

SOUTH BUCKS DISTRICT COUNCIL

Council - 16 January 2017

Present: Councillors Mr Anthony, Mr Bagge, Mr Bradford, Mr Chhokar, Mr D Dhillon, Mr Egleton, Mrs Gibbs, Mr Griffin, Miss Hazell, Mr Hogan, Mrs Jordan, Mr Kelly, Mrs Lewis, Dr Matthews, Mr Naylor, Mr Pepler, Mr Read, Mr Reed, Mr Sandy, Mr Sangster, Mr D Smith, Mrs Sullivan and Mr Walters MBE

Apologies: Councillors Mr Bastiman, Mr Harding, Mr Hollis, Mrs Lowen-Cooper and Mr Samson

35. MODERNISING LOCAL GOVERNMENT IN BUCKINGHAMSHIRE

The Leader of the Council introduced a report which sought Members' approval to make a submission to the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government regarding the modernisation of Local Government in Buckinghamshire under the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 and the Section 15 Cities and Devolution Act 2016.

As Members were aware, in September 2016, Buckinghamshire County Council had submitted a bid (attached at appendix 4) which had proposed the abolition of all five County and District Councils, and the creation of a single unitary council to cover the existing administrative area for Bucks.

The four Leaders of the District Councils had previously determined that they would jointly instruct a report from Deloitte to consider the range of options available for the future of Buckinghamshire. Following the publication of the Districts' Strategic Options Case report in October 2016 (attached as appendix 2), stakeholder engagement on the Strategic Option Case was undertaken (attached as appendix 5).

Based on the Strategic Options Case report and the outcome of the stakeholder engagement, the District Council's draft submission (attached at Appendix 3) proposed that two new unitary councils should be established; one to be established in the north of the existing Bucks County Council administrative area alongside the existing unitary of Milton Keynes, and another in the south to cover the area of the three southern District Councils.

The Leader set out the reasons for the District Councils' case for two new unitary authorities, highlighting the significant differences between the north and south of Buckinghamshire. The District Councils' case asserts that two new unitary councils would be able to benefit more from different economic opportunities as Aylesbury Vale was strongly linked to the midlands and was a significant area within the Oxford Milton Keynes Cambridge growth arc, backed by the National Infrastructure Commission, whereas the southern districts were strongly linked with London.

The District Councils' model would also provide greater local accountability where elected councillors would be able to work closer with partner organisations and communities to influence improvements in the quality of life of local residents and residents would be able to

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hold their elected representatives to account for decisions that were relevant to where they live.

Furthermore, the Districts' model would not only lead to financial savings of £57.4m over the first five years but would provide better value for money through reducing the cost of provision and increased revenue from economic growth.

The Leader emphasised the extensive stakeholder engagement which revealed that, out of the 146 key stakeholders who responded, only 27% were in favour of a single unitary model for the County, compared with 73% who were in favour of either a two or three unitary model.

The next steps were for the agreed proposal to be submitted to the Secretary of State to consider whether Buckinghamshire should move to a unitary form of governance and abolish the existing two tier arrangements. The Secretary of State had agreed to consider the four District Councils' unitary proposals as well as the County Council proposal before making a final decision which was not likely before March 2017.

Cllr Bagge proposed and Cllr Naylor seconded

That:

- i) the Strategic options case at Appendix 2 be endorsed;
- ii) the submission prepared by the District Councils be supported; and
- iii) the Leader of the Council be given delegated authority to make minor amendments and to make the submission on behalf of the Council to the Secretary of State.

Following the opportunity for debate, the recommendation as proposed by Councillor Bagge and seconded by Councillor Naylor was put to the vote.

The recommendation was carried and it was

RESOLVED:

That:

- i) the Strategic options case at Appendix 2 be endorsed;
- ii) the submission prepared by the District Councils be supported; and
- iii) the Leader of the Council be given delegated authority to make minor amendments and to make the submission on behalf of the Council to the Secretary of State.

The meeting terminated at 6.15 pm