

REPORT OF THE
Chief Executive
PART I

1. ENGLISH DEVOLUTION WHITE PAPER

- 1.1. The Government published its English Devolution White Paper on 16 December 2024 setting out a programme of devolution and Local Government reorganisation across England.
- 1.2. The vision outlined by Government is that all parts of England are to be part of regional Strategic Authorities that have a regional Mayor. These Strategic Authorities, working in a similar way to existing Mayoral Combined Authorities will have responsibility for driving growth and shaping public services across wider regional geographies covering strategic leadership of key place shaping responsibilities such as economic regeneration and growth, strategic planning, skills and employment and strategic transport
- 1.3. A report has been prepared for Cabinet setting out the implications and opportunities for the County Council of the English Devolution White paper, and it is appended here for Council to consider proposals for committing to devolution, local government reorganisation and requesting the Secretary of State to delay the County Council's election in May.

RECOMMENDATIONS

With reference to the report annexed to this Council report, it is recommended that the County Council agrees and recommends to Cabinet that:

- a) The County Council is committed to the creation of a Combined Authority across the wider region incorporating Isle of Wight Council, Portsmouth City Council and Southampton City Council, in accordance with the expression of interest submitted to the Deputy Prime Minister on 30 August 2024.
- b) The County Council will request to be included in the Devolution Priority Programme (DPP) as a fast track to delivering devolution for our area.
- c) As a consequence of joining the Devolution Priority Programme the County Council is committed to delivering Local Government Reorganisation across our area. Local Government Reorganisation proposals will be submitted to Government by Autumn 2025.
- d) As a consequence of joining the Devolution Priority Programme the County Council will request to Government a 12 month postponement of the County Council elections due to take place in May 2025 to provide a necessary stable

platform on which devolution proposals can progress at pace in 2025 to ensure the benefits of devolution for the area are realised as quickly as possible.