



Buckinghamshire & Milton Keynes Fire Authority

MEETING	Fire Authority
DATE OF MEETING	15 February 2017
OFFICER	Stuart Gowanlock, Corporate Planning Manager
LEAD MEMBER	Councillor Adrian Busby
SUBJECT OF THE REPORT	Buckinghamshire District Council Proposals for a Two Unitary Councils Structure
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	<p>On 10 January 2017, the district councils published proposals for the creation of two new unitary councils to replace the existing county and four districts structure. The proposals were considered simultaneously by all four district councils at special meetings convened for this purpose on 16 January 2017 with a view to agreeing their submission to the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government which they did.</p> <p>The proposal was prepared in response to an alternative case submitted to the Secretary of State on 27 September 2016 by Buckinghamshire County Council for a single unitary council to replace the existing structure. An initial assessment of the potential implications of this for the Authority was presented to Members at their meeting on 19 October 2016 (shown at Appendix 2).</p> <p>Fire Authority officers have carried out an initial assessment of the potential implications that may arise for the Authority in the event that the Secretary of State were to favour the district councils' two unitary proposal for implementation.</p> <p>The outcomes of this initial assessment are shown at Appendix 1.</p>
ACTION	Decision.
RECOMMENDATIONS	<p>It is recommended that:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. the officers' initial assessment of the potential opportunities and risks to the Authority arising from the District Councils' proposal (Appendix 1) be noted; 2. the potential benefits of the proposal compared with the current two-tier structure of County and District councils be acknowledged and recognised.

<p>RISK MANAGEMENT</p>	<p>Implications for Corporate Risk Assessments/Register status - Risks to the Authority's operations are considered at Appendix 1. These would primarily arise during the transition to a new council structure. These could be mitigated subject to the establishment of effective stakeholder engagement and collaboration arrangements during the transitional period.</p> <p>A further more detailed risk assessment would be carried out in the event that the Secretary of State grants approval to proceed with the implementation of the proposal and following finalisation of the transition programme plans.</p> <p>Staffing Implications - it is proposed that a lead officer be appointed to oversee the Authority's engagement with District Councils' transition programme should the proposal be approved to proceed. There may also be a need to reconfigure aspects of the organisation of the Authority's service delivery structure to align with the new council structures and any associated changes to frontline delivery of related council services.</p> <p>Privacy issues - None identified at this stage. However, the opportunities and risk assessment at Appendix 1 identifies potential opportunities to rationalise data sharing arrangements which could have data protection / privacy implications.</p>
<p>FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS</p>	<p>No immediate financial liabilities accrue to the Authority from the proposal. However, opportunity costs may arise where it is necessary to divert resources away from other activities in order to mitigate any risks arising during the transition phase.</p>
<p>LEGAL IMPLICATIONS</p>	<p>Implementation of the proposal will require the Secretary of State to repeal the Buckinghamshire Fire Services (Combination Scheme) Order 1996 and replace it with a new combination scheme to reflect that membership of the Authority would be drawn from three unitary councils. The election cycles of the two new councils would be monitored to ensure there would be continuity of political appointments at each annual meeting of the Authority.</p> <p>A review of all existing contractual arrangements with the councils would be required to ensure all obligations transfer to the new legal entities simultaneously with their creation.</p>
<p>CONSISTENCY WITH THE PRINCIPLES OF COLLABORATION</p>	<p>The Authority remains committed to a default position of collaboration with Thames Valley FRAs. However, implementation of a unitary structure for Buckinghamshire may generate new collaboration opportunities which would be subject to evaluation as</p>

	<p>they arise. Although BMKFA was not consulted or engaged by either BCC or the District Councils during the preparation of their respective proposals, Authority officers are also ready to contribute to the future transformation of local government service delivery within any new unitary structure by sharing their own experiences of organisational transformation which have enabled BMKFA to put itself onto a more financially stable footing without compromising frontline service delivery.</p>
<p>HEALTH AND SAFETY</p>	<p>No issues identified at this stage.</p>
<p>EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY</p>	<p>None identified at this stage. However, these would subject to further evaluation were the proposal approved for implementation.</p>
<p>USE OF RESOURCES</p>	<p>The arrangements for setting, reviewing and implementing strategic and operational objectives; Performance monitoring, including budget monitoring; achievement of strategic objectives and best value performance indicators;</p> <p>These will be considered if the proposal is approved for implementation in particular any implications for achievement of Authority objectives and impact on service delivery performance.</p> <p>Communication with stakeholders; In the event of the proposal proceeding to implementation a lead officer would be appointed to oversee engagement with the transition programme and to co-ordinate the Authority’s interaction with this.</p> <p>The system of internal control; The lead officer will track the progress of the Transition Programme and report on this and any issues or implications arising for the Authority to the Strategic Management Board and Authority committees when required.</p> <p>The medium term financial strategy; At this stage it is not considered that the implementation of the proposal will have a material effect on the Authority’s medium term financial planning. However this would be subject to further evaluation if the proposal is approved for implementation by the Secretary of State.</p> <p>The balance between spending and resources; No additional funding or additional expenditure requirements identified at this stage although opportunity costs may arise during the transition phase.</p> <p>The management of the asset base; Over the long term implementation of the proposal may generate premises rationalisation opportunities as</p>

	<p>discussed at Appendix 1.</p> <p>The arrangements to promote and ensure probity and propriety; No adverse implications identified at this stage.</p> <p>Environmental; These will be considered in the event that the proposal is approved for implementation.</p>
<p>PROVENANCE SECTION & BACKGROUND PAPERS</p>	<p>Background</p> <p>The background to the proposal is set out in Appendix 1.</p> <p><u>Papers</u></p> <p>Full details of the District Councils’ proposals and supporting Deloitte Strategic Options Case for modernising local government in Buckinghamshire are available from any of the District Council Websites e.g.</p> <p>https://www.wycombe.gov.uk/pages/About-the-council/Modernising-local-government/Modernising-local-government.aspx</p>
<p>APPENDICES</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. District Councils’ Proposals for Modernising Local Government in Buckinghamshire: Implications for BMKFA 2. A Unitary Council for Buckinghamshire: Implications for the Authority
<p>TIME REQUIRED</p>	<p>20 Minutes.</p>
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