

**To: Berkshire Prosperity Board
16 September 2024**

Devolution – Expression of Interest

1 Introduction

- 1.1 To advise the Board of the letter to be sent to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) in response to their invitation to express an interest in devolution.

2 Supporting Information

- 2.1 On 25 July 2024, Will Garton, Director General of Local Growth, Communities and Devolution, wrote to councils inviting them to indicate their preferred geography for devolution, following consultation with neighbours. He suggested that this should be informed by the need for devolution agreements to be tailored to sensible economic geographies, taking into account available data such as travel to work and advanced travel to work areas. Existing public service and partnership arrangements are another relevant factor. Initial views on adopting the mayoral model were also invited.

- 2.2 The response on behalf of Berkshire's six authorities is appended to this report along with Mr Garton's letter. A covering letter will also set out that:

- The newly established Berkshire Prosperity Board is a joint committee where the Leaders of the six Unitary Councils meet quarterly with the specific goal of driving economic growth within the Berkshire area. Our ambitions align closely with the government's key areas of focus for devolution, including health and inequality, net zero initiatives, infrastructure, sector development, education and skills, and social, accessible, and affordable housing.
- We are well-positioned to begin formal discussions with the government on the most effective devolution model for Berkshire. We are, therefore, seeking early engagement with ministers and officials to start outlining arrangements that will benefit the entire Berkshire area and the wider UK.

- 3.2 It is also proposed that the Expression of Interest is accompanied by a statement emphasising Berkshire's significance to the national economy, our strengths, areas for growth and development, and the barriers we need to overcome. Collectively, we are united in our commitment to delivering for both the national and local economies, building on our superb foundation.

- 3.3 Subject to any comments the Board may have, it is proposed to finalise the wording of the letter and statement with the Chair of the Prosperity Board in consultation with all Berkshire Leaders.

3 Equalities Impact Assessment

3.1 Not applicable.

4 Strategic Risk Management Issues

4.1 There are no implications.

5 Climate Change and Ecological Impacts

5.1 There are no implications.

Background Papers

None

Contact for further information

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