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Date: 16th July 2020

Dear Sir/Madam,

Cabinet – 22nd July, 2020

I refer to the meeting of the Cabinet to be held on Wednesday, 22nd July 2020 and attach the following item which will be considered under item 12 on the agenda:

- Devolution White Paper

Yours faithfully,

Brent Davis

Executive Director - Operations

To: Members of Cabinet

Councillor J.A. Jackson
Councillor N.J.P. Phillips

(Finance & Civic Affairs (Leader))
(Planning, Development & Health (Deputy-
Leader))

Councillor I.K. Lloyd
Councillor J. Sheppard
Councillor C. Watkins

(Arts & Leisure)
(Central Services & Refuse)
(Housing & Communities)

Agenda item:12

Cabinet/Individual Cabinet Member Decision

Report Summary Sheet

Date: 22nd July 2020
Subject: Devolution White Paper
Portfolio: Finance and Civic Affairs
From: Executive Director – Resources and Executive Director - Operations

<p>Summary:</p> <p>The Government intends to publish a White Paper in the autumn on further devolution to regions, as set out in the Queen’s Speech delivered before Christmas. It has been widely reported that in considering the devolution and “levelling-up” agenda there will need to be reform of local government, especially in two-tier areas. In relation to this, this report seeks approval for the Borough Council to jointly commission, with a number of the other Warwickshire local authorities, suitable consultants to undertake a review of the local government structures within the County and for the results, and any recommendations, from this review to be used for submissions to Central Government in proposing any changes necessary.</p>
<p>Recommendations:</p> <p>That the Borough Council participates in the review of Local Government in Warwickshire as set out in the report.</p> <p>That the Executive Directors be given delegated authority, in consultation with the Leader of the Council to agree the final brief for the review</p> <p>That the Council contribute to the cost of the review, up to a maximum of £30k, to be funded from the Financial Planning Reserve</p>

That the Leader of the Council be appointed as the Borough Council's Elected Member representative on any working group to consider this work across the County or region

That this report be marked not for call in on the grounds of urgency.

Options:

To accept the report or ask for further information

Reasons:

To enable the Council to be able to respond in a balanced, objective and well informed manner to the anticipated Autumn devolution White Paper.

Consultation undertaken with Members/Officers/Stakeholders

Cabinet Member for Finance and Civic Affairs

Subject to call-in:

No on the grounds of urgency

Ward relevance:

All

Forward plan: No

Delivering Our Future Theme:

All

Delivering Our Future Priority:

All

Relevant statutes or policy:

Anticipated devolution White Paper.

Equalities Implications:

No specific implications

Human resources implications:

No specific implications

Financial implications:

At this stage the overall cost of undertaking the review of options has not been determined and it is not yet clear how many of the other Warwickshire local authorities will wish to participate in the review. However, it is thought the cost to the Borough Council is likely to be in the region of £25,000 - £30,000.

Health Inequalities Implications:

No specific implications

Section 17 Crime & Disorder Implications:

No specific implications

Risk management implications:

No specific implications

Environmental implications:

No specific implications

Legal implications:

The proposal is for the Borough Council and a number of the other Warwickshire local authorities to contract with a suitable consultancy to undertake a review of the local government structures within the County in order to allow the findings to be used for submissions to Central Government in proposing any changes necessary.

Contact details:

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NUNEATON AND BEDWORTH BOROUGH COUNCIL

Report to: Cabinet – 22nd July 2020

**From: Executive Director – Resources and
Executive Director - Operations**

Subject: Devolution White Paper

Portfolio: Finance and Civic Affairs (Cllr J Jackson)

Delivering Our Future Theme: All

Delivering Our Future Priority: All

1. Purpose of Report

1.1 This report seeks approval for the Borough Council to jointly commission, with a number of the other Warwickshire local authorities, suitable consultants to undertake a review of the local government structures within the County and for the results, and any recommendations, from this review to be used for submissions to Central Government in proposing any changes necessary.

2. Recommendations

2.1 That the Borough Council participates in the review of Local Government in Warwickshire as set out in the report.

2.2 That the Executive Directors be given delegated authority, in consultation with the Leader of the Council to agree the final brief for the review

2.3 That the Council contribute to the cost of the review, up to a maximum of £30k, to be funded from the Financial Planning Reserve

2.4 That the Leader of the Council be appointed as the Borough Council's Elected Member representative on any working group to consider this work across the County or region

2.5 That this report be marked not for call in on the grounds of urgency.

3. Report

- 3.1 Members will be aware that the Government intends to publish a White Paper in the autumn (expected to be September) on further devolution to regions, as set out in the Queen's Speech delivered before Christmas. It has been widely reported that in considering the devolution and "levelling-up" agenda there will need to be reform of local government, especially in two-tier areas.
- 3.2 In order to ensure that the Borough Council, and the people it represents are prepared and able to influence the debate on this issue in a balanced, objective and well informed manner, it is suggested work should commence as soon as possible on undertaking a review of the local government structures within the County of Warwickshire. It is proposed that such a review should be jointly commissioned by all of the Warwickshire local authorities and that the results should then be used for submissions to Central Government in proposing any changes necessary. It is also suggested that the Warwickshire Association of Local Councils be invited to join this review as well, to enable the roles and views of parish and town councils to be captured as part of the review. It should however be noted that Warwickshire County Council have now publicly stated that it is their intention to commission a separate study just looking at a single Warwickshire-wide Unitary as its only option. Therefore, the wider review that is the subject of this report may in fact be commissioned by just the District and Borough Councils in Warwickshire.
- 3.3 Whilst the detail of the White Paper is not yet confirmed, there are a number of issues and pressures that a review will need to address, some of which have been caused, made worse and/or made more apparent by COVID19. These include the growing financial pressures on local government and other local agencies; the need for new services or arrangements related to health and social care; changing demographics and ways of life; changes elsewhere in local arrangements (for example elected mayors); the overall reduction by the public in engagement with government at all levels and a general sense of frustration in communities being able to influence decision making or the responsiveness of decision takers.
- 3.4 It is expected that in undertaking the review each of the potential options for local government reorganisation will need to be assessed against jointly agreed criteria. These criteria are expected to include areas such as the need to:
- Reflect and deliver a clearly understood sense of place;
 - Provide clarity of local community political leadership to local people, to government and to other public agencies for a widely understood sense of local place;
 - Offer clarity of vision reflecting community ambitions for a clearly understood sense of place;

- Deliver effective and efficient arrangements for the provision of quality services whether directly, indirectly or shared, to achieve the set vision for community ambitions for a clearly understood sense of place;
 - Deliver wider improvements to public sector service delivery arrangements for the local community for a clearly understood sense of place.
- 3.5 Whilst it will be up to the review to identify what options will need to be considered for the future of local government in Warwickshire, it is likely that there are at least four that would need to be fully evaluated including:
1. Status Quo – no changes from the present political/administrative arrangements;
 2. Single Council Unitary Warwickshire - the creation of a Warwickshire wide unitary authority
 3. Two Council Unitary Warwickshire - in relation to this option Government have previously stated “*any new unitary council’s population would be expected to be in excess of 300,000*”. The current population of Warwickshire is estimated to be 571,010 (mid 2018) and by 2030 would be in excess of 600,000, and therefore would lend itself to a maximum of two authority areas.
 4. An area wider than Warwickshire.
- 3.6 Members are also likely to be aware that Stratford on Avon District Council and Warwick District Council are discussing closer ties, including the option of becoming one organisation and this will also be considered (either as part of option 3 or within the context of remaining as a two tier area). In addition the relationship between any new Council(s), the existing elected Mayor for the West Midlands and/or any other proposed elected Mayors will also need to be considered.
- 3.7 Given that it is suggested work should commence as soon as possible undertaking a review of the local government structures within the County of Warwickshire, so that the Borough Council will be prepared and able to influence the debate on this issue in a balanced, objective and well informed manner when the White Paper is published, it is recommend that this report be marked not for call in on the grounds of urgency.
- 3.8 Warwick District will lead the procurement exercise and it is likely that a framework will be used to expedite the process given that the White Paper is expected in September.

4. Financial Implications

- 4.1 At this stage the cost of undertaking the review of options has not been determined. In addition it is as yet unclear how many of the other local authorities will wish to participate in the review. However, it is thought the cost to this Council would be in the region of £25,000 - £30,000. This can be funded from the Financial Planning Reserve.