

CORPORATE COMMITTEE

28 NOVEMBER 2018

REPORT OF CHIEF EXECUTIVE

COLLABORATIVE REVIEW IN TO IMPROVING PUBLIC SERVICES

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 Over the last few months there have been a number of discussions regarding the future of local government within Leicestershire. This is part of a wider debate regarding public sector reform across the country. This report updates members on collaborative work being undertaken by all 7 District and Borough Councils within Leicestershire to explore ways to improve partnerships and identify opportunities for service integration, efficiency and improvement.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 **For members to note the current position and confirm their support to Melton Borough Council's continued support of collaborative efforts to improve public services within the area and county.**

3.0 KEY ISSUES

- 3.1 The District and Borough Councils in Leicestershire have a well established and strong partnership and are committed to work together for the benefits of the residents we serve. In July 2018, Leicestershire County Council announced their intention to explore the feasibility of establishing unitary local government within Leicestershire. The District and Borough Councils are committed to ensuring local government within Leicestershire is as effective and efficient as possible whilst also remaining connected and relevant to the communities they serve. Consequently an initial commitment was made by the Districts to review all structural and functional reform options so as to inform and influence the wider discussion.
- 3.2 In October 2018, following a meeting with the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, all 7 MPs in Leicestershire sent a letter to the leaders of the County and all District Councils. The letter set out that there is unanimous agreement amongst the MPs that now is not the time to launch a review of local authority structures in Leicestershire and they have called upon the County Council to cease their current review process and in so doing have suggested that the District and Borough Councils would no longer need to undertake their own parallel review work.
- 3.3 The MPs have advised that they feel no more public funds should be spent on this issue and that there are more pressing regional and national policy matters which should be the focus of our attention and resources over the next few months and years.
- 3.4 Given local government reorganisation requires parliamentary approval, and therefore the support of the MPs, it is clearly no longer necessary or appropriate to commission a review of existing local authority structures within Leicestershire

and consequently all 7 District and Borough Councils have agreed not to undertake any further work exploring this.

3.5 The District and Boroughs do however continue to recognise that public funds are under pressure and that all public services have an obligation to deliver the best possible and most efficient services to our residents. Consequently the District and Borough Councils will continue to work collaboratively with our colleagues in the County Council, other public services and our MPs to ensure we can meet this ambition.

3.6 In line with their original commitment to work collaboratively, all 7 District and Borough Councils have agreed to commission a review of place based public services to consider how best to build strong and effective partnerships and explore opportunities to integrate services, reduce cost and improve impact.

4.0 **POLICY AND CORPORATE IMPLICATIONS**

4.1 This work contributes primarily to two of the Council's priorities:

OG1: Delivering quality services to business and residents, understanding what matters to our customers.

OG3: Becoming a more agile and commercial council; securing our financial future

5.0 **FINANCIAL AND OTHER RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS**

5.1 The cost of the review will be shared between all 7 District and Borough Councils and it is anticipated will not exceed £5k per authority. The cost of this work can be contained within existing budgets.

6.0 **LEGAL IMPLICATIONS/POWERS**

6.1 Specific legal advice will be sought throughout any collaborative review work.

6.2 The unitary model was established under the *Local Government Act 1992*. There are two legislative powers which can enable single tier reform.

6.3 The first power is contained in the *Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007*. This gives the Secretary of State the power to invite any principal authority to make a proposal on single tier reform. On 1st November 2018, the Secretary of State for the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government stated that the specific circumstances in which he would formally invite proposals "will be set out in due course". If a formal invitation is received, the Secretary of State will develop criteria upon which the proposals should be made which is likely to include the requirement to have broad cross section support for the proposals.

6.4 The second power is contained in the *Cities and Local Government Devolution Act 2016*. This allows the Secretary of State to make regulations prescribing the

governance arrangements, the constitution or membership, or the structural and boundary arrangements for local authorities. This power allows the Secretary of State to make regulations which allows for the practicalities of transferring functions from district councils to the county council. The Secretary of State can currently make regulations without the consent of all relevant local authorities; however this power will expire on 31 March 2019. Therefore without the consent of Leicestershire District Councils from 31 March 2019, this power can not be used.

7.0 **COMMUNITY SAFETY**

7.1 There are no direct community safety implications, though any review of public sector reform will likely include consideration of the how the council works with other community safety partners, therefore it is possible any recommendations or proposals which emerge from this work could have wider community safety implications.

8.0 **EQUALITIES**

8.1 Undertaking an equality impact assessment is included within the scope of the work being commissioned.

9.0 **RISKS**

9.1

L I K E L I H O O D	A	Very High				
	B	High				
	C	Significant				
	D	Low		1		
	E	Very Low				
	F	Almost Impossible				
			Negligible 1	Marginal 2	Critical 3	Catastrophic 4
		IMPACT				

Risk No	Risk Description
1	Reviewing options for change has the potential to de-stabilise existing structures however local government is well used to and adept at change and therefore any consideration of new ways of working represent an opportunity to improve services.

10.0 **CLIMATE CHANGE**

10.1 There are no direct implications associated with climate change.

11.0 **CONSULTATION**

11.1 Consultation and engagement with key stakeholders will be considered as part of the review.

12.0 **WARDS AFFECTED**

12.1 Public sector reform has the potential to affect the way in which services are provided in all wards within the borough but as this stage the review is just about exploring and considering options.

Contact Officer Edd de Coverly

Date: 8th November 2018

Appendices : N/a

Background Papers: N/a