

## Support for a More Democratic Devolution Process for Kent

### **This Council notes that:**

- 1 The current devolution process in Kent must prioritise democratic governance and accountability to ensure that decisions are made in the best interests of Kent residents.
- 2 The high cost of standing for metro mayoral elections in England, including a £5,000 deposit and a £5,000 contribution for inclusion in a candidate booklet, deters capable individuals from running for office. While it is essential to discourage frivolous candidacies, alternative mechanisms, such as requiring candidates to gather a specified number of signatures from electors, could achieve this more effectively.
- 3 Spending limits for mayoral elections are disproportionately high, with an allowance of approximately £150,000 for areas as populous as Kent. This creates a significant barrier to genuine democratic participation and fair competition.
- 4 Until 2023, mayoral elections in England were conducted under the Supplementary Vote system, which provided a fairer voting mechanism compared to the First Past the Post system now in use.
- 5 A democratically elected assembly would enhance the devolution process by providing necessary oversight and scrutiny of the mayor's decisions, ensuring power is exercised transparently and in the best interest of Kent's residents.

### **This Council believes that:**

- 1 Reducing the financial barriers to standing for election would foster greater participation and diversity among candidates, strengthening democracy.
- 2 Lowering spending limits for mayoral elections would create a more equitable electoral process, allowing fair competition and enhancing the legitimacy of elected officials.
- 3 Reintroducing a fairer voting system, such as the Supplementary Vote, would ensure a more representative and democratic outcome.
- 4 Establishing a directly elected assembly, along the lines of the London Assembly, as part of the devolution process is essential for maintaining checks and balances and safeguarding transparency and accountability.

### **This Council resolves to:**

- 1 Call for the cost of standing for election to be lowered by reducing deposit requirements, and introducing an alternative mechanism, such as requiring signatures from electors, to discourage frivolous candidacies;
- 2 Submit a formal request in writing to the Electoral Commission to recommend the reduction of spending limits in mayoral elections to ensure fair and equitable competition among candidates;
- 3 Support the reintroduction of a fairer voting system, such as the Supplementary Vote, for mayoral elections in England;
- 4 Support the establishment of a democratically elected assembly as part of the devolution process in Kent, to provide oversight and scrutiny of the mayor's decisions, and write to the Local Government Association (LGA) to investigate whether this move could be backed and supported nationally;
- 5 Support the use of the additional member system or another form of mixed-member

proportional representation as the method by which to elect members to the above assembly;

- 6 Write a letter to the Leader of Kent County Council, the relevant minister in the Department for Levelling Up, Housing, and Communities (DLUHC), and our local MPs, stating the council's position with regard to recommendations one, three, four and five (above) and seeking their support for these reforms.
- 7 Support the above positions during the devolution process in our interactions with Kent County Council, the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government and other relevant stakeholders.

Proposed by: Councillor Rich Lehmann

Seconded by: Councillor Alastair Gould