

To: Members of the Special Sub-Group

Councillors Farrell, Hayfield, Humphreys, Jenns, Singh and Sweet

For the information of the other Members of the Council

SPECIAL SUB-GROUP

8 NOVEMBER 2016

The Special Sub-Group will meet in the Committee Room, The Council House, South Street, Atherstone on Tuesday 8 November 2016 at 6.30pm.

AGENDA

PART I - PUBLIC BUSINESS

- 1 Evacuation Procedure.**
- 2 Apologies for Absence / Members away on official Council business.**
- 3 Disclosable Pecuniary and Non-Pecuniary Interests**
- 4 Public Participation**

Up to twenty minutes will be set aside for members of the public to ask questions or to put their views to elected Members. Participants are restricted to five minutes each. If you wish to speak at the meeting please contact David Harris on 01827 719222 or email democraticservices@northwarks.gov.uk.

ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION AND DECISION (WHITE PAPERS)

- 5 **Devolution Update** – Report of the Chief Executive

Summary

This report gives an update on recent developments in relation to the West Midlands Combined Authority and the Devolution Agenda.

The Contact Officer for this report is Jerry Hutchinson (719200).

EXEMPT INFORMATION (GOLD PAPERS)

- 6 **Exclusion of the Public and Press**

Recommendation:

That under Section 110A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public and press be excluded from the meeting for the following item of business, on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined by Schedule 12A to the Act.

- 7 **Proposed Staffing Changes in the Streetscape Division** – Report of the Assistant Director (Streetscape) **to follow**

The Contact Officer for this report is Richard Dobbs (719440).

JERRY HUTCHINSON
Chief Executive

For general enquiries please contact David Harris, Democratic Services Manager, on 01827 719222 or via e-mail – davidharris@northwarks.gov.uk.

For enquiries about specific reports please contact the officer named in the report.

Agenda Item No 5

Special Sub-Group

8 November 2016

Report of the Chief Executive

Devolution Update

1 Summary

- 1.1 This report gives an update on recent developments in relation to the West Midlands Combined Authority and the Devolution Agenda.

Recommendation to the Sub-Group

That the report be noted.

2 Background

- 2.1 North Warwickshire Borough Council's application for Non-Constituent membership of the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) was accepted on 29 June 2016.
- 2.2 Since then, Council representatives have been engaged in WMCA meetings with a view to seeking to maximise the opportunities from getting a return from the WMCA and Devo Deal.
- 2.3 The Leader of the Council is a member of the main WMCA Board and the Chief Executive of the Programme Board which services the main Board. These both meet fortnightly, although this can be subject to change, depending on business.
- 2.4 In addition, there are a number of Member and officer groups. Perhaps the key one of these, at least initially, is the Non-Constituent Members (NCMs) Group. This comprises representatives of all Councils and other organisations involved in WMCA other than the seven Mets. There are a large number of bodies in different stages of formation and resources to service them are limited.

- 2.5 In terms of initial 'bids' for representation, North Warwickshire Borough Council has requested the following:-

	Member	Officer
WMCA Board	Councillor Humphreys	Jerry Hutchinson
Programme Board		Jerry Hutchinson
HS2 Delivery Programme Board		Jerry Hutchinson/ Steve Maxey
Devolution Strategy Group		Jerry Hutchinson/ Steve Maxey
Housing & Land	Councillor Humphreys	Steve Maxey
Finance & Investment	Potentially One Member	
Officer Finance Group		Chris Brewer

A number of other organisations have not yet put their bids in and, at a recent meeting, it was announced that the groupings were going to be rationalised, so watch this space!

- 2.6 The main issue from North Warwickshire Borough Council's perspective is to understand where things are happening that we can productively get involved in and, where appropriate, influence.
- 2.7 A number of NCMs had produced detailed 'ask' documents, ie, things they wanted from the Devolution Deal. It soon became clear that this would lead to a massive 'wish list' which was unlikely to be prioritised. The main focus of the Devolution Deal is to enhance the Economic Development and Growth Agenda through the WMCA's Strategic Economic Plan (the so-called 'Super SEP') and the best chance for NCMs to benefit in the short term is to ask for things which would help with or are related to that plan.
- 2.8 On that basis, the 'asks' that have been put forward for North Warwickshire Borough Council at this stage are:-

1 Housing Growth – NWBC has published a draft Local Plan that has an aspiration to take the area's contribution to the extra housing that cannot be accommodated in the wider West Midlands area. NWBC is the first and to date only Council that has offered to do this. There will be however significant infrastructure constraints that will need to be overcome. The importance of overcoming these constraints is acknowledged in the WMCA SEP and is a central plank of its policy; "The key to successful growth will be work to remove barriers to development to create a higher volume of housing"

(Exec summary p.6); “The WMCA will ensure acceleration of the housing market to support economic growth”; “A greater and broader range of housing will improve the quality of life of people across the West Midlands” (all Exec summary p.6).

Overall the importance of Housing runs through the entire SEP. It is likely, however, that significant work will be required to the A5 to unlock its potential as a growth corridor. Investment in rail and other public transport, linked to the opportunities presented by HS2 will also be crucial so that people living in these new communities will be able to access and play their part in the growth of the West Midlands economy.

2 Business Rate Pool – the Council is facing very significant threats to the services it can offer as a result of lost income caused by the HS2 project. A number of demolitions and reduced rating valuations are likely to occur as a result of the construction and operation of the line. North Warwickshire is asked to host and ‘take the local pain for a national gain’, resulting in the Council losing the growth in income it has already generated. If the projections are correct HS2 will result in a large boost to the West Midlands economy but threatens the provision of local services. It would also remove the incentive to grow the economy in North Warwickshire that was built into the new NDR system. In order to be a truly inclusive project therefore NWBC ask that its losses be compensated from the wider gains to the West Midlands family of authorities.

- 2.9 It has to be understood that the first Devolution Deal is virtually complete but it is important to get a marker down early that, firstly, if North Warwickshire is to provide extra housing it needs help to provide the infrastructure that goes with it. Similarly, if the main plank of the Growth Agenda is that to maximise the advantages of HS2, then WMCA should be prepared to assist.

3 Future Developments

- 3.1 It is likely that the Devolution Agenda will develop with further deals potentially following the first. How this unfolds will depend on a number of factors such as Government Policy, availability of funding and resources, delivering outcomes and buy-in from constituent and non-constituent members. These are clearly very early days. At this stage, it makes sense for the Council to position itself to be able to influence the agenda. The aim must be to obtain tangible benefits, both for the Borough and the County as a whole, as future deals are developed. Any further developments since the publication of this report will be reported verbally at the meeting.

4 Report Implications

- 4.1 None at this stage.

The Contact Officer for this report is Jerry Hutchinson (719200).

Background Papers

Local Government Act 1972 Section 100D, as substituted by the Local Government Act,
2000 Section 97

Background Paper No	Author	Nature of Background Paper	Date