

To: Council

Date: 20 December 2022

Report/Comments of: Cabinet

Title: Cabinet feedback – Strategic Partnership Business Case

#### **SUMMARY OF REPORT CONSIDERED**

<b>Report Title:</b>	Strategic Partnership Business Case
<b>Purpose/Description of Report:</b>	The purpose of the report is to feed back the comments from Cabinet to Council at the point they consider the Strategic Partnership between Melton Borough Council and Harborough District Council.
<b>Key Decision:</b>	No
<b>Relevant Portfolio Holder:</b>	Leader of the Council

### **1. Introduction and Overview**

On 12th October 2022, Cabinet confirmed their interest in exploring the establishment of a strategic partnership with Harborough District Council (HDC) and provided authority to work with HDC to develop a full business case and set out an approach to operate such an arrangement.

The business case sets out the design principles for the partnership, the intended benefits, and the initial proposition to share a small number of senior roles. It also sets out service delivery opportunities that could be explored if the partnership is established.

On 6 December 2022 Cabinet met to consider the business case and memorandum of agreement, alongside feedback from the Scrutiny and Audit and Standards Committees.

### **2. Summary of Feedback/Recommendations for Council Consideration**

- Cabinet were grateful for the work undertaken and feedback provided by both the Scrutiny and Audit and Standards Committees.

- It was noted that a number of the comments from Audit and Standards Committee had already been incorporated into the updated memorandum of agreement, including the extension of the early termination clause from six to seven months. This this was welcomed by Members.
- In terms of the rationale for sharing senior roles 50/50, rather than using relative populations, it was confirmed that various options were considered and are referenced in the business case, with the pros and cons for each set out. In reviewing the options 50/50 was agreed as the most appropriate because it ensures an equal leadership focus across both councils. It was also noted that the responsibilities placed upon a senior manager do not change based on population size and although Melton has a smaller general fund it does have an HRA, which Harborough does not, and taken together they are broadly similar value. Equally the headcount across both councils is similar. It was also highlighted hat this 50/50 split only applies to the 3 senior roles and any other shared arrangements will be apportioned based on the most appropriate approach for that service or role.
- It was also highlighted that in terms of monitoring time spent at each council, that senior managers are not judged on time worked but on what they deliver in relation to the corporate plan. This happens now and would continue under a shared arrangement.
- Cabinet agreed it would be helpful to include the breakdown of indicative financial savings from the identified future opportunities within the business case. It was noted this additional information had already been provided to scrutiny and would be included in the business case.
- Cabinet recognised the importance of monitoring the strategic partnership and confirmed there would be an initial review after the elections in May 2023 and then a more comprehensive review after 12 months of operation.
- In relation the length of the business case, it was acknowledged it was a long document but it was important that Council had all the information required to make a decision. It was confirmed that the Cabinet report had been written to make a far greater distinction between the initial proposition to share three roles due to be considered by Council, and the future opportunities which are yet to be fully investigated.
- In terms of the speed of the process, it was noted that the first discussions on the proposed partnership took place in September and the Council was due to consider the proposals in December. It was also noted that the business case had been published since 18<sup>th</sup> November. It was also noted

that the feedback from the Lincolnshire partnership was that a degree of pace was necessary to ensure it didn't destabilise the organisation and Cabinet felt it had been a comprehensive process with both Scrutiny and Audit and Standards committees fully engaged.

- Having considered the feedback, Cabinet discussed whether to endorse the business case and agreed that it should be endorsed and made recommendations to council to enter the partnership and share 3 senior roles
- Cabinet members expressed a number of reasons for this including:
  - The potential to give Melton a stronger more united voice across the county and region, given the partnership would represent over 50% of Leicestershire.
  - The strategic partnership will represent an extension of the partnership working already taking place with Harborough District Council and an example provided in respect to the provision and monitoring of CCTV.
  - The ability to work with Harborough on common challenges and opportunities e.g. ageing population, digital connectivity or housing availability, cutting out duplication, sharing skills and doing things once not twice.
  - Helping to improve the resilience of our services, particularly those with small teams – also helping us to deliver savings and efficiencies.
  - Supporting our efforts to attract and retain the best possible team by creating opportunities for job enrichment and development.
- Given the financial challenge facing local government and public services generally Cabinet felt that doing nothing was not an option and that the proposals to establish a partnership represents the best option to help the Council manage the challenging situation, protect services and support our communities.

**Leader of the Council**