

FULL COUNCIL – WEDNESDAY, 21 SEPTEMBER 2016**Written questions from Councillor Dave Stewart to Cllr Jonathan Bacon - The Leader of the Council and answers from Cllr Bacon**

1. Can you inform full council what your views are about the Hampshire Local Authority Consultation?

The Hampshire consultation is primarily about the reorganisation of local government in the Hampshire area and suggests that a unitary Hampshire model will deliver savings in the organisation of local government, although this is only based on a modelling exercise. Residents of the Isle of Wight will recall this is what happened to the Island in 1995 and the Isle of Wight does seem to have struggled financially ever since. It is really a question for Hampshire and their residents how local government is organised there although my personal view is that greater localism rather than more centralisation is the better approach to take.

2. Can you confirm what engagement or communication you have had with the Leader of Hampshire County Council regarding a) the Hampshire Local Authority Consultation which involves options relating to the Isle of Wight and b) the Isle of Wight Councils views on the Hampshire Local Authority Consultation?

To be clear the only options in the Hampshire County Council consultation that impact on the Isle of Wight are those which create one combined authority for Hampshire and the Isle of Wight OR two combined authorities; Solent and Heart of Hampshire. Neither impact on the sovereignty of the Isle of Wight Council and there is no compunction to join any Combined Authority. Members will be aware that the Council has discussed both options and is clear that both could be acceptable should if they ensure the Isle of Wight's financial sustainability. Currently the first option is dormant due to the actions of Hampshire County Council and the other one has been subject to an eight week consultation period on the Island in the three authorities that has just concluded.

In July of this year I received correspondence from the Leader of Hampshire County Council which set out, "It is exclusively Hampshire residents we are consulting and I happily give you that assurance. We have no interest in interfering with the sovereignty of your own council(s). We would be delighted if you could make the same commitment in return".

Whilst Hampshire County Council was invited to comment on the Solent Combined Authority consultation its The Leader of Hampshire County Council has accordingly not sought my or the council's views on the county council's consultation exercise. In any event I am not aware that this Council has formed any such view to be communicated.

3. Can you confirm what engagement or communication you have received from the Leader of Hampshire County Council regarding a) the Hampshire Local Authority Consultation which involves options relating the Isle of Wight and b) the Leader of Hampshire County Councils' views on the Isle of Wight Solent Deal Consultation?

See the answer to question 2 in relation to 'options relating to the Isle of Wight'.

I received a letter dated 8 September from the Leader of Hampshire County Council which I have circulated to all Members. Although dated 8th September it was actually received by email on 15th September. A response to this letter is being prepared by the partners. Ultimately it will be for the Secretary of State to satisfy himself, that the consultation is sufficient for the purposes of drafting the legislation to create the combined authority.

4. Can you confirm what undertakings, assurances or guarantees have been given about Government funding for the proposed Solent Combined Authority from the Government or from the Leaders of Southampton and Portsmouth Councils for the next a) year b) five years c) thirty years and will you

publish all notes and correspondence relating to this so members can be better informed before the October full council meeting?

The offered government funding was set out in the draft devolution deal document proposed for the Solent 8 authorities and received from government in March this year. To quote the document, "The Government agrees to allocate an additional £30 million per annum of 75% capital and 25% revenue funding for 30 years, which will form part of and capitalise the Solent Combined Authority single pot". The only caveat being that the funding is subject to five yearly gateway reviews to confirm it is being spent appropriately. As I have expressed in stakeholder meetings the guarantee is as certain as any guarantee offered by the current government.

5. Can you confirm what undertakings, assurances or guarantees have been given about Government funding for the proposed Solent Combined Authority from the Government or from the Leaders of Southampton and Portsmouth Councils in the event of additional District Councils joining the authority after establishment for the next a) year b) five years c) thirty years and will you publish all correspondence relating to this so members can be better informed before the October full council meeting?

See the answer to question 4; there are no indications the funding will increase in a Solent 8 model.

6. Can you confirm what functions will become the responsibility of the proposed Solent Combined Authority and what estimates have been made of the costs of those over the next a) year b) five years c) thirty years and will you publish all notes and correspondence relating to this so members can be better informed before the October full council meeting?

The functions are set out in the draft devolution deal document proposed for the Solent 8 authorities and received from government in March this year. These have been set out in full in information provided to members in formal papers and the briefing note sent out in July. Discussions with government officials were on the basis that the funding for these functions would transfer with responsibility. The detailed discussions about how this would happen in practice can only be concluded when the principles of the deal are agreed.

7. Can you confirm what undertakings, assurances or guarantees have been given that funding for the proposed Solent Combined Authority will not affect future funding for the Solent Local Enterprise Partnership or any other source of growth funding currently available or under consideration from the Government or from the Leaders of Southampton and Portsmouth Councils for a) the Isle of Wight b) any other member of the combined authority and will you publish correspondence or notes relating to these matters so members can be better informed before the October full council meeting?

I have had no discussions in this regard and therefore cannot comment. My understanding is that agreeing a local growth deal is an entirely separate process independent of the devolution agenda and no indication has been given to the contrary. You will be aware that the Solent Local Enterprise Partnership is one of the proposed constituent members of the Solent Combined Authority and has written in support of the governance review.

8. Can you confirm what impact the formation of the Solent Deal Combined Authority will have on future funding for the Island Roads PFI Contract which currently ensures our roads are upgraded and maintained for 25 years and will you confirm what undertakings, assurances or guarantees have been given by Government to this future funding and publish all notes and correspondence relating to this so members can be better informed before the October full council meeting?

As set out in para 26, page 7 of the Solent Draft Governance Scheme, 'no powers are intended to be ceded to the Mayoral Combined Authority by the Constituent Authorities'. I have therefore had no discussions in this regard and there is no reason to believe that a Solent devolution deal or Combined Authority would have any impact on this contract.