

Extraordinary Council (LGR AND DEVOLUTION)
20th March 2025

Councillor Questions

1. Question from Councillor Cox to the Leader of the Council Question

The Administration is proposing to respond to Government that Southend supports a London-style Mayor for Essex. Can I ask the Leader what evidence was obtained to show that this City supports an elected Mayor for Essex?

Answer

The Government stood on a manifesto that committed to devolution for England. The evidence of support is clear from the results of the General Election.

2. Question from Councillor Cox to the Leader of the Council Question

The report and accompanying paper suggests that the cost to this Council could be a minimum £1 Million to submit a final bid to Government in September. If the Government doesn't cover these costs, can I ask the Leader how this Council will fund these costs?

Answer

Appendix 2 of the Cabinet report identifies estimated costs, for Southend of up to £1million. The exact cost to the Council will not be known until, across Essex, we commence several of the activities and undertake more detailed financial analysis of the work required to fulfil the Governments requirements. Any costs that are not funded by Government will need to be funded from the Council's reserves.

3. Question from Councillor Stuart Allen to the Leader of the Council (Cllr Cowan)

Question

At the January Full Council meeting regarding fast-tracking devolution, there were a number of councillors who voiced their unease about a Strategic Authority Mayor. How come then in our response to the consultation does it say that this Council 'Strongly Agrees' with the concept of a Mayor when from the meeting that was simple not the case?

Answer

The Devolution consultation response is presented in draft for debate by Council.

The response is on behalf of the Council following the Council's endorsement in January by significant majority decision (36 for and 7 against) to submit the expression of interest in the Devolution Priority Programme which would require the establishment of a Mayoral Combined County Authority. I believe that a vote of 83% in favour equates to this council strongly agreeing.

However, this is a public consultation run by the Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government and there is the opportunity for individuals and groups to make their own response to the consultation, including councillors who have alternative views.

4. Question from Councillor Stuart Allen to the Leader of the Council (Cllr Cowan)

Question

Will the Leader commit to holding a public meeting with residents and representatives from all political parties, where members of the public can ask questions in a question time format about Devolution and the proposals in front of us, before the cut of date for consultation?

Answer

The Devolution consultation is led by Government, the Council's role is as a respondent only.

The Government is holding an engagement event on 31 March 2025 at 6-8pm at Anglia Ruskin University in Chelmsford and there is an open invite to attend. We will send details to all councillors.

However, I am open to attending resident's groups and relevant meetings, where diaries allow, to discuss and inform on Devolution. This would be in a personal capacity and will not constitute part of this council's official response.