

Appendix 2

Response from East Sussex County Council to the consultation on establishing a Mayoral Combined County Authority across East Sussex, West Sussex and Brighton and Hove

Question 1: To what extent do you agree or disagree that establishing a Mayoral Combined County Authority over the proposed geography will deliver benefits to the area?

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Strongly agree X |
|---|
- Agree
 - Neither agree nor disagree
 - Disagree
 - Strongly disagree
 - Don't know
 - Prefer not to say

We agree that establishing a Mayoral Combined County Authority (MCCA) over the proposed geography will deliver benefits to the area for our residents, businesses and visitors to Sussex and although containing many contrasting communities and places, Sussex is an entity people identify with and generates a sense of belonging.

The proposed Sussex geography contains a mix of rural, urban and coastal areas and in determining future considerations it will be important that the delivery of benefits are spread appropriately across the whole extent of the geography amongst areas where there are (i) current or emerging growth and equally (ii) into areas where there are pockets of deprivation to address barriers and unlock their full potential for growth.

We welcome the proposed MCCA powers, functions and funding that would be made available from Government and see these as helping to address existing known barriers and unlock potential within the area enabling the economy to grow.

A Sussex MCCA will positively elevate the voice of Sussex to be heard at a national level across key departments with the representation of an appointed Mayor on both the Council of Nations and Regions chaired by the Prime Minister alongside the Mayoral Council chaired by the Deputy Prime Minister. This will benefit the proposed

geography and deliver benefits to the area with the potential to unlock further powers, functions and funding.

MCCAs will allow for a strategic and joined up level of place-making to be undertaken, which is currently lacking across Sussex. Alongside the introduction of Spatial Development Strategies (SDS), the establishment of an MCCA will allow for a consistency of decision making on critical planning matters (e.g. distribution of growth) and how key infrastructure needs to support such growth can be planned for, prioritised, funded and delivered. This has been lacking with the current system where, in spite of the principles around Duty to Co-Operate, Local Plans across an area often do not align with one another and decisions on where investment is directed to support that growth can be inconsistent across authority areas.

Difficult decisions, particularly in relation to how unmet housing need from one area could be met in another, have often not been satisfactorily resolved. The introduction of the SDS at the MCCA level should significantly improve this situation.

Question 2: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposed governance arrangements for the mayoral Combined County Authority?

- Strongly agree

- Agree **X**

- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
- Don't know
- Prefer not to say

We agree with the proposal that the Constituent councils are the County Councils of East and West Sussex and the Brighton and Hove City Council and the governance arrangements subject to the following:

- I. The Council considers that consideration be given to voting being weighted having regard to the proportion of population that the constituent councils each represent.

- II. The Council also does not support the proposed name. The area covered by the MCCA is Sussex, of which the three constituent authorities are all part. There is no basis or rationale to single out not just one part of the area, but one part of one of the constituent Members. To do so risks disenfranchising and diminishing the status of other key areas in Sussex and undermining joint working. The fact is that the area covered by the MCCA is Sussex, there is no basis for specifying particular areas of the Constituent Authorities. We strongly believe the name of the MCCA should be Sussex.
- III. The Council is supportive of the ability to have non-constituent and associate members but does not consider that these should be limited to six, and it should be at the discretion of the constituent members of the MCCA to reflect the local area and its make up.
- IV. Clarity is also sought in relation to transitional arrangements. The Consultation document sets out that functions will be transferring from local authorities and detailed confirmation is needed about exact changes so we can ensure they are appropriate and practical and ensure clarity of responsibilities and accountabilities. This is particularly important in relation to staff and contracts.
- V. Confirmation is sought in relation to how the costs of establishing the MCCA will be met.

Question 3: To what extent do you agree or disagree that working across the proposed geography through the Mayoral Combined County Authority will support the economy of the area?

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|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Strongly agree X |
|---|
- Agree
 - Neither agree nor disagree
 - Disagree
 - Strongly disagree
 - Don't know
 - Prefer not to say

We agree that working across the proposed geography through the MCCA will benefit the economy of the area. We see this as an opportunity for the area to have a greater say/control in decision making at a sub-regional and local levels over the responsibilities for transport/infrastructure, adult education/skills and employment programmes, housing and strategic planning, economic development and regeneration that will all contribute to driving economic growth and social well-being.

As explained in section 3 of the consultation, we can see the value of working across the proposed geography as each of the discipline/subject areas will be supported with the release of powers, functions and funding responsibilities that will help address the known barriers to development and investment across the area.

We would like to elaborate on each of the discipline/areas separately in how we see them supporting the economy of the area as set out below.

Transport and Local Infrastructure

Welcome the potential establishment of a wider Local Transport Authority (LTA) covering the Sussex area. Although there are close working relationships and collaboration between the existing LTAs on their respective transport plans, the responsibility for an area wide Local Transport Plan (LTP) sitting with the MCCA will further enhance this and enable greater co-ordinated planning of transport infrastructure and services within and between travel to work/learn/visit areas by all modes, including public transport, rail and road based journeys. It will also complement the requirement of the spatial development strategy (SDS) for Sussex and Brighton, ensuring greater linkages between transport and land use planning across the geography, and support a transport infrastructure first approach. Further clarity is required on the interaction between the MCCA's wider LTP and the unitary authorities in relation to their local implementation plans for transport.

We also welcome the simplification and consolidation of local transport funding. At present, funding for transport infrastructure and services - active travel, bus services and infrastructure (via Bus Service Improvement Plans) and integrated transport - is received by LTAs in a piecemeal fashion, often only one or two years and with a spend time limit, often competitive (with the risk of abortive work) and received at different times during the financial year. The receipt of this ad-hoc funding makes planning the development and delivery of a co-ordinated transport infrastructure and services programme very difficult to manage. Consolidating and devolving funding for transport infrastructure and services over multiple years, and over a wider geography means investment can be planned more effectively and efficiently, and the devolved funding as well as Community Infrastructure Levy monies can be targeted at the right transport interventions and services, alongside any additional funding from the proposed 30 Year Investment Fund, that meet the needs of the communities of Sussex and Brighton and the priorities of the MCCA LTP.

Welcome opportunity for more formal partnerships with National Highways, the rail industry and Active Travel England. At present, the engagement with these organisations is sporadic and as local transport authorities we have little say in the investment priorities of strategic transport providers in our authority area. Whilst our strategic transport priorities are articulated in our LTP4 and through Transport for the South East's Transport Strategy & Strategic Investment Plan, having a greater say and a strategic co-ordinating role through, for example, the establishment of a Key Road Network (KRN) and enhanced partnerships with strategic transport partners – National Highways, Great British Railways - across the wider Sussex geography is supported.

Major capital infrastructure and local growth delivery

We welcome the opportunity for longer-term funding certainty which can act as a catalyst for more joined up major infrastructure and local economic growth investment across the wider MCCA geography. Developing a deliverable pipeline of major infrastructure and local growth projects is complex and challenging and can take many years to come to fruition, and longer still to achieve the full value once delivered. Devolving funding for those larger-scale infrastructure improvements in a way that is consistent with the Key Road Network could lead to improved value for money delivery frameworks, a consistent approach to attracting and retaining people with the necessary skills, and clearer objectives to ensure the needs of people and communities are met.

Skills and Employment

The current skills and employment funding landscape is complex due to government-set criteria for funded programmes. These programmes often lack flexibility to address local economic priorities and job availability. This issue has been highlighted in the pan-Sussex Local Skills Improvement Plans (LSIP) and in the priorities set by our established and highly effective Skills East Sussex board.

Working across the proposed geography through the MCCA for employment and skills will support the area's economy. Local areas possess an understanding of their economies and can tailor programmes to address specific needs, focusing on growth and emerging sectors. The proposed powers, functions, and funding responsibilities would enable collaboration in addressing local priorities and demands in key economic growth sectors and skills shortages via consolidated skills and employment support funding. Additionally, continuing to collaborate with partners and jointly managing the LSIP with employer representative bodies will further strengthen relationships with stakeholder partners.

The proposed MCCA would be well-positioned to advance the objectives outlined in the Get Britain Working plan to reduce economic inactivity, promote integration and innovation within local health, work, and skills provision, set the strategic direction for

skills provision and opportunities for 16-19 year-olds that support their future employment.

Economic Development and Regeneration

We agree that the MCCA will play a key role in attracting investment into Sussex and Brighton and supporting business growth. We see this as an opportunity to strengthen and deepen our productive relationships with Government departments with investment into our key growth corridors in East Sussex (Hastings/ Bexhill; Lewes/Newhaven and around the A22 Wealden/Polegate and Eastbourne areas) with programmes that can support existing/established businesses and also to design and deliver programmes that will create critical mass across our rural areas, such as our proposed “Innovation Animateurs” programme.

As an example, we already run a successful East Sussex Growth Hub service and we want to continue that relationship with government and local business to enable them to access the required business support services and funding they need to grow, be more productive/innovative, boost exports and encourage responsible investment into the county and across Sussex (see East Sussex Prosperity 2025 – 2050). With the opportunity for greater funding certainty through the MCCA and particularly the 30-year investment fund – we envisage there would be opportunities working with our other partners to consider prioritising spend on interventions that will support and grow the economy of the area. We are also of the view that the MCCA will be in a key position to take a more holistic approach to investing for economic growth across the piece.

Cultural Strategy

The cultural sector in East Sussex has grown considerably in recent years. Through our Cultural Strategy, and our work with the established Culture East Sussex board and the South East Creative Economy Network, significant investment in our cultural assets for example Towner Eastbourne and Towner in the Seven Sisters (known currently as Black Robin Farm), the Devonshire Creative Quarter in Eastbourne, Charleston, Lewes and the De La Warr Pavillion in Bexhill, England’s Creative Coast has been made.

We have already delivered two key creative industry support programmes – the current Create Growth programme is a partnership across all of Sussex - and the formation of an MCCA will provide significant opportunity to enhance and deepen that work.

Tourism

The East Sussex, Brighton & Hove and West Sussex Local Visitor Economy Partnership (LVEP) secured accreditation in 2024. The LVEP covers the proposed MCCA area. This collaboration has allowed us to develop a Sussex brand, in

particular, supporting our visibility to potential international visitors. Gatwick Airport and Newhaven Port serve as critical access routes to our tourism hotspots attracting international visitors to our county and Sussex.

We now have a growing visitor economy and have recently launched an East and West Sussex destination Management organisation: Experience Sussex which works in partnership with Brighton & Hove to deliver the LVEP Strategy for Growth – which aims to grow our visitor economy value from £5bn to £7.5bn.

Given the above level of cross-boundary working, the formulation of an MCCA can only be seen as enhancing work across Sussex in tourism, hospitality and the visitor economy.

As a result of the above, having a deeper and closer collaboration with the Government's DCMS and with key arm's length bodies (Visit England/Visit Britain, Arts Council England and Historic England) through the MCCA will provide opportunities to attract much needed private and public investment. This will stimulate growth in terms of job numbers and GVA into these growing sectors in our economy and enable a shared approach to developing the skilled workforce required to support these sectors.

Question 4: To what extent do you agree or disagree that working across the proposed geography through the Mayoral Combined County Authority will improve social outcomes in the area

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Strongly agree X
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- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
- Don't know
- Prefer not to say

We strongly agree that the Mayoral Combined County Authority will improve social outcomes across Sussex. The support provided by the MCCA for a more inclusive, accessible and local economy and to strengthen local communities, which will result in better social outcomes for residents across Sussex.

The MCCA will support local economic growth, access to skills and will improve transport across the area, all of which will provide greater opportunities and access to better paid jobs.

The ambition of the Spatial Development Strategy to support the building of new homes will help in relation to the lack of access to affordable housing in the area, which will have a positive impact on social outcomes.

The proposed duty of Mayoral Combined Authorities in relation to health improvement and health inequalities, will mean that this will form a core consideration in relation to decisions that are taken which should lead to improved social outcomes for residents.

Question 5: To what extent do you agree or disagree that working across the proposed geography through a Mayoral Combined County Authority will improve local government services in the area?

- Strongly agree

- Agree **X**

- Neither agree nor disagree

- Disagree

- Strongly disagree

- Don't know

- Prefer not to say

We agree that working across the proposed Sussex geography through an MCCA will improve local government services. So as not to repeat our responses again (particularly on questions 1 and 3) they can be summarised as:

- The ability to make a spatial plan across a wider area should enable more timely delivery of housing and infrastructure
- The potential to simplify associated local government funding, by reducing/removing competitive bidding for limited funding, with the potential for multi-year financial settlements from Government
- Better integration of other public services e.g. boundaries of other strategic organisations to be coterminous with those of a Sussex MCCA including Police and NHS Integrated Care System.

- Has triggered potential for fast track local government reorganisation, with opportunity to deliver transformed and integrated services as well as better value for money.

Question 6: To what extent do you agree or disagree that working across the proposed geography through a Mayoral Combined County Authority will improve the local natural environment and overall national environment?

- Strongly agree

- Agree **X**

- Neither agree nor disagree

- Disagree

- Strongly disagree

- Don't know

- Prefer not to say

There is already good cross-boundary working across Sussex when it comes to natural environment matters but the MCCA will provide an opportunity to further strengthen it. The two Local Nature Recovery Strategies (LNRS) for Sussex are being prepared in a coordinated manner, with shared stakeholder engagement, commissioning of evidence and mapping. This work, along with other areas of work centred on the natural environment, is supported by the Sussex Local Nature Partnership, which operates across the proposed MCCA area. All of this reflects the reality that natural environment matters are not constrained by administrative boundaries (e.g. the High Weald National Landscape covers significant parts of both East and West Sussex and the South Down National Park and even wider area). Given this level of cross-boundary working, the formulation of an MCCA can enhance work across Sussex on the natural environment. It should ensure that investment is directed to priority areas/projects and we would hope to see that the MCCA could be a key player when it comes to implementing aspects of the two LNRSs.

Question 7: To what extent do you agree or disagree that working across the proposed geography through the Mayoral Combined County Authority will support the interest of local communities and reflect local identities

- Strongly agree

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Agree X |
|--|

- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
- Don't know
- Prefer not to say

This will be a key success measure for the MCCA and the Mayor in particular given the large and differing geography across Sussex which already has a strong sense of the separate identities of East Sussex and West Sussex and the City. These differences are reflected in the nature of the land, geology, history, demography, economies and traditions. The differences as well as the similarities and common objectives will need to be celebrated and recognised. Experience and learning from elsewhere, as well as the councils' experience of working together and with Sussex partners on joint issues, demonstrates it can be done but it will need close attention and effort both in creating the MCCA and how it, especially the Mayor, operates.