

## **Appendix 2**

### **Durham County Council – Item 9: North East Combined Authority Devolution Deal: A poll for County Durham**

#### **Methodology for conducting the poll**

- A postal poll of all County Durham electors
- The postal ‘pack’ that each elector would receive to consist of:
  - A letter from the Leader
  - A leaflet comprising information prepared by the University of Durham to give sufficient background information to enable electors to take part in the poll
  - A series of poll questions prepared by the University of Durham
  - A return envelope and details of how to complete the poll by post or on-line according to elector preference
- An ‘end-to-end’ service is currently being procured whereby an independent third party would print and post the packs, scan and analyse returns by post or on-line and prepare a report on the results
- Safeguards are in place to prevent electors from completing the poll by both postal and on-line means.

#### **Timeline**

9 December 2015	Decision to conduct poll in the manner set out in the Council report and in this appendix
16 December 2015	Award contract to third party (tbc)
11 January 2016	Mail out of packs commences – staggered over a few days
14 January 2016	First packs received by electors
8 February 2016	Poll closes
24 February 2016	Council meeting

#### **Cost**

The cost of the poll comprises two main elements – fixed costs based on developing, designing, printing and posting the poll and variable costs based on the size of the response and how many electors choose to post their response rather than respond on-line.

Assuming a 20% response, in other words, broadly in line with mayoral or PCC turnouts, with a fifth of respondents choosing to reply on-line, the cost is expected to be approximately £200k. A response in line with local government election turnouts would cost approximately £230k.

### **Leaflet**

The University of Durham were contracted to develop succinct, clear and independent background information to provide appropriate context for electors to take part in the poll. The content which would be formatted into a leaflet with appropriate illustrations is attached as appendix A.

### **Poll questions**

The University of Durham were contracted to develop appropriate questions from which it would be possible to elicit the views of electors on the devolution deal. The content, which will be formatted into an appropriate, scannable format is attached as appendix B.

### Should County Durham sign up to the North East Devolution Deal?

#### What do you think?

The Government wants to devolve some powers and resources to the North East. That would mean that more decisions about spending on public services would be made here, rather than by the Government in London. It could also help to strengthen our economy and increase the number of jobs.

But if we agree to this Devolution Deal we would have to make some changes. In particular, the Government says we would have to have an Elected Mayor and Combined Authority for the North East area.

The seven local Councils in the area, including Durham County Council, recently signed a *proposed* agreement to go ahead with this deal. But that isn't a final agreement. At Durham County Council we will not make a final decision about this until we've consulted the public. **We need to know what you think.**

#### What's on offer?

Over the last few months, the seven local councils - in Northumberland, Tyne and Wear and Durham - have been working more closely together. They have formed an organisation called the 'North East Combined Authority' led by the seven Council Leaders.

This Combined Authority has been having discussions with the Government about devolving powers and resources to the North East area. Similar discussions have been taking place in other parts of the country – and other deals will soon follow.

The Government is offering:

- To give the North East new opportunities to support businesses and create more jobs. That includes giving the North East an extra £30 million a year to set up an Investment Fund to help business growth.
- To let us develop our own plans to improve post 16 education and training so that people have better skills and better prospects.
- To let us take more decisions ourselves about transport investment, particularly public transport.
- To enable us to do more to identify opportunities for investment in new housing.
- To give us more say over how money from the European Union is spent in the North East.
- To enable us to review health and social care provision and develop plans to improve and integrate services so that people receive better care.

These proposals offer quite a limited amount of devolution. Most public services would be unaffected. But the Government says that these proposals, if agreed, could lead on to more devolution in the future.

As part of the Devolution Deal, we would have to have an Elected Mayor and Combined Authority for the North East area. The Mayor, to be elected in 2017, would chair the Combined Authority, with a Cabinet made up of the seven Council leaders. The Mayor and Combined Authority would take decisions about spending on the devolved services across the area.

### **Why this matters**

The Devolution Deal would not lead to big changes in the way Councils are run, at least in the foreseeable future. Durham County Council would continue to operate as it does now. Many decisions would still be made by the Government in London.

### **But it is important to all of us - and we need to make the right decision about whether to go ahead.**

There are advantages and disadvantages. Under the Devolution Deal, more decisions would be taken in the North East, rather than London. But it may also mean that, in the future, some decisions would be taken at the regional level, by the Combined Authority, rather than at the County level.

In some parts of the country, devolution may mean that Elected Mayors would have certain powers in relation to the Police and Fire services. But that is not expected to happen in the North East. It would, in any case, be difficult to do here -- because County Durham's Police and Fire services also cover Darlington (which is part of a separate Tees Valley Devolution Deal).

The Devolution Deal would give the North East an extra £30 million a year. That would be spread across the whole North East area and would include the costs of the new Mayor's administration. And, meanwhile, the money we get from the Government to run Council services is expected to continue to fall – we are going to have to continue to cut Council spending on local services, whatever we do.

If we in Durham decide not to be part of this, the Devolution Deal would probably go ahead anyway, with the agreement of the other North East Councils.

### **The choice for Durham**

**We need to know what you think so we can make the right decision. That is why we are having this consultation. This leaflet is being sent to every elector in County Durham so that everyone has a chance to hear about the Devolution Deal and tell us what they think.**

**This leaflet is from Durham County Council. We have sought to explain the Devolution Deal as clearly as possible. More details are on our website, [www.durham.gov.uk](http://www.durham.gov.uk).....**

## Appendix B

### Tell us what you think....

1. The Devolution Deal would mean that more decisions about spending on public services would be made in the North East, rather than by the Government in London. Do you think that devolving some power and resources to the North East would:
  - Be a step in the right direction?
  - Make little or no difference?
  - Be the wrong thing to do?
  - I don't know
2. If we agree the Devolution Deal we would have to have a North East Elected Mayor. The Mayor would be directly elected by voters across the North East area and would chair the Combined Authority, made up of Council Leaders. It's not yet clear how powerful the Mayor would be. *If the Deal goes ahead, how powerful should the Mayor be? Do you think the Mayor should be someone who:*
  - Has quite a lot of power and influence – perhaps coming to be seen as someone who represents the voice of the North East area?
  - Has limited power and influence—someone who chairs the Combined Authority but does not have a major role representing the area?
  - I don't know
3. The Devolution Deal would only cover some issues – some aspects of business support, post-16 education and training, transport, and housing. *If the Deal does go ahead, do you think we should then try to get additional powers and resources devolved to the North East?*
  - No, I wouldn't want to see more devolution
  - I'm not sure -- it depends, let's wait and see
  - Yes, I would like to see more devolution
  - I don't know
4. The Devolution Deal is intended to improve our economy and create more and better jobs. But do you think it will make much difference? *If the Deal does go ahead, do you think it will:*
  - Help to bring more prosperity and more jobs to County Durham
  - Have little or no impact on prosperity and jobs in County Durham
  - Lead to less prosperity and fewer jobs in County Durham
  - I don't know