

## Solent Devolution: Public Consultation

### Results of Activity: Isle of Wight

Isle of Wight Council held a number of different activities across the public consultation timespan.

Public consultation closed on the 18<sup>th</sup> of September, but IOW Council has received comments beyond this date.

The consultation activity had been promoted a number of different ways:

- Through the council's own social media platforms on Facebook and Twitter.
- Promotion through the Isle of Wight Council website iwight.com with front page prominence.
- Press releases.
- Responses to queries received by email from the Solent Deal website
- Bus shelter poster campaign – the adverts were placed on a number of Island-wide bus shelters on a rotation basis.
- Radio campaign on Isle of Wight Radio
- The use of the supplied printed materials at local libraries and County Hall reception.
- Through advertisements and articles in the local newspaper, the Isle of Wight County Press.
  - Also included 'letters to the editor'
- Advertisements in the local Island-Wide community magazine 'The Beacon.'
- Advertisements online on local news and community website 'On the Wight.'
- Through 2 drop-in (open-air) sessions with members of the public.
  - Esplanade, Cowes during Cowes week. (50 engagements)
  - St Thomas Square, Newport (90 engagements)
- Through a number of meetings, with different stakeholder groups as listed below:

| Session                | Who                        | Date              | Time        | Venue             |
|------------------------|----------------------------|-------------------|-------------|-------------------|
| NHS discussion session | Cllr Bacon & John Metcalfe | Tues 30 August    | 16:30-18:30 | Conference Room 5 |
| Staff (1)              | John Metcalfe              | Weds 31 August    | 10:00-11:30 | Westridge         |
| Staff (2)              | John Metcalfe              | Weds 7 September  | 8:30-10:00  | Conference Room 4 |
| General Public         | Cllr Bacon & John Metcalfe | Weds 31 August    | 16:30-18:30 | Medina Theatre    |
| Town & Parish Councils | Cllr Bacon & John Metcalfe | Thurs 1 September | 16:30-18:00 | Conference Room 5 |
| Businesses             | Cllr Bacon & John Metcalfe | Mon 5 September   | 17:00-18:30 | Conference Room 5 |
| Voluntary              | Cllr Bacon & John Metcalfe | Mon 5 September   | 18:30-20:00 | Conference Room 5 |

## **The comments from the meeting of the general public on the 31<sup>st</sup> of August:**

Q: How much additional costs will the Mayor be vs London Mayor?

A: London Mayor receives substantial allowances and other costs relative to the running of his office. The only additional costs of a mayor anticipated on the governance review are for travel and subsistence. If the Mayor is to receive an allowance, this will have to be set by a specially appointed Independent Remuneration Panel, who will make recommendations to the Combined Authority.

Q: If other authorities join, how will that affect the allocation of funds?

A: No allocation of funds is yet agreed, but it will be based upon the current need and readiness of projects across partner areas. The Isle of Wight currently has very little by way of capital funding to facilitate regeneration, so this is an opportunity for greater certainty of that.

Q: Why does the LEP get a vote as an unelected body?

A: Because it has a responsibility for (and received funding direct from the government for some of these activities) economic development, infrastructure, transport and on the Growth Board, and it is only on these things that it has a vote – not on any other matters being considered by the Combined authority.

Q: Why is there not unanimity on all votes? It appears that on some issues that are not subject to a unanimous vote, the Island could miss out.

A: Unanimity of votes is required for the major decisions, particularly those relating to the agreement of plans and the setting of any levies. As a result of this consultation consideration could be given to extending the need for unanimity all functions of the combined authority.

Q: How will the ferry company presence on the LEP board be dealt with in respect of transport infrastructure issues/decisions?

A: Therefore, the LEP will be representing the views of the LEP board, and not the views of a single member of the LEP. The LEP then holds a single vote on the Mayoral Cabinet; the other posts are held by the local authority areas and Mayor.

Q: Will prudential borrowing be considered by the SMCA?

A: This may be considered.

Q: How is the independence of the office of Mayor obtained?

A: The Mayor will be directly elected by the population covered by the combined authority and hence will be independent of any of the constituent authorities as they will be accountable only to the voting population.

Q: Surely with larger electorates, the cities will be more likely to get a Mayor elected than the Island – how is this fair?

A: The Mayor will be elected by a vote across the full population of all three authorities. Each vote will carry equal weight.

Q: What about the initial proposals of a Hampshire and IOW deal?

A: The government seem more inclined to do a deal with the Solent area, as a more viable economic area than the whole of Hampshire.

Q: What will be the benefit to the cities of having the Isle of Wight included in the Solent Deal?

A: The financial sustainability of the Island has to be assured in any devolution deal with government.

Q: £30m doesn't go far when the Island is facing a £22m revenue gap – how will this be addressed?

A: The Solent Deal is only part of the solution to meet the Isle of Wight's financial challenges. A new regeneration team is shortly to be recruited, that will focus on generating big, bold and ambitious plans for economic growth and sustainability. The creation of this team will enable more capacity to work on schemes to benefit the Island, and also bid for other funding, which the authority has not been in the position to do in recent times, due to the austerity agenda and cuts to its budget.

Q: Will businesses be included in the process when thinking about local growth needs?

A: Businesses have been included in the consultation process and will continue to be a key stakeholder for the SMCA.

Q: With council elections due in May 2017, what impact would a change in leadership have on a SMCA deal?

Others:

- What is the next stage after consultation?
- When will we know what share of the initial £30m we will get?

### **Comments from Chief Executive John Metcalfe from the same event**

Devolution - Public Meeting (31 August)

c40 people attending includes 3 councillors

Areas of discussion and views expressed

1. The Island has nothing in common with the two cities - the needs of Islanders are different to those in the cities and because it is smaller and with different needs its needs may get overridden by the requirements of the two cities (David Vs Goliath). Big concern that the cities will vote in support of one another and effectively freeze the island out of securing benefits for the IW. Equally that the cities might vote for something on the IW that is not in the IW best interests (although it may be for the CA. Eg Red Funnel scheme in East Cowes). Concern at why the cities would want to work with the IW at all.

2. The IW is sufficiently different to the mainland to have its own deal similar to Cornwall - why can it not have the same deal?
3. Being short of money is no reason to enter the combined authority - what is the strategic rationale and the benefits to the IW community from doing it. We need to be able to 'sell' the vision for the improvements the deal will bring. No real confidence that the pooling of business rates will be of benefit and the cities acting in collaboration may stop any benefit of growth in their areas coming to IW.
4. The DEM is seen a 'risk' to the IW securing benefits from the deal/CA. The IW electorate is smaller than the cities so the assumption is that the DEM will come from one of those areas. If that is the case what is to stop the DEM pushing policies and projects for the area from which they have been elected and even if they do not how can the CA overcome that perception? The PCC is quoted as an example of a directly elected position who has no profile on the IW at all and in fact has removed the representative that was based here. DEM has to be able to have significant influence with government and support the Island case that has never been properly heard or supported by government. It might be better if the DEM was independent of the area.
5. General view is that the person on the street doesn't want the deal or understand it.
6. People do not understand why Hants CC does not want to be involved - do they know something we don't? Although some views that Solent is better than HIOW as it is more of a functional economic area and it is arguable whether we have anything in common with the more prosperous north Hants area.
7. The £30m investment fund is insufficient for the area and not a reason to go in to the deal. Concern that although the funding is offered for 30 years this may not be deliverable by government over the long term. What guarantees will there be that the IW would get its fair share of the funding and how could this be allocated before the CA comes into being. The IW needs more investment than that offered in the deal to support inward investment grow businesses and upskill its workforce building on the strengths in its existing businesses.
8. SLEP should not be a voting member - it's not democratically elected and there is no support for it on the IW (primarily based on the E Cowes project) - what has I done for the IW? The board are seen as property developers that will not add any value to IW
9. CA deal needs to improve the transport links to the IW, it can't function without easier access and a fixed link should be at least considered as part of the CA work (cost of travel a significant issue).
10. Need to look beyond business growth to supporting the vulnerable in society. Businesses may be persuaded to locate here because of the low rates of pay but what good will that do the people working for them, business gets lost of help and support - help people.
11. Mixed views about the value of a referendum - acknowledge that it is a very complicated subject and the lessons of the Brexit vote indicate that if the subject

can't be explained simply it is hard to get a balanced view through a referendum. Although some were of the view a referendum should happen regardless.

12. Acknowledgment that there are IW elections in May and that this could unpick the decisions made now about the CA if the IW had not made any commitments at the point of the election (I've could IWC withdraw if the CA had not yet done anything).

### **General comments from Helen Wheller regarding the St Thomas Square drop-in.**

- I engaged with 47 people about the proposals.
- In the main, I would suggest that opinion was positive and that 'being at the table' was important for the Island.
- People were unsure of what 'hand the Island would be dealt' and worried about PCC/SCC taking the lion's share of funding.
- In terms of extra funding, people were keen that we got some and they were keen to see economic growth and jobs/training on the Island improved through the process.
- Some people voiced that 'we've been here before' and again, worry that the Island will become left out of proposals due to size.
- In the main, people were happy to be involved and keen to share their views via the survey.
- I only spoke to one person that was against the proposals, having considered them in recent weeks.
- Most people approached did engage. Very few walked away without having listened to the 'nutshell' proposals.
- Most people were from the Island, although a few from Portsmouth/Southampton and beyond were also interested to engage

### **In terms of the printed survey documents a number of around 50 were sent over for input**

### **In respect of emails generated from the Solent Deal website**

#### **Queries and response to 'M'**

- First relates to housing - would the Isle of Wight retain the current number of around 500 houses a year to be built on the Island or would there be a new figure allocated to the Solent deal area ?

- Second relates to transport - would there be any possibility of transport funding being spent on anything to do with a fixed link \_? (I am very anti-fixed link and think that any funding spent on this would harm the uniqueness of the Island )
- And just one other - does the IWC have any priorities at the present time for infrastructure projects on the Island if the deal proceeds?

Housing allocations are based upon market areas, and the Island is a single market. There is therefore no requirement for the council to provide for need that arises within another market area (or authority) and the likely impact of a combined authority on the housing number delivered on the Island is therefore limited by this. Any change in housing number would be as a result of increased need arising from the Island.

There are currently no plans for a fixed link between the Island and the mainland although you will appreciate that this is an issue upon which local feeling is mixed. Any infrastructure project that planned would need to have a business case that demonstrated that investment was value for money.

The Island Infrastructure Task Force has been set up to work specifically on identifying and prioritising infrastructure projects. It is anticipated that there will be an initial report from the Task Force published by the end of the year which will give an indication of projects after which further detailed work will be required to set out the business case for individual projects.

### **Email to 'G'**

Thank you for your email regarding the lack of a meeting on Solent Devolution in Ryde or Sandown. At this time we have been unable to organise a meeting at these locations, although we are holding a meeting in Newport. I appreciate the difficulties that this presents you.

Information regarding the Devolution process is already on the Solent Deal website and I have attached a Frequently Asked Questions document that supplies you with further information.

### **Email comments from P**

In principal, I welcome the 'Solent' initiative.

Shared resources usually find savings and greater efficiency.

The danger is, that as the ' poor relation' we must ensure we get our fair share, and this, used to create a positivity to opportunities for the Island.

Economic opportunity would need to be prioritised and an agreement of achievability agreed with our partners.

The Island will always be a difficulty with conventional manufacturing but, as we proved in the past, we can be successful by focusing in specialist areas, for example composites, the Maritime industry, computer industry, gaming etc.

To achieve success, we must have political support, which sadly has been missing in recent years.

We should not and must not develop an economy which relies on 'handouts.' We are part of the wealthy South East and should be supported in finding our way to contribute to this economy and not expect permanent subsidies.

We can and will grow, as an Island economy, by attracting successful businesses,

providing 'proper' and not low wages, and an education system that does not, as it does now, detract from locating here.

We should also, always seek better quality and more user friendly transport links, redress the ever ageing population, try to establish a maritime based or, something similar, specialty campus for one of our mainland universities and therefore creating opportunities for more young adults living here and all the 'industries' that come with such a facility. We have a wonderful and underused site at the previous Bembridge School for this.

There are many more ideas but these are a few to consider.

The Isle of Wight is a great place to live and work and with the Solent opportunity we really could take it from the relatively economically poor area we have today to something successful and exciting.

Hope this helps, and thanks for giving me the opportunity.

### **Response received from Ventnor Town Council**



consultation  
response 160916 VTC

This is Ventnor Town Council's response to the current consultation on the Solent Mayoral

#### **Combined Authority proposal.**

##### **1) PREAMBLE**

a) The authority for this response is Minute 127/16 of the Town Council Meeting of 12 September 2016.

b) The decision was preceded by an initial discussion of the Devolution proposals at the Town

Council meeting of 12 August followed by an informal discussion by Members and Clerks on 5 September and by further discussion at the 12 September meeting based on Report 61/16 for that meeting.

##### **2) RESPONSE**

a) The Town Council's resolution in Minute 127/16 was that the participation of the Isle of

Wight Council in the proposed Solent Mayoral Combined Authority be supported and the Isle of Wight Council be asked to address and progress a number of significant matters.

b) Those matters are:

i) The arrangements for the democratic accountability of the Mayoral Combined

Authority (MCA) need to be developed. There should be an established process whereby the Leaders of the three Councils and the members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee report back to their Councils in meetings open to the public. There should also be a place for Isle of Wight Town and Parish Councils on the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to enable accountability to these bodies as well.

ii) It needs to be clear whether the MCA will take over responsibility for the Island Roads contract.

iii) If the MCA is to take over powers which will become available when the Bus Services Bill becomes law, then the Isle of Wight Council and Town and Parish Councils need to be involved in discussions about improvements to individual routes.

iv) Although the encouragement of advanced manufacturing is to be welcomed, the setting of economic development priorities should, from the beginning, recognise the importance of tourism, agriculture and small firms providing services to the Isle of Wight economy and ensure that investment also occurs in these sectors.

v) There needs to be greater clarity on the distribution of business rates and, in particular, how the redistribution of business rates both nationally and within the MCA

will operate. If the national redistribution merely replaces the loss of Government grants then the critical financial position of the Isle of Wight Council will not be improved. It is difficult to imagine that a redistribution of business rates within the MCA can greatly help the Isle of Wight Council given the funding that Southampton and Portsmouth Councils need to deal with problems in their area.

### 3) GOING FORWARD

Ventnor Town Council is committed to assist the Isle of Wight Council in any way it can in securing the outcomes identified in this submission and asks to be kept informed of developments in respect of them.

#### **Gurnard Parish Council**

Gurnard Parish Council has decided that councillors will make their own representation to the devolution deal, but they were unanimous in their opposition to the elected Mayor for the whole area as it would reduce local accountability.



Can you please feed this into the main consultation document, as we have missed the deadline?

**Chief Executive John Metcalfe Comments on key themes**

1. Marginalisation of the Isle of Wight
2. Independence of the Mayor
3. Securing financial sustainability for the Island
4. Securing a 'fair share' of the investments fund
5. Long term security of the funding offer
6. A separate Isle of Wight deal
7. No involvement from Hampshire
8. Too complicated for the average person to follow/understand
9. Social benefits Vs business benefits
10. Impact of the IW elections – timing of any agreement

**Facebook**

Please note the Council is will be analysing facebook content later this week

**Analysis**

Not yet undertaken