

Your say on Suffolk-Norfolk devolution deal

Suffolk and Norfolk residents are being asked for their views on a proposed devolution package which would include electing a mayor for the two counties.

The majority of councils across Norfolk and all in Suffolk, along with the New Anglia Local Enterprise Partnership have supported the deal and agreed to ask the public for their views.

The consultation will run **until 23 August**.

Key elements of proposed Norfolk/Suffolk deal are:

- £25m funding each year for the next 30 years (£750m) to support economic growth, development of local infrastructure and jobs
- £130m investment over five years to support the building of new homes across Norfolk and Suffolk
- Over the lifetime of the deal around 200,000 homes could be built
- Control of a £225m transport budget for the next four years
- Control of an existing c£20m annual adult skills fund to ensure the training offer matches the needs of local businesses and the local labour market
- Control of an existing c£2m annual apprenticeship grant for employers

The deal provides for the creation of a combined authority, made up of the leaders of each of the district, borough and county councils involved, and a directly elected mayor. The Combined Authority would decide the most effective and efficient level to deliver services to ensure the best possible outcomes for communities.

About the Mayor

- The Mayor would be elected by residents in the council areas that have voted to approve devolution
- The Mayor would not be able to make decisions alone and would require the support of a certain number of members on the CA to progress his or her proposals
- Existing civic mayors across Norfolk and Suffolk would not be affected
- Locally, the elected mayor would be held to account by voters (with elections every four years)
- There would also be an Audit Committee and an Overview and Scrutiny Committee set up to review spending and decision making respectively
- No decision has yet been taken on how much the elected mayor would be paid

As part of the consultation, people are being asked for their views on more decisions being taken locally, rather than at central government. They will be asked if they support the creation of a combined authority chaired by a mayor for the two counties, how decisions should be taken and how a combined authority and mayor should be held to account for the decisions they take.

People can have their say by visiting www.eastangliadevo.co.uk and completing the online survey or the hard copy version. The website also includes further information about the proposed deal and the role of the proposed combined authority and mayor.

In addition, Ipsos-Mori will also be carrying out more than 3000 phone surveys across the two counties to ensure decision makers have a representative sample of views.

Those areas that approved the proposed Devolution deal are:

- All Suffolk borough, district and county councils
- New Anglia LEP
- Norfolk County Council
- Broadland District Council
- Kings Lynn and West Norfolk
- South Norfolk District Council

However, Norwich City Council, Great Yarmouth Borough Council, Breckland and North Norfolk District Councils voted against the proposals

In Suffolk, councillors will vote in October on whether to give the scheme their backing once the responses from the consultation are known.

Critics of the proposal argue that it does not give the new combined authority any real powers or freedoms to operate and much of what happens will still be dictated by Whitehall. There are also worries that the new system adds further unnecessary expense and bureaucracy at a time of financial constraint.

Suffolk community transport re-launched

Suffolk's Community Transport system has been relaunched as Connecting Communities. The tenders for the county's community busses had to be re-negotiated because they were due to expire and the county council took advantage of that exercise to stream line the services to make them more efficient.

The operators across the county are now collaborating to keep administration costs down so, for example, they are sharing training sessions.

They have also made their services simpler to understand for users – with one phone number in each district to call. For us it is 01440 712028

They also aim to run their services for longer each day – hopefully from 7am-7pm, Monday to Saturday. The key improvements in our area are

- Centralised telephone booking line with email journey request facility.
- Overall extension on booking and service hours.
- Greater focus on making connections with bus and rail services.
- An IT booking and scheduling system.
- Marketing strategy to engage with young people via Facebook & Twitter.
- Developed links with health related transport provision
- Developed opportunities to provide transport for Samuel Ward Academy students

See [www. Suffolkomboard.com](http://www.Suffolkomboard.com) for more information

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