal authorities involve Local Councils in their decision making and why did it not occur to anyone when setting up the Localism Commission to offer a seat to NALC? If Local Councils are good enough to pick up LA level responsibilities, they deserve to be heard and treated differently.

In areas where there is no Town or Parish Council, some community bodies have taken over services or assets. Otherwise many services have ceased and buildings and land are being sold off. In areas where there are Local Councils, they have usually been asked to take on the services – or buildings – or open spaces – or allotments – or car parks – or whatever. But the fact of the matter is that the vast majority of Parish Councils only employ one professional officer – a Clerk – who is usually part time. So, the only way they can take up new powers and responsibilities is by upping their income to pay for them and this means increasing the precepts they are allowed to raise over and above the principal authority's taxes. On the face of it, therefore, the local authorities appear to be running tight ships and the local councils appear to have become profligate.

The Third Sector/ Non-Governmental Organisations and Charities

Similarly, the 'Third Sector' and non-governmental organisations and charities such as the Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE) have been feeling greatly disenfranchised since the demise of regional working in which they had a stake. It was a statutory requirement that the Regional Assemblies/ Leaders Forums had a 40% representation from social, economic and environmental partners (SEEPs) and, because the major role of Assemblies/ Leaders' Forums was the production of Regional Spatial Strategies, those 'SEEPs' with planning experience, and also Local Council representatives, were able to make a much valued contribution to the business in hand. The new sub-regional spatial frameworks which are emerging are incorporating the Strategic Economic Plans of the Local Enterprise Partnerships but no real input from social and environmental partners. The Strategic Economic Plans were not drawn up with any requirement that they should strike a balance between economic, environmental and social matters – the three pillars of sustainability. The fear is that the new spatial plans will be unbalanced to the detriment of open spaces, the countryside and communities.

The need to bring attention back to the local level, to basic environmental principles and to listen

Observing District Councils merging (the introduction cites three examples) and the setting up of huge new Combined Authorities does not feel like 'Localism' to the average citizen or to Local Councils. Much attention will be focused on the CA mayors who will be shouting loudly and pressing for more powers and funding – but it is imperative that local voices are also heard. Just pushing community services and the upkeep of buildings and open spaces onto Local Councils does not 'empower' them. Giving them a real 'say' empowers them. Similarly, for the Third Sector, NGOs and charities, they proved during regional working that they had a valuable contribution to make. They should be allowed to carry on making it in a genuinely democratic way.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The government needs to understand:

- (1) its handling of devolution to date has led to uncertainty and confusion,
- (2) its fiscal policies towards principal authorities is having major impacts at the local community level and particularly on Local Councils and
- (3) there is limited evidence of real 'localism'.

National government would also do well to look at the work that Ipsos Mori did for the Cabinet Office which observed that trust in local government in the UK rose during the past decade but remained flat for central government. And recent polling shows that 72% of people trust local councillors to make decisions about local services, compared to only 12% who prefer MPs to do so. Ipsos Mori have also found during the last year that the proportion of people in favour of spending more on public services, even if it means tax rises, has increased from 46% in 2010 to 60% in 2017 and those favouring tax cuts and cuts to services has fallen to 11%. This public support for taxation and spending at the local level and for local democracy needs to be interpreted into action.

As a result, the author suggests the government needs to:

- ❖ Ensure all devolution deals are subjected to a thorough appraisal process, as recommended by the Lords Constitution Committee, (see 'recommendations' in last devo update).
- ❖ Set down criteria for Combined Authorities (CAs) which requires them to be totally transparent and to involve social and environmental partners as well as Local Councils in the formative stages of their sub-regional spatial frameworks. (The economic input is already present through the Local Enterprise Partnerships and their Strategic Economic Plans).
- ❖ Require each CA to have a basic, easily understandable constitution that is inclusive, as recommended by the Centre for Public Scrutiny (see 'recommendations' in last devo update).
- ❖ Conduct regular appraisals of the CAs to understand how they are performing.
- ❖ Make it compulsory that all spatial planning frameworks and all Local Plans are rural proofed, sustainable and include health impact assessments which incorporate air quality.
- ❖ Make provision for some sort of basic revenue support grant to remain for principal authorities, certainly in the short to medium term, to ensure they do not fail and are able to fulfil their statutory obligations whilst endeavouring to find new funding sources.
- ❖ Understand that if they 'cap' Local Councils/ impose referendum principle on them, the whole double (or triple) devolution agenda will collapse and therefore they must refrain. Local Councils have a long way to go to build up professional staff/capacity and competence.
- ❖ Empower Local Councils by giving them some planning responsibilities and the right to appeal planning decisions and take on board NALC's 'asks' in 'Devo Local' and 'Devo Plus'.
- ❖ Require principal authorities to award a seat on their strategic planning boards and one on each of their local planning committees to a Local Council representative
- ❖ Keep an eye on/learn lessons from Northumberland's five 'Area Councils' experiment (p.22), Gloucestershire's 'Big Community Offer' and 'Oxfordshire Together' (p.33) and other 'localism' best practice examples such as in Wiltshire (see 'Believing in Localism', p. 35).

Local Councils and the Third Sector/ NGOs/ charities need to:

- ❖ Examine their structures to see if they are 'fit for purpose' to engage fully with the different local government levels and the new spatial frameworks
- ❖ Keep themselves well informed about governmental changes and what others in their sectors are doing and
- ❖ Work collaboratively whenever possible, eg. through the Rural Coalition in order to get their messages across.

STOP PRESS: Sept. 30, 2017. James Palmer, Cambridgeshire and Peterborough CA Mayor, has launched a bid to bring the Greater Cambridgeshire & Greater Peterboro' Local Enterprise Partnership under a single umbrella (single officer structure and an assurance framework) with the CA after it emerged the National Audit Office is investigating the LEP, having been alerted by NE Cambs. MP Steve Barclay asking questions about projects awarded to the construction firm of the LEP's chair. ('Local Government Chronicle' news).

Devolution and Localism: are we going forwards or backwards? is an update of a discussion paper produced in 2016 for the Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE) and the National Association of Local Councils (NALC) by Lillian Burns. Lillian, who is a journalist by training, has done voluntary work for CPRE and also been a Parish Councillor for over 20 years.

