



BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MEETING OF THE COUNCIL

THURSDAY 9TH JUNE 2016, AT 6.00 P.M.

PARKSIDE SUITE - PARKSIDE

SUPPLEMENTARY DOCUMENTATION

The attached papers were specified as "to follow" on the Agenda previously distributed relating to the above mentioned meeting.

7. The Government's Devolution Agenda - West Midlands Combined Authority Potential Membership (Pages 1 - 6)

A report is attached on responses received to the public survey about potentially joining the West Midlands Combined Authority.

K. DICKS
Chief Executive

Parkside
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7th June 2016

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Bromsgrove District Council West Midlands Combined Authority Survey 2016

Summary of Responses

The public of Bromsgrove were surveyed during the period 20 May 2016 through to 5 June 2016:

West Midlands Combined Authority

Bromsgrove District Council will consider whether to join the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA).

Last year, after public consultation with our residents, we decided not to formally consider it as a Council as we felt there wasn't enough information about the Combined Authority and we wanted to look elsewhere, locally, to see if there was another deal on the table, which it doesn't seem in the short term there will be. It is clear that Government are now working on larger geographic footprints than single counties without a mayoral model. The Worcestershire Leaders have recently met to consider next steps and we agreed that many of the things contained in the Worcestershire devolution document we can and will continue to pursue.

We will continue to work together to see what can be done without a devolution deal and assess whether a different configuration or arrangement could achieve our desired outcomes whilst continuing to monitor the progress of those deals already agreed and the evolving position of the Government on deals outside of the City Mayor model.

We have been approached by the Chairman of the Shadow West Midlands Combined Authority as to whether the Council wants to consider becoming a Non Constituent Member of the WMCA. The WMCA has progressed significantly and is the biggest Combined Authority in the country and is growing. It includes the seven constituent councils of Birmingham, Coventry, Dudley, Sandwell, Solihull Walsall and Wolverhampton plus the three Local Enterprise partnerships (LEPs).

The WMCA launched its Statement of Intent in July 2015 and since then has been joined by Cannock, Nuneaton & Bedworth, Redditch, Tamworth and Telford and Wrekin Councils.

Non-constituent membership provides the opportunity for collaboration across the region, a seat at the table to engage with and influence the direction and priorities of the Combined Authority. Non-constituents play a full role in the business of Combined Authority Shadow Board.

Stratford and Shropshire County have also now voted to be part of the WMCA and will join officially later in the year. Warwickshire are voting later this month (May) with a recommendation to approve. Other non constituents are the Police Crime Commission and West Midlands Fire Service.

Agenda Item 7

Together the partnership works together to move powers from Whitehall to the West Midlands and our locally elected politicians who know this region best. Individually councils will deliver local services and retain their identity and sovereignty but on the big decisions will have the resources to work together.

WMCA's first devolution deal (DD) was signed in November and was the largest one nationally to date and will unlock over £8bn of investment over a ten year period and see, in essence, 500,000 new jobs, developed skills, better transport, improved housing and crucially public sector reform for the region.

DD highlights include:

- *The £4.4bn HS2 Growth Strategy to ensure maximum economic benefit from the HS2 investment. This will include the HS2/UK Central interchange, Curzon Master plan, expansion of the metro network to the Black Country and HS2 stations, UK Central infrastructure package, including new transport links to Coventry and enhancing the HS2 supply chain.*
- *Additional transport investment of £1,670m to support the UK Central Coventry scheme, other transport investment and highways maintenance of the key route network.*
- *A £500m housing investment fund (mainly locally funded). This will support the development of new homes*
- *A £200m land remediation fund. This will enable brownfield land to be brought back into use for housing and employment*
- *A £1bn Collective Investment Vehicle (locally funded) to help companies invest and grow.*
- *A £50m Innovation Centre*
- *A £30m employment, education and skills programme*

The WMCA is also a key partner of the Government's Midlands Engine ambition which will bring together partners to work more closely to achieve greater regional economic growth and productivity improvement. The Engine will cover 86 local authorities and 11 LEPs and covers 17.9% of the UK population, with an economy worth £222bn. It also contains two core cities, 11.5 million citizens, 27 universities and three international airports.

This is why we think it is worth considering again.

Please let us have your comments.

The survey was made available on the council's website, in paper format at Parkside and disseminated to community groups. A press release was issued promoting the survey in the local press.

There were a total of 31 responses to the survey received by the closing date; of these 1 was a duplicate entry. The breakdown of the 30 unique responses is as follows:

In favour – 10 Not in favour – 19 Other* – 1

* Other refers to a response which did not state whether they were in favour of joining or not

Agenda Item 7

Responses have been grouped by theme.

The main themes from respondents in favour:

Theme
Don't want to miss out
Local decision making/greater say/devolved power
Commonality with West Midlands
Will benefit/help development of Bromsgrove
Benefits of pooling resources
Benefit of regional model

Other comments referred to how the combined authority model was forward looking and could be a more effective body for the people of Bromsgrove than current arrangements allow. However, there was also an acknowledgement of the importance of the relationship with the rest of Worcestershire.

The main themes from respondents not in favour:

Theme
Loss of influence/voice/local decision making powers
Loss of identity
Stay as we are/prefer other options i.e. Worcestershire/N. Worcs
Nothing in common/different issues/priorities to West Midlands
No benefit to the town
Loss of land to non-district housing/development
Concern about issues faced by other councils e.g. financial position
Prefer rural feel of Bromsgrove
Need more information/consultation/public vote
Potential reduction of funding and services for Bromsgrove
Undemocratic/too bureaucratic/less responsive

Several respondents commented on the rural nature of Bromsgrove; others felt a lack of affinity towards the West Midlands. Housing and related issues appeared key to many respondents.

There was an ongoing concern that Bromsgrove could be perceived as a 'small' partner within the West Midlands Combined Authority particularly given that the other potential partners are big cities. As a consequence it may not benefit Bromsgrove as much as some of the larger authorities. There were also concerns expressed that the identity of Bromsgrove might be affected.

Survey comments – Appendix A

Policy Team
7 June 2016

Comments received by those in favour:

It seems that everyone else is joining so it would leave us out on a limb if we were not to. I'm in favour then as long as it doesn't all become too unwieldy - but no way of telling this!
The city region model like the WMCA is the right approach for the future. Bromsgrove DC needs to be well associated with it. Staying on the outside as part of an evolving shire county model is not sufficiently forward looking particularly given Bromsgrove 's geographical closeness to Birmingham and the likely continuing obligation to collaborate on housing matters in any event. Redditch Council's WMCA involvement also suggests Bromsgrove with its existing close affiliation through shared staff should be involved along with Redditch. Fear about the impact on the Bromsgrove green belt is not a sufficient reason to remain detached-a combined West Midland council model will need to have regard to identifying green belt land. Better that Bromsgrove is fully part of future land use and housing development within the WMCA
Bromsgrove DC should be a member of WMCA. We cannot afford to be left out of regional and local investment decisions many of which will affect our area. What have we got to lose by joining?
I would support the Council if you intend to join the WMCA
I think this is a great idea and having Bromsgrove in the WMCA will give Bromsgrove the chance to voice itself on a bigger stage. and it may mean Bromsgrove can prioritise over others where before we have missed out on chances to better itself.
I initially wrote to strongly support the proposal and in view of the updated information available I am now even surer that I would want Bromsgrove to become a Non Constituent Member of WMCA. Please don't pass by this opportunity.
As a voluntary sector and service user partner of Bromsgrove DC I would support better integration with the metropolitan area and think that it could be beneficial to our communities. However I do see the need for adjacent Worcestershire authorities to also engage in the process and be influenced by Bromsgrove's consultation and its outcomes
I would support Bromsgrove joining the WMCA as it is an opportunity and otherwise the district could miss out on a lot.
In my opinion it would be madness NOT to be part of this economic powerhouse; if there was a vote it would get my vote
Having attended the Voluntary sector briefing on the WMCA I believe that Bromsgrove DC should be a part of this for the following reasons: 1. larger authorities are now being sort as major points of contact and if we are not in it we cannot participate. 2. It would give Bromsgrove DC more buying power and therefore a better economic advantage 3. We would benefit from economic and social regeneration prospects

Comments received by those not in favour:

If Bromsgrove becomes a Non Constituent member of the WMCA it will be a very small fish in a very large sea and will be beholden to the Constituent members in particular Birmingham putting the green belt and the benefits of living in Worcestershire at risk. Any benefits of such membership to the residents of Bromsgrove have not been made clear nor is there any evidence to suggest that working with other councils in Worcestershire will not achieve positive outcomes for our population. Last year the Council decided not to join as there was insufficient information about the WMCA. There is still insufficient information to make a decision. Just because the Chairman of the shadow WMCA has asked Bromsgrove to join does not mean that we have to join without full knowledge of what we are joining. I do not agree with the proposal that Bromsgrove joins the WMCA and do not want Bromsgrove to join the WMCA..
Please note that I am not in favour of this proposal. There is still too little information and the proposals seem aimed at sending funds to the major conurbations. Joining the WMCA will mean Bromsgrove - and possibly Worcestershire - will become part of 'Greater Birmingham'
On balance we would prefer to not join in with the combined authority
Am totally against BDC joining WMCA. Bromsgrove is not in the West Midlands and residents don't aspire to become part of WM. Joining removes the power to make it's own decisions from BDC and leaves the way open Birmingham to control and take over the area. Councillors elected to BDC will lose their powers as they will be subsumed into WMCA. There is no clear benefit for the residents in BDC joining.

As a Non Constituent Member of the WMCA BDC would have little say and no vote so I cannot see what real gain can come of becoming a Non Constituent Member of the WMCA
No No No it brings nothing to Bromsgrove that won't happen anyway.
the fear is that Birmingham will rule and absorb it's neighbours i.e. us Bromsgrove this smacks of the early days of the EU "oh it's only for trade"; who would control the finances? I would not trust bham with my money so the basic idea is ok but the thought of a greater bham=nightmare.
My opinion is that Bromsgrove District Council should be patient and wait for another Combined Authority which would keep the distinctive characteristics of the region such as a Combined Authority further south; Worcestershire Herefordshire and Gloucestershire?
I wish that this proposal does not go ahead. We are not part of the West Midlands and I wish our town to remain what it is - a semi-rural town bordering on other rural areas. There is no way that I would want the control of Bromsgrove Council to be influenced in any by a larger authority. Sometimes society matters more than money based projects. I fear enormously that Bromsgrove will be subsumed into Birmingham definitely not what I want no matter what the government plans. The government does not live here! Counties have worked perfectly well in the past and can do in the future. Leave it please! we should not be bullied!!
Bromsgrove is a rural market town .We don't want or need to be part of a huge conurbation where our needs will inevitably be at the bottom of the pile. Our outlook and habits are far removed from those of cities.
I do not feel that it is in the best interests of residents for Bromsgrove to be amalgamated with the West Midlands. There is a huge housing crisis in Birmingham extremely concerning issues with social services and a severely stretched mental health service. I feel that Bromsgrove and the concerns of its residents would not be a priority for the West Midlands Combined Authority.
No No No. No way must the council go down this road and join the WMCA. We are facing a battle to stop further integration with the EU. Stay out of it. Its a completely wrong way for the council to go.
What is the probability that another combined authority may be created which may include areas from Worcestershire and Herefordshire as well as other regions? It may be worthwhile to explore that possibility instead of being attached to the Birmingham area.
Will it be the end of the West Mercia why cant we stay Worcestershire.
No definitely not!!!!
We think we are in a respectable position to maintain our identity as it is
Not hugely impressed. The bigger an organisation the less responsive it is to the little people. Sure there is power in a union but not in a conglomerate which is what this is.
I am totally against Bromsgrove being part of any West Midlands regional set-up. I believe that Bromsgrove's voice would be diminished by being a small fish in a very large pond. I believe also that the district's semi-rural character would be destroyed by the vast amount of housing that would inevitably follow. I believe that it would amount to being ruled by a Birmingham-dominated urban authority. NO THANKS!!
I am opposed to this for many reasons. The main one is around those already committed- they will not have the same priorities as the majority have very different customers.

Other comment:

A Parish Council was concerned that the public consultation allowed insufficient time to make such a huge decision and the decision could be made without the full facts or support of Bromsgrove stakeholders.

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