



the Messenger

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Leading law societies warn against SRA's overreaching reforms



The five largest local law societies in the UK – Birmingham, Bristol, Leeds, Liverpool, and Manchester – known as “the Joint V” – have joined forces to challenge the Solicitors Regulation Authority's (SRA) proposed reforms to client money management, regulatory oversight, and the Compensation Fund.

Representing over 15,000 legal professionals nationwide, the Joint V argue in their high-level response submitted to the SRA this week that the SRA's proposals are disproportionate, risk undermining public confidence in the profession, and fail to deliver meaningful consumer protection improvements. Each Society will also deliver its own individual detailed response to the SRA.

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Greater Manchester to lead the devolution revolution

It's nothing new to Greater Manchester of course, with the Combined Authority and elected Mayor established in 2014, but the Government's plans for a 'devolution revolution' are starting to materialise. As an area with what is now to be termed as an 'Established Strategic Authority', the powers and freedoms that are available will be some of the most devolved in England.

These are exciting times. The Deputy Prime Minister in the Devolution White Paper stated if "we're going to build an economy that works for everyone, we need nothing less than a completely new way of governing." This involves not just Strategic Authorities covering all of England, but the replacement of the district and county council tiers of local government with a new unitary council. Proposals for this large-scale reorganisation have been sought by the Government, with outline plans needed by the end of March.

Armed with its devolution deal, the latest version of which was secured in 2023, the GMCA has considerable experience of using its devolved powers to work with local services, businesses, communities and other partners to improve the city-region. This rich seam of experience will be of major interest to the new Mayoral Councils and the Council of Nations and Regions, which will be chaired by the Prime Minister. The elected Mayor of Greater Manchester, Andy Burnham, will of course be joining both. The white paper enables further devolution to Strategic Authorities with consolidated long-term budgeting and the opportunity each year to ask for more responsibility



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from central Government, to be delivered in accordance with its new missions.

Mayors will be integral to delivering the 1.5m homes committed to in this Parliament. Established Mayoral Strategic Authorities will have the ability to set the strategic direction of any future affordable housing programme. This will require a stronger partnership and an increase in Homes England's accountability to the Mayors. Although it's not yet known what this will mean in practice, as part of this, the Government intends, over time, to move Homes England to a more regionalised model so that it can be more responsive to the needs of the area, and it will be Mayors that will have the control of grant funding for regeneration and housing delivery. For Registered Providers of affordable housing in Greater Manchester who will now have leadership for the Affordable Homes Programme, devolution will bring significant changes. These changes will require engagement with those organisations and Mayors that could gain greater devolved decision-making powers in the future.

Manchester has an opportunity to lead England's devolution revolution, so watch this space.

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