

STAFFORDSHIRE MOORLANDS DISTRICT COUNCIL

Report to Cabinet

8th October 2024

TITLE:	Devolution
PORTFOLIO HOLDER:	Cllr Mike Gledhill – Leader
CONTACT OFFICER:	Andrew Stokes – Chief Executive
WARDS INVOLVED:	Non-Specific

Appendices Attached:

Appendix A – Devolution FAQs

1. Reason for the Report

1.1 The purpose of this report is to:

- Outline the progress with devolution in England
- Set out the new Government’s commitments to further devolution;
- Report progress on the considerations for devolution in Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent

2. Recommendations

It is recommended that Cabinet note:

2.1 The progress with devolution in England as set out in Section 9 of the report

2.2 The new Government’s commitment to an expanded ‘devolution framework’ as detailed in Section 9 of the report

2.3 The support of the Leader (after consulting with the other political group leaders) to the expression of interest for devolution in Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent submitted to Government on 30th September 2024 by the Staffordshire Leaders Board

3. Executive Summary

3.1 In the King’s speech in July, the new Government’s plans were unveiled to create an English Devolution Bill which aims to give local government greater

powers over local growth through a new standardised devolution framework set out in law.

- 3.2 Devolution is the process of transferring power from the centre (Westminster) to the nations and regions of the United Kingdom. The UK system of devolution has been developed on a piecemeal basis and different parts of the UK have different degrees of devolution. In Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland there are national assemblies which possess executive and legislative powers. In Greater London, a Mayor of London and the London Assembly were created in 2000.
- 3.3 Combined authorities were introduced in the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009 in order to provide a platform for further devolution in England. Combined authorities are local government entities set up by two or more neighbouring local authorities wishing to coordinate responsibilities and powers over services. Between 2011 and 2017 a number of combined authorities, almost all chaired by metro mayors, were created
- 3.4 In February 2022, the previous Government produced the Levelling Up the United Kingdom white paper, followed by the Levelling-up and Regeneration Act 2023, which set out a new devolution framework for England which extended devolution beyond metropolitan areas for the first time. It also established a new form of combined authority (Combined County Authority) to be made up of upper-tier local authorities providing for a single, accountable institution across a functional economic area or whole county geography with district councils able to be non-constituent members.
- 3.5 The implementation of the Levelling-up and Regeneration Act 2023 saw the creation of two further combined authorities including in the East Midlands which became the first Mayoral Combined County Authority.
- 3.6 In Staffordshire, work has been progressing over the last couple of years to enhance the collaboration between the Staffordshire County Council, Stoke-on-Trent City Council and the district and borough councils which has been overseen by the Staffordshire Leaders' Board. This has included the exploration of the potential for a devolution deal with Government.
- 3.7 On 16 July 2024, the deputy prime minister, Angela Rayner, wrote to the leaders of county and unitary councils (including Staffordshire County Council and Stoke-on-Trent City Council) in 'devolution deserts' – areas without a current devolution settlement – **inviting them to submit 'expressions of interest' by the end of September** that set out how they propose to work together with neighbouring authorities to take on devolved powers.
- 3.8 While the full details of what the proposed new legislation will mean has not yet been announced, on 30th September 2024, the Leaders representing the county, city and eight district and borough councils across Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent have written jointly to Government to seek a conversation about devolution and how it could benefit the area. An outline of the

Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent devolution “opportunities, asks and benefits” against the following themes was attached to the letter:

- Economic Development
- Skills
- Energy and Environment
- Transport
- Housing and Regeneration.

3.9 A copy of letter and theme summaries was circulated to all councillors

3.10 It is important to note that in the letter the Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Leaders outlined their proposed key principles:

- **Devolution must work for all:** plans must reflect and respond to a deep understanding of local needs and opportunities. That is what our authorities have been working hard at over the summer.
- **Form must follow function:** if we are to accept another layer of governance in the county, at additional cost to the people of Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent, then the prize in terms of devolved functions, powers and resources has to be significant.
- **Governance has to be inclusive:** our Leader’s Board works because all local authorities get to participate and contribute, and we want to ensure that this is also the case in any devolved arrangements.
- **Commitment to subsidiarity:** devolution should be to the most appropriate level of governance for the function in any question, and that should mean a combination of county-wide, local authority level and, perhaps most importantly, community level. We seek a devolution deal that gives us flexibility to make those judgements together.

3.11 The Staffordshire Leaders made it clear that they reserve their position ‘on the preferred model of devolution until the promised devolution framework and guidance is published but stressed that they do not consider an elected mayor to be appropriate for Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent.

3.12 Prior to the commitment to sign the letter to government the Staffordshire Moorlands Leader engaged with the Council’s other political leaders who are supportive of the approach. The Group Leaders have written to all councillors to stress the following:

- Reassure all councillors that any devolution deal that can be struck with Government will **categorically not involve any reorganisation in local government in the county or involving Stoke-on-Trent.**
- There is **an expectation that devolution would come with extra funding from Government,** which is not available to existing local

authorities, in order to boost our local economy and raise living standards, for example by investment in transport

- A view that the model of **an elected mayor is not suitable for our County, District and Town/Parish system**
- As group leaders we welcome this development and put on record that SMDC is committed to this type of collaborative working. **There is no wish or intention to 'merge' with other councils.**

4. How this report links to Corporate Priorities

- 4.1 The enhanced two-tier working approach delivered by the Staffordshire Leaders Board will potentially have a significant impact on the achievement of a number of the Council's corporate priorities. This could be enhanced by a devolution deal.

5. Alternative Options

- 5.1 There are no options to consider at this stage

6. Implications

- 6.1 Community Safety - (Crime and Disorder Act 1998)

None

- 6.2 Workforce

None

- 6.3 Equality and Diversity/Equality Impact Assessment

None

- 6.4 Financial Considerations

There are no immediate and significant financial implications arising from the expression of interest at this stage. However it is expected that devolution would see additional funding for the wider Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent area

- 6.5 Legal

The current framework for the creation of combined authorities and devolution in England is contained within the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009 and the Levelling-up and Regeneration Act 2023.

In the King's speech in July, the new Government's plans were unveiled to create an English Devolution Bill which aims to give local government greater powers over local growth through a new standardised devolution framework set out in law.

6.6 Climate Change and Sustainability

Climate Change is a key remit of the Staffordshire Leaders Board is to oversee the alignment of relevant local authority action on Climate Change, Waste and Sustainability.

Energy and Environment is one of the themes for the devolution “opportunities, asks and benefits” which are set out in the Staffordshire Leaders’ letter to Government.

6.7 Conservation and Enhancement of Biodiversity

The Staffordshire Leaders Board’s climate change priority includes the enhancement of biodiversity

6.8 Consultation

The SMDC political leaders were consulted prior to the Leader committing to sign the letter to Government

Details of the letter were shared with key internal stakeholders – the FAQs attached at Appendix A were also circulated

6.9 Risk Assessment

Not applicable at this stage

ANDREW P STOKES
Chief Executive

Web Links and

Background Papers

Staffordshire Leaders Board / County Deals – Cabinet Report – 8th February 2022

<https://democracy.highpeak.gov.uk/documents/s27156/SMDC%20-%20Staffordshire%20Leaders%20Board%20-%20County%20Deal%2002-22.pdf>

Staffordshire Leaders Board – Revised Constitution – Cabinet Report – 11th June 2024

<https://democracy.highpeak.gov.uk/documents/s40531/SMDC%20-%20Staffordshire%20Leaders%20Board%20-%20Revised%20Constitution%2011-06--24.pdf>

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7. Background & Introduction

- 7.1 There has been lots of press coverage, both locally and nationally, since the election about devolution. In the King's speech in July, the new Government's plans were unveiled to create an English Devolution Bill which aims to give local government greater powers over local growth through a new standardised devolution framework set out in law. This will build on the previous Government's approach which was updated in the Levelling-up and Regeneration Act 2023 which included the introduction of a new form of devolved local government called a County Combined Authority.
- 7.2 In Staffordshire, work has been progressing over the last couple of years to enhance the collaboration between the Staffordshire County Council, Stoke-on-Trent City Council and the district and borough councils which has been overseen by the Staffordshire Leaders' Board. This has included the exploration of the potential for a devolution deal with Government.
- 7.3 While the full details of what the proposed new legislation will mean has not yet been announced, on 30th September 2024, the Leaders representing the county, city and eight district and borough councils across Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent have written jointly to Government to seek a conversation about devolution and how it could benefit the area.
- 7.4 The purpose of this report is to:
- Outline the progress with devolution in England
 - Set out the new Government's commitments to further devolution;
 - Report progress with the considerations for devolution in Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent

8 Devolution in England – History and the Current Position

- 8.1 Devolution is the process of transferring power from the centre (Westminster) to the nations and regions of the United Kingdom.
- 8.2 The UK system of devolution has been developed on a piecemeal basis and different parts of the UK have different degrees of devolution. In Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland there are national assemblies which possess executive and legislative powers.
- 8.3 By the late 1990's Government had devolved powers to Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland but England was largely left out of this process. The exception was Greater London, where a Mayor of London and the London Assembly were created in 2000.
- 8.4 Planned elected assemblies in other English regions were abandoned after a failed referendum in the North East in 2004. Instead, the English regions were granted a limited form of administrative decentralisation via 'regional

development agencies' and 'government offices for the regions'. However this regional tier was dismantled by the coalition government after 2010.

- 8.5 Combined authorities were introduced in the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009. Combined authorities are local government entities set up by two or more neighbouring local authorities wishing to co-ordinate responsibilities and powers over services, including aspects of transport, housing and social care. The first combined authority was established in Greater Manchester in 2011 but this was followed by a three-year lull in which no others were formed.
- 8.6 The agenda for mayoral combined authorities then accelerated, as they formed the basis of the then Government's initiative for English devolution. The coalition government (2010–15) aspired to build 'strong city regions' with integrated public services in order to boost growth. The government started a new process of English devolution in 2014, negotiating bespoke deals with groups of local authorities who formed new combined authorities almost all chaired by metro mayors. Nine such bodies were established between 2015 and 2019, mostly in city-regions. In several cases, the powers of these combined authorities have been extended over time. In addition, a more limited non-mayoral devolution deal was agreed with Cornwall County Council in 2015.
- 8.7 In February 2022, the last Government produced the Levelling Up the United Kingdom white paper, which was followed by the Levelling-up and Regeneration Act 2023 which set out a new devolution framework for England which extended devolution beyond metropolitan areas for the first time and set out pathways to a devolution deal for every area of England that wants one. The framework is underpinned by four principles:
- Effective leadership,
 - Sensible geography,
 - Flexibility, and
 - Appropriate accountability.
- 8.8 The white paper more specifically set out the Government's intention that devolution in England would be extended, deepened and simplified with an immediate focus on:
- Inviting Cornwall; Derbyshire and Derby; Devon, Plymouth and Torbay; Durham; Hull and East Yorkshire; Leicestershire; Norfolk; Nottinghamshire and Nottingham; and Suffolk to start formal negotiations to agree new County Deals;
 - Agreeing a Mayoral Combined Authority (MCA) with York and North Yorkshire
 - An expanded MCA deal for the North East;
 - Negotiations for trailblazer deals with the West Midlands and Greater Manchester Combined Authorities;

- Working with the MCAs, starting with the trailblazers to streamline the funding landscape for MCAs, and invite other MCAs and the GLA to bid for further powers through the devolution framework.
- 8.9 The Levelling-up and Regeneration Act 2023 established a new form of combined authority (Combined County Authority) to be made up of upper-tier local authorities providing for a single, accountable institution across a functional economic area or whole county geography, and district councils can be non-constituent members. County councils would be expected to work closely with their district councils.
- 8.10 The devolution framework sets out a flexible, three level approach to devolution recognising that a one-size fits all model would not be suitable. The Framework sets out the types of powers and functions that will be considered for each devolution level. Some powers may only be available to certain authorities or geographies, and there would be scope to negotiate further powers on a case-by-case basis. There may also be an option to change public sector administrative boundaries on a case-by-case basis to support devolution.
- 8.11 The three levels set out in the devolution framework are:
- Level 3 – A single institution or County Council with a directly elected mayor (DEM), across a functional economic area (FEA) or whole county area;
 - Level 2 – A single institution or County Council without a DEM, across a FEA or whole county area; and
 - Level 1 – Local authorities working together across a FEA or whole county area e.g. through a joint committee.
- 8.12 Level 3 represents the previous Government’s preferred model of devolution, but it was clear that this will not suit all areas, and that the framework instead allowed areas to deepen devolution at their own pace. Level 3 areas have access to the largest set of powers, including the ability to consolidate existing core local transport funding into a multi-year integrated settlement, devolution of locally-led brownfield funding, mayoral control of Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) functions where boundaries align and the ability to introduce a mayoral precept and supplement on business rates.
- 8.13 Level 2 areas have fewer, but still significant powers, including control of appropriate local transport functions, ability to introduce bus franchising, the ability to provide input into Local Skills Improvement Plans, and Homes England compulsory purchase powers.
- 8.14 Level 1 areas have access to three core powers: the ability to host Government functions best delivered at a strategic level including more than one authority, the opportunity to pool services at a strategic level, and the opportunity to adopt innovative local proposals to deliver action on climate change.

8.15 In the devolution framework it was made clear that the UK Government would not impose top-down restructuring of local government. Reorganisation will remain a locally-led avenue available where there is broad local support, but will not be a requirement for a devolution deal..

8.16 The implementation of the Levelling-up and Regeneration Act 2023 saw the creation of two further combined authorities including in the East Midlands which became the first Mayoral Combined County Authority⁷

8.17 In summary there are currently 4 types of institutions that can have devolved powers, funding and responsibility in England. These are:

- **Combined Authorities or Mayoral Combined Authorities:** formed of 2 or more local councils, either led by a directly elected Mayor (Mayoral Combined Authority) or without a Mayor (Combined Authority). They support councils to work together across a wider geographic area on issues such as transport and housing. Any “lower tier” authorities (districts or borough councils within a county council area) are included as members.
- **Combined County Authorities or Mayoral Combined County Authorities:** formed of 2 or more local councils, either led by a Mayor (Mayoral Combined County Authority) or without a Mayor (Combined County Authority). They support councils to work together across a wider geographic area on issues such as transport and housing. Any “lower tier” authorities (districts or borough councils within a county council area) are not included as members.
- **Local authorities with devolved powers:** existing local councils who cover a large enough area to directly take on devolved powers, funding and responsibilities; and
- **Greater London Authority:** The Greater London Authority (GLA) is the regional governance body for Greater London. Established in 2000 it is different to other institutions in England with devolved powers. It consists of 2 political branches – the Mayoralty, which holds the decision-making power, and the 25-member London Assembly, which serves as a means of scrutinising the mayoralty. The Mayor can take decisions without the involvement or approval of the 32 borough councils and City of London, whereas Combined Authorities (which exist elsewhere in England) have a formal role for the local councils in their areas.

8.18 Combined authorities also hold local transport powers and functions that previously sat with the local councils, so that local transport issues can be considered across a wider area (typically, a “travel to work” area).

8.19 Currently around half of the English population is covered by devolution and the current combined authorities in England are:

Region	Type	Constituent Authorities	Date Formed
Cambridgeshire and Peterborough	Mayoral Combined Authority	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cambridge • Cambridgeshire • East Cambridgeshire 	March 2017

Region	Type	Constituent Authorities	Date Formed
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li data-bbox="794 248 927 275">• Fenland<li data-bbox="794 280 1018 306">• Huntingdonshire<li data-bbox="794 311 986 338">• Peterborough<li data-bbox="794 342 1090 369">• South Cambridgeshire	

Region	Type	Constituent Authorities	Date Formed
East Midlands	Mayoral Combined County Authority	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Derby • Derbyshire • Nottingham • Nottinghamshire 	February 2024
Greater Manchester	Mayoral Combined Authority	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bolton • Bury • Oldham • Manchester • Rochdale • Salford • Stockport • Tameside • Trafford • Wigan 	April 2011
Liverpool City Region	Mayoral Combined Authority	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Halton • Knowsley • Liverpool • Sefton • St Helens • Wirral 	April 2014
North East	Mayoral Combined Authority	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Durham • Gateshead • Newcastle upon Tyne • North Tyneside • Northumberland • South Tyneside • Sunderland 	May 2024
South Yorkshire	Mayoral Combined Authority	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Barnsley • Doncaster • Rotherham • Sheffield 	April 2014
Tees Valley	Mayoral Combined Authority	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Darlington • Hartlepool • Stockton-on-Tees • Middlesbrough • Redcar and Cleveland 	April 2016
West Midlands	Mayoral Combined Authority	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Birmingham • Coventry • Dudley • Sandwell • Solihull • Walsall • Wolverhampton 	June 2016
West of England	Mayoral Combined Authority	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bath and North East Somerset • Bristol • South Gloucestershire 	February 2017
West Yorkshire	Mayoral Combined Authority	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bradford • Calderdale • Kirklees • Leeds • Wakefield 	April 2014

Region	Type	Constituent Authorities	Date Formed
York and North Yorkshire	Mayoral Combined Authority	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> North Yorkshire York 	February 2024

9 Current Government's Position on Devolution

- 9.1 Despite the progress with Devolution in England, half of England's population and almost three quarters of its land area have been left out to date. This includes nine of the 25 largest urban areas as well as many non-metropolitan and rural places.
- 9.2 Since the general election in July, the new Government has made clear that England's metro mayors will play a central role in helping them achieve their missions. Within days of the general election all the mayors were invited to 10 Downing Street to meet the prime minister and deputy prime minister.
- 9.3 The government is also planning to publish an expanded 'devolution framework', with new powers on offer, a devolution white paper, and an English Devolution Bill that will create a simpler process by which powers can be devolved. The King's Speech confirmed that the English Devolution Bill would see 'new powers for metro mayors and combined authorities' – including those around strategic planning, local transport networks, skills and employment support.
- 9.4 On 16th July 2024, the deputy prime minister, Angela Rayner, wrote to the leaders of county and unitary councils (including Staffordshire County Council and Stoke-on-Trent City Council) in 'devolution deserts' – areas without a current devolution settlement – **inviting them to submit 'expressions of interest' by the end of September** that set out how they propose to work together with neighbouring authorities to take on devolved powers.
- 9.5 The Deputy Prime Minister's letter noted that many local authorities' previous applications to central government had been "held up by lengthy negotiations over powers, geographies, or governance" and the new government would move beyond "a deals-based approach, setting out clear conditions and a clear offer in return for places seeing a devolution agreement".
- 9.6 The government is therefore opening the way for devolution to be extended to the whole of England – a policy known as 'completing the devolution map'.
- 9.7 This initiative reflects the government's view – expressed clearly in its manifesto – that over-centralisation is one of the factors constraining the economic potential of many English regions and counties, and that devolution of power across England will therefore help to "kickstart economic growth", the new government's number one mission.
- 9.8 On 19th September 2024, it was announced that Government had 'signed off' on agreements for regional mayors in Greater Lincolnshire and in Hull & East

Yorkshire, and to establish combined county authorities in both Devon & Torbay and Lancashire.

- 9.9 Mayors will be elected in Greater Lincolnshire and Hull & East Yorkshire – the last part of Yorkshire to be covered by a devolution deal – in May 2025. For Devon & Torbay and Lancashire, combined county authorities will be established in early 2025. Ministers are also encouraging local leaders to deepen these devolution deals and take strides towards mayoral devolution as the standard.
- 9.10 It was also announced that the government is also minded to progress with the four non-mayoral ‘Level 2’ Single Local Authority devolution agreements with Cornwall Council, Buckinghamshire Council, Warwickshire County Council, and Surrey County Council, subject to further statutory tests being met. The government however is encouraging these areas to continue working to explore the next steps towards deeper and wider devolution.

10 Potential for Devolution in Staffordshire & Stoke-on-Trent

- 10.1 Prior to the publication of the previous Government’s Levelling Up the United Kingdom white paper, Staffordshire did not seek to become a pathfinder for a County Deal, however began laying the foundations for the development of a potential County Deal with the formation of the Staffordshire Leaders Board (constituted as a Joint Committee) in 2022 to strengthen the previous governance arrangements.
- 10.2 The Staffordshire Leaders Board established a clear set of priorities for collaboration and began work on these through a variety of structured partnership arrangements.
- 10.3 The May 2023 local elections saw changes in political control in a number of the district and borough councils. Since these changes, the Board, with its new membership, undertook a refocus including:
- Welcoming Stoke-on-Trent City Council (who previously were not involved in the Board) as part of the Board Membership.
 - Working together to restate the clear ambition to collaborate on opportunities to help unlock some of Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent’s most important challenges.
 - Reflecting on existing priorities with a forward look and developed a refreshed set of priorities.
 - Supporting a strengthened approach for Leader and CEO ‘Sponsors’ against each priority (cross-boundary combinations suggested to work best).
- 10.4 The refreshed set of priorities agreed at the Leaders Board in March 2024 are:
- Economic development (incorporating Green Growth)

- Transport infrastructure
 - Climate Change including a joint approach to Waste and Sustainability
 - Health inequalities
 - Social inequalities
 - Strategic migration partnership / Asylum dispersal
 - Devolution and a future County Deal
- 10.5 The Council's Chief Executive is one of the leads (to share his experience from the East Midlands County Combined Authority involvement), alongside the Chief Executives of Staffordshire County Council and Stoke-on-Trent City Council, for the development of the approach to Devolution and a future County Deal..
- 10.6 Regular meetings of the lead Chief Executives took place in the summer alongside separate sessions with the Chief Executives all authorities which took place in July where initial scoping thinking was explored. This work concluded with the development of the following for consideration by the Leaders Board:
- An understanding of the potential benefits, limitations and opportunities of devolution across Staffordshire, its individual districts and boroughs, and the City of Stoke-on-Trent;
 - An outline of the devolution “opportunities, asks and benefits” against each of the priority areas that were identified.
- 10.7 The devolution “opportunities, asks and benefits” have been set out under five main themes:
- Economic Development
 - Skills
 - Energy and Environment
 - Transport
 - Housing and Regeneration.
- 10.8 On 30th September 2024 a letter of intent (with the devolution summaries theme summaries was sent to Angela Rayner MP and Jim McMahon MP. The letter was signed by all the Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Leaders.
- 10.9 A copy of letter (theme summaries was circulated to all councillors.
- 10.10 It is important to note that in the letter the Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Leaders outlined their proposed key principles:
- **Devolution must work for all:** plans must reflect and respond to a deep understanding of local needs and opportunities. That is what our authorities have been working hard at over the summer.
 - **Form must follow function:** if we are to accept another layer of governance in the county, at additional cost to the people of Staffordshire

and Stoke-on-Trent, then the prize in terms of devolved functions, powers and resources has to be significant.

- **Governance has to be inclusive:** our Leader's Board works because all local authorities get to participate and contribute, and we want to ensure that this is also the case in any devolved arrangements.
- **Commitment to subsidiarity:** devolution should be to the most appropriate level of governance for the function in any question, and that should mean a combination of county-wide, local authority level and, perhaps most importantly, community level. We seek a devolution deal that gives us flexibility to make those judgements together.

10.11 The Leaders made it clear that they reserve their position 'on the preferred model of devolution until we have seen the promised devolution framework and guidance. However, we do welcome your ongoing commitment to flexibility on the governance arrangements for devolved powers. Most significantly, whilst there are benefits to elected mayors for some areas, this is not a model which is suitable for Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent'.

10.12 Prior to the commitment to sign the letter to government, the Staffordshire Moorlands Leader engaged with the Council's political leaders who are supportive of the approach. The Group Leaders have written to all councillors to stress the following:

- Reassure all councillors that any devolution deal that can be struck with Government will **categorically not involve any reorganisation in local government in the county or involving Stoke-on-Trent.**
- There is **an expectation that devolution would come with extra funding from Government** which is not available to existing local authorities in order to boost our local economy and raise living standards, for example by investment in transport
- A view that the model of **an elected mayor is not suitable for our County, District and Town/Parish system**
- As group leaders we welcome this development and put on record that SMDC is committed to this type of collaborative working. **There is no wish or intention to 'merge' with other councils.**