

# **COUNCIL BUSINESS COMMITTEE**

## **Consultation - The Future of Lancashire Locals 14 January 2010**

### **Report of the Head of Democratic Services**

#### **PURPOSE OF REPORT**

To advise Members of a request for comments by the Leader of Lancashire County Council regarding the future of Lancashire Locals and to determine a response from this District.

This report is public

#### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

**That the Committee consider the draft paper from the Leader of Lancashire County Council and determine a response from this District.**

##### **1.0 Report**

- 1.1 The Leader of Lancashire County Council, County Councillor Geoff Driver, is currently in the process of reviewing the County Council's approach to working with District Councils to deliver local priorities.
- 1.2 He is preparing a paper setting out the conclusions of this review and suggestions for a new approach. He has forwarded a draft paper, attached at Appendix A, which includes the view that Lancashire Locals are not a sufficiently cost effective vehicle for delivering what local people need and states that he is minded to recommend the County Council to disestablish them with effect from 31 March 2010.
- 1.3 His intention is that this would achieve financial savings and free up time and energy to develop more locally-focussed and flexible approaches to localism. He summarises his administration's approach as having the following four elements:
  - further strengthening relationships at leadership level to enable us to make step changes in determining and implementing shared priorities
  - devolving a range of decisions, services and budgets, which are most sensibly decided locally, direct to the district councils and
  - strengthening the role of County Councillors in representing their local constituents
  - building on existing local mechanisms for engaging with local people and communities
- 1.4 Comments have been requested both on the disestablishment of the Joint Lancashire Local Committees and on any ideas on how to further improve a joint approach to locality working.

- 1.5 Comments must be received by 29 January 2010 in order to allow a report to the County Council's Cabinet on 4 February, with a final decision on disestablishing Lancashire Locals by the County Council on 25 February.

## **2.0 Background**

- 2.1 Early in 2006, Lancashire County Council put forward proposals to establish Joint Committees with each of the District Councils in Lancashire, to be known as 'Lancashire Locals'. This Council resolved in February 2006 to participate in the proposed Lancashire Local in the District and that the basis of its delegation would be proportional representation with at least one member of Cabinet included.
- 2.2 In March 2006 the City Council formally resolved to establish the Joint Committee and adopted the proposed Constitution.
- 2.3 The meetings are held at different venues throughout the district and at different times of day. The Committees comprise the 10 County Councillors and 10 City Councillors appointed on PR.
- 2.4 The initiative is lead by the County Council who carry out the role of servicing the Committee – organising meetings, putting together the agenda and publishing the minutes. Being a Joint Committee however means that the City Council is obliged to keep records in the same way as for any other City Council Committees in order to comply with Access to Information legislation and any decisions on the Constitution of the Joint Committee require approval of both Councils.
- 2.5 The County Council delegated a number of powers to the Joint Committee in relation to Highways, Waste, Libraries, Museums, Youth and Community expenditure and a local Grants Scheme, in addition to using the Committee in a consultative role. The City Council has not agreed any delegations but does occasionally submit reports for consultation purposes.
- 2.6 In early 2009, the County Council embarked on a review of each of the Lancashire Locals with a view to enabling each one to be more flexible and responsive to local needs. A review of the constitution was undertaken to ensure that it offers, from their perspective, as wide a range of local government service delegations as possible at this moment in time to the district level, without undermining the standard of those services, and secondly they looked at strengthening the role of the Lancashire Local Committees and considering how Lancashire Locals are able to shape and influence all County Council Services delivered in their area.
- 2.7 A consultation exercise was undertaken which allowed the Lancashire Local Joint Committee to formally respond: 'That the consultation paper on developing the Lancashire Locals be welcomed as a basis for more integrated working between the County Council and the City Council to enable initiatives to be taken forward which will be of benefit to the people of the Lancaster District.
- 2.8 Further comments were also expressed at the meeting as follows:-
  - the relationship with the Local Strategic Partnership would be of significant importance, but more work was required to ensure complementary working and linkage;
  - the imbalance on agendas between County and City Council business needed to be addressed and it was important that the City Council was encouraged to submit issues for consideration;

- the approach described in the consultation paper was welcomed and the need for more integrated/joint working was recognised.

2.9 In addition the City Council submitted the following response, approved by the Council Business Committee:

'The principles described in the consultation paper reflect the national and regional trends to more localism and community engagement in accordance with priorities identified by the LSP. Although the main thrust of the proposals are around delegation of County powers, there are clear indications that Districts as well may be expected to delegate powers to Lancashire Locals and to provide more support to those arrangements. For Lancaster District our Community Engagement/Neighbourhood Management proposals are still developing and more detailed consideration needs to be given as to how they will align with the proposed development of the Lancashire Locals model.'

2.10 Following the conclusion of the consultation exercise a revised Constitution was approved by the County Council on 11<sup>th</sup> December 2008 which provided for additional delegations from the County Council and a simplified approach to future amendments to allow the future development of Constitutions more tailored to the requirements of individual districts. The new Constitution was endorsed by the City Council. There have been no delegated functions from the City Council.

### **3.0 Options and Options Appraisal**

3.1 The Terms of Reference of the Council Business Committee provide for this committee to determine the method of response and where necessary ratify responses on behalf of full Council to consultations.

3.2 The Committee is therefore requested to consider the following options:

3.2.1 Option 1 – to formulate a response to the County Council on the disestablishment of the Joint Committee including any views on how to further improve a joint approach to locality working as set out in the draft paper.

3.2.2 Option 2 – not to respond to the consultation and await any formal notification of the County Council's intentions.

3.2.3 Option 3 – to allow each political group to respond individually to the proposal. Since the proposal has arisen as a result of a change in the political administration at County Hall, Members may consider that the different political groups on this Council will have differing views which would best be expressed individually.

<b>CONCLUSION OF IMPACT ASSESSMENT</b> <b>(including Diversity, Human Rights, Community Safety, Sustainability and Rural Proofing)</b>
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None directly as a result of this report.
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<b>FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS</b>
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There are no direct financial implications to the City Council as a result of this report.
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The Joint Committee is managed by the County Council and requires minimal City Council officer time to support it. It would result in one less Committee for Members to attend although it is likely to be replaced by other methods of meeting and working together as partners.

#### **SECTION 151 OFFICER'S COMMENTS**

The S151 Officer has been consulted and has no further comments.

#### **LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

The Joint Committee has been established under the Local Government Act 1972 and any changes will need to be endorsed by Council and reflected in the Constitution.

#### **MONITORING OFFICER'S COMMENTS**

The Monitoring Officer has been consulted and has no further comments.

#### **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

Letter from the Leader of Lancashire County Council dated 22 December 2009

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