

**Wiltshire Council**

**Council**

**29 September**

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## **Devolution Discussions**

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### **Purpose of Report**

This report updates Council on ongoing discussions that the Council is having with the Government in respect of the Governments devolution proposals

From the turn of the year the Council has been encouraging the government to open a dialogue to explore opportunities for further devolution to Wiltshire on the basis of existing arrangements with a view that combined authorities will not be appropriate everywhere.

It is also set in the context that in this period of austerity it should be recognised that more of the same will not deliver the transformation in services that residents need. Reflecting that the benefits of the leadership of place achieved as a unitary council and the partnerships developed with other public bodies have been clearly recognised in Lord Heseltine's report 'No stone Unturned'

Over the summer period the Chancellor George Osborne called for local authorities to draw up their devolution 'wish-lists' ahead of the 4 September deadline.

To meet this tight deadline, a draft discussion document (appendix A) was submitted, following consultation with some of our key partners, to the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government to continue the dialogue.

This is a discussion document and does not commit the council to any of the proposals contained within. It will be the responsibility of Council to consider and approve the final devolution submission following further discussions with councillors, partners and Central Government.

By opening a dialogue and gaining the support of central government it is envisaged that we can develop proposals that would deliver seamless working across a wide range of services.

The discussion document submitted to meet the deadline set by government builds on work already in progress, further developing cooperation on the use of public buildings, integrating health and social care even further, and increasing the devolution of services to community area boards.

These are all open to discussion with the opportunity to add or remove pending further discussions with government departments and partners.

For Wiltshire, this could mean that by 2020 the county aspires to have:

- Vibrant town centres and a local economy continuing to grow and outperform the English average
  - A council that is independent of central government grant
  - A 'single view' of the customer for a range of public services
  - A 'one Wiltshire, one budget' approach – where public services are free to plan for the long term with multi-year funding settlements
- Increased volunteering levels and easier secondments between public sector services. “

## **Proposals**

a. That Council:

- i) notes the progress made to date;
- ii) debates and contributes to the initial proposals that have been put to the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government to strengthen the councils position and enable positive and constructive discussion with central government and
- iii) delegates the Corporate Directors following consultation with the Leader of the Council to discuss and develop proposals with Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government and partner organisations.

b. That the final devolution proposal is brought back to Council for approval.

**Councillor Jane Scott, OBE**  
**Leader of the Council**