

Combined Authority (North East Leadership Board) Member Briefing Thursday 27 November 2013

Introduction

Durham, Gateshead, Newcastle, North Tyneside, Northumberland, South Tyneside and Sunderland councils have all come together to establish the North East Leadership Board. The seven local authorities are requesting the Government to formalise this arrangement through the creation of a combined authority.

The Board will help deliver a more coordinated approach to important issues affecting the whole region such as transport, skills and attracting investment. It will not replace individual councils, who will continue to deliver the vast majority of services to local communities.

Why is a combined authority being established?

The North East Leadership Board has been working in shadow form to develop a more co-ordinated approach to important issues affecting the whole region such as transport, skills and attracting investment.

Their shared ambition is to create the best possible conditions for growth in jobs, investment and living standards, to make the North East an excellent location for business, to prioritise and deliver high quality transport infrastructure and to enable residents to raise their skill levels and to benefit from economic growth long into the future.

The benefits of a combined authority include:

- closer working to deliver the shared ambitions of the seven councils to accelerate economic growth; focusing on skills, transport and inward investment,
- giving the area a stronger voice nationally and internationally,
- placing the area at the forefront nationally for devolved funding and powers from central government.

The North East Leadership Board is keen to join a number of other areas, including West Yorkshire, South Yorkshire and Merseyside, in making their arrangements more formal by creating a legal body referred to as a 'combined authority'.

This will ensure that the North East does not lose out on opportunities for greater decision-making powers, access to more funding from Government and is in a better position to collaborate on key local issues. More detailed information is available at the Frequently Asked Questions page of the North East Leadership Board [here](#).

Establishing the combined authority

The formal process to establish the combined authority is currently underway. Following regional consultation and an extensive governance review earlier this year in June 2013 all seven Local Authorities agreed a formal recommendation to establish this new arrangement. This was agreed by full council on 3 July 2013. The report can be accessed [here](#).

A proposal was subsequently submitted in summer 2013 to the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, to establish a new body, the North East Leadership Board, as the combined authority for the area.

Government consultation

As part of the legislative process to establish the new body and gain parliamentary approval, the Government must run a consultation to seek views on the proposed combined authority.

The Government have requested comments on the proposal to establish a combined authority for the area of Durham, Northumberland and Tyne and Wear, and in particular:

- On whether you support changing the governance institutions for the area of the “North East Local Enterprise Partnership” area by the creation of a combined authority;
- On whether you consider that establishing the proposed combined authority would be likely to improve the provision of transport in the area and its effectiveness and efficiency, the provision of economic development and regeneration in the area, and the economic conditions in the area;
- On how establishing such an authority may impact on the identities and interests of local communities and on securing effective and convenient local government;
- On the proposed constitutional arrangements (including the formal name of the combined authority) and functions for a combined authority as set out in the Annex to this consultation paper; and
- On how such an authority and the local enterprise partnership can work in a seamless manner to ensure the private sector is ‘hardwired’ into the leadership and decision making for the functional economic area.

The consultation to establish the North East Leadership Board will run until Thursday 2 January 2014. To take part in the consultation visit [here](#). Subject to this process the combined authority will be established in April 2014.

North East and Northumberland consultation activities

It is important to ensure that local stakeholders and members of the public have a range of opportunities to input to the Government consultation. Northumberland County Council has organised a range of additional ways to get involved. The other Local Authorities in the area have organised similar activities and there is also engagement at regional level with key stakeholders such as representatives of the business community. Local activities include:

- A short survey which is open until 5pm, Wednesday 11th December 2013, available [here](#) and from the council’s home page.
- Focus Group workshops at 4pm and 6pm on Thursday 12th December at Morpeth Town Hall. To register for these events contact Declan Langan at declan.langan@northumberland.gov.uk

Views shared in the regional and local activities will be used by the seven councils in their response to a Government consultation about the proposal.

Contact:

If you have any further queries please contact Andy Thom, the Council’s Head of Democratic and Legal Services at andy.thom@northumberland.gov.uk