

Council 16 July, 2015

Devolution in the West of England

Labour Group to move:

This Council recognises that the West of England is a local economic area with over 90% of its residents working within its area. It is the only City Region outside London to be a net contributor to national resources and its four local authorities must not miss out compared to other parts of the England in terms of the devolution of power and resources.

The partnership between our four local authorities is our key external relationship. We are proud of the heritage and distinct identity of our own district and respect those of the other three West of England authorities.

Council commits to looking favourably on any proposals for devolution that pass the tests of democracy, accountability and scrutiny. True devolution should be about all local services and how to give local people and their elected representatives a greater say on how they are run.

Council believes that the West of England local authorities have demonstrated that they can work constructively within existing structures. We want to see an approach to devolution that is focussed on building upon this co-operation rather than imposing new governance arrangements.

Council believes that devolution and co-operation should extend beyond the current range of local services. We want to see decision-making powers over skills and local bus and rail services delegated to a more local level, better co-ordination and partnership across the range of public services, including health and policing and a more strategic overview and assessment of housing and especially affordable housing. We also want to see greater powers of scrutiny over the Local Economic Partnership and other decision-making bodies spending public money.

Council resolves to adopt these principles in any discussions on the shape of devolution for the West of England. Council further resolves to communicate this vision to Central Government and to ask our local MPs to share this vision and communicate it to Ministers.

Council resolves to urge Central Government to offer far greater control of local finances to local authorities, including the further localising of business rates.

Council confirms its opposition to a 'Metro Mayor' for the West of England and calls on Central Government to offer our sub region a full model of devolution at least equal to that offered to other parts of England that does not impose this unwanted structure on the West of England.