

Leader of the Council

Cllr Richard Clewer

Legal & Governance

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REFERENCE: L-01-25

Submission to the Devolution Priority Programme

Purpose of Report

Wiltshire Council has been invited to make a submission for councils in the 'Heart of Wessex' to join the Devolution Priority Programme. A letter from leaders of the relevant councils to the Minister has been requested by 10 January 2025.

Consultation

An extraordinary meeting of Full Council took place on 9 January 2025 seeking support for a submission.

Full Council supported the intention to write to the relevant Minister to seek inclusion in the Devolution Priority Programme by a vote of 65 to 7 in favour, with 1 abstention.

If accepted onto the Devolution Priority Programme widespread public consultation would take place on the establishment of a Mayoral Strategic Authority ahead of formal consent for its establishment.

Options Considered

The options considered include:

- 1) not making a submission, which would mean it would take longer for Wiltshire residents to benefit from the additional funding and powers promised by government through devolution and the council may be subject to ministerial direction to join a strategic authority in which it has had less influence in shaping; or
- 2) making a submission so that residents can benefit from the additional funding and powers promised by government through devolution as rapidly as possible.

Reason for Decision

It is the view of the council leaders involved that, with a population of approximately 1.5 million, the Heart of Wessex presents a realistic and ambitious offer which can redefine

local decision-making and partnership across the patch, offering the Government an opportunity to showcase what devolution can offer to the region and to the wider UK. The Heart of Wessex has real strengths in sectors such as defence, digital, life sciences and clean energy, and devolution will help ensure the success of these sectors in kickstarting economic growth, making Britain a clean energy superpower and breaking down barriers to opportunity.

The provision of additional powers and funding through participation in the Devolution Priority Programme and the rapid establishment of a Mayoral Strategic Authority offers the opportunity to deliver our shared priorities and improve the lives of local residents. It is the intention for the Leader of the council to make a submission with fellow Leaders in the Heart of Wessex, to the Minister, seeking inclusion in the programme on that basis.

DECISION MADE

To confirm that, with the support of Full Council, I will make a submission with fellow Leaders in the Heart of Wessex, to the relevant Minister, seeking inclusion within the Devolution Priority Programme.

This decision was published and will come into effect on 10 January 2025.

The following report and appendices are attached:

Single Member Decision on Devolution

The following supporting documents are available from the officer named above:

[English Devolution White Paper](#)

.....signed.....

**Cllr Richard Clewer
Leader of the Council**

Date.....10 January 2025.....

This decision has been exempted from executive call-in procedures in accordance with Part 8 of the Constitution as the decision is urgent.