

POLICY & FINANCE COMMITTEE

24 SEPTEMBER 2020

LOCAL GOVERNMENT REORGANISATION

1.0 Purpose of Report

1.1 This report seeks approval to set aside the sum of £30,000 to support the Council to engage fully and proactively in the development of proposals for local government re-organisation and wider public services reform.

2.0 Background Information

2.1 The Government's Devolution and Recovery White Paper is expected to be published in October 2020 and for this to include details of a fresh push to deliver more democratically elected Mayors, Combined Authorities and Unitary Councils.

2.2 **Appendix 1** to this report is a report which is being submitted to the County Council's Policy Committee on 16 September 2020. That concludes with a recommendation that the Leader of the Council writes to the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government requesting an invitation for the County Council to come forward with proposals for unitary local government for the County Council's administrative area.

2.3 While the report does not make reference to a preferred option at this stage, the County Council has previously promoted a single unitary Council covering the whole of its administrative area and it is expected that this will continue to be the County Council's position.

2.4 In anticipation of this, the Leaders of all Borough and District Councils in Nottinghamshire and the Leader of Nottingham City Council have written to the Minister of State for Regional Growth and Local Government setting out opposition to a single County unitary being the only option for consideration and requesting time to work up alternative proposals. A copy of that letter, which has already been circulated to all members of Council, is attached as **Appendix 2** to this report.

2.5 In order to progress this work and respond promptly and collaboratively, Borough and District Council Leaders have recommended engaging external support to assist with a range of key tasks, including preparation and appraisal of options for improving local services, financial assessments and community engagement.

2.6 There is an element of uncertainty about what work is required and when it will be required, as this will be influenced by the forthcoming White Paper and the Government's response to correspondence from local authorities across Nottinghamshire. However, based on the information that has been communicated by Government ministers and officials, it is considered appropriate to set aside resource to ensure that Newark and Sherwood District Council is able to play a proactive and influencing part in shaping the future design of local government and public services for the benefit of our local community.

3.0 Financial Implications (FIN20-21/5097)

3.1 The proposed sum of £30,000 to support work associated with Local Government Re-organisation and public service reform will be met from the Council's Change Management Reserve.

4.0 Equalities Implications

4.1 One of the stated aims of the emerging White Paper is to 'level up' prosperity across the Country. This will need to be factored into the response to, and development of, options for improving local government and other public services.

5.0 Community Plan – Alignment to Objectives

5.1 Maintaining and improving the quality of life for local people and businesses will be the overriding objective in our consideration of public services reform and our response to the White Paper.

6.0 RECOMMENDATIONS that:

- (a) the sum of £30,000 be set aside from the Change Management Reserve to support work associated with the forthcoming 'Devolution White Paper' and more specifically, the design and development of options to improve local government and public services more generally in Nottinghamshire;**
- (b) the Chief Executive be requested to update this Committee on a regular basis on the progress of the above work; and**
- (c) Members note the options for any future Local Government Reorganisation affecting Newark & Sherwood District Council would be referred to Full Council for consideration and debate.**

Reason for Recommendations

To provide resource to enable the Council to participate effectively in the interests of its local community.

Background Papers

Nil.

For further information, please contact John Robinson on Ext 5200.

John Robinson
Chief Executive