

"Businesses back devolved powers for Lancashire but support for a Mayor is dependent on securing meaningful funding and avoiding additional costs."

Introduction

The introduction of a directly elected Mayor as part of local government reorganisation would represent one of the most significant changes to governance and decision making across Lancashire in a generation. Such a change has the potential to influence economic development, transport, skills, investment priorities and the strategic direction of the region, with implications for businesses of all sizes and sectors.

As the voice of business across the County, North and Western Lancashire, East Lancashire and Lancaster Chambers' of Commerce, believes it is essential that the views of the local business community are understood and represented throughout this process. Given the importance of the issue, the Chamber undertook a survey of its members and the wider business network to establish the level of support for a mayoral model and to identify any opportunities, concerns or priorities that businesses believe should be considered.

The survey was designed to be balanced and impartial. Participants were provided with objective information about the potential role and responsibilities of a Mayor, together with a fair outline of both the possible advantages and challenges associated with the model. The purpose of the survey was not to advocate for a particular outcome but rather to provide a platform for businesses to express their views and to ensure that policymakers have access to an evidence based understanding of business sentiment.

The survey results indicate that businesses and stakeholders are broadly supportive of a Lancashire Mayoral Authority but that support is conditional. Respondents clearly recognise the potential benefits of devolution and stronger regional representation, while expressing significant concerns about additional costs and a desire for greater clarity before implementation.

Overall Support for a Lancashire Mayor

Support for the introduction of an elected Mayor is relatively strong, with 65.16% either strongly supporting (34.19%) or tending to support (30.97%) the proposal. Only 13.55% oppose the idea, while 21.29% remain neutral or unsure.

This suggests that the concept of a Mayor is generally accepted in principle by most respondents. However, the sizeable proportion of undecided respondents indicates there is still an opportunity for further engagement and communication.

In summary - There is a clear majority in favour of the principle of an elected Mayor but one in five respondents still requires convincing.

Devolution Funding is the Primary Driver

The strongest message from the survey is the importance of securing additional devolved funding for Lancashire.

- 72.55% said it was *very important*
- 20.26% said it was *important*

This means that 92.81% of respondents view securing additional government funding as important.

The findings suggest that respondents are less interested in governance reform for its own sake and more focused on the economic opportunities that devolution could bring.

In summary - Support for a Mayor appears closely linked to the expectation of increased investment, powers and resources for Lancashire.

Perceived Benefits to Lancashire's Influence

A substantial majority believe a Mayor would strengthen Lancashire's national profile:

- 66.88% believe a Mayor would strengthen Lancashire's voice
- 18.64% do not
- 22.03% are unsure

While some uncertainty remains, respondents generally view a Mayor as a mechanism for increasing Lancashire's influence with central government and attracting greater attention and investment.

In summary - The case for representation and influence is resonating with respondents.

Significant Concerns About Additional Costs

The survey highlights a major area of concern around financial implications.

- 61.04% would be *very concerned*
- 18.83% would be *moderately concerned*

This means almost 80% of respondents have significant concerns about any increase in costs for businesses or council taxpayers.

This is arguably the biggest risk identified in the research. While respondents support the potential benefits of devolution, they do not want those benefits to come with increased financial burdens.

In summary - Cost neutrality or demonstrable value for money will be critical to securing lasting public and business support.

Support is Conditional Rather Than Unconditional

When asked which statement best reflected their position:

- 50.00% support a Mayor only if accompanied by additional powers and funding
- 18.83% support adopting a Mayor as soon as possible
- 14.94% would prefer more information before deciding
- 8.44% oppose the proposal
- 7.79% remain unsure

Combining the first two responses shows that 68.83% are broadly supportive of having a Mayor. However, only around one in five want immediate implementation without conditions.

This demonstrates that support is largely pragmatic rather than ideological. Stakeholders want assurances that Lancashire will secure meaningful powers, funding and economic benefits.

In summary - The survey reveals support for a Mayor, but not at any cost and not without tangible benefits.

Strategic Conclusions

The survey points to five key conclusions:

1. There is a mandate for further exploration

With around two-thirds supporting the principle of a Mayor, there is sufficient support to continue developing devolution proposals.

2. Funding matters more than governance structures

The overwhelming importance attached to devolved funding suggests that the economic case should be the central message in future communications.

3. Lancashire wants a stronger voice nationally

Respondents recognise that a Mayor could provide a stronger advocate for the county and improve its influence with government.

4. Cost concerns must be addressed

Any proposal will need to demonstrate how the new arrangements will deliver value without increasing costs to businesses and residents.

5. Communication remains essential

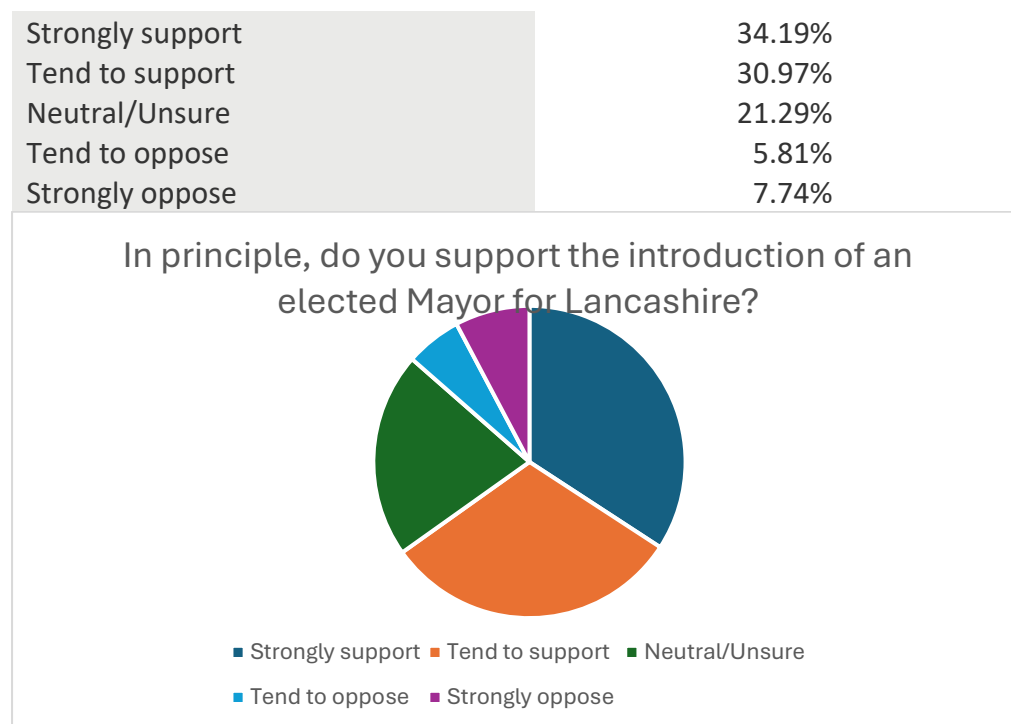
Nearly a quarter of respondents are either neutral, unsure or seeking more information. This represents the key audience for future engagement activity.

Conclusion

The findings of this survey provide a valuable insight into business opinion on the potential introduction of a directly elected Mayor for Lancashire. The Chamber's objective throughout this process has been to ensure that the views of the business community are heard and represented in what is likely to be a significant decision for the county's future governance and economic development.

Mayoral Survey Responses

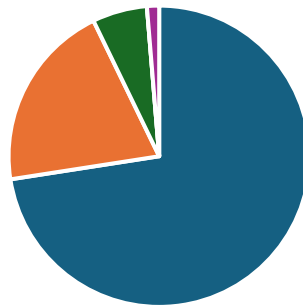
In principle, do you support the introduction of an elected Mayor for Lancashire?



How important is it that Lancashire secures additional devolved funding from government?

Very important	72.55%
Important	20.26%
Neither	5.88%
Unimportant	0.00%
Not important at all	1.31%

How important is it that Lancashire secures additional devolved funding from government?

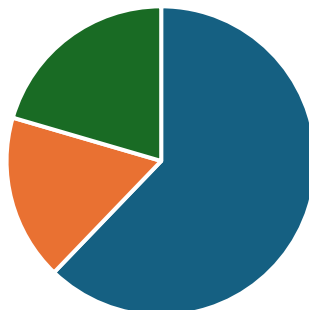


■ Very important ■ Important ■ Neither ■ Unimportant ■ Not important at all

Do you believe a Mayor would strengthen Lancashire's national voice and influence?

Yes	66.88%
No	18.64%
Unsure	22.03%

Do you believe a Mayor would strengthen Lancashire's national voice and influence?

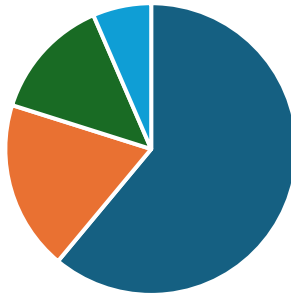


■ Yes ■ No ■ Unsure

How concerned would you be if the new structure increased costs for businesses or council taxpayers?

Very concerned	61.04%
Moderately concerned	18.83%
Slightly concerned	13.64%
Not concerned	6.49%

How concerned would you be if the new structure increased costs for businesses or council taxpayers?



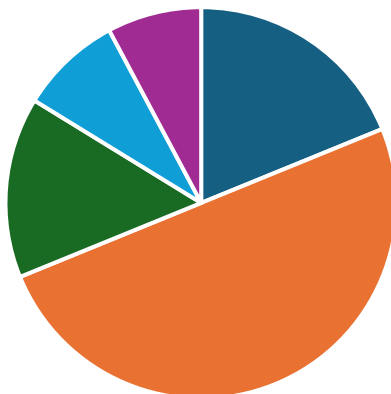
■ Very concerned ■ Moderately concerned ■ Slightly concerned ■ Not concerned

Based on what you currently know, which statement best reflects your position?

Lancashire should adopt an elected Mayor as soon as possible
 Lancashire should adopt an elected Mayor, but only with additional powers and funding
 Lancashire should delay the decision until more information is available
 Lancashire should not adopt an elected Mayor
 Unsure

18.83%
 50.00%
 14.94%
 8.44%
 7.79%

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■ Lancashire should adopt an elected Mayor as soon as possible
 ■ Lancashire should adopt an elected Mayor, but only with additional powers and funding
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 ■ Lancashire should not adopt an elected Mayor
 ■ Unsure