

Report of the Cabinet Member
Policy, Corporate and Asset Management

1. Introduction

I have been asked to report by Councillor Greenslade, as follows:

- *on the devolution agenda for the South West', and*
- *on actions taken to lobby for the retention of the Royal Marine bases in Devon.*

2. Joint Committee - Devolution

The County Council voted to join the Heart of the South West Joint Committee at the beginning of this year. The Joint Committee is made up of the following voting members: 2 County Councils, 2 Unitary Councils, 13 Devon and Somerset District Councils, and 2 National Parks. It also has the following non-voting members: HotSW LEP and 3 Clinical Commissioning Groups. As the Council is aware the partnership was originally established back in 2015 to seek a devolution deal with the Government. Members will note that, with the exception of Cornwall Council, the Government has only entered into devolution deals with mayoral combined authority areas and the Joint Committee membership were clear that they did not feel a mayoral arrangement was appropriate for this area. The Government has been promising to publish a 'Devolution Framework' which will guide the 'deals' non-metropolitan and non-mayoral areas can expect from Government. This has been delayed but we have been advised by Secretary of State for MHCLG that it will appear in the Autumn Statement. I will, of course, report back to Council if this Devolution Framework does appear.

In the meantime the Joint Committee has, in collaboration with the LEP Board, approved and agreed its Productivity Strategy and is now working towards a Delivery Plan. Members will be aware that in the Terms of Reference for the Joint Committee, its main purpose is to work with business and communities to drive up our low levels of productivity and deliver prosperity for all through these measures. This Strategy and our ongoing negotiations with Government, through senior civil servants, form the basis of our asks of Government that we would hope to formalise into a deal. Through the Joint Committee we are in negotiation with civil servants on a range of 'asks' in support of our strategy. For example, members of District Councils will be aware that the Joint Committee is running a Housing Summit in the region in the Autumn with a view to engaging with Housing Ministers and Homes England to explore a 'housing deal' for our area. We have also had a favourable response from the National Infrastructure Commission regarding a joint study of our infrastructure needs. As Members are aware the National Infrastructure Commission is an agency established by Government to advise on spending priorities.

These are just two examples of the work of the Joint Committee and the areas of a potential 'devolution deal' with government. The Council is reminded that any draft deal would be subject to the approval of each member Council.

3. Royal Marine Bases

As Councillor Greenslade will be aware, the Council previously agreed that, following the conclusions of the Defence Select Committee, the County Council join with Plymouth City Council and write to the Secretary of State for Defence expressing support for the retention of Royal Marine bases in Devon and Plymouth. The letter would also include concerns about the effect any reductions will have on the economy of Devon and Plymouth. In addition, I also said at the Council meeting that the letter would be all party. With the review still not complete, it is premature to make representations at this stage.

Councillor John Hart

Cabinet Member for Policy, Corporate and Asset Management