

Report to: **Cabinet**  
Date: **8 March 2016**  
By: **Chief Executive**  
Title of report: **Three Southern Counties (3SC) Devolution Update**  
Purpose of report: **To provide an update on the progress of 3SC devolution activity and to confirm the next steps**

---

## **RECOMMENDATIONS:**

**Cabinet is recommended to note the report**

---

### **1. Background**

1.1 A progress report on the 3SC devolution work was considered by Cabinet at its December 2015 meeting. This report provides an update on the activity that has taken place since this date.

### **2. Progress to Date**

2.1 The Strategic Oversight Group, the officer group responsible for providing oversight and day-to-day leadership of the 3SC devolution activity, met for the first time on 7 January 2016. The group brings together all of the officers leading the work on the 3SC devolution focus areas to ensure a consistent and coherent direction of travel for the development of the devolution proposals and to advise the 3SC Leaders' Group and the "pitch team" (the team who represented the 3SC at the Ministerial Challenge meeting).

2.2 The 3SC pitch team met with Baroness Williams, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, on Thursday 14 January 2016 as part of the initial Ministerial Challenge meeting which takes place as devolution talks progress. The team was made up of the Leaders from the three County Councils, a Borough and District Leader representative from each county area and Tim Wates, Chair of Coast to Capital Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP). East Sussex was represented at the meeting by Cllr. Glazier, Leader of East Sussex County Council and Cllr. Bob Standley, Leader of Wealden District Council. Baroness Williams was impressed by the progress that has been made over recent months and gave a very positive response to the 3SC proposal. Baroness Williams was particularly pleased with how well the numerous authorities across the 3SC area involved in the proposal are working together.

2.3 The 3SC has adopted a phased approach to negotiating proposals with Government. As such, the focus areas prioritised for discussion at the meeting were housing and planning, infrastructure and skills. The Minister recognised the importance of maximising the potential of brownfield sites in public ownership and was interested in the proposed delivery of at least 34,000 new homes across the 3SC by 2020. The Minister was keen that work should now commence with the Homes and Communities Agency to develop a register of brownfield land available for development and to firm up delivery numbers for a second Ministerial Challenge meeting. The Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG) is also keen to work with the LEPs to consider how early delivery of infrastructure will release growth.

2.4 As a "gateway meeting" which would determine whether the 3SC proposition would progress further or whether some of the fundamental tenets of the proposals would need revisions, the positive response to the "asks and offers" allows the next phase of more detailed discussions to take place with partners and Government.

2.5 The Governance arrangements were also discussed and it was agreed that progress will take place as part of the Governance Review.

### **3. Latest Position**

3.1 Baroness Williams and DCLG encouraged the 3SC to get started on delivery in areas that do not require devolved funding or powers, and to provide an update on progress at a second Ministerial Challenge meeting (a date for a second meeting has not yet been arranged). A letter following the meeting was sent from Baroness Williams to Cllr. Goldsmith, Leader, West Sussex County Council and main 3SC spokesperson, reaffirming Government's endorsement for the 3SC devolution bid and encouraging the 3SC to begin delivery as soon as possible (a copy of the letter is attached as Appendix 1).

3.2 A meeting of all workstream lead officers took place on 19 January 2016 to plan the next phase of work following the Ministerial Challenge meeting. Philip Carr, Relationship Manager, Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, provided an update on the next stage of negotiations with Government (Philip advised Baroness Williams during the Ministerial Challenge meeting).

3.3 A Communications Group, chaired by Becky Shaw and supported by Heads of Communications, has been formed to oversee and steer the communications and engagement activity requirements for the coming weeks and months. The Group has developed a Communications and Engagement Strategy, created a 3SC Devolution Newsletter (which is sent to all Members) and developed a standard presentation which can be used by all partners in sharing the latest position on the 3SC devolution deal.

3.4 Detailed work with partners and Government will continue with a view to finalising a 3SC devolution deal at the first possible opportunity. The progress of other devolution deals signed and being developed across the country indicates that there is still considerable work to be done before the 3SC deal can be finalised. As such, the provisional target date for signing the 3SC deal in March 2016 will need to be revised with advice from Government. An update to Members will be confirmed as soon as possible.

3.5 Members and officers from the East Sussex Borough and District Councils and representatives from East Sussex Fire and Rescue Service, South Downs National Park and the South East Local Enterprise Partnership have engaged with and contributed to the development of the 3SC proposal, which will continue as the detailed discussions phase of the work commence.

3.6 Close work is continuing with the Greater Brighton Economic Board (GBEB) and, to a lesser extent, with Hampshire and the Isle of Wight as they develop their devolution proposals. At GBEB's Ministerial Challenge meeting, Baroness Williams was supportive of the 3SC and GBEB developing joint proposals in relation to transport and infrastructure. Collaboration with GBEB on joint areas will take place as appropriate.

### **4. Next Steps**

4.1 Detailed discussions with Government and relevant partners will commence to deliver the best possible devolution deal for residents, businesses and communities.

4.2 Networks will be accessed to ensure the 3SC can learn any lessons from other areas that are further advanced in their devolution negotiations with Government.

4.3 Regular updates will be provided to Cabinet as this work progresses.

### **Becky Shaw, Chief Executive**

Contact Officer: Lee Banner

Tel no. 01273 481857



Department for  
Communities and  
Local Government

Cllr Louise Goldsmith  
Leader, West Sussex County Council  
County Hall  
West Street  
Chichester  
PO19 1RQ

**Baroness Williams of Trafford**  
*Parliamentary Under Secretary of State*

**Department for Communities and Local  
Government**  
4th Floor, Fry Building  
2 Marsham Street  
London SW1P 4DF

Tel: 0303 444 3461  
Fax: 0303 444 3291  
E-Mail: [baroness.williams@communities.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:baroness.williams@communities.gsi.gov.uk)

[www.gov.uk/dclg](http://www.gov.uk/dclg)

19 January 2016

Dear Louise,

I was pleased to be able to meet with you and colleagues from the Three Southern Counties Region to discuss your devolution proposals recently. Thank you to you and the team for the work that you have put into this since we last spoke; it is clear that a lot of time and effort has gone into this, and I look forward to seeing how this work develops going forward.

I would encourage you to continue to liaise with officials at DCLG to work up your prioritised asks, as well as to be clear as to what asks you need devolution for, and what the area could already do without any devolved powers or funding. As I explained in the challenge session, it is important – for all your asks – that you consider the appropriate accountability structures needed, but this should not delay you in carrying forward those areas that you can already deliver and will make a real difference to the region. Your Cities and Local Growth Relationship Manager Philip Carr ([Philip.carr@bis.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:Philip.carr@bis.gsi.gov.uk)) will continue to help you with this moving forward.

I hope to be able to meet with you again in the near future to see the progress that has been made.

*Best wishes*

*Sue*

**BARONESS WILLIAMS OF TRAFFORD**