

# PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

HOUSE OF COMMONS  
OFFICIAL REPORT

Third Delegated Legislation Committee

DRAFT YORK AND NORTH YORKSHIRE  
COMBINED AUTHORITY ORDER 2023

*Tuesday 12 December 2023*

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**Saturday 16 December 2023**

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**The Committee consisted of the following Members:**

*Chair:* STEWART HOSIE

† Atherton, Sarah ( <i>Wrexham</i> ) (Con)	Mahmood, Mr Khalid ( <i>Birmingham, Perry Barr</i> ) (Lab)
† Bell, Aaron ( <i>Newcastle-under-Lyme</i> ) (Con)	† Mohindra, Mr Gagan ( <i>South West Hertfordshire</i> ) (Con)
† Clarkson, Chris ( <i>Heywood and Middleton</i> ) (Con)	† Slaughter, Andy ( <i>Hammersmith</i> ) (Lab)
† Duguid, David ( <i>Banff and Buchan</i> ) (Con)	† Smith, Cat ( <i>Lancaster and Fleetwood</i> ) (Lab)
† Elphicke, Mrs Natalie ( <i>Dover</i> ) (Con)	Wallis, Dr Jamie ( <i>Bridgend</i> ) (Con)
† Glindon, Mary ( <i>North Tyneside</i> ) (Lab)	† Young, Jacob ( <i>Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities</i> )
† Hollern, Kate ( <i>Blackburn</i> ) (Lab)	William Opposs, <i>Committee Clerk</i>
† Lavery, Ian ( <i>Wansbeck</i> ) (Lab)	† <b>attended the Committee</b>
† McMahon, Jim ( <i>Oldham West and Royton</i> ) (Lab/Co-op)	
† Maclean, Rachel ( <i>Redditch</i> ) (Con)	

The following also attended, pursuant to Standing Order No. 118(2):

Levy, Ian (*Blyth Valley*) (Con)

## Third Delegated Legislation Committee

Tuesday 12 December 2023

[STEWART HOSIE *in the Chair*]

### Draft York and North Yorkshire Combined Authority Order 2023

9.25 am

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (Jacob Young):** I beg to move,

That the Committee has considered the draft York and North Yorkshire Combined Authority Order 2023.

It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Mr Hosie.

The draft order was laid before the House on 7 November. If it is approved, it will implement the devolution deal agreed between the Government and the councils of York and North Yorkshire on 1 August 2022. Since then, we have worked closely with the councils on implementation, and on 3 November 2023, those councils consented to the order.

The order will establish a new York and North Yorkshire Combined Authority and the office of Mayor for the area, with the first election taking place on 2 May 2024. The elected Mayor will then take up office on 7 May, with a four-year term ending at the next mayoral election in May 2028. Thereafter, there will be elections every fourth year to be held on the ordinary election day for the year: the first Thursday in May. Following the enactment of the Elections Act 2022, those mayoral elections will be held on a first-past-the-post basis.

The Mayor will be the chair of York and North Yorkshire Combined Authority, which will comprise as constituent councils City of York Council and North Yorkshire Council. The combined authority will be established on the day after the day on which the order is made, subject to parliamentary approval, which is likely to be before the end of the year.

Until the elected Mayor takes office, there will be an interim chair of the combined authority, which will appoint one of its members to that post. The order confers significant functions on the combined authority, as agreed in the devolution deal. They include the functions of a police, fire and crime commissioner, to be exercised by the Mayor.

Other significant functions include, as set out in the devolution deal, concurrent powers with Homes England, powers on regeneration and transport, and powers for establishing mayoral development corporations.

Education and skills functions will be conferred on the combined authority at a later date, along with the devolution of the adult education budget, as agreed with the area.

**Ian Lavery (Wansbeck) (Lab):** Can the Minister say whether the residents of York and North Yorkshire have been consulted about these huge changes? That has happened in other areas. Have the residents had any say in this?

**Jacob Young:** Absolutely. We have a statutory responsibility to consult. I will come on to that later.

**Cat Smith (Lancaster and Fleetwood) (Lab):** The Minister said that the Mayor would be elected every four years on a fixed-term basis. Why does he think that that is a better system than the Mayor being able to decide when he or she wishes to have an election, just as the Prime Minister gets to choose when to hold the UK general election?

**Jacob Young:** Local government generally holds elections every four years. We are considering a local government Mayor and we therefore think that it is right that they are elected every four years.

As I was saying, the adult education budget will be devolved to the combined authority later, as agreed with the area. That is with a view to the area being responsible for skills and adult education from the academic year 2025-26, subject to its meeting the readiness conditions, and to parliamentary approval of the secondary legislation that confers the functions.

The order also provides for the governance arrangements of the combined authority. Each constituent council will have two members on the combined authority, and the Mayor will appoint one of them to be Deputy Mayor. The Mayor will also appoint a Deputy Mayor for policing and crime, who may be any person the Mayor considers appropriate. Those governance arrangements provide that the PFCC functions and certain other functions—for example, the power to designate a mayoral development area, or to draw up local transport plans and strategies—are to be exercised by the Mayor personally. The Mayor may delegate the exercise of those functions to another member or officer of the authority, with particular specified arrangements for the PFCC functions.

The order will be made, if Parliament approves, under the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009, as amended by the Cities and Local Government Devolution Act 2016. As required by the 2016 Act, along with this order, we have laid a section 105B report, which provides details about the public authority functions that we are devolving to the combined authority, some of which are to be exercised by the Mayor.

The statutory origin of the order is in a governance review and scheme adopted by the constituent councils in accordance with the requirements of the 2009 Act. It reflects the agreed devolution deal.

As provided for by the 2009 Act, the councils of York and North Yorkshire consulted on the proposals in their scheme. That goes directly to the point that the hon. Member for Wansbeck made. The councils promoted the consultation by several means and activities. Responses could be made online or directly by email or on paper. That public consultation ran from 21 October to 16 December 2022, and a total of around 2,500 people responded to it through a variety of platforms. As statute requires, the constituent councils provided the Secretary of State with a summary of the responses on 9 March 2023. The results of the online survey show that a majority of 54% of respondents support or strongly support the overall proposals for the establishment of and the governance arrangements for a new mayoral combined authority and an elected Mayor.

The Secretary of State is satisfied that the order meets the statutory tests in the 2009 Act, namely that no further consultation is necessary, and that conferring the proposed powers would be likely to: improve the exercise of statutory functions in the combined authority area; reflect the identities and interests of local communities; secure effective and convenient local government, and ensure that, where the functions are local authority functions, they can be appropriately exercised by the combined authority.

Most importantly, the order opens a way to providing the very considerable funding for the area set out in the deal. That includes £18 million of annual investment funding for York and North Yorkshire for the next 30 years. In total, that will mean more than £500 million to be invested in the area to drive growth and take forward local priorities. The deal also includes an additional £1 million to support the development of local transport plans, more than £13 million for building new homes on brownfield land during 2023-24 and 2024-25, and £7 million investment to drive green economic growth, along with investment of up to £2.65 million in projects that support the area's priority of delivering affordable, low-carbon homes.

The existing local enterprise partnership will be integrated into the new combined authority to facilitate support for the local economy and the business sector. The Government are currently investing £25.4 million from the UK shared prosperity fund and from the Multiply fund in the York and North Yorkshire area. From 2025-26, York and North Yorkshire Combined Authority will plan and deliver this funding, if the UKSPF is continued and delivery geographies remain the same. All that will help the Mayor and local leaders to drive economic growth and development for rural, coastal and urban communities across York and North Yorkshire.

I pay tribute to the local leaders and their councils for all they have done and continue to do to address local priorities and support businesses, industry and communities across York and North Yorkshire.

The order, which is supported locally, is a significant step forward for York and North Yorkshire, its businesses and communities. It is key to the future economic development and regeneration of the area, and it will enable local leaders to invest in and address local priorities effectively. I commend it to the Committee.

9.33 am

**Jim McMahon** (Oldham West and Royton) (Lab/Co-op): It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Mr Hosie. I am delighted to take up the role of shadow Minister for English Devolution and Local Government, and to discuss devolution in England once again.

If we want to achieve change in our country, we must all be steadfast champions of local and devolved government, where decisions can be taken by communities with a real interest in and insight into place and the people who live there. There is no road to recovering our fragile economy or fractured public services, or delivering on the demands for power to be distributed, which does not travel through our local councils, combined authorities and mayors.

Parliament is privileged to have many former councillors serving in it. I know from serving as a councillor for 13 years, including as a council leader, the difference

that local government can make when public services are aligned with public good. However, we also know that those foundation are weakened after 13 years of austerity. Nine councils have issued section 114 notices, and there is a strong chance that more will follow, unless the Govt take urgent action. There is still no plan from the Government to deal with the chronic state of adult social care, rocketing demand for children's services, and the broken housing market that fuels the homelessness crisis, the like of which we have not seen in modern times.

There can be no hiding from the fact that the mini-Budget just over a year ago, which sent so many households to the brink, is also hitting councils hard. Rocketing inflation means that the cost of servicing borrowing is much higher. The cost of energy and wider inflation mean that budgets set in good faith simply do not hold against that tide.

English devolution is, at best, a fragmented patchwork, which still excludes large parts of the country. Before entering Parliament, I had the honour of serving on the Greater Manchester Combined Authority as we were building the first devolution deal outside London, which created, I believe, the most expansive devolution package in England. It created the conditions for Greater Manchester to take control of its bus network, unleashing fairer fares and delivering for the needs of local communities and the economy. There was also a rapid package to reform health and social care in the area.

However, that was 10 years ago. Progress on rolling out further powers across England has been painfully slow. We have seen great things in the Yorkshire region, with Mayor Tracy Brabin in West Yorkshire and Mayor Oliver Coppard in South Yorkshire. They are showing the difference devolution can make when Westminster learns to let go.

That is happening across the country under Labour metro Mayors and council leaders. Areas such as York and North Yorkshire, which we are discussing today, are rightly being pragmatic in accepting that the order is an important step forward, and we hope that the Hull and East Riding devolution agreement makes further progress too. However, the truth is that the devolution settlement is fragmented, piecemeal and does not go far or fast enough. The powers and resources do not touch the sides of what is needed and do not provide enough resilience in the age of austerity.

Too many devolution deals lack ambition from the Government. In too many places, including large parts of rural England, there is no devolution to speak of. It is important to address that. Consequently, communities cannot assert control over the places where they live and invest. That means that local people, economies and the services they rely on are held back and starved of the investment they need to get on.

As the begging bowl culture and "hunger games" approach continue, we cannot level up from the top down, which is why Labour will set a presumption towards handing power back to our towns, cities and communities. Labour will push power out of Westminster with a "take back control" Act that gives communities a direct say in their future. We will start by giving all our metro Mayors the powers and flexibility to turbocharge growth in their areas, for example, over planning and housing, transport, net zero and adult education.

[*Jim McMahon*]

We will offer all places the right to negotiate with the Government for powers that have been devolved elsewhere. Local leaders will take on powers whereby they can demonstrate capacity and sound financial management. Giving all towns and cities the tools they need to create good jobs and attract investment, including longer-term funding settlements for local government, is important for our collective future.

We do not intend to divide the Committee on the order. We hope that more progress and ambition across England can be shown when it is made.

9.38 am

**Jacob Young:** I welcome the hon. Member for Oldham West and Royton to his place. It is good to see him back on the Front Bench.

As I said earlier, the order is widely welcomed by the people of York and North Yorkshire. It is a significant development for the whole area, which is largely rural as well as including significant towns and coastal communities, along with the amazing city of York. It makes an important contribution to the Government's levelling-up agenda.

The hon. Gentleman mentioned the Greater Manchester Combined Authority, on which he served. That combined authority was created and the powers were conferred on it by this Government. Even the bus network, which the Mayor of Greater Manchester is now delivering, is being delivered through powers that the Government conferred. The hon. Gentleman also mentioned the West Yorkshire Combined Authority. Guess what, Mr Hosie? That, too, was created by this Government. We also created the South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority. The Government are truly driving devolution

forward. When the last Labour Government were in power, the only area in England that had a devolution agreement was London. Labour even tried a failed devolution experiment, whereby the town was to run the borough. We rejected that universally because devolution has to be locally led. That is the principle that we have adopted. We will not force devolution on any area that does not want it.

As part of our levelling-up missions, as set out in the levelling-up White Paper and now the Levelling-up and Regeneration Act 2023, we have provided that every area that wants a devolution deal by 2030 will have one. We have made that commitment, but we will not force any area into going down the devolution road if it does not want to do that. Devolution must be bespoke and fit the area's needs.

I am delighted that York and North Yorkshire have chosen to take the level 3 devolution step, as have Hull and East Yorkshire, which the hon. Gentleman mentioned. A mayor is not necessarily the right fit for every area. Not long ago, I was in the constituency of the hon. Member for Blackburn, who is here, where we discussed the Lancashire devolution deal, which does not come with a Mayor because that is not right for the people of Lancashire—it is not what they chose.

The deal that the order implements will make a significant contribution to the future economic development and regeneration of York and North Yorkshire—God's own county if anybody asks me, though I recognise that hon. Members from Lancashire may take a different view. The order will empower local leaders to invest in local priorities, and again I commend it to the Committee.

*Question put and agreed to.*

9.41 am

*Committee rose.*



