

Compilation of Official Responses to the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Devolution Consultation from Parish Councils.

Please note that a number of parish Councillors responded to the consultation as individuals. The responses shown here are those where the submission stated that it was 'on behalf of' a whole parish council.

The following responses were submitted via the on-line questionnaire.

Submission From:	Grafham Parish Council
1. To what extent, if at all, do you support or oppose the principle of devolution?	Strongly Oppose
Further comments on question one	
<i>"No value and not required."</i>	
3. To what extent, if at all, do you support or oppose the idea of transferring powers and funding down from Government and then District, City and County Councils becoming part of a Combined Authority for Cambridgeshire and Peterborough?	Strongly Oppose
4. To what extent, if at all, do you support or oppose the election of a mayor in order to access what is in the proposed Cambridgeshire and Peterborough devolution deal?	Strongly Oppose
Any other comments:	
<i>"As a Parish Council we strongly oppose to the proposal due to the fact that it adds another layer of decision making that is unnecessary and a waste of funding."</i>	

Submission From:	Trumpington Yess' Association
1. To what extent, if at all, do you support or oppose the principle of devolution?	Strongly support
Further comments on question one	
<p><i>"The Trumpington Yess' Association welcomes the principles of the devolution proposals. Trumpington is at the cutting edge of growth in Cambridge and South Cambridgeshire, with 3700 homes under construction within our small area and the Cambridge Biomedical Campus on our doorstep. It is essential to our local community that national and local government continues to invest in affordable and council rented housing, the local transport infrastructure and services and local community and education services. We can see that the proposals will strengthen that investment by devolving decisions to a more appropriate local level. - - We support the geographic area proposed for the authority which is much more suited to our area than the previous three-county proposal. We also support the proposed investments in Cambridge council rented housing, affordable housing, transport infrastructure and transport services and the concept of an elected Mayor and the Combined Authority to make the necessary decisions. In the future, we hope that more powers will be devolved by the government, if the new arrangement proves successful. - - In our discussions, some reservations were expressed about the proposal for an elected mayor. However, we accept that the Combined Authority should be led by a person directly elected by the people of Cambridgeshire and Peterborough - and should not be a person drawn from the membership of the Combined Authority,</i></p>	

having been appointed to it by a council responsible for only one part of the authority's area. The necessary checks and balances to ensure a mayor does not have excessive power, which are an important part of the proposal, should be further developed."

3. To what extent, if at all, do you support or oppose the idea of transferring powers and funding down from Government and then District, City and County Councils becoming part of a Combined Authority for Cambridgeshire and Peterborough?

Strongly support

4. To what extent, if at all, do you support or oppose the election of a mayor in order to access what is in the proposed Cambridgeshire and Peterborough devolution deal?

Strongly support

Any other comments:

"We support the proposal that the Combined Authority should have responsibility for a non-statutory spatial plan and supplementary planning documents which would be material considerations in addressing planning applications. Decisions on these vital matters are taken remotely in Whitehall at present, on the basis solely of national requirements such as the National Planning Policy Framework, without essential regional/sub-regional mitigation. - - It is important that the scrutiny and accountability arrangements for the Mayor and Combined Authority are strengthened by, for example, ensuring that the authority's audit committee has necessary independence including ability to commission independent advice as needed, and adequate public accountability arrangements in their own areas for Leaders acting as members of the combined authority. - - With respect to Section 5, we would argue that the quorum provision is too low, requiring only five members of the Combined Authority - including the Mayor, presumably - to be present for a decision to be valid, which makes it possible for the Mayor plus two other members to make up a simple majority. We can see the argument for a quorum of 5 out of 9, but 6 would make much more sense in these special circumstances. - - Finally, we are concerned that the Summary document on the consultation website gives an inaccurate impression of the detailed decision-making requirements, for example, in the way in which Section 3 of the Summary describes the Mayor's powers."

Submission From:

Orwell Parish Council

1. To what extent, if at all, do you support or oppose the principle of devolution?

Tend to oppose

Further comments on question one

The document as presented suggests there might be benefits to the area in terms of future investment into the region. This inward investment is implied as happening due to the economic development focused around Cambridge. It is presented as a way to develop the area but ignores the legacy of under investment in education and infrastructure around the county. Any monies that can address this under investment and then provide the additional resources for growth should be encouraged. The document only talks of additional resource linked to more housing rather than how the current under investment for local communities is to be addressed. It also unclear why this additional investment requires the setting up an extra tier of government and no other alternatives are proposed – for example reconstituting a county council with full accountability to the electorate for the old county of Cambridgeshire. This investment may not be best served by the creation of a fourth tier of government with its attendant bureaucracy. There are references to scrutiny and references for accountability to elected bodies. Surely any elected body should be accountable to the electorate and open to debate. By creating a scrutiny committee, the mayor is still open for challenge, in the same way the county council is and was – this seems to suggest moving back to an older county authority – with the current check and balances – which may require reform rather than being sidelined. - The proposed fourth tier also appears to place the majority of decisions for infrastructure and education

within the mayoral cabinet. The decision making does not seem to be responsive to local representatives for example, page 6 of the document states decisions are “subject to the majority including the vote of the Mayor, unless otherwise set out in legislation, or specifically delegated through the Authority’s Constitution”. Surely if the statutory powers already exist within county structures then the extra burden of bureaucracy is not needed, and if any decision is claimed to be a majority only if the mayor votes for it then it is not truly a decision that might reflect local concerns. - As outlined, the powers that are supposed to respond to local considerations will be insulated from local people by extra layer of government and a cabinet rather than the responsiveness of simply returning to the old Cambridgeshire county boundaries with elected officials debating and deciding on issues - in effect implementing the principles of good democratic government outlined in the questions below. Unless this is a bid to create a unitary authority structure for the region. - The outline of the development of services across the region states that there will be reference to local plans – the very local plans that have been suspended. Assuming these plans are responsive to local needs it seems that it would be possible for an older county area to deliver these without the need for a mayor. Communication to central government could be through the Leader of the Council, a change in job description rather than an increase in tiers of government. - The finance sector also raises concerns as the amount of investment in housing seems to imply more concrete and an unlocking of other investments through economic growth. Such economic growth should lead to increased funds for the area which could be developed and used within the older county council authorities using local plans. The housing issues suggest that if the need is recognised it could be delivered within the area without the need for further bodies. - On balance it seems this is an extra layer of bureaucracy with limited accountability to local needs. The positive element is the recognition that we need investment infrastructure but this does not require an additional layer of government – investment using local plans should be able to deliver these benefits. –

3. To what extent, if at all, do you support or oppose the idea of transferring powers and funding down from Government and then District, City and County Councils becoming part of a Combined Authority for Cambridgeshire and Peterborough?	Tend to oppose
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4. To what extent, if at all, do you support or oppose the election of a mayor in order to access what is in the proposed Cambridgeshire and Peterborough devolution deal?	Tend to oppose
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Any other comments:

“Whilst we would not want to be part of a wider Cambs, Norfolk and Suffolk area, we are supportive with re-creating the old Cambridgeshire, but do not see why we need an elected mayor to run it, just the existing structures.”

Submission From:	COUNTRY LAND AND BUSINESS ASSOCIATION (CLA)
1. To what extent, if at all, do you support or oppose the principle of devolution?	Not Answered
Further comments on question one	Not Answered
3. To what extent, if at all, do you support or oppose the idea of transferring powers and funding down from Government and then District, City and County Councils becoming part of a Combined Authority for Cambridgeshire and	Not Answered

Peterborough?	
4. To what extent, if at all, do you support or oppose the election of a mayor in order to access what is in the proposed Cambridgeshire and Peterborough devolution deal?	Not Answered
<p>Any other comments:</p> <p><i>“RESPONSE ON BEHALF OF THE COUNTRY LAND AND BUSINESS ASSOCIATION (CLA)</i></p> <p><i>The CLA has approximately 32,000 members, who own or manage over half the rural land in England and Wales. As a membership organisation, the CLA support landowners and rural businesses by advising them on how best to protect and maximise their assets.</i></p> <p><i>CLA members in Cambridgeshire represent a wide range of backgrounds and rural businesses; however all have an interest in the development and support of a strong rural economy. It is vital that any devolution settlement adequately addresses the local needs of rural businesses and the rural community in a transparent and accountable manner.</i></p> <p><i>Whilst the proposed devolution agreement would inject significant investment into Cambridgeshire, disappointingly there is no mention of any investment into rural areas. Much of Cambridgeshire can be defined as rural and the significant input of rural businesses and communities to the Cambridgeshire economy should not be overlooked. It is imperative that rural areas are not forgotten in the devolution process. An urban-centric approach will not be able to channel the potential of the rural economy and create the conditions conducive to economic growth.</i></p> <p><i>It is reassuring that the proposal clearly identifies the importance of the LEP in this process. There has to be a genuine partnership between the Combined Authority and the Local Enterprise Partnership so that the right structures are put in place. If there is no joint approach in seeking to harness the economic and social benefits devolution can deliver it will undoubtedly be the case that the opportunities that arise will be lost. There is no room or appetite for duplication of efforts and the creation of more forums for discussion which can so often deliver very little.</i></p> <p><i>Finally, the proposal acknowledges the importance of improving connectivity in the county. Good broadband increases the competitiveness of any business. It is the driver for information sharing and commerce: businesses with poor broadband connections are at a disadvantage. The CLA is seeking a universal, fast, reliable and affordable broadband service that meets the needs of modern-day rural businesses. Better connectivity will mean that businesses can compete more effectively, through better management, research, marketing and communications. Furthermore, in rural communities with no affordable broadband, a technology-reliant, younger generation is becoming educationally and socially disadvantaged. Therefore it is essential that the intention of the Combined Authority to improve broadband connections is upheld and prioritised.</i></p> <p><i>Connectivity does not however solely relate to broadband. Mobile coverage is still poor in many rural areas of Cambridgeshire. Good mobile coverage, as with broadband, is essential to the running of modern day rural businesses and life in rural communities. With a lack of investment into this important service businesses struggle with day-to-day activity, visiting tourists are deterred, those working outside in rural areas are left without direct contact to emergency services, and those living in rural areas are socially disadvantaged. Therefore, the Combined Authority needs to prioritise improving connectivity in Cambridgeshire, not only in terms of broadband, but also in terms of mobile coverage.”</i></p>	
Submission From:	A South Cambridgeshire Parish Council. Name of the Parish Council not included within the submission by the clerk.
1. To what extent, if at all, do you support or	Strongly support

oppose the principle of devolution?	
Further comments on question one	
<i>In potentially difficult economic circumstances the Parish Council believes there could be advantages in having greater local influence and control on local policy and decision making including investment in local services and local development. Devolution though is an opportunity for central government to shift the balance of power and responsibility (shifting the blame) and there is some potential for tension between centrally determined policy and local decision making</i>	
3. To what extent, if at all, do you support or oppose the idea of transferring powers and funding down from Government and then District, City and County Councils becoming part of a Combined Authority for Cambridgeshire and Peterborough?	Strongly support
4. To what extent, if at all, do you support or oppose the election of a mayor in order to access what is in the proposed Cambridgeshire and Peterborough devolution deal?	Tend to support
Any other comments:	
<i>Need to understand how the combined authority proposes selecting a candidate for mayor and how the CA will engage effectively with local communities to involve them in local democracy and transparent decision making.</i>	

Submission From:	Godmanchester Town Council
1. To what extent, if at all, do you support or oppose the principle of devolution?	Neither support nor oppose
Further comments on question one	
<i>“Godmanchester Town Council remains neutral about the principle of devolution but is opposed to many of the matters of detail in the proposed scheme. The questions as set do not allow the council to express its full views”.</i>	
3. To what extent, if at all, do you support or oppose the idea of transferring powers and funding down from Government and then District, City and County Councils becoming part of a Combined Authority for Cambridgeshire and Peterborough?	Tend to oppose
4. To what extent, if at all, do you support or oppose the election of a mayor in order to access what is in the proposed Cambridgeshire and Peterborough devolution deal?	Strongly oppose
Any other comments:	
<i>Godmanchester Town Council note that Town and Parish Councils are not mentioned in this debate and that they should be included in local decision making. The Council agreed the following points</i>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>• There was consensus that the scheme was flawed and probably unnecessary.</i> 	

- *An Elected Mayor would add a further layer of bureaucracy and was unnecessary.*
- *Town and parish Councils were not referred to.*
- *The promise of £20 million over the next 30 years was not credible and did not in any case really offer enough for the kind of projects envisaged.*
- *Some premised projects such as road and rail improvements could not be limited to this region and would in any case rely on cooperation with other authorities.*

Submission From:	Eversdens Parish Council
1. To what extent, if at all, do you support or oppose the principle of devolution?	Strongly Oppose
Further comments on question one	
<i>“We are highly sceptical about the role of a directly elected mayor. It seems the range of subjects the new mayoral authority can deliver on is very limited and we see little to assist rural communities. We doubt the financial wisdom of installing another layer of local government at a time when the overall funding to local government is being cut and we are unsure how the new authority would add value.”</i>	
3. To what extent, if at all, do you support or oppose the idea of transferring powers and funding down from Government and then District, City and County Councils becoming part of a Combined Authority for Cambridgeshire and Peterborough?	Strongly Oppose
4. To what extent, if at all, do you support or oppose the election of a mayor in order to access what is in the proposed Cambridgeshire and Peterborough devolution deal?	Strongly Oppose
Any other comments:	
<p><i>“We, the Eversdens Parish Council have discussed the proposal for a directly elected Mayor for Cambridgeshire and Peterborough. We understand that the new authority will have a paid mayor with considerable powers. -</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>- We are highly sceptical about the role of a directly elected mayor. It seems the range of subjects the new mayoral authority can deliver on is very limited and we see little to assist rural communities. We doubt the financial wisdom of installing another layer of local government at a time when the overall funding to local government is being cut and we are unsure how the new authority would add value.</i> <i>- The potential costs of the proposed change would need to be factored against this. It seems that the mayoral authority would manage quite a small additional budget for housing and establish a new university in Peterborough. We are not convinced we need an extra degree awarding university in the area.</i> <i>- Much new housing is already planned. We can see the merits of closer collaboration between councils on developments that cross administrative boundaries. We would like greater participation in local decision-making rather than another administrative tier.</i> <i>- The proposal fails to set out a clear business case for devolution. As a result, we cannot see how the new authority will add value.</i> <i>- The Parish Council is strongly opposed to an elected mayor and the bureaucratic and financial complexity which it will inevitably entail.”</i> 	

Received as a separate letter



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Cambridgeshire and Peterborough East Anglia Devolution Proposal
Histon & Impington Parish Council

August 2016

Introduction

The Council has responses over and above Support/Oppose to most questions, so this response uses the question numbering and headings, but includes the Council's response with those questions rather than all at the end.

Over-riding comment

Has to be that the consultation timing is poor (holiday season and too short), is seeking responses from people who are struggling to come to terms with the questions, let alone the answers, and where residents are largely disengaged from the process.

In that context, the earlier, lightweight, consultation run by South Cambridgeshire attracted responses from no more than 80 people - out of a population of around 150,000 - a response rate of 0.05% can hardly be described as engaged.

All Councils should have done more (drop in sessions etc etc) to ensure that residents knew what they were voting for!

1. To what extent, if at all, do you support or oppose the principle of devolution?

The Council fully supports the principle of devolution, as long as this is Central Government downwards to local decision makers (and possibly County/District downwards, too). The Council does not support powers from District/County being passed up to higher level decision makers.

2. Why do you say that?

The devolution deal at the Cambridgeshire & Peterborough level is correct, will allow for innovation, and will provide the means to ensure that the economic powerhouse that is centred on Cambridge will continue to prosper. It will allow for the adjustment of current Government policies and approaches (eg starter homes) to better fit with local circumstances.

Powers being passed to higher levels - that is not devolution!

3. To what extent, if at all, do you support or oppose the idea of transferring powers and funding down from Government and then District, City and County Councils becoming part of a Combined Authority for Cambridgeshire and Peterborough?

The Council strongly supports a new combined authority, with powers and funding down from Government.

As well as a representative from the LEP a representative from the remaining (omitted) tier of Local Government, Parish Councils, must be included.

4. To what extent, if at all, do you support or oppose the election of a mayor in order to access what is in the proposed Cambridgeshire and Peterborough devolution deal?

The Council would only support IF (and only if) this was the only way the transfer of the powers and funding would be acceptable to Central Government.

There is no clear case as to why the mayoral role is essential; and adding yet a further level of administration to the complexities that we have at the moment, does not simplify processes, and complicates and obscures governance and administration for residents.

The Council sees no reason why the necessary functions could not be handled by one of the Council leaders.

5. To what extent, if at all, do you agree or disagree with each aspect of how decisions would be made?

In all cases, and for all decisions, decisions must require the support of the majority plus two.

Note that a simple majority, given the diverse sizes of the bodies involved could lead to decisions being taken which are not in the interest of the majority of residents. Simple majority plus two encourages the development of consensus. Plans take time to come to fruition during which political leaders may

change. A consensus approach is more likely to produce plans that are agreeable to a wider range of people and so not be subject to so many changes of direction during implementation

6. How important, if at all, is each of these in holding the Combined Authority and Directly Elected Mayor to account?

An independent scrutiny committee that has the power to ask the Mayor and other members of the Combined Authority to attend a meeting to answer questions. This would be made up of councillors from participating councils who are not members of the Combined Authority itself.

The Council views this as essential

The scrutiny committee having the power to review any of the decisions made by the Combined Authority

The Council views this as essential

An audit committee which would monitor the Combined Authority's finances

The Council views this as essential

Cambridgeshire and Peterborough electors being able to directly elect their mayor – through the ballot box

The Council views this as not at all important

The Combined Authority will be open and transparent – where it's expected that most decisions will be made in public

The Council views this as essential

A Government assessment every five years

The Council views this as not at all important

Furthermore

It is essential that the combined authority has mechanisms in place to communicate with, and listen to, the public.

Consultation by its constituent bodies is not sufficient

7. For each of the following, to what extent, if at all, do you support or oppose these decisions being made locally, by the Combined Authority and Mayor just described, rather than by the Government in Westminster?

Deciding how to spend funds to build new homes, including affordable homes

Deciding how to spend funding on infrastructure projects, such as road and rail improvements

Creating a transport plan for Cambridgeshire and Peterborough that helps to coordinate road, rail and bus services

Deciding how a budget is spent to maintain roads in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough

Deciding how funding is spent on apprenticeships in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough

Reviewing further education in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough to help provide young people aged 16 and over with the skills that local employers need

Deciding how funding is spent on adult education and skills training in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough for people aged 19 and over to help produce a workforce with skills that local employers need

Joining up health and social care services (such as elderly care) so that they better support people

Working with local councils to develop a new strategy for housing and development in line with existing local plans

Designing a new service to support those with a health condition or disability and the long-term unemployed back into work

Working with local partners as part of an integrated employment service to ensure residents have better access to the job market

Reviewing all land and property held by the public sector and creating a list available for development in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough

The Council strongly supports the devolution of further powers (as in the example list above).

However, devolved powers must be that - and Central Government must not interfere once powers and funding have been delegated.

8. To what extent, if at all, do you support or oppose Cambridgeshire and Peterborough, as part of a Combined Authority with a Directly Elected Mayor, deciding on how to spend this infrastructure funding?

The Council strongly supports local decision making on infrastructure spend.

However, a prescriptive list when local decision making is being proposed is a contradiction in terms.

9. To what extent, if it all, do you support or oppose Cambridgeshire and Peterborough, as part of a Combined Authority with a Directly Elected Mayor, deciding on how this housing fund is spent?

The Council strongly supports local decision making on the spending of the housing fund with the caveats:

Planning authorities should determine the relevant policies for the housing developments arising

Developments must be part of a properly produced and reviewed spatial strategy

10. To what extent, if at all, do you support or oppose this proposal?

The Council supports the spending of a further £70 million fund to provide more rented housing in, *and around*, Cambridge City