

REPORT OF THE LEADER AND LEAD MEMBER FOR STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

The Leader and Lead Member for Strategic Management and Economic Development held a meeting on 11 March 2025. Also present: Councillors Colin Belsey, Chris Collier, Anne Cross, Penny di Cara, Nuala Geary, Ian Hollidge, Johanna Howell, Christine Robinson, Stephen Shing.

1. Proposed response to consultation on the proposed Mayoral Combined County Authority across East Sussex, West Sussex and Brighton and Hove

1.1 On 16 December 2024, the Government published its English Devolution White Paper which set out its ambitions in relation to Devolution and Local Government Reorganisation. The Government's clearly stated preference was for all parts of the country to eventually have a Mayoral Strategic Authority. Having established the Council of Nations and Regions and the Mayoral Council, the Government's policy places Mayors "front and centre" as fundamental partners to the Government. Set out in the White Paper was an intention to invite a number of places to join the Government's Devolution Priority Programme. These places would be those that are ready to achieve mayoral devolution at pace.

1.2 On 9 January following a debate at Full Council the Cabinet agreed that East Sussex County Council should apply to be part of the Devolution Priority Programme. On 5 February 2025 the Government confirmed that Sussex was one of the 6 areas nationally that had been successful in their application. The Government has indicated that it is minded to establish a "Mayoral Combined County Authority (MCCA) for Sussex and Brighton". There is a statutory process that has to be followed which includes seeking local views to inform the final decision by Government. The Government therefore launched a consultation on 17 February which will run until 13 April 2025.

1.3 The Cabinet is due to consider the Government consultation and proposed response on 20 March 2025, following a meeting of the Full Council. The report to Cabinet to which is appended the Government's Consultation Document and the Council's proposed response is at Appendix A of this report.

1.4 The Leader and Lead Member for Strategic Management and Economic Development **recommends** the County Council to –

☆ (1) Note the contents of the Government's consultation on Establishing a Mayoral Combined County Authority across East Sussex, West Sussex and Brighton and Hove Council and report to Cabinet; and

(2) Express views to Cabinet on the County Council's response to the Consultation.

**LEADER AND LEAD MEMBER FOR
STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

2. Proposed response to Government invitation for proposals for a single tier of local government in East Sussex

2.1 On 5 February 2025 the Minister of State for Local Government and English Devolution wrote to all District, Borough and County Councils in two-tier areas and some unitary councils issuing a statutory invitation for proposals for a single tier of government within their respective areas. The area that our invitation related to was the County of East Sussex. A copy of the Minister's letter and the statutory invitation is set out at Appendix 1 of Appendix B.

2.2 The Government is adopting a staged process. As can be seen from the letter and invitation the initial stage is for all areas to submit an interim plan to Government on or before 21 March 2025. This should set out progress on developing proposals in line with the criteria and guidance. The letter at Appendix 1 of Appendix B, sets out what is expected in this interim plan, including of the councils in Sussex as part of the Devolution Priority Programme. The Cabinet is due to consider the Government invitation and proposed interim plan on 20 March 2025, following a meeting of the Full Council. The report to Cabinet, is at Appendix B of this report.

2.3 The proposed Interim Plan document is set out at Appendix 2 of Appendix B and has been put together by the Chief Executives of the District and Borough Councils and the County Council, supported by a cross-councils officer project team established for this purpose.

2.4 The Interim Plan sets out the progress of working towards a proposal for a single tier of local government across East Sussex in the shape of one unitary. This interim plan is predicated on the Councils' understanding of the criteria set out in the statutory invitation. Should the government signal some flexibility in the current criteria the District and Borough Councils' have indicated that they may wish to consult residents on their views about alternative options.

2.5 The Leader and Lead Member for Strategic Management and Economic Development **recommends** the County Council to –

- ☆ (1) Note the contents of Government's letter inviting proposals for a single tier of Local Government across East Sussex;
- (2) Note the proposed Interim Plan; and
- (3) Express views to Cabinet on the Interim Plan ahead of submission to Government.

11 March 2025

COUNCILLOR KEITH GLAZIER
Leader and Lead Cabinet Member for Strategic
Management and Economic Development