

King's Lynn Town Board: Response to Devolution Consultation

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?

- Agree
The two counties share many similar characteristics in terms of their size, rurality, topographical features, size of population and so on. Creating an opportunity and structures to support greater autonomy and over funding decisions, over a long-term period is welcomed.

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

- Unsure
Whilst there are similarities across the counties, each County, district, town and locality has its own unique characteristics – both opportunities and challenges, spread across a vast geography. The proposal for 1 Local Authority representative for each county to sit on the MCCA will require each Member to represent a large geographical area and could be difficult to achieve. There's evidence of west Norfolk being 'left behind' in, for example, the investment and delivery of skills and training provision. It will therefore be critical that the whole of Norfolk can be represented through the wider structure in order to hold the MCCA to account and reduce the risk of "leaving behind" parts of Norfolk. While we appreciate there is a wish to avoid unwieldy, large structures, there must be robust mechanisms in place to gather and listen to the needs and ambitions of local areas. In this context, the make-up of the scrutiny and overview panels will be critical, along with engagement with place specific strategic boards.

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?

- Agree
There are many similarities in the economic profile, sector strengths and challenges of both counties. Existing collaborations and partnerships between and across businesses, and businesses operating in both counties. Stronger working across the two counties will also enable opportunities to maximise the economic benefit to the local economies within from national infrastructure projects like Sizewell C and offshore wind projects.

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?

- Unsure
We know from, New Deal / SRB and SSCF neighbourhood renewal funding and other similar programmes that locally based decisions using local data, consultation, and drawing on local knowledge from communities and those working directly with communities, means that investment and actions are better tailored and targeted at those most in need, and have the greater impact. As expressed earlier, without sufficient representation, or robust mechanisms that allow and encourage input from sub-regions and localities within either Norfolk or Suffolk, these places and their communities risk being left behind and therefore inequalities could widen.

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?

(No comment on this one as I think LAs are better placed and informed to respond.)

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?

- Agree

The natural environment is one of the greatest strengths and assets of the 2 counties. There is an opportunity to utilise the powers and funding through devolution to support the growth in the green economy, drawing on the local expertise and knowledge.

Both areas also face the same challenges in terms of management of coastal areas and flood risk; a regional approach to this will ensure the management of these areas are prioritised according to priorities of the region.

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 interests and needs of local communities and reflect local identities?

Structures and mechanisms must be put in place to ensure voices of those furthest from power, geographically and metaphorically speaking, are heard and taken into account. The MCCA must use existing strategic boards, like Neighbourhood / Growth Boards to ensure that the interests and needs of local areas and communities are listened to and heard. This needs to happen alongside the creation of democratic structures.