

YORKSHIRE & HUMBER Association of Civic Societies



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15th July 2020

West Yorkshire Combined Authority
Wellington House
40-50 Wellington Street
Leeds
LS1 2DE

Dear Sir or Madam,

West Yorkshire Devolution Consultation

I am writing to offer some comments on the above consultation on behalf of the 16 civic societies in our membership across West Yorkshire (out of 40 civic society members in total across the wider Yorkshire and Humber area).

I am sure you will be aware of the active role that civic societies have long played in commenting on matters to do with planning and development in search of design quality within their own localities. Civic Societies also contribute significantly to the promotion of civic pride, the conservation and appreciation of built heritage, and the facilitation of debate as community organisations on a range of issues related to place making and place shaping, including environmental and infrastructure matters.

At present, our member societies will have well established working relationships with key officials and members of their respective local authorities. Formal and informal channels of communication for an exchange of ideas and information, particularly on strategic planning matters, will already exist. It is important that such direct channels are encouraged, developed and supported between community organisations and the new Mayoral Combined Authority.

If implemented, the devolution deal will give the elected Mayor considerable powers and autonomy in terms of spatial development strategies, provision of infrastructure, housing and transport. In addition, the deal will give the Mayor authority to declare Mayoral

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Development Areas and to create a Mayoral Development Corporation for any such areas declared. It is not at all clear how the proposals as formulated will encourage public participation or, indeed, engagement, with planning and infrastructure provision powers that the new Mayor might exercise.

These are, of course, all subjects in which civic societies will have considerable interest and it is important that they (and other community organisations for that matter) are given an opportunity to participate in consultations on these issues in future.

In short, I am flagging here the need for a community engagement strategy.

While I am sure that others will no doubt be seeking assurances that channels of communication for consultation and feedback will be opened on a range of matters from education to employment and from trade to innovation, on behalf of the civic society movement in West Yorkshire, I am asking for an assurance that any new Mayor elected will be required to consult with the community specifically on planning and development issues.

Further, I would ask that the skill and expertise of civic societies as community organisations with a long track record of participation in planning and development matters be given specific recognition within such arrangements.

Yours sincerely

Kevin Trickett MBE

Chair