

APSE Central Region Seminar: 12th July 2017

Devolution and the Future of Local Government

**Professor Colin Copus,
Professor of Local Politics
Local Governance Research Unit, Department of Politics and Public Policy
De Montfort University, The Gateway, Leicester, LE1 9BH
Tel: 0116.257.7819**

 **@ProfCopusLG**

Email: ccopus@dmu.ac.uk web: www.dmu.ac.uk/lgru

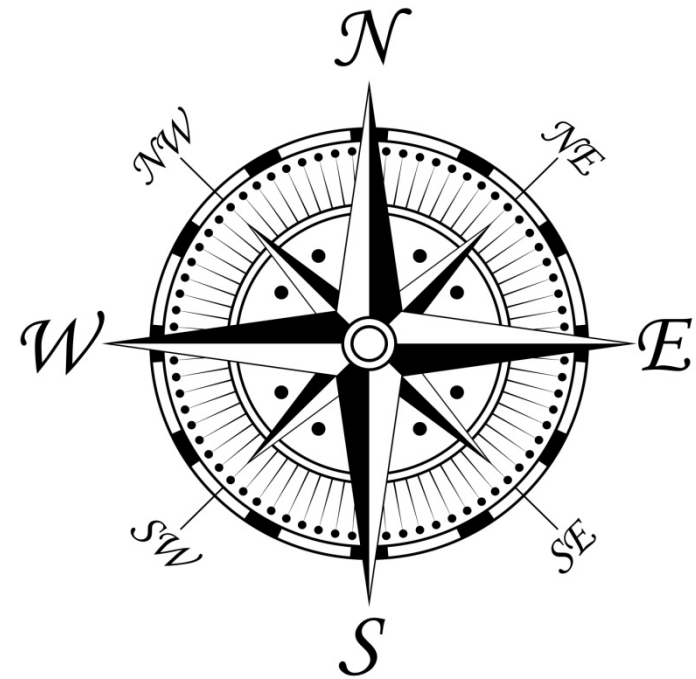


The Context

- Large remote councils; 352 councils for a population of 53 million
- 18,000 councillors
- Mixture of a two-tier and unitary system
- Mainly a service providing, overseeing, co-ordinating or commissioning body
- A creature of statute with no independent right to exist
- Shape, size, boundaries, roles, functions and responsibilities set by central government
- Restricted taxation powers, which and have been, capped by central government
- Little real political power either locally or in the national setting
- Too big to be local; too little power to be government

Council boundaries: Administratively Convenient Lines on a Map

- Points of the compass councils:
 - East Staffordshire
 - North East Derbyshire
 - South Norfolk
 - South Hams
 - South Holland
 - North Shropshire
 - East Hampshire
 - West Berkshire
 - West Lindsey
 - North Yorkshire
 - North East Lincolnshire
 - Mid Suffolk



Casual mergers: 'And' Councils

- Redcar and Cleveland
- Kings Lynn and West Norfolk
- Basingstoke and Deane
- Brighton and Hove
- Bath and North East Somerset
- Oadby and Wigston
- Blackburn with Darwen
- Barking and Dagenham
- Weymouth and Portland



These Places Just Don't Exist

- Three Rivers (the Chess, Gade and Colne)
- Sandwell (Sandwell Priory)
- Newham (Merger of East Ham and West Ham, so it was a 'New' Ham)
- Kirklees (Kirklees Priory legendary burial place of the English freedom fighter and resistance hero: Robin Hood)
- Calderdale (a river)
- Telford and Wrekin (Telford a bloke; Wrekin, a hill)
- Vale of White Horse





Councillors and managers: Responding to the Challenges

- Globalisation
- Europeanisation
- Urbanisation
- Austerity
- Government control
- The need for innovation
 - public services
 - local leadership
 - governing
- Ensuring community cohesion
- Devolution
- The challenge of responsibility without power



<i>Year</i>	<i>Policy</i>
1998	Regional Development Agencies Act
2002	Local Government Act
2003	Regional Assemblies (Preparations) Act 2003
2004	Referendums - Regional Assemblies in the North East
2009	Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act Total Place: a whole area approach to public services
2010	The Coalition: Our Programme for Government
2011	Public Bodies Act and abolition of Regional Development Agencies Localism Act Unlocking Growth in Cities 16 Whole Place Community Budgets
2012	Referendums - directly elected mayors
2013	Lord Heseltine Review Local Authorities assume responsibility for Public Health
2014	Growth Deals <i>'We need a Northern Powerhouse'</i>
2015	Cities and Local Government Devolution Bill 100% business rates retention Health devolution pilots
2016	Cities and Devolution Act

Combined Authority	Governance	Skills and employment	Housing	Transport	Business	Fiscal	Health	Rural	EU Funds	Digital	Trade	Environment	Pub Service reform	Public safety
Greater Manchester Combined Authority	Mayor (directly elected) will be Chair and Member of GMCA Leadership Board	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
North East Combined Authority	Mayor (directly elected) will be Chair and Member of NECA Leadership Board	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓		✓		✓	
Tees Valley Combined Authority	Mayor (directly elected) will be Chair and Member of TVCA Leadership Board	✓	✓	✓	✓						✓	✓		
Liverpool City Region Combined Authority	Mayor (directly elected) will be Chair and Member of LCRCA Leadership Board	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		
Sheffield City Region Combined Authority	Mayor (directly elected) will be Chair and Member of SCRCA Leadership Board	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓								
East Anglia Combined Authority	Mayor (directly elected) will be Chair and Member of EACA Leadership Board	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓				✓			
Greater Lincolnshire Combined Authority	Mayor (directly elected) will be Chair and Member of GLRCA Leadership Board	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓			✓		✓
West Midlands Combined Authority	Mayor (directly elected) will be Chair and Member of GLRCA Leadership Board	✓	✓	✓			✓						✓	
West of England	Mayor (directly elected) will be Chair and Member of GLRCA Leadership Board	✓	✓	✓										
Cornwall	Government has signed formal agreement for devolved powers to county	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		

Source: HM Treasury, Devolution Deals (2014; 2015; 2016) Indicative only, needs updating.

Common Themes from the ‘Deals’

Common menu of ‘things to do’ – often closely linked to specific policy projects with timeframes set by the centre, e.g:

- Skills
 - Transport
 - Economic development and health and social care
 - Housing and planning
 - Police and Fire
- The deal culture = a supervised and opaque process
 - Little or no public engagement
 - Big budgets but little power
 - **Cut and paste devolution / decentralisation**

What was Driving Devolution

Economic growth

Response to austerity

Shifting of responsibility

Empowering cities

Ideological / political expediency

Road to Damascus conversion to a fundamental shift in the relationship between central and local government

Where do we go from here: Lessons to be Learned

- Change of government matters - it always does
- Devolution can't be a top-down enforced process
- Local politics matters
- Local government to set the devolution pace, shape and powers
- Business rate retention isn't nearly far enough (Full fiscal autonomy for English local government)
- Devolution must be about powers not just more stuff to do!
- So, do we have a ...

