

MEETING OF MIDDLESBROUGH COUNCIL

At the Meeting of Middlesbrough Council, lawfully convened, and held in the Town Hall, Middlesbrough on 9 November 2015.

PRESENT: Councillors Brady, (Vice Chair), The Mayor, D Budd, Councillors Arundale, Biswas, Blyth, Brunton, Carr, Cole, Coupe, Cox, Culley, Davison, Dean, Harvey, Hellaoui, Higgins, Hubbard, Hussain, Lawton, Mawston, McCabe, McGee, McGloin, McTigue, G Purvis, P Purvis, C M Rooney, D Rooney, Rostron, Saunders, Shan, Sharrocks, Taylor, Thompson, Uddin, J A Walker, N J Walker, Walters and Young

OFFICERS: R Broad, L Henman, A Hoy, J Lewis, S Lightwing, A Pain, M Robinson and K Whitmore

In the absence of the Chair, the Vice Chair chaired the meeting.

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE were submitted on behalf of Councillors Bloundele, Goodchild, C Hobson, J Hobson, Lewis and Rathmell.

DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

There were no Declarations of Interest at this point of the meeting.

15/40 TEES VALLEY DEVOLUTION DEAL

A report of the Chief Executive was presented, the purpose of which was to seek Council's endorsement of a devolution deal with central Government for a package of devolved powers and resources for the Tees Valley.

The Mayor explained that following an enormous amount of work by ministers, politicians, civil servants and local government officers, in a short timescale, the devolution deal had recently been signed by the leaders of the five local authorities in the Tees Valley. The Tees Valley authorities were third to sign a deal, after Sheffield and Manchester. Whilst there were some reservations, all five Tees Valley authorities were convinced this was a good opportunity for the area.

Whilst the submitted report outlined many elements of the devolution deal, much more work was required to finalise the details. The associated legislation still needed go through Parliament and it was anticipated that this would happen early next year at approximately the same time as the Combined Authority would be approved. A Constitution would also be developed and approved.

Local Authorities in the Tees Valley had been working together in one form or another for the last two decades, more so than anywhere else in the country. The devolution deal would give the Tees Valley more power over a whole range of things including investment, European funding, housing, transport projects, education, skills and culture. The investment of £15 million a year over 30 years would enable the area to stimulate business and jobs and improve skills. The deal was the first tentative step by Government to de-centralise and the Mayor commented that once the powers were devolved they were unlikely to be rescinded.

The Mayor then responded to questions and comments from several Councillors.

With regard to residents, the Mayor confirmed that the next stage in the process was for all five authorities to publicise the devolution deal more widely. There had been some coverage in the local press and Middlesbrough Council intended to publish articles in the Love Middlesbrough magazine. The Mayor acknowledged that it would be a challenge to communicate the relevant information in a way that would involve and interest local people.

A Member referred to the fact that the leader of Durham County Council had proposed a postal poll to gauge the electorate's views prior to signing a deal with Government. The Mayor

confirmed that a poll would be costly and the results would not be binding on any local authority decision.

In response to comments regarding finance, the Mayor clarified that the funding of £15million a year over the next 30 years was an investment fund. The intention was not for the five authorities to divide the money up and each take an equal share. The aim was to use the funding to develop employment, business and industry and encourage more investment from other sources. It was highlighted that other projects were ongoing alongside the devolution deal. In transport terms, Rail North was created some time ago by local authorities to influence and determine the franchise for the Transpennine Express and Northern Rail.

Regarding housing, the Mayor confirmed that it remained the responsibility of the individual local authorities. The information in the report relating to housing was about identifying land for industrial development or housing that was not available currently. Similarly, transport funding would continue from the same funding sources as at present and local authorities would continue to influence the provision of road and rail links.

In relation to the Gateway process and Government monitoring of how the investment fund was spent, the Mayor commented that virtually every form of funding provided to local government was monitored and withdrawn if not used appropriately.

In response to a query as to whether the Elected Mayor for the Tees Valley would have the power of veto over proposals put forward by the leaders of the five authorities, the Mayor commented that whilst the Government proposed powers to that individual, Manchester had already gone down the route of limiting that power. These were details that still needed to be agreed.

In summary, this was the first step in a new process and a new way of working. The Mayor was confident that the authorities could work together to ensure that the devolution deal succeeded.

On a vote being taken, it was **ORDERED** as follows that the Council supports the Tees Valley Devolution package as set out in the submitted report.