


Browne Jacobson supports establishment of East Midlands Combined County Authority

 29 February 2024

England's first-ever combined county authority has been established across Derbyshire, Derby, Nottinghamshire and Nottingham with wide-ranging legal support from Browne Jacobson.

The UK and Ireland law firm advised the four constituent councils involved in creating the East Midlands Combined County Authority (EMCCA) on all legal aspects.

Combined county authorities are the latest stage of England's devolution programme, having been established under the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act, which received royal assent in October 2023.

Browne Jacobson, which has one of its seven offices in Nottingham, worked with lead lawyers from Derbyshire County Council, Derby City Council, Nottinghamshire County Council and Nottingham City Council to form a governance group that has overseen all the key legal issues.

This included working on the framework of the East Midlands devolution deal, which guarantees £38m funding per year to the area for the next 30 years and an additional £1.5bn in transport funding.

The governance group also led the proposal to the Secretary of State for forming the combined county authority, a consultation on this proposal, and established the East Midlands Combined County Authority Regulations 2024, as well as other amending regulations necessary to implement aspects of the new combined county authority model.

Laura Hughes, Head of the Public Law team at Browne Jacobson, led the firm's work on the project.

She said: "We are proud to have worked on such a ground-breaking project in England's devolution programme, a central plank of the UK Government's levelling up agenda and a major step-change for the organisation of local government.

"We worked closely with our colleagues within Derbyshire County Council, Derby City Council, Nottinghamshire County Council and Nottingham City Council to advise on all legal issues as they arose, and we wish to congratulate everyone who has been involved within those local authorities to reach this critical milestone.

"This is a fantastic example of what can happen when dedicated public servants pull out all the stops to achieve something they really believe in, and it has been a pleasure to work with all those individuals and teams."

Following its official establishment yesterday (28 February 2024), a board that features representatives of the four constituent councils will meet in advance of the mayoral election that takes place on Thursday 2 May.

The elected mayor, who will take up office on 7 May for a four-year term, provides democratic accountability for the new powers and budgets that are being devolved from Westminster, including planning, infrastructure, transport, adult education and economic development.

Each constituent council will appoint two of its members to the EMCCA, with four non-constituent members also appointed to represent borough and district councils across Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire.

Browne Jacobson will host an evening dinner ahead of the Local Government Association Annual Conference on 1 July at Piccolino, in Harrogate.

Speakers including Browne Jacobson partner Laura Hughes, Derbyshire County Council managing director Emma Alexander and Derby City Council chief executive Paul Simpson will discuss how they shaped the current legislation to establish the EMCCA and next steps for the devolution programme.

Anyone interested in attending the event, which is aimed at local authority chief executives, should email nicola.adams@brownejacobson.com.

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