

**ARUNDEL TOWN COUNCIL**  
**DEVOLUTION CONSULTATION - DRAFT RESPONSE**

**Final online submission date: Sunday 13<sup>th</sup> April**

*Timetable*

*Please provide your feedback to the Administration Officers by 27<sup>th</sup> March. This will enable a revised consultation response to be approved at the Town Council Meeting on Thursday 10<sup>th</sup> April. The draft response may be modified following the ADALC conference on 31<sup>st</sup> March and/or the presentation by Dawn Hudd at our April Council Meeting.*

**Consultation questions**

For each question are asked to indicate whether

*Strongly agree - Agree - Neither agree nor disagree - Disagree - Strongly disagree*

*Don't know - Prefer not to say., and to explain our answers.*

**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?** *(The Combined County Authority comprises the council areas of West Sussex, Brighton and Hove, and East Sussex -see map at the end of this document)*

<b>Strongly Agree</b>
<b>Explanation</b> As a predominantly rural area, though with significant urban conurbations, Sussex and Brighton have issues and opportunities that will be far better addressed by having strategic leadership across the whole county. They are impossible to deal with under the current, fragmented, separate governance of East Sussex, West Sussex, and Brighton & Hove.  To take only one example, travel within and across the territory, by bus and rail, is difficult, resulting in residents and visitors needing to use their cars for almost all trips, to the detriment of the narrow streets of historic towns and villages, health, and the environment. An overall, county-wide strategy for public transport and active travel could deliver improvements in all these areas.

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

Agree
<p><b>Explanation</b></p> <p>The direct election of the Sussex and Brighton Mayor will strengthen local democracy and give the electorate reason to believe that their vote matters – which is not always the case in local elections – because Mayoral candidates will be able to offer themselves for election on a basis of their manifesto strategic plans and will be held accountable for delivering them.</p> <p>In addition, whilst it is not directly within the scope of this consultation, a collateral benefit of giving town and parish councils wider responsibilities, will mean that local decisions are more often made by people living in the communities affected by those decisions. This will increase residents’ interest and engagement with their local town and parish councils, increasing the reach of local democracy and potentially raising the calibre of local councillors.</p> <p>We have two reservations about the governance plans:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>-If each of the constituent councils appoints two representatives to the Combined County Authority, because of differences in the population of the three constituent councils, Brighton &amp; Hove would be heavily over-represented compared to West Sussex.</li><li>-It seems undemocratic to empower the Combined County Authority to give voting rights to unelected non-constituent members. Theoretically, since decisions are to be made by a simple majority, this could enable the Mayor and six non-constituent members to make decisions that were not supported by any of the constituent councils.</li></ul>

**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
<p><b>Explanation</b></p> <p>We believe that the Mayoral Combined County Authority will support the growth of the economy of the area in three ways. It will have greater capability to attract inward investment than the existing councils, and it will be able to establish marketing campaigns across Council boundaries – e.g. for Sussex’s flourishing wine industry, for economic ‘heritage’ tourism. This compares to the current situation, in which the marketing of both Sussex vineyards and historic attractions in towns like Battle, Arundel and Chichester is fragmented between three different councils. An improvement in transport across Sussex will benefit the area by providing people with</p>

easier access to a broader range of educational, training and employment opportunities.

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

**Strongly Agree**

**Explanation**

An improvement in transport infrastructure and highways will improve access to training and employment opportunities which, over time may help to bring the GVA (currently £28, 264) closer to the south-east regional average (£35,845), whilst a Sussex-wide housing strategy may alleviate the problems of young people in finding affordable housing here – over time, a better trained, younger population will result in prosperity being spread over a wider area of Sussex. Health services would also benefit – Arundel battled with the NHS for eight years before it finally obtained a prescription-dispensing pharmacy in its High Street – and currently access to both GP services and NHS dental services are unevenly spread across the county.

**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**

**Explanation**

For the reasons described above, we believe that the establishment of a Mayoral Combined County Authority will improve the delivery of local government strategic services across Sussex & Brighton.

However, the full benefit will only be realised if this development is complemented by the establishment of Unitary Authorities and conferring greater responsibilities on local town and parish councils because it is these, the most local of all councils, which properly understand their communities. We recognise the challenge presented by the current situation in which the capability, leadership and governance of parish councils is highly variable – but the current district and county councils will be aware of this. There may need to be a segmentation of town and parish councils, with different powers and responsibilities being conferred on each council as it develops over time.

**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****Explanation**

The natural environment of much of Sussex & Brighton means that it should be a focal point and provide a template for Nature Recovery in the UK. Strategic support across Sussex and Brighton will build on the many local initiatives already springing up. A county-wide waste and recycling strategy is much needed, and could result in collateral economic benefits.

Green energy providers are already present in the area, with the Hydrogen Plant at Shoreham and the Rampion wind farm. All of this can be amplified with a perspective across the whole area. Green energy and technology could be a potential valuable economic driver in the territory.

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

**Agree****Explanation**

Sussex was a kingdom before the Romans landed, and later became the home of the South Saxons. So establishing a Mayoral Combined County Authority is building on governance and identity that first existed 2,000 years ago. So, the Sussex and Brighton area does have long-standing geographic coherence -even though it may now cover places as different as Gatwick and Arundel.

This raises the question of the name. Why 'Sussex and Brighton', and not 'Sussex'? 'Sussex' is the county – 'Sussex and Brighton' is an invented area.

However, the key to establishing strong local identities is to empower and support parishes within the frameworks of County Councils. The District Councils may have been a convenient way of delivering services, but residents do not identify with them or recognise them as natural communities. Residents recognise that they live in Arundel in Sussex – possibly Arundel in West Sussex – they do not identify themselves as living in Arun District unless they need to deal with them over some service like waste collection. For the process of Devolution to be effective it needs to work at both the broadest level (Sussex & Brighton) and the most local level (Arundel).

