SCR Devolution Consultation:
results summary

Appendix C

Summary

This paper provides a summary of the results from the online consultation which enabled people, businesses and community organisations in Sheffield City Region (SCR) to have their say on the proposed SCR Devolution Agreement.

The survey included a number of open questions about the proposed Agreement, enabling respondents to offer written (ie. free text) comments, questions and thoughts without the limitations of tick box responses. The survey was also designed to be non-linear, ensuring that people could answer the questions that most interested them and ignore the ones that did not.

The online consultation ran from 2nd December 2015 to 15th January 2016 and attracted 245 responses from across SCR.

This report summarises the perspectives of respondents to each question in the survey. Whilst it is not possible to provide a statistically robust quantitative assessment of the results because of the qualitative design, the report offers a sense of how respondents from SCR feel about key elements of the proposed Agreement.

Key trends and perspectives from the responses:

- Positive support throughout for principle of stronger local control of decision-making
- Recognition of the impact that specific policy areas could have on SCR and the local economy
- Negative perceptions of the need for an elected mayor – mainly due to creation of additional bureaucracy; complexity with existing arrangements; outcome of 2012 city mayor referenda
- Real need for clarity about the geographical scope of the mayoral arrangement and powers, particularly for East Midlands districts
- Positive about potential for more devolution, particularly once the current set of proposals have been implemented. Suggestions are ambitious and radical including tax raising powers, all skills, public transport, education and health.

Purpose

1. This report provides a summary of the results from the local consultation activity which sought the views of people, groups and businesses in Sheffield City Region (SCR) on the proposed SCR Devolution Agreement.
2. The report is predominantly based on the online survey as the main route for comments and contributions to the discussion but also builds in views from the wider consultation activity under the themes.

Having your say on devolution: background and methodology

Background

3. The proposed Devolution Agreement for Sheffield City Region stated that the policy and funding proposals in the Agreement were subject to the 2015 Spending Review, and to Sheffield City Region "consulting on the proposals and ratification from the local authorities"[1].

4. Following the announcement, SCR developed a programme of consultation to enable local residents, businesses and community organisations across the SCR area to have their say on the proposals.

5. This programme of consultation has generated a range of activities and contributions including from:

   - **Local residents** - large scale online survey for the public, businesses and representative organisations
   - **Business** - engagement with businesses including through the SCR Local Enterprise Partnership (SCRLEP); a Business Insider event with the Chambers of Commerce; and local business advisory panels
   - **Local democratic bodies** – including Overview and Scrutiny Committees; locality assemblies; a dedicated meeting of the SCR Scrutiny Board; and the SCR Combined Authority
   - **Partners and community organisations** – including detailed submissions from community organisations and the University of Sheffield's Crick Centre 'Citizens' Assembly' project[2]
   - **Direct correspondence** – in some instances, we have also received direct letters and emails from some residents and community organisations, including Sheffield Citizens Advice, Age UK, Cavendish Cancer Care, Sheffield Mencap, and Voluntary Action Sheffield.

Online survey

6. The online survey was the main, large-scale form of consultation on the proposed Devolution Agreement. The survey was launched on the 2nd December 2015 and ran until the 15th January 2016.

7. The survey was supported by a dedicated SCR microsite which provided respondents with a range of information, explanations, FAQs and videos explaining both the concept of devolution and what the proposed Agreement could mean for SCR. The site also included a link to the full devolution document and testimonials from leading SCR politicians, business leaders and academics.

Fig 1: SCR Devolution Survey

Fig 2: SCR Devolution microsite

[1] HMG (2015) *Sheffield City Region Devolution Agreement*, https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/466616/Sheffield_devolution_deal_October_2015_with_signatures.pdf

[2] University of Sheffield's Crick Centre (2016) *Citizens' Assembly North*, http://citizensassembly.co.uk/home-page/sheffield/

8. The survey was widely publicised across the City Region, including activities by all nine local authorities and coverage in the local (eg. local papers), regional (eg. Yorkshire Post; BBC Look North) and national media (eg. BBC News website). The survey link and microsite was also regularly promoted through social media channels by councils, SCR Combined Authority and partner organisations.

9. The main purpose for the survey was to enable people and organisations across SCR to give their unrestricted views on the SCR devolution proposals and not limit people's responses with structured quantitative questions (ie. tick box). Therefore, the survey was purposefully designed to be:

   - **Open-ended** – the survey questions enabled people to give qualitative (ie. written word/free text) answers rather than ticking boxes
   - **Non-linear** – which means that people could answer the questions that interested them and ignore the questions that didn't interest them

10. The survey asked people about their views on devolution proposals for SCR as a whole and therefore it was decided not ask respondents which part of the City Region they lived in. The survey did, however, ask respondents what they thought the impact of the devolution proposals would be on their life and where they lived.

Who responded?

11. In total, there were **245 responses** from across Sheffield City Region. As **Fig 3** shows, respondents are broadly representative of the working age population of the City Region with some over-representation of people aged 40+. However, very few people aged under 25 responded to the survey.

12. **Fig 4** demonstrates that the majority of responses were from local residents (82%) with a further 10% from businesses and 6% on behalf of community and interest groups in the City Region.

13. Respondents were overwhelmingly male with 170 (73%) men responding to the survey compared to 62 (27%) women.

14. Respondents were predominantly (95%) from a White British ethnic heritage and that group were slightly over-represented compared to the 16+ population of SCR. Similarly, respondents from a Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) background were under-represented compared to the local population and indeed, very few people from BME backgrounds actually responded to the survey.

Fig 3: Consultation respondents by age

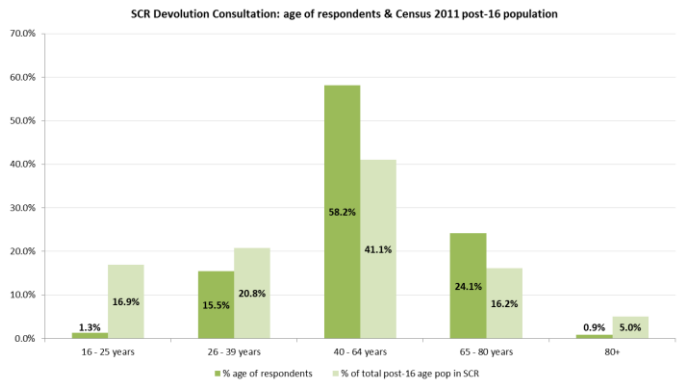


Fig 4: Consultation respondents by type

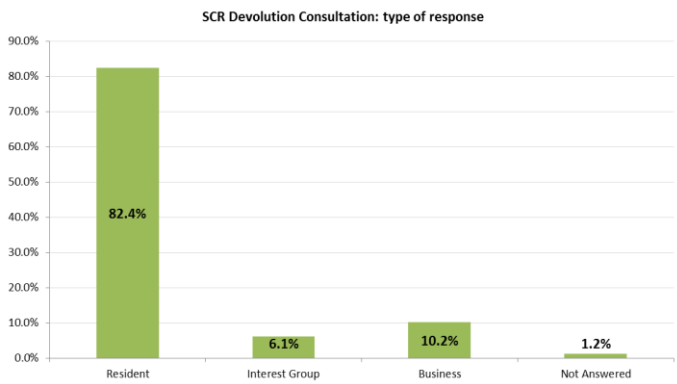
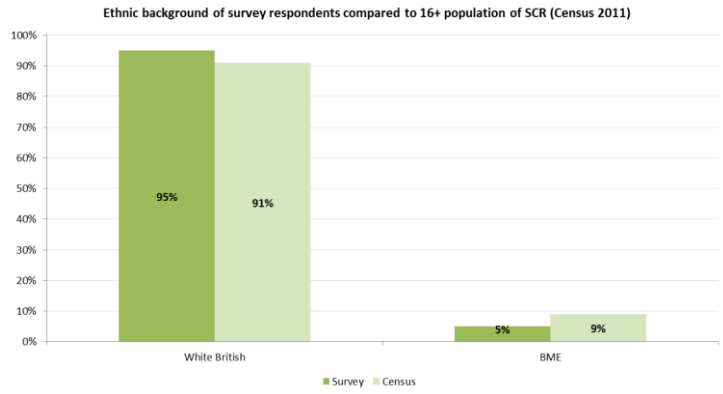


Fig 5: Consultation respondents by ethnic heritage



3

Survey results

15. This section provides an overview of the views offered by respondents in SCR about the proposed Devolution Agreement. As suggested elsewhere, the survey was not designed to produce numerical or quantifiable results but rather to give people, businesses and community organisations the opportunity to comment and have their say on the devolution proposals.

16. Therefore, responses were written in free text and this report aims to provide a summary of the key themes and issues raised by respondents by question based on the key words and comments made. Where possible or appropriate, the report also attempts to offer a perspective as to whether the tone of the responses received to a particular question were positive, negative or mixed. This is not intended to be statistically robust but is a relatively simple way of summarising a large number of written responses.

Do respondents want more information about the Devolution Agreement?

"The Sheffield City Region Devolution website provides lots of information about the powers, resources and implications for local areas of the in-principle devolution deal. Is there anything else you would like to know?"

17. This question enabled people to comment on the information that was provided to respondents on the SCR devolution microsite and areas about which they would like to receive more information.

18. The areas which respondents would like more information on from the 79 responses to the question predominantly relate to four main themes:

- **Accountability and decision making** – respondents clearly would like to understand more about the proposed new democratic arrangements in SCR. In particular, respondents want more information about the democratic process for the proposed directly elected mayor (eg. who can vote?); how decisions will be made under the new structures; the transparency of those decisions; and how the public can get involved and engaged in future decision making.
- **Powers and money available** – respondents clearly know more about what the devolved powers will mean for the City Region and for the specific areas within SCR. This includes more information about the amount of new money SCR will receive; whether there are guarantees to and specific requests for more information about the impact of the Devolution Agreement on specific policy areas (predominantly transport/infrastructure; planning).
- **Geography** – there were specific references to places within SCR with requests for more information about what the proposed Devolution Agreement means for that area; whether there are different arrangements for the non-SCR districts; and implications for the wider local geography (eg. the county councils and Yorkshire).

[3] Population comparison data from Census 2011, ONS.

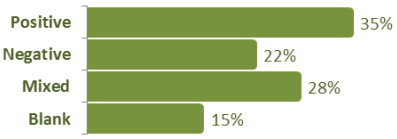
- **Transition** – there were also comments about process of moving to the proposed mayoral combined authority arrangements, particularly the potential costs of such a move and whether such a move could be reversed.

Perspectives on the concept of devolution to city regions

"Do you have any views on whether local areas like the Sheffield City Region should be given more powers and resources from national government to run local transport systems, create more businesses and generate more jobs?"

19. This question asked respondents about their views on devolution and whether powers should be devolved down to local areas from central government to deliver locally-focused outcomes.

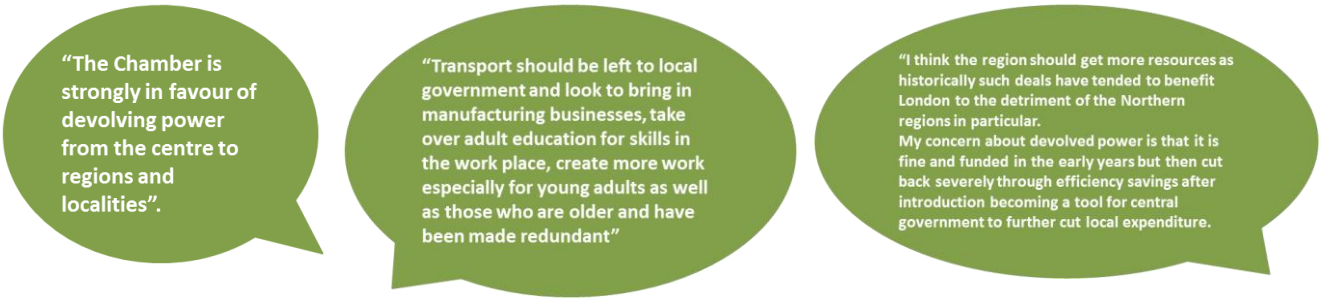
20. Analysis of the responses received show that respondents' perspectives on devolution are reasonably split with around a third of comments being positive and a fifth being more negative. The main reasons given for these firm perspectives were:



- **Positive** – strong support for the principle of greater local control over decision making, particularly in order to improve transport, public services and bring decision making closer to local voters
- **Negative** – a lower number of responses were strongly negative but the main concerns were about the proposed elected mayor; the geographical scale of the proposed model (preference for Yorkshire) and public engagement and transparency in relation to the proposed Devolution Agreement.

21. In some ways, the summary statistics to this question are unhelpful because they mask the large number of comments made which are generally supportive of the principle of devolution but that support is caveated by a number of concerns about devolution to SCR (hence 'mixed' views). These reservations predominantly fall under a small number of common themes:

- **Governance and geography** – concerns about the potential for new layers of 'bureaucracy'; preference for a wider Yorkshire geography; whether the public and the private sector will be fully involved in decision making; and questions about how much real autonomy SCR will have
- **Local decision making capacity** – concerns about the track record and ability of places in SCR to work together and make the decisions to maximise the benefits for the whole of SCR
- **Government's motivations** – some respondents questioned whether Government would really devolve power and whether devolution would just lead to more cuts
- **More powers** – suggestions that the proposed agreement could go further, particularly involving more funding.



Reflections on the specific policy themes within the proposed Devolution Agreement

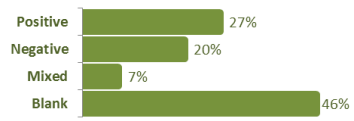
22. The online survey included a section of questions which enabled respondents to offer their views on the specific policy themes contained within the proposed Devolution Agreement for SCR. As the survey was non-linear, people could choose to respond to all these areas or just the ones that interested them.

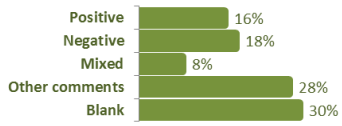
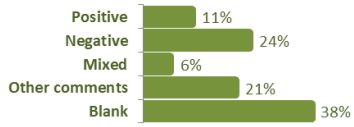
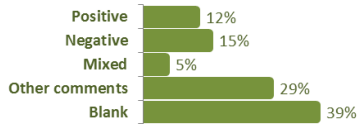
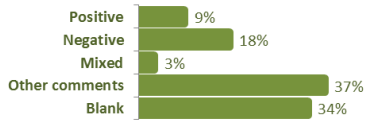
23. Respondents were encouraged and directed to read the content of the proposed Devolution Agreement and the SCR microsite before answering these questions.

24. The table below (**Fig 6**) provides a summary of the main comments by policy theme. While responses to each questions largely related to the respective policy theme, several common areas were present across all themes which are worth reflecting on and may need to be addressed if the proposed Agreement is finalised. These themes were:

- **Recognition of the opportunity** – across all the policy themes involved, a number of respondents made comments and statements which recognised what the a particular power might bring to the SCR economy
- **Awareness and understanding** – building on the question earlier in the survey, the policy theme questions demonstrate that SCR need to improve awareness and understanding of how any new powers will work; what the ultimate aim/outcome is intended to be; and how decisions will be made to deploy the new power.
- **Local capacity to deliver** – possibly related to the challenges around awareness and understanding, there is a consistent challenge from respondents about whether SCR can manage the proposed new powers in a way that supports the SCR economic strategy and all the districts within SCR.
- **Geography** – as elsewhere, a number of people raise questions relating to geography both in terms of whether all places in SCR will receive the benefits of any devolution arrangement and whether a larger geography (ie. Yorkshire) might be more appropriate.

Fig 6: policy theme questions – summary of responses

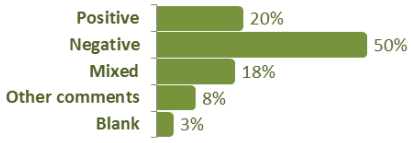
Theme	Summary of responses
Employment, skills and education  	• Respondents were largely positive about focusing on skills for employment • The main concern was around the lack of control over apprenticeships and 16-18 education • Some concern over whether skills and jobs will be available across the SCR areas or whether the big urban areas will dominate, particularly at the expense of rural areas. • There is also a feeling that a focus on manufacturing jobs would be beneficial • Importance of progression through training system (ie. to ensure people continue to develop) • Some concerns about quality of existing provision in SCR and whether devolved

	control will improve this
Transport 	• A similar proportion of respondents made positive and negative comments in this area, but the majority either made no comments or didn't indicate a whether they agreed with the current plans or not. • Improved links with the wider area, including Yorkshire and Trans-Pennine • Some support for bus franchising and 'TfL powers' • A lot of concern for rural public transport and need for public transport to be affordable • Comments expressing that the HS2 issue in SCR needs to be resolved • A number of positive comments about the prospect of smart-ticketing • A feeling that public transport needs to be much more integrated (ie. with other modes of transport in SCR) and with wider planning (housing, infrastructure)
Financial 	• As with transport, more than half of respondents were not clear whether they feel positively or negatively about the proposals in this area. Almost a quarter of respondents made negative comments, with only one in ten making comments that were supportive of the proposals. • Some recognition of the need to be able to invest for the long term • A consistently emerging theme is scepticism about ability to manage these decisions locally. • Concern that £30m over 30 years is not enough annually and will not replace the money that has been lost through budget cuts • Concerns about how the money will be managed and whether all areas will benefit (eg. SY or all SCR districts; urban v rural)
Business growth 	• Fewer numbers of respondents provided answers to this question, possibly reflecting that the great majority of respondents were individual residents of SCR who may not use business support services. • Supportive comments focused predominantly on the opportunity to support smaller businesses in SCR, the attraction more businesses/investment, and closer alignment with national programmes (eg. UKTI). • There were some contrasting views about the focus for business report, including whether there should or should not be a focus on key locations (eg. M1 corridor; AMRC etc) • Commonality with other questions about the ability of SCR councils to manage business support effectively.
Housing and planning 	• Of those who made comments, more respondents gave negative views than positive. • The main area of positivity was around the prospect of better regional planning, particularly linked to plans for wider infrastructure. • The lack of new social/affordable housing was a common area of challenge from respondents • Clear concerns about where development occurs. A number of respondents argue for protection of the Green Belt in SCR and the focus should be on brownfield land.

Views on the proposed directly elected mayor

"The Government has made it clear that in return for more powers and resources to be devolved to the Sheffield City Region the Sheffield City Region Combined Authority will have to agree to the creation of directly-elected Mayor who will work in partnership with local politicians and the private sector. What are your views on this?"

25. The development of the directly elected city region mayor model by Government through the most recent Devolution Agreements has generated headlines and therefore increased public awareness. While respondents could choose which questions to answer, only around 10% failed to actually address this question, possibly reflecting the importance of the issue to local people.



26. Respondents are predominantly more negative of the proposal for an elected mayor in SCR than they are elsewhere about devolution or the specific policy themes. Reasons given for concerns about the mayoral model are wide-ranging but areas which attract greatest concern are:

- Concern about the perceived financial cost and an increase in bureaucracy with an additional tier of governance
- Sense that Sheffield voted not to have an elected (city) mayor in the referendum of 2012 and potential confusion with the existing Mayor of Doncaster
- Concern about the executive power that any elected mayor may have over the City Region, with particular reference to the mayoral 'veto' over policy decisions
- The threat to the City Region of having a poor quality candidate (*and conversely, the importance of getting high calibre candidates*). Many people suggested that the mayoral role should not be a party political one
- Concerns about the electoral geography, with some respondents suggesting that the mayor should cover the whole SCR; some fearing the implications for areas in SCR that do not vote for the mayor; and others not wanting to be part of the mayoral geography
- A number of references to the imposition of the mayoral model by Government

27. As suggested by the statistics above, there were positive views expressed about the potential for mayoral leadership in the SCR, with respondents particularly focusing on the potential for a single figurehead for decision-making in SCR as long as the right powers are available.

"This will confuse the political landscape - why still have a PCC? Why not pool more Council functions, such as Heath and Social Care, School Improvement etc?"

"Mayor through the back door. I voted on this and said no in 2012! Why is this being forced through?"

"If we have a Mayor it is important that we all get a vote across the region".

"Why should we be forced into having a mayor? Would the mayor be the mouthpiece for the Govt? If a mayor would be of benefit then there needs to be more transparency and accountability and no over-all power."

"I agree with the idea of a directly elected major as it would provide a recognisable figurehead, greater direct accountability and potentially more effective decision making"

"There are examples elsewhere in the UK of good and bad mayors. As long as the Region can galvanise enough interest in the election of the Mayor to ensure that whoever is elected understands the needs of the Region, it should be a good thing. hopefully having one point of contact will also enable projects to get started more quickly, rather than being stuck in red tape."

Benefits of the proposed Devolution Agreement

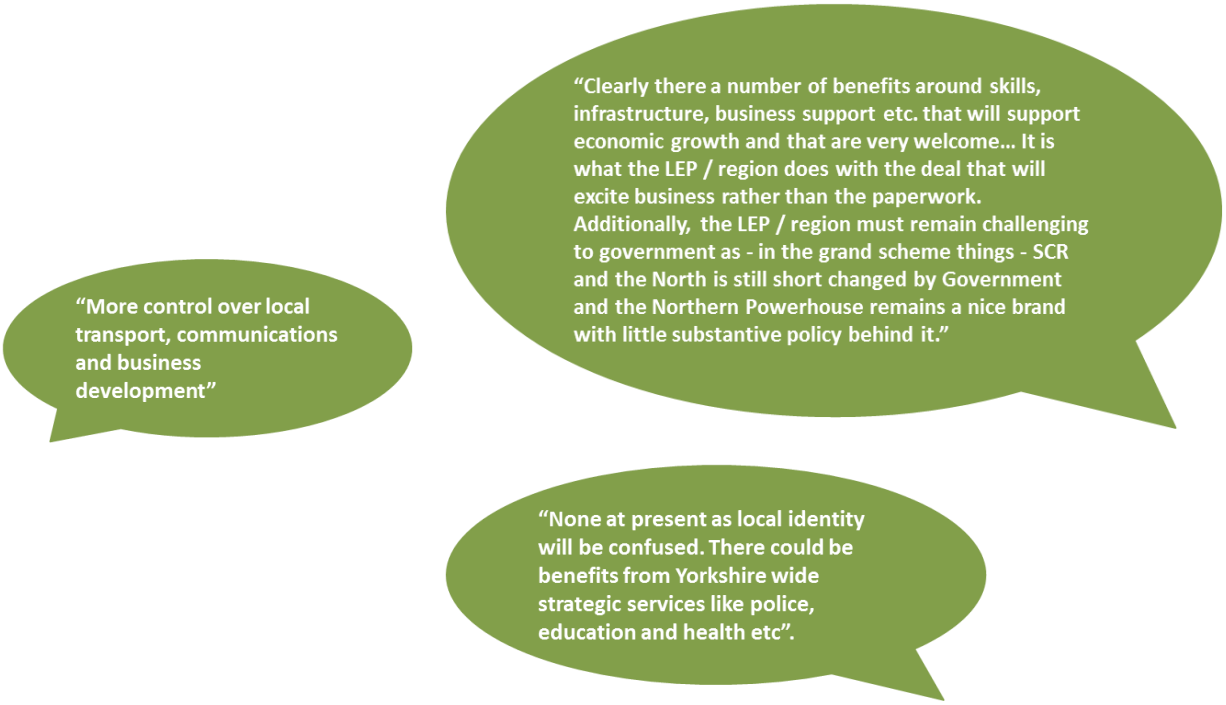
"What do you think the main benefits of the devolution deal are for you/your area?"

28. Over half of respondents made positive statements about the potential benefits of the proposed Devolution Agreement for them or their local area. Around a third of respondents felt there were unlikely to be any benefits.

29. The main areas that respondents cited as being benefits were:

    - The ability to make faster, locally-focused decisions is seen as positive, with the ability to be more flexible and deliver change more quickly.
    - Stronger local accountability and local influence over decisions to focus resources to the places that need it in SCR
    - Business growth and jobs are seen as potential benefits
    - Improvement to public transport, bus regulation and the introduction of smart-ticketing.

30. The negative comments were either due to scepticism about the whole devolution process or a lack of clarity about what the benefits are, something which needs to be considered if the Devolution Agreement moves forward. Further, this area raised questions about what the benefits will be for places within SCR, particularly the districts in the North Midlands and whether the Devolution Agreement will create confusion over who provides services in the area.



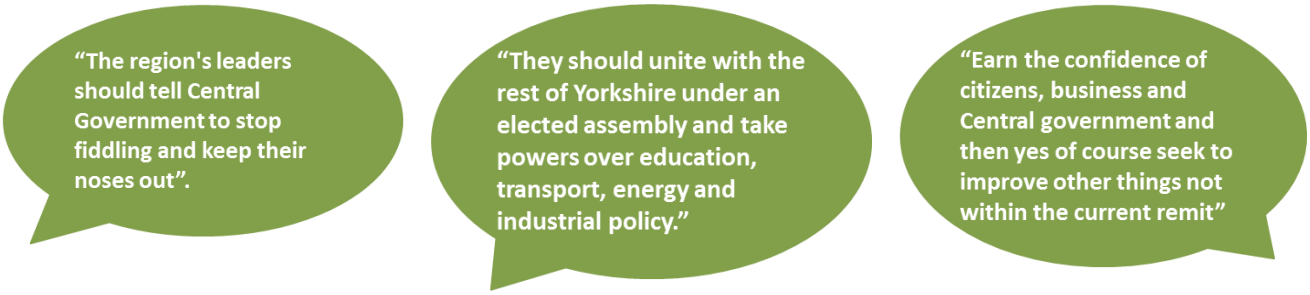
Further devolution to SCR

31. The final questions looked at firstly whether SCR's Leaders should look to receive more devolved powers from Government and if so, what powers they should seek.

"Do you have any views on whether Sheffield City Region Leaders should try to secure more powers and devolution in the future?"

32. Approximately 40% of respondents felt that SCR should try to secure more powers and devolution in the future; 20% felt they should not. Respondents were notably keen for the current and proposed devolution proposal to bed-in before further powers are devolved to SCR.

33. The majority of the comments against further devolution were either fairly blunt (ie. "*no*") this this question in particular led a number of respondents to suggest devolution as part of a wider geography (eg. Greater Yorkshire; English Parliament).



"What further powers and resources to achieve our vision for growth, if any, should be devolved to the City Region?"

34. Where respondents chose to respond to this question, there were a broad range of suggestions for what additional powers SCR may seek from Government. Suggestions included:

- **Education**
- **Under-19s skills ("all skills")**
- **Housing**
- **Police and emergency services**
- **Dedicated investment**
- **Arts and culture**
- **Public transport based on the TfL model**
- **Railways**
- **Tax setting and tax raising powers**
- **Air quality / clean air zones**
- **'Manchester model'**
- **'Scottish model'**

35. There were a number of additional comments from respondents who commented that additional powers should be devolved but to a Yorkshire or Greater Yorkshire geography.