

Cheshire & Warrington

English Devolution White Paper: Detailed overview

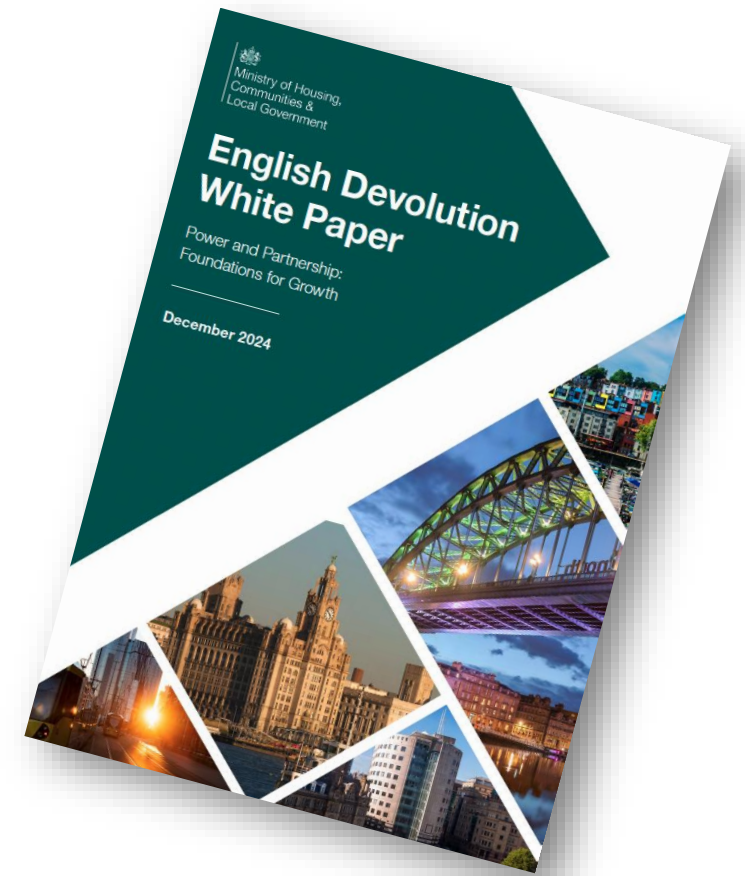
ANNEX A

Joint Committee 31st January 2025

Overview

The following slides start to develop detail across the Devolution White Paper as it impacts Cheshire and Warrington (C&W).

*NB: Given the early stage in devolution development in C&W, this section considers content based on a devolution agreement with a ‘**Foundation**’ Strategic Authority (i.e. non-mayoral) and a Mayoral Strategic Authority.*



Overview: Aims of the Devolution Framework

High quality transport infrastructure supporting growth and opportunity. Bringing decisions about transport closer to people is key to improving the transport networks we rely on every day.

Skills and employment provision that is more relevant to local jobs.

More houses, served by the necessary infrastructure, and more social housing with Mayors becoming responsible for strategically planning for housing growth, backed by devolved funding.

More investment in local areas through fuller devolution of business support. A clearer role for Strategic Authorities in innovation and on domestic growth, exports and investment.

Strategic Authorities at the heart of making Britain a Clean Energy Superpower, with a strategic role in the delivery of the Local Power and Warm Homes Plans.

NB: Areas with Mayoral Authorities and areas in the Priority Programme will take part in an early evaluation of the framework with HMG during English Devolution Bill development.

Responsibilities

Creating a mandate for Strategic Authorities to act strategically to drive growth *and* support the shaping of public services where strategic level coordination adds value

Transport & Local Infrastructure

C&W Strategic Authority becomes the Local Transport Authority, with transport functions including the ability to introduce a local bus franchise. This would all come under one area-wide transport plan.

Devolution Framework

Functions	Impacts
A single transport settlement for C&W (via the SA)	Enables greater flexibility to focus resources on local priorities. More flexibility if Mayoral SA.
Introduce bus franchising and decarbonising the local bus fleet	Bringing bus services into local control to help improve services across C&W – with flexibility to adopt approaches that would best serve the region and its mix of urban and rural communities.
Priority for new rail partnerships with Great British Railways	To influence the local rail offer and maximise the benefits/mitigate the impacts of strategic rail proposals to the region.
Statutory role in governing, managing, planning and developing the rail network – and increased local control of rail stations	Achieving better alignment to our local economies, places and communities across the sub-region – putting us on an equal footing with the likes of Manchester and Liverpool in terms of engagement and influence.
Increase local decision making on consents	Supporting local priorities and speeding-up decision making – ending the requirement to seek Secretary of State approval for a number of functions, including ‘stopping up orders’ and lane rental Schemes.
A duty to establish a ‘Key Route Network’ on the most important local roads plus a formal partnership with National Highways.	To ensure consistency of maintenance and management across the network - especially for accessing key towns/ employment locations and improved integration with the national Strategic Road Network.
Active travel	Additional support for active travel schemes across C&W.

Skills & Employment Support

C&W Strategic Authority works across the sub-region and jointly owns the C&W Local Skills Improvement Plan (with employers) as well as responsibility for developing a local 'Get Britain Working' Plan. Devolved adult skills funding – alongside a clear role in employment support.

Devolution Framework

Functions	Impacts
Joint Ownership of the C&W Local Skills Improvement Plan (with Employer Rep Bodies).	C&W SA to develop the plan (must include sector skills plan) and ensure it's fully aligned to the Local Growth Plan. SA to designate a new Employer Rep Body to ensure strong employer voice in its development. As well as a focus on existing skills needs, 'future skills' will form a key part of the plan.
Devolution of core Adult Skills Funding	As below – but a more limited offer...
Devolution of all non-apprenticeship adult skills functions via a consolidated pot (2026/7+)	Offer local residents and local employers easier access, to more flexible support and training that is less reliant on traditional delivery models and enables us to target key sectors that have hard to fill job vacancies and people with complex needs. This would increase our ability to spend and, over time, increase our share of the national budget (currently very low).
Central youth careers provision	A locally-targeted offer of high quality careers education which would provide a service that is integrated with other support/progression programmes. Making sure there are clearer pathways into work - aligned to local labour market needs. Provide a consistent quality of careers provision across all schools, colleges, independent training providers, etc.
Post 16-19 education leadership for C&W – informing HMG and college provision.	Encourage further collaboration and specialisations in our growth sectors across our colleges and University including by co-investment in specialist equipment and facilities. Providing a clear progression from education to FE/HE which supports local employment opportunities (and aligns to LSIP & careers provision).
Develop local Get Britain Working Plan for C&W	Accelerate a more locally-led and joined-up approach to tackling economic inactivity, including young people 16-24, 50+, and ex-offenders, at risk of becoming economically inactive and/or on low incomes get the support they need to overcome barriers to work. Support an efficient move from tax credits to Universal Credit including minimising fraud and errors in the system.
Devolved supported employment funding	
Co-designing any future non-Jobcentre Plus employment support	Greater engagement and involvement of partners in the design of programmes so they meet local need. This will mean more people can benefit from better targeted employment services

Housing & Strategic Planning

C&W Strategic Authority leads the sustainable development growth agenda for the sub-region – working to a C&W Local Growth Plan, a ‘universal system’ of strategic planning and supporting delivery of ‘the right homes in the right places’, including affordable and social housing.

Devolution Framework

Functions	Impacts
Devolved funding for regeneration and housing	Allow us to have greater influence on our housing market to ensure homes are delivered that respond to our needs and growth aspirations. Align this with a regeneration focus, unlocking brownfield land and supporting positive impacts for people and places.
Duty to produce a Spatial Development Strategy (SDS)	A strategic approach to spatial planning with the support of the majority of all constituent councils. (NB: areas without a Strategic Authority will also be required to develop these strategies). For C&W the SDS will align with the Growth Plan and help to frame investments (public and private) supporting sustainable growth across the sub-region.
Compulsory Purchase Powers (with HE)	'Building-in' local mechanisms to support delivery of the SDS - ensuring pace and certainty to increase investment, bringing forward the right infrastructure for sustainable development and creating an environment which is delivery focused.
Ability to establish a Mayoral Development Corporation	
Ability to make Mayoral Development Orders	
Ability to raise a Mayoral Community Infrastructure Levy to fund strategic infrastructure (once SDS in place)	
Strategic development powers (once SDS in place)	
Strategic Place Partnership with Homes England	Creation of a joint development pipeline and shared delivery planning - HE will be moving to a regional and place-based operating model to support this process.

Economic Development & Regeneration

C&W Strategic Authority leads a strong partnership working nationally and regionally to support productivity and growth. Attracting inward investment, supporting business to thrive and grow and helping create vibrant places where people want to live and work

Devolution Framework

Functions	Impacts
Partnership with Department for Science, Industry and Technology and UK Research and Innovation to strengthen local research and innovation capacity	Supporting innovation-led growth through direct connections with UK R&I via a network of specific points of contact.
Develop joint innovation action plans and collaboration with Innovate UK to shape long-term strategies and investments	Working directly with Innovate UK (and additional access to data and information) to develop a long-term innovation strategy and shape investment opportunities – with a particular focus on the C&W transformational cluster and sector priorities.
Responsibility as the accountable body for the delivery of Growth Hubs	Mayoral Strategic Authorities will take the lead role in managing and focusing local business support – as well as delivering business growth products (via Growth Hubs).
A Strategic Partnership with the Department for Business and Trade (DBT) focused on domestic growth, exports, investment and delivery of local growth priorities.	Aligning priorities set out within the C&W Local Growth Plan with national policy-making and a bilateral; partnership with DBT to support effective delivery. Working alongside DBT on a new approach to business support (via the UK Small Business Strategy), including a new Business Growth Service. Delivering the roll out of a tailored export programme for C&W (as part of the North) targeting small businesses with export potential as well as closer working with the Office for Investment to support on large scale inward investment.
Partnership working with Department for Culture, Media and Sport Arm's Length Bodies to maximise culture, heritage, and sport spending in place.	Following the DCMS review currently underway, increase joint working and align national investment and priorities with delivery of the C&W Local Growth Plan

Environment & Climate Change

C&W Strategic Authority will be a key partner in achieving the government's clean power mission to transition Great Britain to a low-cost, clean power energy system by 2030, and in implementing the Warm Homes Plan. Working to deliver decarbonisation, including innovative approaches to heat and power under local arrangements (via a Local Power Plan and heat network zones). Working collectively to provide environmental leadership and stewardship – particularly in biodiversity enhancement and nature recovery.

Devolution Framework

Functions	Impacts
Devolution of retrofit funding (this parliament subject to a successful transition period).	Whilst this is not expected to come fully on-stream until 2028+, it will include the Warm Homes: Local Grant, the Warm Homes: Social Housing Fund and the Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme.
Heat network zoning coordination role	Zoning coordinators within Strategic Authorities will be able to designate areas as heat network zones.
Coordinating local energy planning to support development of regional network energy infrastructure	Engaging directly with the National Energy System Operator to develop Regional Energy Strategic Plans and provide a transparent route for local insights to inform energy system planning.
Green jobs and skills coordination role	Align future (and current) skills needs via the LSIP (and skills delivery).
A strategic role on net zero in collaboration with government, including on Great British Energy's Local Power Plan and Warm Homes Plan	Working alongside Great British Energy through the Local Power Plan to support the roll out of small-medium renewable energy projects across C&W. This is expected to deploy up to 8G W of additional power from small-medium sized generation projects by 2030 – alongside a locally-driven pipeline of projects.
Responsibility for coordinating delivery and monitoring of Local Nature Recovery Strategies	Providing local, place-based environmental leadership.

Health, Well-Being & Public Service Reform

C&W Strategic Authority (a Marmot Region) will use its strategic role and statutory duty to ensure that health is a key driver for social and economic progress and a cornerstone for the region's development. Reducing health inequalities is therefore an essential component to deliver the vision. Working alongside the C&M ICB to prevent ill health, tackle health inequalities, and improve the lives of poorest the fastest. Doing this by focussing on the prevention agenda: Improving living and working conditions, reducing poverty and promoting healthy behaviours.

Under these functions, local impacts include:

Functions	Impacts
A bespoke statutory health improvement and health inequalities duty	Using the overarching role of Strategic Authorities to take action across the social determinants of health, through the exercise of their functions, in areas such as transport, housing, and planning, and through working with other local leaders to move away from traditional forms of service delivery to a holistic approach, organised around service users.
Mayors engaged during the Integrated Care Boards chair appointment process	Work to increase alignment and closer working between (M)SA and ICB. There may be some discussion around boundary alignment to improve public service delivery.
Mayors as members of local Integrated Care Partnerships, and consideration for position of chair or co-chair	
A role in convening partners and driving cross-cutting public service reform, including looking at areas such as multiple disadvantage	Working alongside government and Councils, work in partnership to deliver public service reform and prevention – seeking innovation and improvement to support delivery of better public services across C&W.

Public Safety

C&W Strategic Authority, working in close partnership with the Police and Crime Commissioner, Fire and Rescue Service and Local Resilience Forum.

Under these functions, local impacts include:

Functions	Impacts
Mayors accountable for the exercise of Police and Crime Commissioner functions where police force and mayoral boundaries align	C&W will not be seeking to align PCC and FRA functions at this stage. However, it is anticipated the Police and Crime Commissioner within the Strategic Authority geography would sit as non-constituent member of the Strategic Authority.
Mayors accountable for the exercise of Fire and Rescue Authority functions where fire and rescue service and mayoral boundaries align	
A clear and defined role in local resilience, working with the Local Resilience Forum to embed resilience into broader policy and delivery	Subject to the 2024 national resilience review, it is expected that the SA will have an increased role in the work of the LRF – as well as ‘building in’ resilience across all policy areas.

Beyond the first 18 months...

Focus for the future. After 18 months, and as long as effective governance and financial mechanisms are in place, Mayoral Strategic Authorities can move to 'Established' Strategic Authority status. The following highlights additional devolution opportunities for C&W beyond 2027.

Additional functions/investment - examples:

Functions		Impacts
Multi-departmental, long-term integrated funding settlement	Removal of gateway review from the investment process	A single systematised approach to spending controls and a single, streamlined, overarching assurance and accountability framework coordinated by the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government.
A 'right to request' further devolution		A right to request further rail devolution, up to full devolution of defined local services.
Multi-modal integrated ticketing		Bringing integrated ticketing across different forms of transport.
Additional devolved employment support and alignment of Jobcentre Plus boundaries		All funding via the integrated settlement.
Ability to set the strategic direction of any future programme to support affordable housing provision		Setting the strategic direction of any future affordable housing programme in their area, including shaping the tenure mix and identifying priority sites for housing development to be supported by grant (via HE)
Public sector land commission		Ability to establish across multiple Government Departments and Agencies.
Ful devolution of Growth Hubs funding		Via the integrated settlement.

Investment

Financial devolution to C&W

Additional investment streams:

Funds – all subject to 2025 Spending Review	
Devolution Priority Programme – set-up/capacity funding	
One-off capital fund (TBC)	
Mayoral Investment Fund (TBC)	
30-year Investment Fund	
Single Transport Settlement	
Adult Skills Funding (<i>core or all except apprenticeship funds</i>).	
Regeneration & Housing Programme (inc. Brownfield Land Funding)	
Growth Hubs	
Retrofit Programme	