

# Devolution and LGR Update



**Norfolk**  
County Council

# Devolution

- The English Devolution Paper was published in December 2024 - [English Devolution White Paper](#)
- Mayoral devolution in areas with a population of 1.5m+. For us, this means creating a new combined authority between Norfolk County Council and Suffolk County Council
- Strategic Remit – transport and local infrastructure; skills and employment support; housing and strategic planning; economic development and regeneration; environment and climate change; health, wellbeing and public service reform; public safety
- NCC applied to be part of the Devolution Priority Programme and it was announced last week that we have been accepted. Not all areas were. We now work towards a mayoral election in May 2026
- How might devolution through the combined authority benefit Norfolk?
  - A 30-year investment fund. Size confirmed over the summer as part of the spending review as well as regeneration and retrofit monies. (Investment fund was previously £20m p.a.). We see funding go to combined authorities as dedicated pots rather than competitive bidding
  - Seat at the table – Council of Nations and Regions; Mayoral Council

# Devolution

- 6 areas chosen to be part of the Devolution Priority Programme
- Government will do public consultation unlike last time when we did. This will launch imminently and we will be a resposdee to it
- Will move away from a 'Deal based' approach to a framework that is automatically available when relevant criteria met
- Legislation will enable streamlined process to Statutory Instruments so that things are automatically conferred
- Districts will not be constituent members but govt expects effective levels of collaboration, especially when a district covers the primary city/economy in that county. In the future any unitary authorities created in Norfolk and Suffolk will become the constituent members.
- We are mobilising with Suffolk joint programme teams and have this week had an initial 'kick off' meeting with govt.
- Government has introduced the regulations to postpone our elections in May 2025

# Process and Timescales (Indicative at this stage)



# How does Local Government Reform (LGR) fit in?

- Policy agenda is to simplify local government, financial efficiencies and improve outcomes for residents by creating unitary authorities
- Govt hope is that proposals can be developed collaboratively.
- All two-tier Councils were written to by central govt, inviting proposals on 5<sup>th</sup> February
- Update on progress and initial proposals to be submitted 21 March. Deadline for final proposals by the end of September
- New authorities in place April 28 (subject to govt agreeing to proposals)
- This shouldn't just be a debate about the number but opportunity to deliver public service reform

# Process and Timescales (Indicative at this stage)



# What is required? The Interim Update

- Should set out progress and recognises level of detail may vary across the country. May describe more than one potential option if more than one are under consideration
- Needs to identify barriers, challenges and need for any support
- Indicative size, boundaries, costs and arrangements
- Early views on councillor numbers in line with boundary commission guidance
- How supports devo
- Summary of local engagement and future plans for it
- Indicative costs of preparing proposals and standing up an implementation team



# Govt Criteria

1. Cover whole area; sensible geography and economic areas; robust evidence, analysis inc costs & benefits
2. Right size – guide 500,000 or more. Justify exceptions. Deliver efficiencies, manage transition costs.
3. Deliver high quality, sustainable services. Avoid unnecessary fragmentation of services, consider impact on vital services like SEN, housing supply, homelessness, social care, children's services, public safety.
4. Demonstrate joint working, local engagement. Consider local identity, cultural and historic issues.
5. Support devo arrangements inc population ratios.
6. Enable stronger community engagement and neighbourhood empowerment.



# Next Steps

- Mobilise member engagement
- Mobilise with Suffolk re Devo
- Confirm processes and legal steps with government for Devolution
- Agree initial approaches with Districts now LGR invitation has been received
- Inform our own governance processes by the above