

24th November 2015

Deeper Devolution

The ongoing work to develop HIOW's devolution bid has been warmly welcomed by Greg Clark, Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, after he received a detailed presentation last week. The 19 partners nominated a small delegation made up of the Chairman of Enterprise M3 LEP, Geoff French, and five local authority leaders - Cllr Jonathan Bacon (Isle of Wight); Cllr Séan Woodward (Fareham); Cllr Simon Letts (Southampton); Cllr Roy Perry (Hampshire County Council) and Cllr Clive Sanders (Basingstoke) – to travel to London and present the detailed case on behalf of the partnership. The Secretary of State was particularly interested in HIOW's ambition to secure fiscal independence through its business rate proposals and its proposals to improve local transport. He asked that more work be done on the housing plans and future governance options but also assured the delegation that his Department would continue to actively support the development of this bid.

This newsletter considers how we plan to extend the opportunities of devolution to local communities and the wider public sector family through 'deeper devolution'.

What do you mean by 'deeper devolution'?

The current 'devolution agenda' is about devolving powers down from Whitehall i.e. from central government to sub regional areas where groups of local councils work together to manage those devolved responsibilities. 'Deeper devolution' is HIOW's plan to advance the agenda in terms of its breadth and depth so that functions and decisions are taken closer to local communities. The aim is to maximise capacity and deliver better outcomes for local people. Deeper devolution may, for example, involve functions being devolved from the County Council to district councils or from those authorities to local parish councils.



Equally, it may involve spreading the scope of responsibilities more widely to other public sector partners or local voluntary or community organisations across the HIOW area.

How would this be compatible with public service efficiency?

Whilst significant efficiencies are secured by large scale delivery of services e.g. Hampshire's approach to waste disposal, scale can in some cases create its own problems, e.g. through duplication from silo working or standardised service provision that is less responsive to local priorities. HIOW has a wealth of public sector and community organisations well-placed to respond to local needs. Our aim is to increase their involvement in service design and delivery and secure 'economies of scope' through better sequencing and co-ordination of activity.

Deeper devolution should give local communities more say over public services and enable more problems to be tackled at an earlier stage, thus reducing demand on services and increasing local resilience.

How would a devolution deal with central government help?

Whilst we are already exploring ways to devolve functions, increase collaboration, and provide more flexible, locally-led services, a successful deal with the Government would enable us to go further. Government support would enable us to make better use of all publically owned assets, enabling us to increase co-location and to support community based initiatives. For example, we may want to extend Community Hub pilots where multi-disciplinary teams share community buildings and deliver a mix of targeted and universal services relevant to the local area, improving access to services for local residents.

Could 'deeper devolution' be applied to key themes within the bid?

Yes – deeper devolution will vary according to the place and the issues. However, key themes such as the delivery of an integrated transport system and our ambitions around health and social care could benefit from wider and deeper engagement through the 'deeper devolution process'. For example, community transport is a vital part of HIOW's transport system and thrives best when it responds to local needs. Most minibus based services, such as Dial-a-ride and Call & Go services are provided under contract to the County Council, with some services jointly funded and designed by district councils. A range of options are now being explored by the County Council and districts which could further devolve down decision making and funding responsibilities to local areas.

Engaging communities in the design and delivery of future services is crucial if HIOW is to provide more efficient and locally responsive services. This is particularly so for discretionary services which, given the squeeze on local government funding, might otherwise be at risk. Future examples could

include more community engagement in some environmental elements of highway maintenance, as well as engagement in maintenance of Rights of Way, countryside sites, and the running of community library services.

Above all 'deeper devolution' is about applying the principle of subsidiarity and supporting and empowering HIOW communities to come forward with solutions that help meet local priorities.

Focus of the next newsletter

The next newsletter will focus on HIOW's ambition to retain 100% business rates and relinquish grants in order to be financially independent of central government and able to shape its own destiny.

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