

Cambridgeshire and Peterborough East Anglia Devolution Proposal
Histon & Impington Parish Council

August 2016

Introduction

The Council has responses over and above Support/Oppose to most questions, so this response uses the question numbering and headings, but includes the Council's response with those questions rather than all at the end.

Over-riding comment

Has to be that the consultation timing is poor (holiday season and too short), is seeking responses from people who are struggling to come to terms with the questions, let alone the answers, and where residents are largely disengaged from the process.

In that context, the earlier, lightweight, consultation run by South Cambridgeshire attracted responses from no more than 80 people - out of a population of around 150,000 - a response rate of 0.05% can hardly be described as engaged.

All Councils should have done more (drop in sessions etc etc) to ensure that residents knew what they were voting for!

1. To what extent, if at all, do you support or oppose the principle of devolution?

The Council fully supports the principle of devolution, as long as this is Central Government downwards to local decision makers (and possibly County/District downwards, too). The Council does **not** support powers from District/County being passed up to higher level decision makers.

2. Why do you say that?

The devolution deal at the Cambridgeshire & Peterborough level is correct, will allow for innovation, and will provide the means to ensure that the economic powerhouse that is centred on Cambridge will continue to prosper. It will allow for the adjustment of current Government policies and approaches (eg starter homes) to better fit with local circumstances.

Powers being passed to higher levels - that is **not** devolution!

3. To what extent, if at all, do you support or oppose the idea of transferring powers and funding down from Government and then District, City and County Councils becoming part of a Combined Authority for Cambridgeshire and Peterborough?

The Council strongly supports a new combined authority, with powers and funding down from Government.

As well as a representative from the LEP a representative from the remaining (omitted) tier of Local Government, Parish Councils, must be included.

4. To what extent, if at all, do you support or oppose the election of a mayor in order to access what is in the proposed Cambridgeshire and Peterborough devolution deal?

The Council would only support **IF** (and **only if**) this was the only way the transfer of the powers and funding would be acceptable to Central Government.

There is no clear case as to why the mayoral role is essential; and adding yet a further level of administration to the complexities that we have at the moment, does not simplify processes, and complicates and obscures governance and administration for residents.

The Council sees no reason why the necessary functions could not be handled by one of the Council leaders.

5. To what extent, if at all, do you agree or disagree with each aspect of how decisions would be made?

In all cases, and for all decisions, decisions must require the support of the majority **plus** two.

Note that a simple majority, given the diverse sizes of the bodies involved could lead to decisions being taken which are not in the interest of the majority of residents. Simple majority plus two encourages the development of consensus. Plans take time to come to fruition during which political leaders may

change. A consensus approach is more likely to produce plans that are agreeable to a wider range of people and so not be subject to so many changes of direction during implementation

6. How important, if at all, is each of these in holding the Combined Authority and Directly Elected Mayor to account?

An independent scrutiny committee that has the power to ask the Mayor and other members of the Combined Authority to attend a meeting to answer questions. This would be made up of councillors from participating councils who are not members of the Combined Authority itself.

The Council views this as **essential**

The scrutiny committee having the power to review any of the decisions made by the Combined Authority

The Council views this as **essential**

An audit committee which would monitor the Combined Authority's finances

The Council views this as **essential**

Cambridgeshire and Peterborough electors being able to directly elect their mayor – through the ballot box

The Council views this as **not at all important**

The Combined Authority will be open and transparent – where it's expected that most decisions will be made in public

The Council views this as **essential**

A Government assessment every five years

The Council views this as **not at all important**

Furthermore

It is **essential** that the combined authority has mechanisms in place to communicate with, and listen to, the public.

Consultation by its constituent bodies is **not** sufficient

7. For each of the following, to what extent, if at all, do you support or oppose these decisions being made locally, by the Combined Authority and Mayor just described, rather than by the Government in Westminster?

Deciding how to spend funds to build new homes, including affordable homes

Deciding how to spend funding on infrastructure projects, such as road and rail improvements

Creating a transport plan for Cambridgeshire and Peterborough that helps to coordinate road, rail and bus services

Deciding how a budget is spent to maintain roads in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough

Deciding how funding is spent on apprenticeships in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough

Reviewing further education in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough to help provide young people aged 16 and over with the skills that local employers need

Deciding how funding is spent on adult education and skills training in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough for people aged 19 and over to help produce a workforce with skills that local employers need

Joining up health and social care services (such as elderly care) so that they better support people

Working with local councils to develop a new strategy for housing and development in line with existing local plans

Designing a new service to support those with a health condition or disability and the long-term unemployed back into work

Working with local partners as part of an integrated employment service to ensure residents have better access to the job market

Reviewing all land and property held by the public sector and creating a list available for development in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough

The Council strongly supports the devolution of further powers (as in the example list above).

However, devolved powers must be that - and Central Government **must not** interfere once powers and funding have been delegated.

8. To what extent, if at all, do you support or oppose Cambridgeshire and Peterborough, as part of a Combined Authority with a Directly Elected Mayor, deciding on how to spend this infrastructure funding?

The Council strongly supports local decision making on infrastructure spend.

However, a prescriptive list when local decision making is being proposed is a contradiction in terms.

9. To what extent, if it all, do you support or oppose Cambridgeshire and Peterborough, as part of a Combined Authority with a Directly Elected Mayor, deciding on how this housing fund is spent?

The Council strongly supports local decision making on the spending of the housing fund with the caveats:

Planning authorities should determine the relevant policies for the housing developments arising

Developments must be part of a properly produced and reviewed spatial strategy

10. To what extent, if at all, do you support or oppose this proposal?

The Council supports the spending of a further £70 million fund to provide more rented housing in, *and around*, Cambridge City