

## **SCC DRAFT response to Government consultation on establishing a Mayoral Combined County Authority for Hampshire and the Solent**

All questions below have the same options:

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

Please explain your answer.

### **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?**

Proposed response: '*strongly agree*'

Please explain your answer:

*Southampton City Council strongly supports the proposed creation of a Mayoral Combined County Authority covering Southampton, Portsmouth, Hampshire and the Isle of Wight.*

*A Mayoral Strategic Authority would bring significant additional funding and powers devolved from government departments to Hampshire and the Solent. For Southampton, having a Mayor with focus on driving economic growth, investment in infrastructure and strategic transport across the region could deliver huge benefits.*

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

Proposed response: '*strongly agree*'

Please explain your answer:

*Southampton City Council agrees with the proposed governance arrangements for the new Mayoral Combined County Authority. As a constituent council Southampton City Council would appoint one representative as a constituent member of the Mayoral Combined County Authority which would allow us to reflect the views of Southampton as part of the new combined authority. We recognise that the*

*concurrent process of Local Government Reorganisation means that representation on the Mayoral Combined County Authority will need to be reviewed once the new unitary arrangements across the region are in place, and would recommend that provision is made for this in the legislation to establish the body. We note the ability for the Mayoral County Combined Authority to appoint non-constituent and associate members to support delivery of the work programme in a non-voting capacity. This would allow the new authority to ensure representation of partners and expertise from across the region. We welcome the proposal that the appointment of non-constituent and associate members would sit with the Mayoral County Combined Authority rather than the Mayor directly, this seems a sensible safeguard to prevent the risk of politicisation of these roles. Prior to the finalisation of Local Government Reorganisation boundaries, it will be important to ensure the voice of District Councils is heard in the Mayoral County Combined Authority's governance, either through the non-constituent and associate members or another mechanism.*

*We also welcome the clear intention for a strong scrutiny and audit role in the new authority as this will support oversight, transparency and challenge of the decision making process.*

*While it is welcome that Mayor would have "some functions" conferred onto them as part of the secondary legislation to establish the Combined County Authority, it is important that the full powers set out in the Devolution Framework for a Mayoral Authority are conferred on the Authority as quickly as possible to ensure that the body is able to maximise its impact.*

**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?**

Proposed response: 'strongly agree'

Please explain your answer:

*Southampton City Council recognises the economic benefits of a mayoral combined authority. Southampton is a major gateway to the rest of the world and has one of the fastest growing economies in the country. We know that there is major economic potential to be unlocked with Southampton identified as the third highest performing city in the UK, according to PwC-Demo's Good Growth for Cities Index 2024<sup>1</sup>.*

*The Solent Freeport, which encompasses the major international ports of Southampton and Portsmouth and the deep-water channel running through Southampton Water, offers further economic potential for Southampton. The business case submitted in 2021 estimated the creation of the Freeport could result*

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<sup>1</sup> [Good Growth for Cities: Delivering Devolution - PwC UK](#)

*in the creation of up to 26,000 jobs in the Solent area, leveraging c£1.6 billion in private sector investment, providing significant and additional funds through pooled retained business rates and delivering increased port capacity. While these benefits have yet to be realised, they do illustrate the potential of the ports to deliver economic growth to the region.*

*Southampton's recently launched Renaissance Vision sets out major partnership ambitions for the future development of the city centre and the vast economic benefits this could deliver. Support and enabling funding from the Mayoral Combined County Authority could help to drive delivery of this plan and unlock this potential economic growth sooner.*

*The Solent includes the unique island economy of the Isle of Wight and two urban hubs of Portsmouth and Southampton. These areas already work together as part of the Solent Growth Partnership and recently published the [Solent Growth and Prosperity Strategy](#). Establishing a Mayoral Combined County Authority will support oversight of some of these challenges such as connectivity, skills gaps and the environmental impact of climate change.*

*In spite of all the potential for growth that Southampton holds it also scores higher in the index of multiple deprivation than other areas in Hampshire so as a city council we are focused on creating the right conditions for inclusive economic growth that will support our residents to access good jobs and reverse long-term trends.*

*A Mayoral Combined County Authority has the potential to enhance the region's already mutually supportive economies and harness the economic potential of the region in a way which brings benefits for local people.*

**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?**

Proposed response: 'strongly agree'

Please explain your answer:

*While Southampton provides much opportunity for economic growth, our data shows that Southampton residents face significant inequality across health, education and employment.*

*The establishment of a Mayoral Combined County Authority is an opportunity to address the substantial health inequality in Southampton through greater devolution and focusing of funding on local needs. Currently life expectancy for men in Southampton's most deprived areas is on average 7.7 years less than those in the least deprived areas. For women, the gap is 4.9 years. Obesity, smoking prevalence*

*and premature mortality from preventable diseases such as cardiovascular disease are disproportionately higher in more deprived wards. We welcome the bespoke duty that the Mayoral Combined County Authority would have in relation to health improvement and health inequalities.*

*We welcome the opportunity to benefit from devolved funding for skills. In Southampton, despite our two universities, only 44.4% of the economically active population were educated to degree level or above, this is second lowest among our comparators and significantly lower than the national average (52.5%). Funding streams such as the Adult Skills Funding being devolved will present an opportunity to target interventions that will support over 19s to engage in training or employment.*

*On average, those working in the city earn less than those who commute in, significant health and educational attainment inequalities exist between areas of the city. Addressing these challenges through devolving budgets for skills and training will benefit Southampton residents and make Southampton a more equal city.*

*Southampton is well used to working across the region to identify and address social outcomes for example through the work of the former Local Economic Partnership (LEP). The LEP identified skills gaps and identified the sectors that work across the region. In their 2021 report the LEP reported that the Solent had a technical skills deficit leaving it out of step with the South East in terms of productivity. While this is a common occurrence in many coastal economies the devolution of powers and budget on adult education and skills offers an opportunity to improve social and economic outcomes for communities in Southampton.*

**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?**

Proposed response: 'strongly agree'

Please explain your answer:

*There are already strong partnerships across Hampshire and the Isle of Wight particularly in health and policing. The Integrated Care Board (ICB) works across the regional footprint already as do the Police, Police and Crime Commissioner and Fire and Rescue Authority.*

*The Mayoral Combined County Authority gives opportunity for greater formal integration and coordination of strategic services, particularly through better integration of transport, skills and strategic planning across the geographic footprint as set out in the consultation document. Whether through formal structures such as*

*the formation of a renewed regional Local Transport Authority or through the convening power of the mayoralty the opportunities for greater alignment and collaboration at a regional level are significant.*

*This evolution would build on the already substantial existing regional cooperation between councils spanning many different service areas. Examples of this include the [Solent Growth Partnership](#), [Solent Transport](#), and collaboration between Health and Wellbeing Boards and the regional Integrated Care Partnership for Hampshire and the Isle of Wight. The establishment of an Mayoral Combined County Authority would strengthen this culture of joint working and create new forums and impetus for even greater collaboration between local services in the future to tackle long-standing regional challenges such as housing supply and affordability, skills provision alignment with economic growth sectors or health and other inequalities.*

**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?**

Proposed response: 'strongly agree'

Please explain your answer:

*Hampshire and the Isle of Wight is rich with natural character areas including the Hampshire Downs, New Forest and for us in Southampton the tidal estuary of Southampton Water. A Mayoral Combined County Authority offers an opportunity for the region to create new partnerships to support work to protect these hugely important natural resources as well as working to tackle some of the specific challenges faced by coastal regions such as flood alleviation.*

*The enhanced role a Mayoral Combined County Authority can play working with government to deliver its climate change and clean energy ambitions present opportunities not only to accelerate our region's move to net-zero emissions, but also to galvanise economic growth and create green jobs. Accelerating the region's roll-out of the Warm Homes Plan for example will also support this aim while also ensuring that local people benefit from reduced household energy bills.*

*Given the interest in protecting two major rivers in Southampton, the Test and the Itchen, spans multiple council areas the coordination and leadership role a Combined County Authority could have in local nature recovery strategies and other environmental initiatives could help to enhance efforts to protect our local natural environment.*

**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?**

Proposed response: 'strongly agree'

Please explain your answer:

*Hampshire and the Solent have a historic geographic footprint that is understood locally and is reflected in many of the local partnerships and service provision arrangements across Hampshire and the Isle of Wight.*

*Hampshire and the Solent is made up of an array of distinct areas and communities ranging from global maritime and trading cities on the South coast to historic inland towns, rural communities, four Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and two National Parks. While diverse, there is a coherent and economically interconnected geography to the Hampshire and Solent footprint, underpinned by strong history and, more practically, well developed transport links.*

*One of the first challenges for a new Mayoral Combined County Authority will be to articulate and then make real the positive impact the new regional institution could have on the lives of the two million plus people who call Hampshire and the Solent home while also respecting and reflecting the identities of the constituent areas.*

*This will necessitate creating a strong understanding of the purpose and benefits of a Mayoral Combined County Authority not just at its inception, but throughout the process of its formal creation and through the election of its first Mayor.*