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Councillor Roy Perry

Leader of Hampshire County Council
Council

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Dear Colleague

I have been asked to clarify the position of Hampshire County Council with regard to devolution proposals in advance of your own vote this week. I am happy to do so on the strict understanding that it is appreciated I do not wish to interfere with the rightful sovereignty and decision-making of other authorities.

I hope the following summary points about Hampshire County Council's position will be of some use.

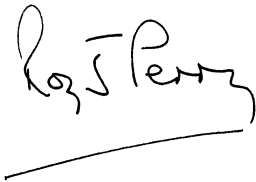
- HCC remains strongly of the view that the single best devolution prospect for the wider area and for all of the individual authorities would be a return to the original "Hampshire Isle of Wight" (HIOW) Combined Authority (CA) proposal. This unquestionably offers the strongest scale and capacity to make a real difference to the economic prosperity of the sub-region, including the Island. HCC will continue to press for this outcome.
- I cannot in good faith guarantee that the HIOW CA option is an immediate alternative to the current Solent proposal because I cannot speak for the other partners. I am sure however that the HIOW proposal should and would have progressed if it had not been for the divisive introduction of the original Solent proposal. I also believe that if the current Solent proposal were to fall then the HIOW one has a serious chance of returning. That is certainly HCC's preference. I know that Government's original preference was certainly for a larger scale CA. The sticking point became the issue of a directly elected mayor. It was not just HCC that opposed the Mayoral model. I have to say that I cannot see how the constrained mayor described in the most recent governance proposal for the Solent deal will satisfy Government expectations on that role. Even so, a mayor, once in office, changes the whole dynamic of local government.
- I respect the right of the three unitaries of Southampton, Portsmouth and the Isle of Wight to establish a CA between themselves. I remain of the view that this CA will not offer the best outcomes for those unitaries or the wider sub-region but I respect that right.
- But if the three unitaries were then to seek to widen their proposed CA to include parts of Hampshire (the southern and other districts) HCC would certainly object strongly and resist that step as it would be divisive and deeply damaging to the County Council and the services we provide. I cannot make that point strongly enough.

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- I have been asked by IWC councillors if the proposal for the three unitaries to establish a combined authority would represent a risk to the education and children's service partnership between our two authorities. I certainly hope not, although the existence of any elected mayor for one part of the wider area certainly heightens that risk as the Government appears inclined to add to mayoral powers over time. HCC is extremely proud of our role in this partnership and the progress it is making on behalf of the Island's schools and children. We remain fully committed to the future of the partnership for as long as we think we can sustain a useful contribution and for as long as IWC wishes us to continue. It is, however, significant that Government considered only Hampshire to have the capacity to offer that help rather than either of the two city unitaries.
- It should be clearly understood that our strong objections to the prospect of a wider Solent CA including some districts of Hampshire are because that proposal represents a direct and divisive threat to the County Council. That step would certainly destabilise the County Council at an already difficult financial time. We remain committed to our partnership but it must be recognised that because a possible wider Solent deal with Hampshire districts would threaten the future of the County Council it also therefore unavoidably has the potential to threaten our children's services function.

I wish you well with your own deliberations.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Roy Perry', with a horizontal line underneath.

Councillor Roy Perry
Leader
Hampshire County Council

Cc: Andrew Turner MP
John Metcalfe, Chief Executive, Isle of Wight Council