

All Member Devolution Briefings

21 and 27 August 2025

Questions and Answers



This paper collates the questions and answers from the four Cheshire and Warrington members briefing sessions held on the 21 and 27 August following the publication of the Cheshire and Warrington Joint Committee report – [Key Documents – Cheshire and Warrington Devolution](#).

Frequently asked questions around devolution for Cheshire and Warrington are available at [Devolution for Cheshire and Warrington](#).

Question	Response
Will there be robust communications around the fact that it's NOT about merging the 3 councils? A lot of confusion remains about this.	There has been (and continues to be) a website and social media campaign to get the facts about devolution out there. Cheshire and Warrington Devolution website: Cheshire and Warrington Devolution . Facebook Cheshire and Warrington Devolution Facebook . Linkedin (19) Cheshire and Warrington Devolution: Posts LinkedIn There has also been more traditional press interviews and newspaper articles to explain the governance of the Combined Authority.
How can we ensure that devolution fully considers, and has a positive impact on, our rural areas?	Devolution offers the opportunity for all areas of Cheshire and Warrington to benefit, including both our urban and rural areas. Rural areas are a key part of our plans especially on themes like transport, housing, and connectivity. We want to particularly draw on key sector strengths in the rural areas and our abundance of natural assets. The Rural Strategy Group are a key contributor to the programme.

Question	Response
	Circulated with this paper is a separate member briefing on rurality and devolution developed by Cheshire East Council.
Who is on the Shareholder Board for Enterprise Cheshire and Warrington?	<p>Enterprise Cheshire and Warrington is a joint council-owned company. It is a company limited by guarantee and was originally set up in 2002, with various names over the years, for economic development in the area. It became Enterprise Cheshire and Warrington in 2023 and each of the three councils are a joint shareholder.</p> <p>The Shareholder Board is the Cheshire and Warrington Joint Committee. Members and the terms of reference are available at Committee details – Cheshire and Warrington Joint Committee Cheshire East Council</p>
What are the government’s statutory tests that Cheshire and Warrington had to pass to continue towards devolution?	<p>The government-led Cheshire and Warrington devolution consultation – GOV.UK, which closed in April 2025 described a series of statutory tests to be met, with Ministers needing to decide:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whether they consider that the establishment of a Combined Authority in the area is likely to improve the economic, social and environmental wellbeing of some or all of the people who live or work in the area • Whether establishing a Combined Authority in the area is appropriate, having regard to the need to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • secure effective and convenient local government • reflect the identities and interests of local communities
When will the full text of the Statutory Instrument be able to be published?	Parliamentary privilege prevents the Statutory Instrument from being shared in full until it has been laid in front of Parliament in draft form and goes through the committee stages as a piece of legislation.

Question	Response
Will members be asked to vote on devolution without knowing the content of the Statutory Instrument?	The key points from the Statutory Instrument are contained within the body of the Joint Committee report .
Does the statutory constitution state that there are two elected members from each constituent council or is this number set by the Combined Authority?	Government has set out that each constituent council must appoint two of its elected members to be members of the Combined Authority, with each of those members needing to appoint a named substitute.
Are all the six members going to be elected councillors and the stand ins too?	Yes, they must be elected members of the constituent councils.
How will the elected members be appointed to the Combined Authority – are they council appointments?	When the Shadow Authority is established, representation will be by the Leader and Deputy Leader of each constituent council. How elected members will be appointed to the Combined Authority is yet to be defined and will be set out within the local constitution.
Who will appoint the Deputy Mayor?	The Mayor of the Combined Authority appoints the Deputy Mayor from the constituent council members of the Combined Authority.
Regarding funding and budgets – what if one council votes against a budget/expenditure item that it sees as detrimental to that council’s interests, but the other two do?	Voting will be by a simple majority, including the Mayor.
Regarding simple majority voting – will there be any safeguards built in if, for example, two councils had a majority from the same	It is likely that this will not be possible as it will contradict the wording of the statutory constitution, but officers can look at this in greater detail when considering local constitution drafting.

Question	Response
<p>party and the third from a different party? Just to ensure that all voices are heard and listened to?</p>	
<p>if a majority of the Combined Authority vote against (say 4 -2), but the mayor voted for, does it still carry under mayoral powers? Or vice versa?</p>	<p>Decisions will be made by a simple majority of the Board, including the Mayor. The Mayor cannot make a decision without the majority of constituent council members. i.e. 4 out of 7 members (including the Mayor).</p>
<p>What is the quoracy for the current Combined Authority committee? Presumably, every council must be represented at every meeting irrespective of quoracy?</p>	<p>For the Cheshire and Warrington Joint Committee there are slightly different rules depending on the matter being voted on under the current terms of reference (as this is also a shareholder board). Paragraph 6 of the Terms of Reference sets this out, so a quorum is 3 voting members for shareholder business of the Joint Committee (part 1) and 4 voting members for part 2 matters, which largely covers sub-regional economy activity.</p>
<p>If the Combined Authority were to get a Mayoral Investment Fund of £600m over 30 years, would that be divided equally over the 30 years? Would there be an uplift for inflation?</p>	<p>Mayoral Investment funds are an annual fund over 30 years, with the amount received not tied to inflation. We do not yet have information on the exact funding package for Cheshire & Warrington but expect it to be in the region of £20million a year (£600million over 30 years).</p> <p>This is a guaranteed fund from Government and other combined authorities have used this funding as leverage to bring in additional funds. The Mayoral Investment Fund is also only one funding stream, we would expect additional funds to come to the Combined Authority over time e.g. Adult Skills Fund, Brownfield Land funding etc. Government has also been clear that much future funding (eg the successor to UKSPF) its likely to be delivered through Combined Authorities.</p>

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	<p>The Annual Report on Devolution 2023-24 highlights the wide range of financial resources that have been devolved to devolution deal areas in addition to the Mayoral Investment Funds.</p>
<p>Are there concerns given the level of monies owed by Warrington Borough Council? Have these investments fallen in value</p>	<p>In recent years, Warrington Borough Council has adopted a commercial approach to investments, which has supported Warrington’s economy and protected local jobs.</p> <p>The investment approach has been funded through borrowing, not through council tax. It has generated around £23million a year, through things like rent collections on council-owned buildings and assets. This £23million income is after all borrowing costs have been paid. Equally, the council has a risk reserve, funded using investment income, for any unforeseen additional costs arising from its commercial portfolio.</p> <p>Further information about Warrington Borough Council’s budget and financial position can be viewed at Council budget warrington.gov.uk.</p>
<p>Do you have concerns about the audit process given the backlog in the National Audit Office?</p>	<p>All Combined Authorities are legally required to have an audit committee to ensure independent assurance of Combined Authorities governance, internal control, and risk management arrangements, as well as the statutory financial reporting process. Combined Authorities are required to publish audited annual financial accounts. While the NAO is involved in designing audit standards and scrutinising the system, they do not directly audit combined authorities. External audit firms perform these annual duties.</p>
<p>If a transport project turns out to be more expensive than budgeted for, who pays?</p>	<p>This would be decided on a case by case basis (as with current arrangements for publicly funded projects) with officers of the Combined Authority advising the Board. Mitigations will be around the assurance framework that will be developed and agreed by the Combined Authority – this is being developed over the next couple of months. Government will need to see a robust assurance framework before funds are devolved.</p>

Question	Response
<p>Will devolution create four authorities in total, with the existing three remaining councils separate and under the Combined Authority?</p>	<p>The three existing constituent councils will remain as separate, independent organisations covering their existing geographies. The Combined Authority will be introduced as a strategic organisation that will cover the whole of Cheshire and Warrington.</p> <p>The three constituent councils make up the Combined Authority via their representatives. Some powers will rest either with one or the other tier of governance, some powers may be exercised concurrently.</p>
<p>What powers will the Combined Authority have over constituent councils?</p>	<p>The Combined Authority will have powers devolved to it when the English Devolution Bill becomes law (see here: English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill: Guidance - GOV.UK for a summary), otherwise, the powers set out in the draft Statutory Instrument give the Combined Authority status of Local Transport Authority and the local councils will no longer have these powers, albeit there may be periods of overlap.</p>
<p>Will there be combined committees for each of the key functions of the Combined Authority e.g. housing, environment and net zero, health and wellbeing etc.</p>	<p>This will be subject to decision by the shadow board and eventually by Combined Authority members to agree how this will work.</p>
<p>Will the health and wellbeing requirements of Combined Authority align with or be different to those of the Cheshire and Merseyside ICB?</p>	<p>Alignment is highly likely given the links already with councils' health and wellbeing agendas.</p>
<p>South Yorkshire combined authority took on the role of the Police Commissioner, why would this be different for C&W?</p>	<p>Where a Combined Authority covers a matching geographic area to the Police Force the Mayor can take on the role of the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC). The</p>

Question	Response
	<p>proposed geography for Cheshire and Warrington does not include Halton and so does not match the geography of the Cheshire Constabulary area.</p> <p>This means that, similarly to Liverpool City Region, there will be a different Mayor and PCC, elected by a slightly different population and with responsibilities for slightly different geographic areas.</p>
<p>Would the Fire Authority become part of the Combined Authority?</p>	<p>Similarly to Cheshire Constabulary, Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service serve a different geography to the proposed Cheshire and Warrington Combined Authority so would not become part of it.</p>
<p>To what extent will the Combined Authority employ people directly to carry out the various functions? Will staff be transferred from constituent councils and/or government departments?</p>	<p>On ‘day one’ of the Combined Authority, four statutory officers are required to be in place. The staffing structure of the Combined Authority will ultimately be a decision of the Combined Authority Board.</p> <p>However, given the infancy of the organisation, it's unlikely to have a full workforce until further functions are devolved. Other options such as secondments/buyback arrangements from the constituent councils will likely be explored.</p>
<p>Can you provide more info on the English devolution bill?</p>	<p>Further information about the Bill is available at English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill: Guidance – GOV.UK.</p>
<p>If unitary authorities are to maintain responsibility for all current areas, what savings will be made in central government to offset the cost of establishing the new Combined Authority, or will the new</p>	<p>Various powers will be transferred to the Combined Authority, either as part of the Cheshire and Warrington Order or when the English Devolution Bill becomes law, so councils won't retain responsibility for all current areas.</p> <p>Savings to be made in central government are a question and a matter for central government.</p>

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authority mean an overall increase in the cost to the public sector?	
If decisions are being transferred from government, are government staff numbers being reduced?	Savings to be made in central government are a question and a matter for central government.
In order to give this process credibility with our residents, we will need to demonstrate that Devolution for Cheshire will improve the quality of life (inc. making them better off) for the residents we represent. This is essential; as there will be a precept that they will have to pay in order to fund this Mayoral Model. Do we have any evidence from other Devo Models that are already in place that they have demonstrably improved the quality of life for their residents?	<p>Not all Combined Authority areas have a Mayoral precept, this would be a decision for the Mayor to decide. However, examples of improvements devolution has brought include:</p> <p>Greater Manchester Combined Authority has set up the Bee Network, a new public transport system, which includes over 250 affordable bus and tram services, alongside a cycle hire scheme.</p> <p>Liverpool City Region has invested £105 million to retrofit thousands of homes across the region, improving energy efficiency and helping residents save money on their bills. In York and North Yorkshire, £27 million has been invested to support businesses, reduce emissions, and boost adult vocational training courses.</p>
If devolution goes ahead but fails to deliver the forecast benefits, is there a mechanism whereby the decision to go ahead could be reversed?	Once constituted, it could only be reversed by further order from government. Government policy is currently for all areas of England to have a Combined Authority for their areas.
Could all three councils join up in the future?	This is not current government policy. The creation of a Combined Authority at this point wouldn't necessarily prevent further local government reorganisation in future if it was determined there were better forms of governance for the area, but this would be a decision for government.

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Can the capital/revenue split of 50/50 be amended by the Combined Authority?	The capital element will need to be spent on capital investments so that would be a minimum of 50%, the revenue element could be spent more flexibly on local priorities (capital or revenue).
Will council tax charges increase as a direct result of devolution?	The elected Mayor has the power to raise a precept, but not all do. The approach varies across existing Combined Authorities with some raising a precept and others not. Locally, Liverpool City Region raise a precept of around £24 a year for a Band D property to be spent on specific items such as transport and digital infrastructure. Mayors must be specific about what the precept funding will be invested in.
Can a Mayor identify precept proposals in their election manifesto?	<p>Whilst it is not a requirement, it is normal for mayoral candidates to be clear on their intentions to raise a precept or not.</p> <p>It is a mayoral power though and so would be the decision of the Mayor. The approach varies across existing combined authorities with some raising a precept and others not. Locally, Liverpool City Region raise a precept of around £24 a year for a Band D property to be spent on specific programmes such as transport and digital infrastructure. Mayors have to be specific about what the precept funding will be invested in.</p>
How will Mayoral candidates be sourced and will they be proportional from political parties or from any other source and how will candidates be supported/funded? When will we know who the candidates are?	<p>As in other elections, this will be a matter for individuals who wish to stand as independents or for political parties who will have established arrangements for identifying and agreeing their own candidates.</p> <p>Please see this useful guide from the Electoral Commission: Guidance for Candidates and Agents at Combined Authority Mayoral elections</p>
Will the Combined Authority oversee all of transport, including walking and cycling?	The Combined Authority will be the Local Transport Authority for Cheshire and Warrington and will have responsibility for transport, including active travel. However, the constituent councils will remain the Local Highway Authority for their area and will continue to play a very strong role.

Question	Response
<p>What authority could a Cheshire & Warrington Transport Authority have over rail services given that these also cover Greater Manchester and Merseyside?</p>	<p>The creation of a Cheshire and Warrington Combined Authority would bring a more equal voice to the area when working with neighbours such as Greater Manchester and Liverpool City Region. Following new legislation to be passed next year, the Mayor would have a statutory role in governing, managing, planning, and developing the rail network and local rail stations.</p>
<p>Will the Local Transport Authority take responsibility for home to school transport?</p>	<p>No. This responsibility will remain with constituent councils.</p>
<p>We need to ensure that devolution is done 'with' rather than 'to' the residents of Cheshire and Warrington. How can residents be better engaged in devolution and how will the neighbourhood-level committees be designed in a way that empowers communities to engage with the future devolution opportunities?</p>	<p>The election will be a key opportunity for residents to engage and vote on the Mayoral candidates and the manifestos on which they stand.</p> <p>The Mayor and the Combined Authority Board will set the way of working for the Combined Authority, but already in place is a Business Advisory Board and a range of devolution ambassadors. Community engagement events have taken place within each constituent council area to understand local views.</p> <p>Neighbourhood working approaches will be the responsibility of constituent councils to take forward, but councils will need to work in partnership with the Combined Authority to ensure residents opinions are understood and influential.</p>
<p>Has government confirmed that they will fund all Mayoral election costs?</p>	<p>The cost would be borne by the Combined Authority. It has been confirmed that the cost of the election can be met from the Mayoral Investment Fund and this cost would be factored into planned usage of those funds.</p>
<p>How much have the three Councils spent to get us to this point?</p>	<p>The Cheshire and Warrington Joint Committee agreed that there would be no call on council budgets as part of development costs for the combined authority. Reported expenditure at end of June was £180,000 out of an approved funding package. This funding has been from the Enterprise Cheshire & Warrington Enterprise Zone.</p>

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<p>Are there problems or complications expected from the fact that the Combined Authority would have a border with Wales?</p>	<p>No. This is an existing border and there is a strong cross-border history of positive partnership working through Mersey Dee Alliance.</p>
<p>What will a devolution deal means in terms of the differing authority demographics, ie, health post code lottery, poverty, transport and rural services.</p>	<p>Funding and powers will allow us to create a much more bespoke approach to training and skills – allied to the skills that we know local businesses need, having the scale to support those needs and target specific groups within the sub-region to have the greatest impact.</p> <p>Cheshire and Warrington also sit within the Cheshire and Merseyside Marmot Region and all partners have recognised the impact that social, economic and environmental conditions have on health, particularly within our most deprived communities. Devolution will support subregional planning and delivery that better aligns to the ‘All Together Fairer’ strategy and that can affect health outcomes locally by focusing on improving the social determinants of health across Cheshire and Warrington.</p>
<p>The Mayor will have the power to DIRECT refusal of strategic applications - but not power to direct approval?</p>	<p>In relation to the determination of planning applications, a Mayor can only follow the strategy that has been agreed by all constituent authorities as part of an adopted Spatial Development Strategy (SDS), is only granted these powers once an SDS is in place and only has involvement in applications of a significant strategic importance</p> <p>If the Mayoral powers in relation to planning applications follows the same system as used in London, as currently set out in the draft Bill, the Mayors of combined authorities would have applications that meet certain thresholds referred to them for consideration. In London this is schemes of more than 150 homes, more than 30m in height (outside the city of London) or development on Green Belt or Open Land.</p> <p>Once a local authority has resolved to make a decision on such referable applications, a Mayor has 14 days to confirm one of the following:</p>

Question	Response
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li data-bbox="898 240 2018 312">• The Mayor will allow the local planning authority decision to stand and will take no further action;<li data-bbox="898 320 1615 352">• The Mayor will direct refusal of the application; or<li data-bbox="898 360 2018 663">• The Mayor will take over and become the local planning authority for the application. In this instance, there will be criteria that need to be met. In London, a Mayor needs to evidence that a development would have a significant impact on the implementation of the Spatial Development Plan, that the development would have significant effects that are likely to affect more than one London Borough and there are sound planning reasons for intervention. There would then be hearings carried out in relation to this case before a decision would be issued by the Mayor.