

COUNTY REPORT SEPTEMBER 2016 TO ROTHERFIELD PARISH COUNCIL

Long Vehicle Restriction in Rotherfield

As previously reported the matter went to Lead Member last week and was approved so good news!

The required TRO's will be advertised this Autumn and the restriction in place next Spring.

Boundary Changes

The LGBC have now published their final recommendations. The boundary for the Division including the majority of Rotherfield Parish remains as per the previous proposals. They have accepted the name change I proposed from Wadhurst to Wealden North East.

Budget

The budget process has started as will be challenging as the County has to find savings of a further 17.3M in 17/18 having saved £78m over the previous 5 years.

Devolution

Leaders Meetings re Devo

The devolution discussions are still continuing and the meeting last Monday made progress.

Given the size of the 3SC area the base funding from Treasury is likely to be more than the standard £30m for 30 years and it is hoped to be over £100m given the need for infrastructure.

Whilst supporting the devolution from Westminster to local control I am concerned with reference to the appointment of a Directly Elected Mayor (DEM). Any Combined Authority will need its own governance but a DEM normally comes with extensive executive power and limited ability for Councils to influence or overrule the Mayor.

The document below is series of FAQ that that 3SC have published which I hope gives members the basic information and may stimulate further questions. I have added some narrative at the end to further update

Devolution in East Sussex, West Sussex and Surrey – frequently asked questions

Who makes up the 3SC?

The 3SC covers the county areas of East Sussex, West Sussex and Surrey, with a population of over 2.5 million. The economy of the 3SC has a combined GVA of £74 billion, bigger than Wales or Greater Manchester.

The devolution proposition is being developed by: 3 County Councils; 23 District and Borough Councils; 3 LEPs; businesses; 12 CCGs; 2 police forces and 2 PCCs; one Combined Fire Authority; South Downs National Park; and other wider public sector partners.

Why are 3SC pursuing a devolution deal?

The councils in the 3SC area are pursuing a devolution deal with Government and their partners to improve outcomes for local residents and businesses through economic growth, enhanced productivity and a transformation in public service delivery. This seeks to create more jobs, improve infrastructure and boost skills within 3SC. Achieving this requires a greater influence and control over infrastructure and skills provision which is central to our devolution proposal.

Therefore, we are taking advantage of the Government's commitment to devolving powers and resources to a local level, which allows authorities to make collective decisions about key services which will benefit the whole area.

What have we asked for from Government?

Government has an important part to play in enabling the 3SC to maintain and grow its contribution to the national economy through a devolution deal. In particular the 3SC are seeking: the pooling of relevant national funding streams locally; the ability to share the financial benefits of growth; Government support to help develop new relationships with key national agencies; speedier release of public land; exemptions from a number of regulations; and Government involvement in the co-design of public services.

What is the relationship between county, district and borough councils in this process?

This is a joint venture between county, district and borough councils. We will jointly explore what might be possible; working differently and taking on powers and resources from the Government. It is about authorities at all levels working together on a sensible strategic geography to enable powers to be devolved from Central Government to Local Government. We will use those new powers to build on the partnerships that work well locally. We are also committed to a parallel programme of double devolution between the county and district councils in each county area.

Is this taking power from existing councils?

No. The aim of the 3SC is to bring decision-making closer to communities and businesses. By working together, all the partners in the 3SC will have more influence on the national policy and funding they need to tackle the vital issues facing the area – including a creaking infrastructure and recruitment challenges for business. These are decisions that are best made by councils, not central government.

Is the area too big?

No. The scale of the 3SC area puts it in a strong position to act on areas such as skills, infrastructure and public service transformation. It also provides the opportunity to test and quickly scale up work in these areas. The 3SC is the UK's gateway to the rest of the world through its close proximity to Gatwick and Heathrow. The required improvements in rail and

road links to fully harness the opportunities this brings cover the whole of the 3SC and are not confined to one small area.

Why are we just copying Greater Manchester? Isn't this a bandwagon that might not be right in the SE?

The work started by Manchester deal is pioneering and sets a level of ambition for Local Government that is game changing. Devolution within the UK has however been around a lot longer. Localism has also been a feature of recent Government policy. The early introduction of the Cities and Local Government Devolution Bill in Parliament demonstrates the new Government's commitment and the need for pace if we are to get a fairer deal for the residents, communities and businesses in Sussex and Surrey. It would be a failure of leadership not to explore the learning from Manchester and other examples to understand the potential benefits for our residents.

Playing games about regional committees won't do anything for residents?

The proposal deals with the important things that matter to residents and the aim is to bring decisions about them closer to residents, involving people who know their areas and what they need. A devolution deal has the potential for the 3SC to bring together what are currently disparate and misaligned sources of funding into coherent strategies to deliver much better results on the ground for individual residents, families and businesses. There are real improvements in value for money, service quality and resident benefit that would follow this was got right and would put residents in the driving seat for 21st century services. It's precisely because we see the direct benefits for our residents and businesses that it is so keen to explore these opportunities.

Does it mean we will have a mayor for Surrey and Sussex? Does it also mean a combined authority proposition? Couldn't we offer a less formal arrangement or a Joint Committee?

We intend to seek very substantial powers and responsibilities from Central government and national bodies. It is clear that Central Government will want assurance about delivery and accountability in exchange for new powers and funding. The governance arrangements need to be appropriate to both provide the assurance that the Government will want and the accountability we owe to local people.

There will be a governance review as part of the proposal and we are committed to both a mechanism for collective binding decision-making and accountability. This will ensure that decisions on prioritisation are taken collectively.

The 'Governance Review' will examine options for how all 26 local authorities would engage in the planning, approval and scrutiny of collective business to achieve binding decisions at the right level and with due process.

Securing equal representation through scrutiny will reflect the need for transparency and democratic challenge without imposing excessive obstacles to effective decision making. The design principles for effective scrutiny will be: transparency and openness; equality of involvement; and simplicity of process (no new burdens).

What does it mean for other partnerships?

We are all involved in range of non-coterminous partnerships and it will need to be worked out how best that landscape evolves. The 3SC believes the focus must be on the difference that can be made first, then ensuring the governance is appropriate rather than starting with structures.

Sussex without Brighton & Hove CC?

Brighton & Hove City Council has submitted its own Greater Brighton Economic Board devolution bid. We will work with them where this makes sense, for example, there is already joint work underway on infrastructure, skills and transport.

So when will all this start to make a difference? Won't it take years?

We are moving quickly to put a set of concrete proposals together and aiming for a deal with Government by March. If a deal is agreed on this basis, we are confident that, in five years' time, we will have delivered: at least 34,000 new homes; a firm programme for improving crucial transport corridors; a reduction in hard to fill vacancies and skills gaps; and a proven shift to preventative activity with a consequential reduction in costs.

We will also focus on long-term investment in economic capital, including infrastructure, skills and knowledge that will lead to a modern transport system, a world-class digital infrastructure and a highly skilled workforce.

What happens next?

Our 3SC Devolution Proposals were discussed with Baroness Williams, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government on 14 January. We are now developing our proposals in more detail through discussions with government officials and partner organisations with a view to discussing a draft devolution agreement at a second Ministerial meeting.

End of FAQ's

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