

**Committee: Cabinet**

**Date of meeting: 18 November 2021**

**Title of Report: Cabinet Working Group – Local Government Reorganisation**

**Report by: Dawn Roberts, Executive Director – Corporate Customer and Community Services**

**Cabinet Member: Stewart Young, Leader of the Council**

### **What is the Report About? (Executive Summary)**

1. This seeks approval from Cabinet to establish a Cabinet Working Group on Local Government Reorganisation.

### **Recommendation of the Executive Director**

2. To approve the establishment of a Cabinet Working Group on Local Government Reorganisation in line with the Terms of Reference set out below.

### **Background to the Proposals**

3. Following the announcement on 21 July 2021 by the Secretary of State that he intended to move forward with Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) in Cumbria which will see the establishment of two new unitary authorities, the seven councils across Cumbria have been working to develop and deliver a joint LGR Programme to implement the Secretary of State's decision.
4. An LGR Programme Board whose membership consists of the Chief Executives of the County Council and six District Council has been established. The LGR Programme Board and the SRO for the Programme are responsible for providing overall leadership for the programme and ensuring it achieves its objectives, delivers the projected outcomes and realises the benefits in the timescales set out.
5. A Cumbria Leaders Oversight Forum whose membership consists of the Leaders of the County Council and six District Councils has been established. The Forum will provide political leadership input from all seven sovereign Councils into the shape and direction of the LGR Programme.
6. A number of **service-based Themes** have been established as part of the programme structure. These are responsible for reviewing the existing services within their scope and leading on the development of options to ultimately be considered by the joint committees and shadow authorities in advance of vesting day, to ensure service continuity. All existing Council services are included within a theme.

7. In addition, a number of **functional Workstreams** (e.g. Legal & Democratic, Finance & Commercial, Communications & Engagement, ICT etc) have been established. These are responsible for leading the design, planning and delivery of the changes required to establish the new councils as safe and legal on Day 1, and driving and supporting the overall programme, managing dependencies.
8. The role of the Leaders Oversight Forum, Programme Board, the service-based Themes and functional Workstreams is to coordinate activity across the seven councils but they have no decision-making authority. Formal decision-making rests with the seven Councils until joint committees are established and subsequently the Shadow Authorities are elected, and the usual governance arrangements of the individual Councils are not impacted by the establishment of the Leaders Oversight Forum, Programme Board or the Themes and Workstreams.
9. In order to provide a forum to ensure there is political oversight and leadership for the County Council's input into the LGR Programme it is recommended that a Cabinet LGR Working Group is established. This Working Group will enable officers working on the LGR Programme to ensure Cabinet members have full engagement with the LGR Programme and provide a forum for Cabinet members to input and contribute to the Council's involvement which is separate from existing structures so does not impinge on the work of Cabinet in relation to the delivery and transformation of County Council services.
10. It is not intended that the Cabinet LGR Working Group will be a decision-making body and any decisions will be made by members or officers (as appropriate) under usual governance arrangements.
11. The proposed Terms of Reference of the Cabinet LGR Working Group are set out below.

## **Terms of Reference for Cabinet LGR Working Group**

### **Purpose**

12. The overarching purpose of the Cabinet LGR Working Group is to provide a forum for officers to engage with members of Cabinet on the LGR Programme and ensure Cabinet members can provide effective input and contributions to those discussions, and to ensure this input is managed appropriately alongside the ongoing delivery of day-to-day County Council services throughout the duration of programme.

### **Objectives**

13. To provide a forum for officers to consult with members of Cabinet on matters relating to the LGR Programme and related work and for Cabinet members to provide input and contribute to the discussions

14. To provide a forum for consideration of the alignment between major / long-term Council decisions and the LGR Programme

### **Meetings**

15. The Membership of the Working Group will be all Cabinet Members. Other members and officers may be invited to join the Cabinet LGR Working Group from time to time. External attendees may also be invited to the meeting to present information or offer expert advice.
16. Meetings of the Working Group are not open to the public and may be held virtually or in person.
17. Meetings will be held at least once a month.
18. The Working Group has no decision-making powers but may make recommendations to Cabinet.
19. The Working Group will continue throughout the LGR programme or such earlier time as Cabinet shall determine.
20. The Working Group will be supported by appropriate officers.

### **Options Considered and Risks Identified**

#### **Option (a)**

- Cabinet resolve to establish the Cabinet LGR Working Group with the proposed Terms of Reference

#### **Option (b)**

- Cabinet resolve not to establish a Cabinet LGR Working Group.

#### **Risks –**

Failure to establish the Cabinet LGR Working Group may result in the arrangements for ensuring political oversight and leadership for the Council's involvement in the LGR Programme are not effective and there is no forum for members of Cabinet to input into the work of officers.

#### **Reasons for the recommendation/Key benefits**

- Establishing a Cabinet LGR Working Group will allow for effective political oversight and leadership and ensure there is a forum for Cabinet to input into the work of officers.
- Establishing a separate Working Group to consider the LGR Programme ensures it will not adversely impinge on the other work of Cabinet whilst ensuring that Cabinet are fully engaged with the LGR Programme to manage interdependencies with other aspects of Cabinet's functions.

### **Financial – What Resources will be needed and how will it be Funded?**

21. There are no additional financial resources required as a result of implementing the recommendation set out in this report.

### **Legal Aspects – What needs to be considered?**

22. Working groups are informal bodies and are not covered by the legislation that relates to council “meetings”. A Cabinet working group is set up by decision of Cabinet and it is within the remit of Cabinet to be able to do. It is not a key decision but should be advertised on the Forward Plan, where possible. A working group can be set up at any time and Cabinet decides when to bring the working group to an end. A working group needs to have a terms of reference that make it clear it is a non-decision making body and can include anyone – Cabinet members, non-Cabinet members from all groups and independents, officers, representatives from outside the Council. Working Groups are able to meet in private (which can be virtually or in person) and have no need to publish agenda or minutes.

### **Health and Safety Aspects – What needs to be considered?**

23. There are no identified health and safety aspects to be considered in relation to the proposals set out in this report.

### **Council Plan Priority – How do the Proposals Contribute to the Delivery of the Council’s Stated Outcomes? (Outcomes - People in Cumbria are Healthy and Safe, Places in Cumbria are well connected and thriving, the Economy in Cumbria is growing and benefits everyone)**

24. The issues discussed in this report are focussed on ensuring that local government reorganisation in Cumbria achieves improved outcomes for the people of Cumbria and ensures places in Cumbria are well connected and thriving and the economy in Cumbria is growing and benefits everyone.

### **What is the Impact of the Decision on Health Inequalities and Equality and Diversity Issues?**

25. There are no identified health inequalities and equality and diversity issues to be considered in relation to the recommendations in this report.

### **Appendices**

No appendices

### **Key Facts**

**Electoral Division(s):** All

<b>Executive Decision</b>	<b>Key Decision Included in Forward Plan</b>	<b>Exempt from call-in</b>	<b>Exemption agreed by scrutiny chair</b>	<b>Considered by scrutiny, if so detail below</b>	<b>Environmental or sustainability assessment undertaken?</b>	<b>Equality impact assessment undertaken?</b>
<b>Yes</b>	<b>Not a key decision</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>N/A</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>No</b>

**Approved by the relevant Cabinet Member/s on 9 November 2021**

**Previous relevant Council or Executive decisions**

No previous relevant decisions

**Consideration by Overview & Scrutiny**

Not considered by Overview & Scrutiny

**Background Papers**

No background papers

**Report Author**

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