

Local Government Reform – consultation responses 24 March 2021

Report of Chief Executive

PURPOSE OF REPORT

This report is to provide information to Council on the government's Local Government Reorganisation consultation and to seek Council's approval of the principles that will form the basis of the council's responses.

This report is public.

RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that Council:

- (1) Receive the update on the consultation process following submission of the Bay Unitary proposal;**
- (2) Endorse the approach of the Council to the consultation responses as outlined in the report and Appendix 1;**
- (3) Endorse the approach to submitting additional commentary on the Bay and North Cumbria proposal as outlined in Appendix 2;**
- (4) Authorise the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Leader to finalise the responses to the consultation for submission to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government by the 19 April 2021 deadline.**

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 At their meetings on 8 December Cabinet and full Council approved the full proposal for a unitary council for the Bay area for submission to the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government. The proposal was also agreed by Barrow and South Lakeland Councils and submitted by the required deadline of 9 December 2020.
- 1.2 Following submission and correspondence with the Ministry further work was undertaken to update the impact assessment on the subsequent effect on local police force and fire and rescue service areas.
- 1.3 The Government has now confirmed that it is consulting on our proposal and is seeking views on the locally led proposals that the Secretary of State has received following his invitation to councils in Cumbria, North Yorkshire and Somerset to submit proposals for local government reorganisation.

- 1.4 Government is consulting on each of the proposals for local Government Reorganisation in Cumbria
- The Bay and North Cumbria
 - Two unitary councils within the Cumbria county footprint–
 - Eden, Carlisle and Allerdale / Copeland Barrow and South Lakeland – as proposed by Carlisle and Eden Councils
and
 - Carlisle, Allerdale and Copeland / Barrow, South Lakeland and Eden - as proposed by Allerdale and Copeland Councils
 - Single unitary for Cumbria – as proposed by Cumbria County Council
- 1.5 The Council is also being consulted on proposals for local government reorganisation in North Yorkshire. The Chief Executive will consider any response to this in consultation with the Leader.
- 1.6 The consultation will run to midnight on the 19th April 2020, and is hosted on the Government's online platform Citizen Space. The Government is consulting with a range of stakeholders. The consultation is open to any person or organisation wishing to express a view on local government reorganisation.
- 1.7 The three councils are making all of our local stakeholders and communities aware and encouraging their participation in the consultation. We encourage Ward Councillors to promote the opportunity to their local residents and communities to respond to the consultation.
- 1.8 Appendix 1 describes the approach the Councils are proposing to take in responding to the consultation. It provides a series of points in respect of each proposal submitted by other Councils. Appendix 2 sets out points for inclusion in additional commentary to be provided on The Bay and North Cumbria proposal. Subject to endorsement by Council they will, together with use of information in the Council's full proposal, be used to develop a series of full responses, to be approved by the Chief Executive in consultation with the Leader for submission to Government.
- 1.9 For Council's information, the Secretary of State has made an Order to postpone local elections to the Principal Authorities in Cumbria. Lancashire County Council elections will proceed as planned.

2.0 Proposal Details

- 2.1 Members are asked to consider the approach and appendices as the framework for the Council's responses to the consultations and to delegate to the Chief Executive in consultation with the Leader to finalise the Council's responses by 19 April 2021 deadline.

3.0 Details of Consultation

- 3.1 The three councils undertook a considerable level of engagement and consultation in the short period of time that was available to develop the Bay unitary proposal and this highlighted strong public support for the bid. At this time, the Council is responding to a consultation process and is making all local stakeholders and residents aware and encouraging them to respond to the consultation through the appropriate channels.

4.0 Options and Options Analysis (including risk assessment)

- 4.1 There is an option not to submit a response. The Council's full proposal indicates the benefits and opportunities which could be realised for residents and businesses by a Bay Unitary. By not submitting a response to consultation on the proposals submitted, the Council would significantly reduce its influence in the reorganisation of local government. This option is not recommended.

5.0 Officer Preferred Option (and comments)

- 5.1 The officer preferred option is to submit responses to the government's consultation, taking the opportunity to influence decisions on local government arrangements for the area. Responding to the consultation does not create any specific risks for the council and would reinforce the strength of the proposal for the Bay unitary. Not responding to the consultation creates the risk that the Council is not able to influence the outcome of proposals.

6.0 Conclusion

- 6.1 Following the submission of the proposal for a unitary council for the Bay, the government has now opened up consultation on all four proposals for Cumbria, including the Bay proposal which includes Lancaster. This is an important opportunity for the Council to influence the future of local government in this area. Council is asked to agree the key principles included in Appendices 1 and 2 so that a response can be made by the deadline of the 19 April.

CONCLUSION OF IMPACT ASSESSMENT (including Health & Safety, Equality & Diversity, Human Rights, Community Safety, Sustainability and Rural Proofing):
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No direct implications arise as a result of this report, which is a consultation response.
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LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no legal issues to raise in respect of this report, which is a consultation response.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no direct financial, resource or procurement implications in this report which is to consider a consultation response. Previous reports to Council on the Bay proposal have set out the implications as they are currently and further detailed work will be required if the proposal is supported at this stage.

OTHER RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS, such as Human Resources, Information Services, Property, Open Spaces
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No significant resource implications arise as a result of this report, which is a consultation response.
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SECTION 151 OFFICER'S COMMENTS

The S151 Officer has been consulted and has no further comments.
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MONITORING OFFICER'S COMMENTS		
The Monitoring Officer has been consulted and no further comments.		
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