Greater Lincolnshire Devolution – Questions & Answers.

What is devolution?
The Government is offering places in England the chance to have greater responsibility and control over decisions and spending in their region. This process of transferring powers and decisions which would usually be taken by central Government to a more local level or regional level is called devolution.

How do things currently work?
Currently, most spending decisions affecting the Greater Lincolnshire area are made by central Government. Many of the taxes raised locally flow back to central Government for it to redistribute as it sees fit.

Why would places want to have more powers and responsibilities from central Government?
To focus spending on local priorities, and have more of a say over local taxation:

- To work together across services and use local knowledge to get better value for money
- To be more self-sufficient and have more responsibility for the future of the local area.
- For decisions to be taken by locally elected politicians working with their private sector partners on the Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) who better understand local issues, and can be held to account locally.

How do places get these powers and responsibilities?
Individual councils cannot get these extra powers and resources on their own. The Government has been clear that to have the most powers and responsibilities ‘devolved’, places must:

- Consent to the establishment of a new body where decisions about these things would be taken. Technically, this is called a ‘Combined Authority’.
- Have an elected Mayor who would have responsibility over some of the powers and resources gained through a deal and would chair the Combined Authority.
- Have an agreed arrangement by all the places involved, as well as central Government.

What is a Combined Authority?
Combined Authorities are statutory bodies established to carry out powers and responsibilities in an area usually in relation to issues such as economic development, regeneration and transport functions. The idea is that by giving these powers and responsibilities to a single body they can be carried out more effectively.

Doesn’t this just create an extra layer of Government?
It is intended that having a Mayoral Combined Authority would make decision making simpler for new powers in the areas of strategic transport and infrastructure, employment and skills, economic development, business investment and low carbon across the Greater Lincolnshire area.

The Mayoral Combined Authority could take decisions in these areas for the whole of Greater Lincolnshire without having to go to each of the individual councils to have decisions confirmed.

By having representatives from the local authorities and the private sector business leaders involved in decision making, the Mayoral Combined Authority would aim to ensure that the views of both sectors are considered. It would also be clear who is responsible for decisions.

Because the Combined Authority is locally accountable, it will be motivated to deliver specifically to the people of Greater Lincolnshire. In addition, money would be spent in ways that respond directly to the needs of the population. This means more jobs, better roads, improved access to education and altogether a better standard of living.
What will happen to local councils and their services if the devolution agreement is approved?
A Combined Authority would not replace the current councils and their services – it would just provide a decision-making organisation for new powers and enable easier coordination of those new powers with existing powers. It is not a move towards merging councils. There will be no impact on council services as a result of devolution. They will continue to be delivered by local councils.

Why do we need a Mayor to get fully devolved powers from Government?
The Government has been clear that places need an elected Mayor to access devolved powers and resources. We won’t get this funding and new powers without one. An elected Mayor would act as an individual to unite and work across the area, and can be held to account for decisions made locally. Our Governance Review concluded that new powers and responsibilities would best be carried out through a Mayoral Combined Authority.

What will the Mayor and the Combined Authority do?
A new, directly elected Mayor will act as Chair to the Combined Authority and will exercise the following powers and functions devolved from central Government:

- Responsibility for a devolved multi-year local transport budget for the area of the Combined Authority.
- Ability to franchise bus services, which will support the Combined Authority’s delivery of smart and integrated ticketing across the Combined Authority’s constituent councils.
- Oversight of a new Joint Investment and Assets Board to review all public sector land and property assets and help unlock land for housing and employment.
- Ability to make proposals to help take forward large developments or new settlements.

The new Combined Authority, working with the Mayor, will receive the following powers:

- Control of a new additional £15 million a year funding allocation over 30 years, to be invested to boost growth; this is new money specifically for growth projects.
- Responsibility for developing a strategic infrastructure delivery plan which will identify the infrastructure needed to support the increased delivery of new homes.
- Responsibility for chairing an area-based review of 16+ skills provision and devolved 19+ adult skills funding from 2018/19
- To help tackle long-term unemployment in Greater Lincolnshire, the Combined Authority will feed into the national design of the new Work and Health Programme.
- To move with the Government and local criminal justice partners towards a co-commissioning arrangement for services for Greater Lincolnshire offenders serving short sentences.
- To work with the Government, Police and Crime Commissioners, local prison governors and the Community Rehabilitation Companies (CRC) to allow more local flexibility with other local services.
- To contribute to the outcomes from the Water Resources Study and the objectives set out in the resulting Greater Lincolnshire LEP’s Water Management Plan

In addition:

- HM Government will work with the Combined Authority to agree specific funding flexibilities. The joint ambition will be to give the Combined Authority a single pot to invest in its economic growth.

How will the new Mayor work?
The Mayor will chair the Combined Authority. The Mayor and Combined Authority will be scrutinised and held to account by the Combined Authority Overview and Scrutiny Committee(s). The Mayor will develop strategies with the Combined Authority.

- The Combined Authority will also examine the Mayor’s spending plans and will be able to amend his/her plans, if two-thirds of the constituent members agree to do so.
- The Mayor will have one vote on the Combined Authority as will other voting members.
• The Mayor will be a member of the Local Enterprise Partnership recognising the importance of the private sector in local economic growth.

What if the Mayor wants to do things that the CA don’t agree with?
The Mayor will need to consult the Combined Authority on his or her strategies and spending plans and the Combined Authority will have powers to reject certain decisions (if two thirds agree to do so). We have spent many years building strong working relationships across both the public and private sectors and those relationships will stand us in good stead.

Who in Government will oversee the Mayor and what powers will they have?
Locally, the Mayor will be held to account by voters (elections every three/ years) and the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. The democratically elected members of the Combined Authority will be able to amend and veto the Mayor’s budget and strategies with a two-thirds majority. There will be 5 yearly ‘gateway assessments’ by Government (HM Treasury) to look at the impact of our investments on the economy.

Who will get to vote for the Mayor?
It will be the residents of Greater Lincolnshire (from the Humber to the Wash) who get to vote for the Mayor. The vote will take place in 2017.

How much will the Mayor be paid for the job?
This needs to be discussed. No figures have been determined. There are no direct comparisons in existence yet.

What role will the business community play?
Businesses across Greater Lincolnshire have a critical role to play and we’ll continue to work closely with them both as individual councils and as a Combined Authority.

How will this Devolution make a difference?
It will give Greater Lincolnshire a dedicated resource for the long term and means we can invest now and in future on projects which will bring more business investment and more jobs to the local economy. But it is different to the budgets which councils receive to fund core services. The funding is vital for the Greater Lincolnshire economy because:

• It is a commitment for the long-term. A significant boost to future planning and will enable Greater Lincolnshire to have the right people and expertise to deliver the growth
• Because we know funding will be available, we can borrow against it, attract private sector investment and fund major projects like new transport connections which can take years to build and therefore need funding committed for the long term.
• Investing in economic growth is a key way of growing our economy for the long term.

Have you already signed the deal?
Greater Lincolnshire has not formally committed to anything. We have only agreed what is in effect a heads of terms agreement with Government. It does not legally commit either side to anything. We signed it with the clear understanding that we would engage with residents and businesses to find out their views. Once we have done this we will take decisions whether to proceed further.

Is this an end-point for devolution or is there the chance for us to get more powers?
If Councils agree to establish the Mayoral Combined Authority to progress devolution for Greater Lincolnshire, there may be opportunities for the Authority to negotiate for further powers and resources in the future.