

FULL COUNCIL - WEDNESDAY, 22 FEBRUARY 2017

Written question from Stephen Hastings to Councillor Dave Stewart, Leader and Executive Member for Strategic and Community Partnerships, and Public Protection

Is the Solent Devolution Deal now dead in the water?

Response

The Solent devolution deal in its current form has been the subject of a number of meetings both locally and in London at the Houses of Parliament. These meetings have involved the leaders of all three Unitary Authorities as well as leaders from district councils and MPs from across Hampshire and the Isle of Wight. The current administration under my leadership have made it consistently clear that we do not support the Solent devolution deal in its current form - a position that was supported by the Isle of Wight Council - although not honoured by the previous administration.

The leader of Portsmouth Council has subsequently acknowledged that the Solent deal in its current form is effectively dead - albeit the proposals supported by the previous administration remain with Government.

Supplementary

If so will the next potential deal have some guarantees for the Isle of Wight?

Response

One of the key concerns about the Solent deal was the lack of any guarantee of any future funding being secured for the Island and although I have always made it clear I support in principal the policy of devolution - I would want any future proposal to include a clear guarantee of benefit for the Island - something which I made clear to the previous leader when I suggested he should seek to negotiate a 'triple lock' on funds to ensure the Island was not outvoted by the two other authorities involved.

Events have now moved on and it is clear other forms of partnership engagement are now the focus of attention by local authorities across Hampshire, along with transport and infrastructure considerations. I believe the Island should engage in these discussions but again make it clear that any future agreement must be in the best interests of the island - that is what our residents expect and that is what we will honour.