

CABINET

11.00 A.M.

5TH NOVEMBER 2020

PRESENT:- Councillors Erica Lewis (Chair), Kevin Frea (Vice-Chair), Dave Brookes, Tim Hamilton-Cox, Janice Hanson, Caroline Jackson, Alistair Sinclair and Anne Whitehead

Apologies for Absence:

Councillor Jean Parr

Officers in attendance:

Kieran Keane	Chief Executive
Mark Davies	Director for Communities and the Environment
Daniel Bates	Director of Corporate Services
Paul Thompson	Chief Financial Officer (Head of Finance & Section 151 Officer)
Luke Gorst	Head of Legal Services and Monitoring Officer
Debbie Chambers	Head of Democratic Services and Deputy Monitoring Officer
Liz Bateson	Principal Democratic Support Officer

77 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest made at this point.

78 PUBLIC SPEAKING

Members were advised that there had been no requests to speak at the meeting in accordance with Cabinet's agreed procedure.

At this point the Chair requested that standing order 17 (Cabinet Procedure Rule 17) be suspended to allow for questions to be taken from all members as the reports were introduced. The proposal was moved by Councillor Brookes, seconded by Councillor Frea and there was no dissent to the proposal.

Resolved unanimously:

(1) That Standing Order 17 (Cabinet Procedure Rule 17) be suspended.

79 LOCAL GOVERNMENT REFORM DEVELOPMENTS

(Cabinet Member with Special Responsibility Councillor Lewis)

Cabinet received a report from the Chief Executive to request Cabinet's endorsement of the outline case for a unitary authority for The Bay area and that Cabinet recommend this to council, noting that the Government had now requested unitary proposals from Cumbria be submitted on or before 9 November.

The options, options analysis, including risk assessment and officer preferred option, were set out in the report as follows:

Option 1: Submit a proposal for a unitary council for The Bay
<p>Advantages: This would mean that the opportunity and benefits of a unitary council, based on the footprint of the three councils around The Bay, would remain on the table and be considered by Government. Delivery of The Bay Prosperity and Resilience Strategy would be enhanced by unitary status with further influence over budgets and delivery of services on The Bay footprint. The district, representing the interests of its residents and businesses, will have a direct role in influencing development of unitary proposals building on between the strong relationships between the three councils, existing joint working arrangements and a shared health services footprint. The draft Outline Proposal at Appendix A highlights in more detail the economic, social and environmental benefits and opportunities which could be realised for residents and businesses.</p>
<p>Disadvantages: The benefits and opportunities highlighted in the draft Outline Proposal would be foregone if a proposal were not submitted as The Bay option will no longer be on the table. By not submitting a proposal, the Council would significantly reduce its influence in the reorganisation of local government and the ability to achieve reform rather than simply structural change. If The Bay option is no longer on the table, the default option for Lancaster district will be, if matters proceed further, to become part of a North Lancashire/ Blackpool unitary, for which no case has been made but which appears to offer few benefits for the district, in terms of building on shared services, TTWAs, economic and community links, shared purpose and strategy, other than at the pan Lancashire level.</p>
<p>Risks: The high-level case does not meet government requirements. This will be mitigated by ensuring compliance with criteria is clear and a compelling case is made based on evidence and public opinion. The three councils have secured strong external advice to ensure criteria can be met. Proposal does not gain support of local bodies and the public. Early communications suggest strong support for the proposal but further detailed engagement will highlight the views of partners and public. The councils would not wish to submit a proposal without strong local support Page 9 Local government reform distracts from other priorities. Although this is not an ideal time, the government has set the timetable for these developments and the Council can prioritise work to ensure the right arrangements that secure the best benefits for residents, for the short, medium and long term future, are agreed for the district.</p>
Option 2: Do not submit a proposal for a unitary council for The Bay
<p>Advantages: None</p>
<p>Disadvantages: Not submitting a proposal would mean that the opportunity and benefits of a unitary council, based on the footprint of the three councils around The Bay, would not be considered by Government alongside other proposals submitted. The benefits and opportunities identified in the draft outline proposal will not be realised for residents and businesses, if a proposal were not submitted. By not submitting a proposal, the Council would significantly reduce its influence in the reorganisation of local government. Loss of potential benefits to residents and businesses. If a proposal for The Bay is not submitted, it is understood that the Council will become part of a North Lancashire/ Blackpool unitary proposal, for which there does not appear to be any evidence that string economic, social and environmental benefits, equivalent to those identified for The Bay proposal, can be delivered.</p>

Risks: The option of a North Lancashire / Blackpool unitary has not been developed and Lancashire has not been invited to submit at this early stage. However, if The Bay option does not remain on the table, this would be the only option available. There is no meaningful way to assess the impact of this on the district. Loss of local determination. If The Bay proposal is not submitted, local residents are likely to have no choice in terms of future unitary arrangements.

The officer preferred option is Option One as this allows The Bay to remain on the table as a unitary option that would include Lancaster district, allowing district leaders and communities a say in what happens in the future, building on the strong relationship and joint working around The Bay and enabling the delivery of identified economic, social and environmental benefits for the area.

Councillor Lewis proposed, seconded by Councillor Frea:-

“That the recommendations, as set out in the report, be approved.”

Councillors then voted:-

Resolved unanimously:

- (1) That Cabinet agrees the outline proposal as attached at Appendix 1 to the report and recommends it to Council for approval and submission to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government by 9 November 2020.
- (2) That Cabinet recommends to Council that the Chief Executive and Leader are delegated to approve any minor amendments that may arise following consideration by South Lakeland and Barrow Councils prior to submission and to continue with the work on the final proposal.
- (3) That Cabinet agrees that a final proposal can be submitted to a future meeting of Cabinet and Council prior to the requested deadline from Government of 9 December 2020, noting that a date of 8 December has been scheduled for this purpose.

Officer responsible for effecting the decision:

Chief Executive

Reasons for making the decision:

Exploring the case for reorganisation and reform will consider the benefits a change to local government could deliver for economic prosperity and resilience within the highly valued environment of Morecambe Bay, with opportunity to improve and maximise the wellbeing of residents. This accords with the Council's priorities of working across boundaries to deliver economic prosperity, strong and involved communities, community wealth, health and well-being, social value and meeting the climate emergency. A key requirement of the proposal is that it demonstrates improvement to local government and service delivery and provide stronger strategic and local leadership across the area of the proposal. The draft Outline Proposal indicates the benefits it seeks to realise for the health, social, economic and environmental wellbeing of the area. The Full Proposal

when developed will provide a clear assessment of impact to inform the Council's decision on the Full Proposal.

Chair

(The meeting ended at 11.54 a.m.)

**Any queries regarding these Minutes, please contact
Liz Bateson, Democratic Services - email ebateson@lancaster.gov.uk**

MINUTES PUBLISHED ON FRIDAY 6 NOVEMBER, 2020

THE DECISION TAKEN AT THIS MEETING (MINUTE 79) WAS NOT SUBJECT TO CALL-IN AS IT WAS REFERRED TO THE EXTRA ORDINARY COUNCIL MEETING HELD LATER THE SAME DAY.