

A&W COUNCILS DEVOLUTION CONSULTATION RESPONSE

APRIL 2025



Background

Question 1 - To what extent do you agree or disagree that establishing a Mayoral Combined County Authority over the proposed geography will deliver benefits to the area?

Question 2 - To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposed governance arrangements for the Mayoral Combined County Authority?

Question 3 - To what extent do you agree or disagree that working across the proposed geography through the Mayoral Combined County Authority will support the economy of the area?

Question 4 - To what extent do you agree or disagree that working across the proposed geography through a Mayoral Combined County Authority will improve social outcomes in the area?

Question 5 - To what extent do you agree or disagree that working across the proposed geography through a Mayoral Combined County Authority will improve local government services in the area?

Question 6 - To what extent do you agree or disagree that working across the proposed geography through a Mayoral Combined County Authority will improve the local natural environment and overall national environment?

Question 7 - To what extent do you agree or disagree that working across the proposed geography through a Mayoral Combined County Authority will support the interests and needs of local communities and reflect local identities?

BACKGROUND



BACKGROUND

- Sussex will be one of the first areas in England to elect a new mayor and secure greater decision-making powers as part of the government's devolution priority programme agreed for a number of different areas of the country.
- Local authorities in West Sussex, including us, have been working together to draft an interim plan for local government reorganisation that was submitted to the government in March 2025
- We captured insights from a community leaders event, businesses leaders event, a ward councillor event and an internal organisational leadership team event and have used the insights to write the proposal
- The following slides give a summary of our responses to the questions

QUESTION 1

To what extent do you agree or disagree that establishing a Mayoral Combined County Authority over the proposed geography will deliver benefits to the area?



STRONGLY AGREE.

- Sussex 'makes sense'. It has a strong sense of identity and is the right size and scale to work effectively locally, nationally and internationally.
- Mayoral authority should be called Sussex as opposed to Sussex and Brighton.
- The MCCA has the potential to unlock larger-scale investment, raise the national profile of Sussex and act as a powerful way to reset the relationship between local and central government.
- Adur & Worthing Councils support the ambition of a Sussex-wide authority but emphasise that its success hinges on staying connected to people and place.
- Mayoral Combined County Authority (MCCA) must be rooted in local voices, designed to improve lives, and focused on outcomes that matter to residents
- Neighbourhood-level say and visible accountability are vital
- Sussex regional identity must be co-owned — reflecting the voices of all communities.

STRONGLY AGREE.

Our Asks to Mayoral Combined County Authority (MCCA)

- Focus on big, long-term missions that matter to people.
- Give each area its own joined-up funding pot: Instead of making places apply for lots of different grants.
- Let councils lead local budgets based on community needs.

QUESTION 2

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposed governance arrangements for the Mayoral Combined County Authority?



DISAGREE.

- We are concerned about the lack of voting rights and representation for borough and district councils until 2028.
- We advocate for local representation from the start, highlighting that these councils hold key functions, such as housing and planning, that must shape the MCCA from its inception.
- Governance underpinning the role of the Mayor is representative of the local population but also that attention is paid to how communities are able to be seen and heard
- We believe that governance must support place leadership. Early engagement has explored the potential for neighbourhood committees or councils to make local decisions, community champions, and participatory models like Citizens' Assemblies to ensure democracy is rooted in place.

STRONGLY AGREE.

Our Asks to Mayoral Combined County Authority (MCCA)

- Make sure all councils have a voice from the start: All councils should be involved in decision-making from day one—not left waiting until later
- Give communities the power to shape public services.
- Make democracy part of everyday life: Let people influence decisions in ways that feel natural and easy to take part in.
- Create Community Covenants: Set up local agreements between the MCCA and each area that clearly set out shared goals and commitments.
- Learn from other areas that have done this well.

QUESTION 3

To what extent do you agree or disagree that working across the proposed geography through the Mayoral Combined County Authority will support the economy of the area?



STRONGLY AGREE

- The MCCA can create the conditions for businesses to grow, invest, and transition to net zero.
- Adur & Worthing Councils strongly support a regional role in shaping inclusive, place-based economic growth.
- We believe the Mayoral Combined County Authority (MCCA) should connect skills planning with real local opportunities, such as green technology, sustainable food, and marine innovation.
- We see the potential for the MCCA to unlock investment in local green and coastal economies, particularly through initiatives like Sussex Bay, eco-tourism, and marine innovation.
- We emphasise that while regional scale can unlock bold investment and coordinate skills planning, it's crucial to keep it rooted in place and recognise different local economies.
- We believe investment should help reduce inequality and grow community businesses.

STRONGLY AGREE.

Our Asks to Mayoral Combined County Authority (MCCA)

- Set up Local Investment Zones focused on industries like care, climate/decarbonisation and housing.
- Give the MCCA more say over transport planning —like Transport for the South East already does - so it can improve things like roads, buses and rail to better connect people and places.
- Use public spending to grow local economies: Make sure big organisations—like hospitals, councils and colleges—use their spending power to support local businesses, jobs and suppliers.
- Introduce a Community Right to Control Investment, so that residents and local groups can influence how money is used in their area, making sure it reflects what matters most to them.

QUESTION 4

To what extent do you agree or disagree that working across the proposed geography through a Mayoral Combined County Authority will improve social outcomes in the area?



STRONGLY AGREE.

- Having local leaders, who have better insight into regional challenges will mean that investment and targeted work streams can be created.
- Integrating services such as health and housing would provide better quality services and better outcomes.
- Ability to plan housing and work places with sustainable travel options, leisure facilities including public spaces to build healthier communities.
- Powers over skills and employment helps to create more tailored local programmes/ devolved control over skills funding and adult education.
- The ability to create reliable and inclusive (and sustainable) transport infrastructure to provide access to job opportunities and mobility for elderly and young people.
- Investment in youth, culture and leisure, supporting social cohesion and reduction in mental health issues.
- Social outcomes should be at the heart of the MCCA's purpose.
- There is a need for a regional deal to join up public services, improve access, and tackle inequalities visibly.

STRONGLY AGREE.

Our Asks to Mayoral Combined County Authority (MCCA)

- Use planning powers to support health and wellbeing.
- Invest in early help and spaces that bring communities together such as through a Regional Prevention Fund or Health Equity Zones
- Put money into things like community hubs, local networks and support services that help people connect, take action together, and build stronger, more inclusive communities—building on what’s already working through Adur & Worthing’s Community Catalyst support.

QUESTION 5

To what extent do you agree or disagree that working across the proposed geography through a Mayoral Combined County Authority will improve local government services in the area?



STRONGLY AGREE.

- Our delivery model, based on working in missions, shows how local government can tackle complexity with creativity.
- There is an opportunity for the MCCA to use its convening power to ensure that all public services in Sussex come together to work effectively and to focus on the integration of preventative services and;
- Provide the ability to plan more effectively into the future on the major challenges of inequality and climate crisis.
- To deliver real change, the regional authority and new unitary authorities must be developed together, with shared leadership, strong local infrastructure, and clear accountability to communities.
- We believe better public services across Sussex is possible — but only if the MCCA helps to join up support around people and places.
- Stronger partnership structures and shared leadership are needed that include community voices.

STRONGLY AGREE.

Our Asks to Mayoral Combined County Authority (MCCA)

- Support flexible local teams that work across services: Invest in mixed teams of professionals who work directly with communities—joining up support around housing, health, the environment and wellbeing.
- Fund the shared spaces and tools that make services easier to use: Back things like community buildings, digital tools and mobile services that help residents access support locally and more easily.
- Set up a Public Service Innovation Lab: Create a space where council staff, local people and community organisations can come together to design, test and grow new ways of delivering services.
- Keep local business support strong and simple: Make sure that local businesses still get the help they need and that it's easy to find and use.

QUESTION 6

To what extent do you agree or disagree that working across the proposed geography through a Mayoral Combined County Authority will improve the local natural environment and overall national environment?



STRONGLY AGREE.

- Sussex has a significant opportunity to implement a leading strategic approach to nature recovery across its land, coast, and seascape.
- Sussex is working together with organizations like the Environment Agency and Southern Water to improve its natural waterways.
- We are also trying new ways to fund projects that restore nature, like the River Adur.
- By planning carefully across land and sea, Sussex aims to attract funding for nature, which will benefit the environment, communities, and the local economy.
- This joined-up approach to climate action includes considering everything from transport to waterways on a large scale, like the ambitious Sussex Bay project.
- Communities want action that includes them.

STRONGLY AGREE.

Our Asks to Mayoral Combined County Authority (MCCA)

- Create a joined-up regional natural investment plan: Develop a clear strategy for how the region will invest in and protect natural assets—like green spaces, rivers, coastlines and wildlife—so they benefit both people and the planet.
- Apply community stewardship to natural capital investments: Support local groups to lead and look after green spaces and climate projects, so they're part of decisions and action on nature.
- Follow the lead of places like Greater Manchester and the West of England.

QUESTION 7

To what extent do you agree or disagree that working across the proposed geography through a Mayoral Combined County Authority will support the interests and needs of local communities and reflect local identities?



NEITHER AGREE OR DISAGREE.

- Our response reflects a nuanced position as we believe the success of the Mayoral Combined County Authority (MCCA) in supporting local communities and reflecting local identities is contingent on a critical factor: a truly integrated design process between Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) and devolution.
- The proposed geography must be carefully considered, prioritising areas with shared strategic priorities and practical interdependencies.
- If identity is imposed or too generic, communities will feel disconnected. What's needed is locally led design, co-created goals, and visible commitment to underrepresented voices.
- We need a stronger neighbourhood voice, participatory decision-making, and support for underrepresented groups to be part of shaping the MCCA.
- Local areas must be supported to retain and grow their distinct identities within any regional structure.
- Communities want to feel seen and involved. Businesses agree that any new structure must reflect the diversity of our local areas.

STRONGLY AGREE.

Our Asks to Mayoral Combined County Authority (MCCA)

- Work with communities to create local charters: Develop “Place-Based Charters” together with local people—setting out shared goals, values and priorities that reflect each area's identity and lived experience.
- Give each neighbourhood its own budget: Let communities have control over some local funding so they can decide what's most needed and take action on the things that matter to them.
- Make sure all voices are heard—especially those often left out: Actively involve people from underrepresented groups in shaping MCCA plans, so decisions reflect the full diversity of Sussex's communities.