

Corporate, Customer and Community Services
Directorate

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Scrutiny Management Board – 10 September 2020

Agenda item 11 (Appendix 4) attached

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APPENDIX 4

DRAFT TASK & FINISH GROUP SCOPE – LOCAL GOVERNMENT REFORM

NON-EXECUTIVE MEMBER SESSION ON FUTURE OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT IN CUMBRIA – 19 AUGUST SUMMARY OF ISSUES RAISED

Members welcomed the opportunity to discuss the potential for reform and emphasised the importance of ensuring that Members are involved throughout the process and in further developing proposals.

Members considered the following two questions:

- What should be the aspirations and characteristics of future governance in Cumbria?
- What should be the focus for scrutiny activity of the autumn to contribute to the further development of proposals?

Future governance

On the characteristics of future governance in Cumbria, Members highlighted the importance of:

- focusing on outcomes for residents
- building on the organisation's strengths-based approach, to draw on local voice, strengths and knowledge when developing new arrangements
- building on effective and coordinated ways of working which have been put in place as a result of Covid-19
- a model which encourages a one-stop shop approach and integration of services to improve the customer journey overall
- strengthened locality governance and delivery, which builds on existing arrangements to build on successes, and minimise confusion and inefficiencies
- an increased role for Parish and Town Councils through local devolution, accompanied by a package of support and capacity-building. Suggestions included potential amalgamation or clustering smaller parishes, or establishing town / parish councils in unparished areas
- allocation of resources, prioritisation and decision making which recognise different need in different parts of the county
- identifying and mitigating any risks of streamlining and impacts on frontline delivery
- geographical boundaries reflecting local communities and identities.

Members encouraged consultation and engagement with area managers in taking into account current locality arrangements and local knowledge. Some Members queried whether Cumbria may benefit from being included in a later tranche of areas considered by the Government for reform and some highlighted possible risks of not taking the current opportunity for proposing reform.

Focus for Scrutiny Activity

Members were supportive of the establishment of a Task and Finish Group to scrutinise, examine and contribute to the proposals on the future of local government in Cumbria during the autumn.

The following themes were highlighted as potential areas for the focus of Scrutiny activity:

- Locality arrangements
 - Locality governance models
 - Town and parish councils – local devolution
 - Decision-making and delivery of resources
- Engaging Communities
 - Engaging communities and community groups in proposals
 - Communities engaged in development of locality structures
 - Scrutiny engaging directly as part of evidence gathering
- Learning from Best Practice and Experience
 - Learning from other areas
 - Draw on the previous Task and Finish Group work from 2013
- Assessment of vulnerable areas - benefits, disbenefits, risks
 - Impact of simplification and rationalisation
- Future ways of working
 - Arrangements for strong system leadership
 - Benefits of increased efficiency and rationalisation, as well as longer-term transformation
 - Joining up / seamless working with other public service bodies for the benefit of residents
 - Building on the strengths of Covid-19 response and recovery ways of working
 - Relationship with any future devolution / deal opportunities

The draft Scope for initial Scrutiny activity below has been developed based on the suggestions of Members at the session on 19 August as outlined above.

Project Outline for Scrutiny Review



The draft scope below sets out an initial piece of work which could be developed into a longer-term, phased piece of work in relation to local government reform over the coming months.

The timeline, pace and process of reform is subject to national government response and decision-making. This may mean that pieces of scrutiny activity can be extended and take longer, or may adapt at pace.

This scope sets out an immediate and intense period of activity up until December, but over the coming weeks it may become clear that this activity can be more phased over a longer time period. Timescales could then be revised in consultation with the Chair and Vice Chair of SMB.

Review Title:	Future of Local Government in Cumbria – locality models and structures		
Date of Board meeting at which scope agreed:	10 September 2020 (to be considered by SMB on 10 September 2020)		
Advisory Board:	Scrutiny Management Board	Scrutiny Officer Support	To be confirmed
Members:	Invitations for expressions of interest in participating to be sent to all non-executive Members of the Council		Chair: To be identified
Timescales:	Initial evidence gathering – September and October 2020 Consideration of findings and recommendations – November 2020	Board Meeting: Initial findings and recommendations -13 November 2020	Cabinet Meeting: Report of initial findings and recommendations to Cabinet - 17 December 2020

<p>Reasons for review:</p>	<p>A non-executive Member session was held on 19 August 2020, which briefed and engaged Members on the current opportunity for development of proposals on the future of local government in Cumbria.</p> <p>The Council's Cabinet considered a high-level, initial proposal for submission to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government on 3 September 2020.</p> <p>At the 19 August session, Members contributed their suggestions on areas of focus for scrutiny activity in relation to local government reform. Members were supportive of the establishment of a task and finish group.</p> <p>Members highlighted several issues for scrutiny activity – locality arrangements was a widely suggested focus, as was learning from other areas and building on best practice. In addition, Members highlighted the exploration of the impacts of reform on the local workforce and on frontline services.</p> <p>A significant part of how, and at what pace, the process of local government reform will progress is subject to Ministerial decision. It is, therefore, important that Scrutiny engagement in the process moves at pace but is also able to be flexible to respond to developments.</p>
<p>Review Aims and Objectives:</p>	<p>An initial phase of activity focused on the development of proposals in respect of locality arrangements, and strengthening the role of town and parish councils:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To identify examples of effective arrangements for engagement, decision-making, and design and delivery of services at locality level; • To explore the benefits, challenges and risks of examples identified; • To seek the views of a range of local stakeholders on potential future locality and community arrangements for Cumbria, including strengthening the role of town and parish councils; • To consider best practice and approaches for engaging with localities and communities in the further development of proposals. <p>To also:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • analyse best practice from other areas on scrutiny engagement in local government reform processes – in further development of future models, in transition, and in planning for transformation.

Links to Council Plan:	<p>This review is about local government reform, and the associated reform of public services, which relates to the delivery of all 3 of the outcomes set out in the Council Plan:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People in Cumbria are healthy and safe • Places in Cumbria are well-connected and thriving • The economy in Cumbria is growing and benefits everyone 	
Key Officer Support:	<p>Key Officers include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To be identified • Scrutiny support for the Task & Finish activity will be provided by the Policy & Scrutiny Team 	
Potential Participants	<p><u>Internal</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local Members • Cabinet Members • Executive Director – Corporate, Customer and Community Services • Officers, including Area Managers and Area Teams 	<p><u>External</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local communities • Town and Parish Councils and Cumbria Association of Local Councils • Community Groups • Members and Officers of other local authorities
Supporting/Background documents: (to include key strategies and projects)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Devolution and Local Recovery White Paper – when published • Report of the Unitary Task and Finish Group (2013) • Reports and materials from other local authorities • Cumbria County Council’s high-level proposal on local government reorganisation (2020) 	
Proposed Methodology	<p>The potential long-term engagement of Scrutiny in local government reform will be phased and flexible.</p> <p>The proposed methodology for this initial phase of activity is a Task & Finish Group or smaller groups working at pace on a combination of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Desk-top analysis of locality models, and examples of scrutiny engagement; • Evidence gathering from other relevant authorities from across the UK; 	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Gathering evidence and input from local communities, local Members, town and parish councils and other stakeholders; and,• Consideration of findings and development of recommendations <p>Following this initial phase of activity, Scrutiny Management Board will consider the focus for future activity.</p>
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Approved by SMB:	Date:
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