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'PRIORITY' DEVOLUTION DEAL

North Somerset Council calls for 'priority' devolution deal

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North Somerset Council calls on the government for a 'priority' devolution deal with the West of England Mayoral Combined Authority after the publication of its devolution white paper (Monday 16 December).



The long-awaited white paper is welcomed by North Somerset Council leaders which clearly sets out the government's ambition 'to shift power away from Whitehall into the hands of those who know their communities best'.

The paper includes a broad raft of proposals to devolve power from Westminster and Whitehall to strengthen local resilience and covers transport, skills and employment support, housing and planning, environment, climate change and both reforming and joining up public services.

Earlier this year, the Deputy Prime Minister invited places without devolution agreements to come forward with proposals for their areas. North Somerset Council responded and asked for government support for a new devolution deal with the West of England combined authority area.

The shared economic geography of the West of England and North Somerset, together with established cultural and transport links, means that local leaders can act at the scale needed to effectively deploy their powers.

The government announced today they are progressing to the next stage and intend to group areas at similar stages of progress.

They will invite places who are able to come together under sensible geographies, which meet the criteria and are ready to achieve mayoral devolution at pace to join their 'Devolution Priority Programme'. The government will announce the areas included in the Devolution Priority Programme in due course.

However, they state that this programme will aim to deliver institutions and have Mayors elected in the May 2026 elections.

Leader of North Somerset Council, Cllr Mike Bell said: "We welcome the promises of changes to financing, longer term funding settlements and freeing councils from top-down micromanagement. North Somerset needs a fair deal, it's fair share of the national cake and a fair chance to work in partnership with our neighbours and businesses to grow our economy and improve our community.

"However, I am concerned that North Somerset risks being left behind because of our almost unique position of seeking entry into an existing mayoral combined authority which has elections next year. North Somerset needs to be included in the Devolution Priority Programme, which the government announced today, and we will be continuing to make that case direct to government and through our three MPs."

North Somerset Council is ambitious to promote further growth and reduce inequality for North Somerset residents whilst accessing new sources of funding and gaining more local control. Devolution of powers and resources supports inclusive economic growth, creates jobs, and improves public services.

To read the Devolution white paper published on Monday 16 December, visit: [English Devolution White Paper - GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk/government/white-papers/devolution)

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