

# DURHAM COUNTY COUNCIL

At a **Special Meeting of Cabinet** held in the **Council Chamber, County Hall, Durham** on **Wednesday 1 November 2023** at **9.30 am**

**Present:**

**Councillor R Bell (Deputy Leader of the Council) in the Chair**

## **Cabinet Members**

Councillors T Henderson, S McDonnell, J Rowlandson, E Scott, A Shield and M Wilkes

## **Apologies**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors A Hopgood and J Shuttleworth

## **1 Declarations of interest**

There were no declarations of interest in relation to any items of business on the agenda.

## **2 North East Devolution [Key Decision: CORP/R/23/07]**

The Cabinet considered a report of the Chief Executive which sought consent to the making of the statutory order to abolish the existing combined authorities in the region (i.e. NECA and NTCA) and replace them with a single mayoral combined authority which encompasses the areas of the seven councils, which is to be known legally as the North East Mayoral Combined Authority (NEMCA) (for copy of report see file of minutes).

In Moving the report, Councillor R Bell, Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Finance explained that the report set out the next steps, process and requirements in establishing a new mayoral combined authority. Agreement of the deal would see the preparation of the statutory order required to implement the proposals. Cabinet were being asked to agree to consent to the in principle to the making of the order and to authorise the Chief Executive to issue formal consent when requested from the Secretary of State and take forward the other arrangements associated with the proposals.

Consent to the making of the order in December or January would allow for the order to be laid before parliament and for it to be made or take effect by March 2024, followed by a mayoral election to be held in May 2024 with the North East mayoral combined authority to come into existence on the 7 May 2024.

In seconding the report, Councillor A Shield, Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Equality and Social inclusion spoke of the 'once in a lifetime' deal which presented a compelling, economic and strategic case for a mayoral combined authority combined with a huge investment fund with potential to significantly leverage growth in the local economy, creating opportunities for neighbourhoods and communities across County Durham and the North East. Councillor Shield placed on record his thanks to officers and leaders of the seven North East local authorities and the Chief Executive of the North of Tyne Combined Authority for all their hard work in developing the devolution deal.

Councillor M Wilkes, Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Neighbourhoods and Climate Change said agreeing the recommendations would be a step closer to having significant new powers and funding for County Durham. Councillor Wilkes explained that the Labour Party's preference had been for 'County' deal, which would have resulted in less funding, and a single individual with control over a billion pound budget and hundreds of services. Councillor Wilkes felt there was no place for that autocratic form of government for County Durham and was thankful that the deal presented would ensure constructive partnership with other councils to bring about significant funding to the region. The Council's Joint Administration and the devolution deal would help make County Durham an economic powerhouse which all partners were working towards in supporting. Councillor Wilkes highlighted the need for the current government and all future governments to further devolve powers and critically, funding to ensure that both the new mayoral combined authority and all North East local authorities achieved their ambitions for both the County and the region.

**Resolved:**

That the recommendations in the report be approved.