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| West Northants Council News |
| 23 Dec 2024 |
| [New year resolution on cards for future devolution approach](https://westnorthants-newsroom.prgloo.com/news/new-year-resolution-on-cards-for-future-devolution-approach) |
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| West Northamptonshire Councillors will meet in the New Year to decide their future approach to devolution.  The Government’s White Paper published on 16 December sets out plans to create more unitary councils, combined authorities (CAs) and strategic mayoral authorities (SMAs) across England and devolve more local decision from central government to a regional footprint. Devolution is used to describe the transfer of powers from national to local government and in places with a regionally-elected mayor, this also means the transfer of significant investment to drive new infrastructure, jobs and growth.  West Northamptonshire Council (WNC) is already a unitary authority created in 2021, replacing and simplifying the two-tier system of county, district and borough councils to deliver all their services to residents in the West Northants area.  But WNC is not currently part of a combined authority or strategic mayoral authority, which are formed by two or more neighbouring councils and typically cover around 1.5million residents.  A strategic mayoral authority is led by a regionally-elected mayor, which is entirely different to civic and ceremonial mayors at town councils and has enhanced powers and funding devolved from national government to make collective decisions on issues such as economic growth, transport, housing, skills and employment.  A new strategic mayoral authority covering the West Northamptonshire area would not replace the existing unitary council but would provide it with a stronger say and more significant role in regional investment and decision making.  A special meeting of WNC’s Full Council will be held on Thursday 9 January for members to consider future devolution plans and whether they should support proposals to progress a strategic mayoral authority with Bedford, Central Bedfordshire, Luton, Milton Keynes and North Northamptonshire. The councils have successfully worked together for many years as part of the Central Area Growth Board, more recently becoming the South Midlands Authorities.  In September, the six authorities submitted an Expression of Interest to the Government for a strategic mayoral authority and now have until 10 January to formally confirm if they wish to proceed and be part of the national Devolution Priority Programme.  Councillor Adam Brown, Leader of West Northamptonshire Council said: “The Government’s plans for devolution propose fundamental changes to local government across England so it’s essential that our members consider and discuss these, and how everyone living and working in West Northants might benefit from the future opportunities it may bring.  “The South Midlands authorities have a strong history of working together to drive economic growth across our region so it makes sense to consider how we can build on this partnership further for the benefit of all our communities, through a devolution deal that could leverage in hundreds of millions of pounds of further investment.  “If our Council approves the proposals and we are joined by the other authorities, then Government accepts the principle of a strategic mayoral authority for the South Midlands, there would then be a period of public consultation guided by the Government to ensure the views of all our residents are fully heard.”  Councillors will meet to consider the devolution proposals at 5pm on Thursday, 9 January 2025 in the Guildhall, Northampton – the report can be [viewed on the website](https://westnorthants.moderngov.co.uk/mgCommitteeDetails.aspx?ID=142)and the meeting watched live on [WNC’s YouTube channel](https://www.youtube.com/westnorthamptonshirecouncil).  The Government’s [English Devolution White Paper is available to view on GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/english-devolution-white-paper-power-and-partnership-foundations-for-growth/english-devolution-white-paper) and further information explaining Devolution is available on the [Local Government Association website.](https://www.local.gov.uk/topics/devolution/devolution-hub/devolution-explained) |
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