

Appendix 1: Proposed response to the specific consultation questions

Q: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposal for Norfolk to have control of money devolved from the Government?

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

Why do you say that?

We strongly agree with the proposal for Norfolk (the geography) to have control of money devolved from Government, as we believe that investment decisions will be made by local leaders who have a better understanding of our area and communities.

However, whilst we support of Norfolk, as a shire county, having control of funding devolved from the Government, we believe that the proposed governance model does not fully utilise local decision makers. In the County Deal, it is proposed that Norfolk County Council will make decisions over the Norfolk Investment Fund through a Directly Elected Leader & Cabinet governance model, which only allows for one of the region's eight principal authorities to make funding decisions – Norfolk County Council. We would prefer to see a governance model that includes all borough, city, and district councils as part of the decision-making process, thus utilising all local leaders and their expertise, ensuring that better outcomes are delivered for residents. District councils in England deliver 86 out of 137 essential local government services. As the housing and planning authorities, they hold most of the critical levers in terms of Levelling Up and are the effective 'super-connectors' between the tiers of local government, government agencies, and local people and businesses.

We see a Mayoral Combined Authority (MCA) as the ideal model to ensure that all councils in Norfolk are utilised effectively and given a say in the decision-making process. The MCA model would also allow for all partners together to lever borrowing through bespoke development corporations, for example. This could have the significant increased benefit of leveraging any debt against a much bigger asset pool.

In terms of the actual funding amounts being delivered, whilst we recognise that the Norfolk Investment Fund is on par per head with other devolution deals agreed, it is evident that other areas have secured more ambitious funding levels for their regions. The West of England Deal (which was agreed in 2016) equated to £27 per head per annum (£30m per year) – plus inflation 2016-2022. In order to reach the same per head figure and relative value, the Norfolk Deal would have to be worth more than £30m – this does not take into account the inflationary impact of this financial year. It is also worth noting that, unlike other areas of the country, we are a net contributor to HMT – and so it is already well established that our area delivers a strong ROI for the UK.

Q. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposed change to create a stronger local business voice for Norfolk?

- Strongly agree
- **Agree**
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

Why do you say that?

We support the concept of a strong business voice, and for the role of business and business leaders in helping shape policy and interventions. However, we are concerned that the detail of the proposed deal is lacking when it comes to recognising that business voices need to represent the diversity of businesses, and economies, within Norfolk. This needs to include representative business voices from key geographies (including Breckland) as well as key sectors. There is a danger that a generic approach to business misses the diversity of need and opportunity across the County area.

District Councils have an almost individual level relationship with their business community. Something which was well demonstrated during the Covid-19 pandemic, and subsequent response. A strong business voice needs to recognise and amplify this. Having Districts empowered in a devolution deal through an MCA would help ensure that the business voice is representative of the diversity of businesses across Norfolk – big and small.

We believe the integration of the functions of the LEP should be supported; however, this would be more beneficial if the governance model was that of a Mayoral Combined Authority (MCA). The LEP's previous success was down to how it championed a collaborative way of working across all partners,

including district councils such as Breckland. District councils have control of the key levers of economic growth, such as housing and planning, and therefore should be involved in working collaboratively to support businesses and economic growth, as is currently done with the LEP, via an MCA model or similar.

Q. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposal to move the Adult Education Budget from Government to Norfolk County Council?

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

Why do you say that?

Whilst we wholeheartedly welcome the devolution of budgets – we believe that these powers and funding should be devolved to a Mayoral Combined Authority (MCA), and not to Norfolk County Council. This is because, we believe that district, city and borough councils should be included and given an active role in the decision-making process, making proper use of their local knowledge and experience.

It is also our belief that the current deal misses opportunities on the topic of adult education and skills. For example, we would argue that a more ambitious deal for Norfolk would seek to secure a skills deal, allowing for greater devolution of powers and funding around skills, whilst also providing a leading role in the design of Local Skills Plans based on the local labour market and economic needs.

Q. To what extent do you agree or disagree with plans to open-up housing and employment sites in Norfolk?

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

Why do you say that?

We are incredibly positive about the broad concept of opening up housing and employment sites in Norfolk, providing they are appropriate to do so and fit in the context of local priorities and local plans. However, we do also see that there are numerous missed opportunities that could have been secured, which would have fully maximised the devolution deals potential. As an example, we believe that it would have been beneficial to seek greater power over infrastructure through powers that have previously been devolved to other Mayoral areas, these include: the power to create Land Commissions across all principal authorities; and the ability for Development Corporations to issue development bonds.

As before, we believe the most effective vehicle for achieving this is one which ensures strong partnership and engagement such as a Mayoral Combined Authority (MCA) for Norfolk. We do not believe that 'working with' and 'getting the consent' of district councils is enough to ensure that delivery of Levelling Up is maximised for Norfolk.

A key factor in development of housing and employment sites will be through the relationships we can leverage across Norfolk with key agencies – such as Homes England. As it stands we do not see that the County Council has the experience, or capacity, to manage these on the required scheme / site level needed to bring significant new opportunities forward. They also do not have some of the key statutory powers, such as Planning, to form the required partnerships. Districts clearly do have all of these things, so, again through an MCA model Norfolk would be able to leverage a network of local expertise and capacity to open-up housing and employment sites.

Q. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposals for an integrated transport settlement?

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

Why do you say that?

We agree to the broad concept of integrating all elements of transport for Norfolk, particularly if they are able to be integrated with wider functions in support of the economy. As before, we believe the most effective vehicle for achieving this is one which ensures strong partnership and engagement such as a Mayoral Combined Authority (MCA) for Norfolk.

Q. To what extent do you agree or disagree with plans for an elected leader and cabinet system of governance?

- *Strongly agree*
- *Agree*
- *Neither agree nor disagree*
- *Disagree*
- *Strongly disagree*

Why do you say that?

It is our belief that the proposed system of governance set out in the deal, present a number of risks, as well as a missed opportunity. Firstly, we believe that a Directly Elected Leader model is untried and presents a potential risk around governance of a directly elected leader being voted in from an opposing political party to the makeup of the County Council, which would inevitably lead to issues with delivery. A further risk of the DEL model of governance is the concern over how focussed a Leader within this model will be on delivery of newly devolved powers and functions whilst simultaneously having to deal with the delivery of the County Council's statutory services. We see this question mark as a risk to the Leader's ability to successfully deliver against the Levelling Up Missions for Norfolk, as it is highly likely that they will regularly get bogged down in resolving critical service delivery issues within the County Council.

Norfolk should not be the guinea pig for this new, untried governance model, and instead devolution can and should be delivered via the MCA model, which has proven to be a success in other areas.

This system of governance is sub-optimal as it misses out on the key role that the county's city, borough, and district councils can play. These authorities, such as Breckland, are the most connected to our local communities, and are experts in delivering positive outcomes for residents. We believe that any system of governance should include city, borough and district councils as constituent partners meaning that they will have a genuine voice in devolved matters going forward.

The proposed devolution deal also misses out on the opportunity to integrate Police & Crime Commissioner (PCC) functions into the DEL role – which has been the case in other devolved areas. This would have saved on the cost of an additional election for the PCC role, which would have counteracted the additional cost of running an election for a Directly Elected Leader (DEL).

We know there are clear examples of strong success through a Mayoral model in other parts of the country – and internationally. From Andy Street to Andy Burnham. A key feature of these, however, is the Mayor's ability to be ambassadors and lifted above the constraints of statutory services. The DEL model is too unwieldy, and too big an ask, and seemingly unlikely to attract the calibre of commercial candidate which has been the route to success in other parts of the country.

There is no obvious benefit to constructing a new governance solution which would only be applicable to relatively few parts of the country. For residents and for the delivery of policy we should be seeking to reduce complication, reduce complexity, and have greater uniformity. The country by-and-large understands and supports a Mayor, the same cannot be said for a Directly Elected Leader. It is our fear that a DEL model would naturally find itself isolated in national conversations, as the model doesn't neatly fit with the development of policy; and then even isolated within Norfolk as residents could find the differences confusing and frustrating.

We also believe that there are some real enhancements the Mayoral Combined Authority (MCA) model offers, particularly in supporting the role and capacity of the Mayor to deliver. An MCA offers the Mayor a group of critical friends and enablers through District authorities, which is lacking in the DEL model.

It is for these reasons that we believe a Mayoral Combined Authority (MCA) model is the most suitable for Norfolk.

Q. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the principles of devolution and the benefits it brings to Norfolk?

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

Why do you say that?

Fundamentally, Breckland welcome the concept of devolution and believe that it is a catalyst in driving change and delivering more for local communities. It is our belief that the government's ambition to devolve more powers to local leaders is essential for effective delivery against the Levelling Up Missions.

Our issue with the proposed County Deal does not lie with the principles of devolution itself, but rather with the governance model that has been selected, as well as numerous missed opportunities to deliver a stronger devolution deal for the people of Norfolk. We believe that a number of further possibilities should be explored to ensure that the best deal for Norfolk can be delivered, these are:

- A collaborative governance model which brings all principal authorities with all the powers of local government together to drive effective delivery for the County. A model where Districts can help enable, by sharing activities, and bringing to the table key services such as planning and housing.
- Funding over a 30-year period which is sufficient and takes into account inflationary pressures – at least £30m per year. Ability to capitalise on the direction of travel of Government in providing single department style-settlements to MCAs. We need a funding solution which is insulated and protected from the risks around service statutory service pressures, which enables substantial leverage – not just from income from government, but from the potential to borrow against the widest possible asset base. It is essential that funding is enabled to be as flexible and agile as possible in order to secure maximum local benefit.
- Full integration of the LEP into a collaborative governance model similar to an MCA – enabling it to become a successful delivery vehicle, driving growth across the County. This integration of LEP functions needs to ensure a strategic voice, and an empowered voice for business. It cannot be lost in a much larger public service delivery organisation.
- A more holistic and co-design approach to criminal justice, prevention and rehabilitation through devolution and integration of criminal justice, offender management powers and PCC functions.
 - Ability to reduce governance by rolling the functions of the PCC into a collaborative Board to focus on strategic public safety issues.
 - Closely integrate health, education and accommodation, with police, Crown Prosecution Service, the courts, prisons and probation service – encouraging simpler pathways to support which would improve outcomes and reduce costs.
 - Opportunity to have a single crime reduction plan.

- Potential to roll in fire service under future reviews and alignment.
- **Greater integration and delivery of health and wellbeing** – taking a person-centred approach through enabling partners to work collaboratively to have a strategic convening role, bringing together the statutory responsibilities from across the ICS, County and District partners.
 - A collaborative board could have a strategic convening role, bringing together the statutory responsibilities from all partners. This would allow for greater ability, through collaboration, to affect change within the health and social care systems which are struggling within Norfolk at present.
 - This could also act as a potential future solution to any democratic deficit in the Health Service locally, and ensure we have a strong geographical basis for aligning health and economy in Norfolk
- **Agree a Skills Deal and leading role in design of Local Skills Plans based on local labour market and economic needs.**
 - A collaboration of partners could take on a more active role as economic champions – a key way of doing this is empowering through consolidating funding and powers around skills development.
 - Effective delivery of the devolved Adult Education Budget will be reliant on creating strong links with skills plans for the area to enable growth.
 - Ability to seek delegation of DWP functions and funding.
- **Power over infrastructure to drive growth.**
 - A number of existing MCAs have created Land Commissions with the aim of developing creative approaches to the use of land, for example through innovative processes and ownership models (e.g. Community Land Trusts and Public-Common Partnerships).
 - Ability for Mayoral Development Corporations to issue development bonds similar to the model previously seen in Milton Keynes.
 - Greater power over determining and marshalling key issues such as energy and power infrastructure. With the opportunity for currently national-level decisions which are locally impacting, to be made locally – at a much quicker pace and much greater return.