

DEVOLUTION – Briefing by Babergh District Council (10th March 2025)

Public Consultation A public consultation is ongoing to explore the *effects* of devolution (not whether it should occur). You can participate here: [Devolution Consultation](#). Everyone is encouraged to take part in this consultation.

Overview

- This session focused on **devolution**, not local government reorganisation.
- Suffolk and Norfolk have been accepted into the **Devolution Priority Programme (DPP)** to form a Mayoral Combined County Authority (MCCA).
- **Key Dates:**
 - Likely **Mayoral elections**: 7th May 2026.
 - May 2025 elections **cancelled** to maintain councillor consistency for decision-making.

Combined County Authorities (CCAs)

- Led by a **Mayor**, CCAs will oversee key services but won't directly alter service delivery.
- Proposals for separate Norfolk and Suffolk CCAs have been rejected.

Mayoral Candidates:

- Candidates may be from political parties, independent, or from various professional backgrounds.
- Independent candidates may face challenges securing campaign support without political backing.

Powers of the Mayor:

- Powers detailed in the forthcoming **English Devolution Bill**, not yet in force.
- Initial elections may occur before the bill's enactment. Existing Mayors may have additional powers.

Decision-Making Structure:

- Decision-making will include:
 - **Two councillors each** from Norfolk and Suffolk.
 - The **Mayor or Deputy Mayor** (mandatory presence).
- Additional roles:
 - 1 political advisor.
 - Up to 4 non-voting members (local experts or organizational representatives).

Key Consideration: The appointment of the right Mayor is crucial, as Mayors may hold significant powers, including potentially serving as **Police and Crime Commissioner**.

Funding and Financial Implications

Funding from central government will support:

- Housing and regeneration
- Local growth

- Adult skills
- Local transport

Investment Plan:

- A **30-year investment fund** for the MCCA.
- Mayors may introduce an additional **precept**.

Uncertainties:

- Full costs and long-term savings (if any) may take years to evaluate.
- Example: A current Mayoral CCA reduced councillors from 240 to 97.

Unitary Authorities & Local Impact

- Number and boundaries of **Unitaries** remain unclear. Possible cross-county Unitary arrangements may require robust cross-border collaboration.
- Concerns raised over prioritizing **statutory services** over discretionary ones.

Parish & Town Councils:

- Opportunities exist for parishes to **discuss taking on assets/services**; action needed before time runs out.
- **NALC Concerns:**
 - Recent government guidance excluded Parish and Town Councils from the stakeholder list.
 - Ministerial response emphasized their crucial role and the need for engagement with them.

Government Expectations (as per the English Devolution White Paper):

- Two-tier local authority areas must:
 - Develop reorganisation proposals.
 - Strengthen collaboration with Parish and Town Councils.
 - Emphasize community engagement and voice.

Further information: [SALC Devolution Portal](#).

Prepared by:

Jo Hazlewood – March 2025