

Wednesday, 29th June, 2016

Present:

Councillor Tim Warren	Leader of the Council and Conservative Group Leader
Councillor Liz Richardson	Cabinet Member for Homes and Planning
Councillor Patrick Anketell-Jones	Cabinet Member for Economic Development, Conservative Deputy Group Leader Bath
Councillor Charles Gerrish	Cabinet Member for Finance and Efficiency, Conservative Deputy Group Leader North East Somerset
Councillor Vic Pritchard	Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Health
Councillor Anthony Clarke	Cabinet Member for Transport
Councillor Martin Veal	Cabinet Member for Community Services
Councillor Paul Myers	Cabinet Member for Policy, Localism & Partnerships

1 WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

2 EMERGENCY EVACUATION PROCEDURE

The Senior Democratic Services Officer drew attention to the evacuation procedure as set out in the Agenda.

3 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Councillor Michael Evans had sent his apologies for this meeting.

4 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were none.

5 TO ANNOUNCE ANY URGENT BUSINESS AGREED BY THE CHAIR

There was none.

6 QUESTIONS FROM PUBLIC AND COUNCILLORS

There were none.

7 STATEMENTS, DEPUTATIONS OR PETITIONS FROM PUBLIC OR COUNCILLORS

Members of the public and Councillors addressed the Cabinet just before item 8 of the agenda.

8 COMBINED AUTHORITY AND DEVOLUTION PROPOSALS

Christina Biggs (Friends of Suburban Bristol Railways) read out a statement (*a copy of which is attached to the Minutes as Appendix 1 and on the Council's website*) where she highlighted matters with Devolution Governance Scheme, Rail Powers and Road Schemes within the Devolution proposals.

Councillor Eleanor Jackson expressed her concerns on congestion at the road leading into Midsomer Norton recycling centre, the state of A367 road and the hole in the wall at Radstock Methodist Church. Councillor Jackson also said that it was unclear how much funding Bath and North East Somerset would receive compared to South Gloucestershire and Bristol and asked the Cabinet to be clear with public on the benefits of the devolution deal and scrutiny involvement.

Councillor Dine Romero said that she did not believe this was a good governance scheme. Councillor Romero expressed her concerns on the security of devolution deal and on scrutiny involvement in the process. Councillor Romero also expressed her concern on a Mayor appointment, even if one was based in Bath. Councillor Romero concluded her statement by saying that, following the outcome of the EU Referendum, this was not a good time to pursue devolution deal.

Councillor Tim Warren thanked all speakers.

Councillor Tim Warren read out the following statement:

'Following many months of negotiations, we have achieved the best possible deal – and one that far outweighs any other devolution deal done elsewhere in the country, both in terms of the funding secured and safeguards in place.

- At more than £1,000 per person this represents by far the biggest financial deal of any devolution package in the country.

- And in terms of protections for our area, we have secured more safeguards than any other deal in the country with a veto over planning matters, unanimous approval required over financial matters, and protections in the voting system to ensure that one area cannot dominate over the others.

However, before we move to a decision on this I would like to address a couple of matters which have arisen in recent days and also make clear the decision Cabinet is taking today.

Firstly, there have been some questions raised over the impact of the Brexit vote on this deal. Over the past few days we have had a number of conversations with both the Treasury and DCLG in this regard. They have offered assurances that the devolution deal is still on offer and the commitments made can and will be honoured. They have also confirmed that the timetable remains the same – that if Council wishes to proceed to the next stage of this devolution deal then we need to take a decision by the 4th July.

Secondly, the decision by our neighbours in North Somerset Council to withdraw from the process. Obviously we are disappointed by this decision, but we also respect it. We have a very strong working relationship with North Somerset, and whatever the outcome of today's decision we will continue to do so. We will still be able to work cross-boundary, as we do with Wiltshire and Somerset, and they will continue to be an important part of the West of England. At the same time, we have ensured and demonstrated that there is a robust economic case to proceed with a three-council deal, and Government has committed to maintaining the same level of funding.

Thirdly, as part of the devolution discussions the Government has strongly indicated that they are open to and would encourage a discussion with the Council about extending the approved Somer Valley Enterprise Zone into new sites. As a result of this we are proposing to include additional sites in Keynsham and the Somer Valley. This will be good for attracting investment in those areas, including much needed infrastructure, and therefore job creation for our residents and has the potential to generate additional business rates to support wider Council services. If the Council votes to support the devolution deal we will be submitting our revised proposals for the extended Enterprise Zone in mid July.

Finally, on the decision we are taking and the next steps of the process -

What we are asking is for Council, in its scrutiny role, to advise Cabinet on whether to proceed to the public consultation stage of the process. If this is agreed, there will be a consultation period commencing in July, the results of which are presented to the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government. The matter then comes back to B&NES to decide whether or not to ratify and accept the Parliamentary Order.'

Subject to the views expressed by the forthcoming Council meeting, Councillor Tim Warren moved the recommendations as printed in the Cabinet report.

Councillor Charles Gerrish seconded the proposal by saying that he was delighted with the deal of £900m of funding for the Mayoral Combined Authority over 30 years. Councillor Gerrish also said that Bath and North East Somerset would continue to keep control over its taxes by setting its own tax levels irrelevant of what the other authorities do, and would govern Council's own decisions on financial issues. Councillor Gerrish also said that the deal would enable region to plan ahead infrastructure developments within areas with infrastructure deficit.

Councillor Anthony Clarke commented that the deal would enable the Mayoral Combined Authority, and each authority to plan future transport developments. Councillor Clarke offered his full support to the motion.

Councillor Vic Pritchard welcomed that an offer on the devolution deal had improved though he was not convinced that the Council, as part of the Mayoral Combined Authority could make 30 year commitment. Councillor Pritchard also said that citizens of this authority had rejected a Mayor for BANES and called for a thorough consultation with residents on a Mayor for the Mayoral Combined Authority.

Councillor Liz Richardson offered her full support to the motion and added that the devolution deal would enable the authority to get on with their projects without the need to go to the Government for every single project.

Councillor Paul Myers also offered his full support to the motion and added that the message about the Mayor for the Mayoral Combined Authority would need to be communicated clearly to the public.

Councillor Patrick Anketell-Jones also supported the motion and said that the devolution deal would provide multiple benefits to the region. Councillor Anketell-Jones also said that the Mayor for the Mayoral Combined Authority would be accountable for the entire region and not the authority and they would not get involved in BANES' affairs.

VOTE: Unanimous, as per recommendations in the Cabinet report.

Councillor Tim Warren informed the meeting that the Cabinet would now adjourn so the Council could scrutinise Cabinet's decision.

4.15pm meeting adjourned

9.10pm meeting reconvened

Councillor Tim Warren said that the Cabinet had heard the views of the Council and its decision was to recommend that the Governance Scheme is approved as per Cabinet recommendations, with additional points moved by the Green Group Members.

Councillor Tim Warren moved the recommendations. Councillor Charles Gerrish seconded the motion.

RESOLVED (unanimously) that the Cabinet:

1. Agreed to proceed with the devolution deal as set out in the governance scheme
 - a) Note the West of England Devolution Agreement (Appendix 1 to the report);
 - b) Consider the Governance Review for the West of England 2016 (Appendix 2 to the report) conducted under s.108 of the 2009 Act and agree the conclusion that the establishment of a Mayoral Combined Authority for the area of Bath and North East Somerset Council, Bristol City Council and South Gloucestershire Council, would be likely to improve the exercise of statutory functions in relation to the area and secure the offer within the devolution agreement;
 - c) Consider the proposed Governance Scheme for a Mayoral Combined Authority (Appendix 3 to the report) and agree to publish the Scheme for public consultation under s.109 of the 2009 Act (as amended);
 - d) Authorise the Chief Executive to subsequently submit to the Secretary of State;
 - i. the Governance Scheme;
 - ii. the consultation responses received (or an appropriate summary); and
 - iii. any further consultation response that the Council itself may wish to make to the Secretary of State for the Department of Communities and Local Government;

e) Authorise the Chief Executive to make any minor amendments or corrections to the governance scheme to enable publication of the scheme for public consultation.

f) Refer any resulting Order to Cabinet for approval.

2. Agreed, following the debate at the Full Council, to include that:

- a) The devolution deal must not be solely about economic growth, but rather must give substantial importance to reducing inequality and enhancing environmental sustainability. Therefore equality and environmental sustainability must be given meaningful weightings in the economic model, in both the criteria used for selecting projects to benefit from devolved funds, and the metrics that determine whether the projects have been successful.
- b) A sufficient level of support must be given to the Scrutiny and Audit roles of the new Combined Authority to allow it to be fully effective and independent from the executive.
- c) The membership of Scrutiny and Audit roles of the new combined authorities must be chosen in a way that ensures fair representation for all political groups across the region and equal representation of all authorities, should appropriately reflect the scrutiny roles that members hold on the individual authorities, and must be chosen in a clear and transparent manner.
- d) In addition to the consultation response from members of the public, a response to the Secretary of State will be compiled on behalf of members of the Council, to reflect the views of;
 - i. The relevant Overview and Scrutiny Committees
 - ii. The Bath City Forum and other Area Forums
 - iii. Each Political Group and
 - iv. Individual Councillors

With all Councillors who wish to be involved being given sight of anonymised feedback from the public consultation exercise.

The meeting ended at 9.10 pm

Chair

Date Confirmed and Signed

Prepared by Democratic Services