

**DON'T BE LEFT
IN THE DARK**

Devolution and mayors

Devolution is one of the biggest changes in the way decisions are made locally.

In England, devolution means transferring power and funding for services from national to local government.

A major part of this is the introduction of mayors directly elected by local people in areas covered by combined authorities.

The first mayoral elections will take place in **May 2017**. This short guide gives information on the role of combined authority mayors, what they will do and what this means for the residents they serve.

Devolution



What is devolution and why is it important?

In England, devolution is the transfer of power and funding from national to local government. Devolution is important because it means decisions are made closer to the people, communities and businesses they affect.

The result is more effective public services, tailored to local need, which provide residents with better value for money. It also helps to forge stronger partnerships between local organisations such as businesses, voluntary and community groups, universities and other public sector bodies like the NHS.

Without devolution, decisions will continue to be made in Westminster, far away from the communities and people they actually affect.

What are combined authorities?

A combined authority is a legal partnership between two or more councils, providing authorities with a formal way to work together across their individual boundaries. It means they can benefit from working at scale on issues and opportunities that affect the whole of their area. This could include managing the road network across a larger area, bringing together adult skills services, or providing a more joined-up health and care system.

The creation of a combined authority must be approved by Parliament. This can be a complex process and the LGA has published a 'plain English' guide to combined authorities that sets out how the process works in more detail. [tinyurl.com/goals6w](https://www.tinyurl.com/goals6w)

What are combined authority mayors and why are they important?

Many combined authorities will have a new, directly elected mayor as part of their devolution deal because the Government believes it is important to have a single point of accountability that is responsible both locally and nationally.

These mayors will work with the councils that make up the combined authority to promote the area and ensure devolution deals deliver for their electorate.

Combined authority mayors will chair a group called the combined authority cabinet, made up of council leaders from individual councils within the combined authority. This is different to a mayor who is directly elected to lead an individual council, like those in Torbay, Mansfield, Hackney or Watford.

A combined authority mayor cannot be a serving councillor and will not replace the leaders of existing councils.

Once elected, the mayor will stay in office for a four-year term, at which point they can choose to stand for re-election. There is no limit on how many terms a mayor can serve.

Which areas will have a new mayor?



In May 2017, candidates will be standing for election in in the following combined authorities: **Cambridgeshire and Peterborough**, **Greater Manchester**, **Liverpool City Region**, **Tees Valley**, the **West Midlands** and the **West of England**. You can check whether your council is included in these combined authorities on our dedicated devolution website: www.local.gov.uk/devolution/directly-elected-mayors

What powers will new mayors have?

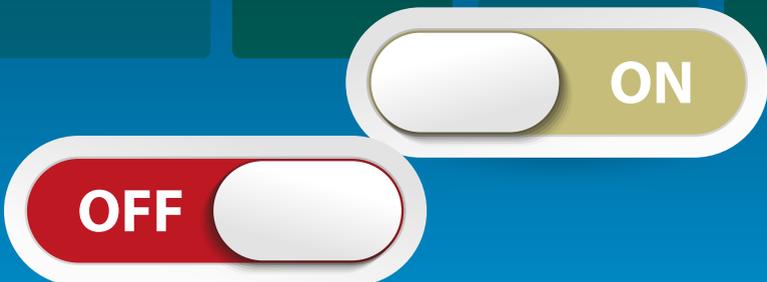
The Cities and Local Government Devolution Act 2016 allows for a wide range of public services to be devolved to mayors and combined authorities.

Under the terms of any devolution deal agreed with government, some powers will rest with the mayor and some with the combined authority as a whole. In both cases the exercise of these powers is overseen by an overview and scrutiny committee. The separate powers and functions of each will be written into legislation and approved by Parliament.

There is no one-size-fits-all approach but in general mayors will be responsible for infrastructure issues that cross boundaries, such as transport and strategic planning. Combined authorities, on the other hand, have generally been given more power over public services for improving local skills and employment, and integrating health and social care, for example.

If all relevant authorities agree, the role of local Police and Crime Commissioner can be merged with the mayor. In most areas, the mayor will also be a member of the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP), a partnership between councils and businesses to help determine local economic priorities and lead economic growth within the local area.

You can see more detail on what powers have been devolved to which area at our online devolution hub: www.local.gov.uk/devolution-deals



Could a mayor's powers be changed once they are elected?

It is possible that mayors could gain more powers as further negotiations with government take place. For example, the Mayor of London's powers have changed significantly since the first mayoral election in 2000, with further powers over housing, skills and transport negotiated through a devolution deal for London. The House of Commons Library has produced a guide tinyurl.com/ndp6mj2 that explains how the powers of the London Mayor and the region that the mayor covers – the Greater London Authority – have changed over time.

Each devolution deal contains the basis for a legal agreement on how powers are divided between the combined authority and mayor. This means any new powers would need to be negotiated with local authorities and central government before they could be devolved.

Are other areas likely to get combined authority mayors in the future?

Any area can go to the Government with proposals for a devolution deal. The Government has indicated that the devolution of any significant powers or funding will require a directly elected mayor. This means that we are likely to have more mayors in the future. However, the LGA believes no one approach fits all, and areas should be able to propose their own governance arrangements.

Who can vote for a new mayor, and how?

If you can vote in other local government elections, you can vote in mayoral elections. Find out if you can vote at **www.electoralcommission.org.uk**

A mayor is elected on a single majority of votes unless there are three or more candidates, in which case there will be a supplementary system of voting which means voters can pick a first and second preference. Voting will take place on 4 May 2017.

Where do I find out more about voting or who candidates are?

Your local council website will give you the information about how to register to vote in the election if one is taking place.

There is a list of candidates on our devolution website **www.local.gov.uk/devolution**

your questions answered

Who will be responsible for making decisions?

Mayors are responsible to the local electorate. In different areas, mayors will have varying levels of decision-making power. Under most current deals, mayoral spending decisions can be rejected by cabinet members where there is a two-thirds majority. Where a local mayor has been given powers to make significant changes to the local area, these decisions will require approval from the mayor and all combined authority members.

Combined authorities are required to have an overview and scrutiny committee to challenge and make recommendations to the mayor and combined authority. This is made up of councillors who are not part of the combined authority cabinet.





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