

## **Key Issues raised by the Working Party assessed against the views set out in the Scrutiny Commission Report**

### **Purpose**

1. The purpose of this note is to set out the issues raised by the Working Party. The majority of the issues have been covered in the Scrutiny Commission report. The only issue not covered by the Scrutiny Commission relates to Transitional Arrangements (see 7 below).

### **Issues raised by the Working Party**

#### **2. Parish Councils**

##### a) Non-Parished Areas

Consideration should be given to undertaking a Community Governance Review of those areas of the County without a town or parish council

Where there is local support for establishment of a town or parish council the new Authority should seek to establish a town or parish council.

##### b) Offer to Parish Councils

Clear recognition that services would only be devolved if:-

- The Parish /Town Council agreed;
- There was a clear business case for devolving;
- The Parish Council was able to demonstrate it had in place good governance and management to deliver and this might be evidenced by having achieved the NALC Award Scheme.
- Costs would remain broadly the same (VFM) and service standards would be maintained or enhanced;

***Comment – Paragraphs 27 to 30 of the Scrutiny Commission report covers the points made by the Working Party***

#### **3. Area Committees**

- The preference was for a formally constituted committee with delegated powers (similar to the Wiltshire Model) with additional protocols to enable the views of members of the public and stakeholders to be heard and taken into account by voting members (councillors).
- There should be greater clarity on how the Area Committees are to be supported (at officer level) and how they would link in with decision making. The Chairmanship of

Area Committees should be determined by the Committees themselves and membership of the Committee should reflect the local political balance.

- Executive Decisions such as minor highways schemes to be delegated

***Comment – Paragraphs 40 to 43 of the Scrutiny Commission report covers the points made by the Working Party***

#### 4. Planning Committee

- Planning Committees should be separate from Area Committees and should meet in the locality;
- Need to develop and adopt a Countywide Local Plan but pending its agreement need to continue with seven Planning Committees;
- Following the adoption of a Countywide Local Plan it will remain important to have local planning committees;
- Consideration be given to thresholds for applications to be determined locally and those determined centrally.

***Comment – Paragraphs 44 to 50 of the Scrutiny Commission report covers the points made by the Working Party***

#### 5. Finance

- Recognition that savings projected would take a few years to deliver as these were dependant on decisions to be taken by the new authority
- The business case should include case studies on how procurement savings would be achieved.
- the increased role that members would be expected to play in a unitary authority be considered further along with the proposed level of allowance of £15,000. It was noted that the level of allowance would be considered by the Independent Remuneration Panel who would have regard to a number of factors including role and responsibilities and benchmarking against other authorities
- That consideration be given to paying a special responsibility allowance for Area Committee Chairmen

***Comment – Paragraphs 32 to 39 of the Scrutiny Commission report covers the financial model. Paragraph 38 addresses the point that savings would take a few years to materialise and the issue regarding case studies will be drawn to the attention of the Cabinet.***

## 6. Staffing

There would be a new authority in place and as such:-

- TUPE would apply to all staff;
- The Head of Paid Service and senior manager posts would be appointed following open competition;
- All Authorities should seek to agree a joint protocol for handling staff matters to ensure equity for all staff affected and to ensure costs are managed;
- Where possible much of the work should take place before vesting day to ensure continuity of service.

***Comment – Paragraphs 67 to 71 of the Scrutiny Commission report covers the points made by the Working Party***

## 7. Transitional Arrangements

- The preferred option to transition to a unitary council (if agreed) would be a Shadow Executive which is both politically and geographically balanced.
- The current LCC boundaries be used as the basis of electing a new authority with each electoral division returning 2 members (4 members in electoral divisions currently returning two members)
- Following establishment of a new Council the Boundary Commission be invited to undertake a review of electoral divisions and size of Council.

***Comment – Paragraph 72 of the Scrutiny Commission report refers to the Transitional arrangements. It does not come to a view as to the preferred way forward. The views of the Working Party will be drawn to the attention of the Cabinet.***

## 8. General/Other issues

- **Housing** – need to be clear how the unitary authority would manage housing services on transfer and going forward thereafter;
- **Other options** – the business case should also include analysis of other options – e.g. two Unitary Authorities or multiple unitary authorities
- **Improved Customer Experience** – the business case needs to demonstrate how residents will get a better service that is more responsive with fewer handoffs.

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