

County Deal - Statement of Common Ground

1. The local authorities are keen to explore the opportunities provided by a county deal.
2. It is commonly held by the local authorities that the interests of the residents and businesses of the HIOW area would be better served by greater devolution of power and funding from central government to local government (and potentially other locally controlled agencies), working under formal arrangements that bring public services together with a shared agenda. This transfer should embody the principles of subsidiarity and local accountability.
3. The purpose of pursuing devolved powers from Government (more recently termed 'county deals') is to secure such powers and funding in order to level up and improve access to, and the quality of, services and opportunities for everyone across the area. In so doing, it will reduce inequalities and improve the well-being of our residents and communities across a range of service areas, potentially including transport, economic development, environment, housing, health welfare, education, trade, energy, employment and skills and parallel government deals such as the recent Solent Freeport agreement.
4. HIOW contains a number of different socio-economic geographies and 'journey to work' catchments that will need to be reflected within any deals sought. The recent HIOW Leaders meeting reflected this through discussion of the different socio-economic geographies (including at a north Hampshire, central Hampshire and the southern or Solent and Isle of Wight level). There was also agreement that consideration should include the strong links and partnership discussions that have been developed with Bournemouth, Christchurch, and Poole (BCP) Unitary Authority since its inception.
5. Across the geography of HIOW and BCP, four separate expressions of interest for 'county deals' have been submitted to DLUHC. The expressions of interest reference a range of potential geographies for a deal, including the 'historic' county of Hampshire, the unitary councils, and the Solent region (including BCP). HMG convened meetings with the council chief executives to discuss potential county deals in both BCP and HIOW areas. HMG confirmed in the HIOW meeting their willingness to consider a deal on the HIOW geography or sub-geographies, and in the BCP meeting a deal that enabled BCP to be part of a deal within the HIOW area.
6. All of the local authorities hold a genuine interest in exploring whether a worthwhile deal can be secured that brings net benefits for each area as well as the whole, acknowledging that different councils have different priorities for their communities, that some options may serve their priorities better than others, but equally that all will strive to find the maximum common ground.

7. Any successful deal(s) will be the product of genuine co-production by equal partners, with the proposals and process for developing them owned and shaped by all, with the final proposals reflecting an equitable distribution of influence and responsibility, including in any voting regime that may be required. It is recognised by Leaders that the HIOW area already has 'best practice' examples such as the successful Partnership for South Hampshire (PfSH) which has delivered effective co-produced growth and attracted funding over a 20-year period for the benefits of the partnership area.
8. It is recognised that a deal will comprise 'asks and offers' from both HMG and the local authorities. The greater the asks, the greater the expected offer. From HMG perspective, certainty, consistency, accountability, and mandate in terms of HMG (single) point of contact with the area of the deal is key. Gains in efficiency and effectiveness in the delivery of public services are also important. To secure this, HMG may be willing to offer a range of freedoms, funding, and powers.
9. Ongoing conversations with surrounding areas will continue as we explore the range of options available.