

Devolution and Local Government Re-organisation

The Government's reported plans for devolution and local government reorganisation will be outlined in a September 2020 White Paper. In advance of this, the LGA Independent Group have agreed a set of principles upon which our work in regards to this will be undertaken.

LGA Independent Group Position

August 2020

According to statements made by Ministers, the Government plans to link further devolution to councils (as stated in the Conservative Party manifesto) to local government reorganisation. Members do not see a mandate for doing this, especially at such a difficult time for our councils and communities.

The LGA Independent Group stance on the reported plans (as outlined in a speech given by Simon Clarke MP speech to the Northern Powerhouse Education, Skills and Employment Summit), seemingly in favour of unitary councils and combined authorities with elected Mayors, is as below:

- **Now is not the time for whole-scale reorganisation of local government.**
 - Given the work underway to support communities through covid-19, the risk of a second-wave, the on-going care crisis, planning and licensing changes, the climate emergency and the long-term recovery needed from the current pandemic, a top-down restructuring of local government is unhelpful and unnecessary.
- **Any devolution deals between central and local government should not be entirely dependent on restructuring or implementing new forms of governance. Many powers and levers currently held in Whitehall should be devolved to councils now.**
 - We have long called for the devolution of power and funding to local communities through their local councils as place leaders.
 - All councils should be able to introduce new forms of local levy to support priorities and be free of referendum limits.
 - Skills, transport and elements of community health provision are other areas which could be devolved to Councils and combined authorities, if they agree that such powers are appropriate to their area

- Support for recovery and the government's 'levelling up agenda' should not be conflated with its new agenda to reorganisation of local government.
- **Any governance and structural plans implemented, should be locally driven, not imposed top-down.**
 - Local government should not be forced into any reorganisation arrangements by Westminster - One size does not fit all
 - Local councils should all be in agreement for governance changes to be made
 - Communities should be properly engaged and consulted on any proposals and what they mean for current council arrangements, support and services
 - Any new governance arrangements should not undermine the democratic process nor representation of the electorate
 - There should be no narrowing of representation as a result of new governance arrangement, in terms of diversity of elected members, be it gender, ethnicity, age, occupation, political affiliation, etc.
- **The LGA Independent Group, like the wider LGA, will not take a position on local proposals for restructuring where there is no agreement between group members involved.**
 - The LGA Independent Group will help facilitate discussions between councillors within our membership and offer [broad campaign support](#), but will not take a position on what is best for a specific local area, unless our members are all agreed.
 - Where all councils in an area agree a way forward and ask for LGA support, we will be able to help.
 - Our ongoing peer support offer, through our Regional Peers, continues to be available for all as does representation by members on the LGA Special Interest Groups, including the District Councils Network and County Councils Network.

[V1.1.14/8/2020: This is a live document which we will keep up to date as further information is announced.]

