

MINUTE EXTRACT FROM A MEETING OF THE WESTMORLAND AND FURNESS JOINT COMMITTEE HELD ON 10 MAY 2022:

W&F30 – IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

At its meeting on 29 March 2022, the Joint Committee had received a report on the Implementation Plan and Programme Governance and had adopted the Plan pending the establishment of the two Shadow Authorities in May (Minute No.W&F/10 (2021/22) refers). The Joint Committee had at that meeting indicated a wish for further clarification and information on a number of matters, including in relation to the responsibility and process for agreeing blueprints, the options for the Fire and Rescue Service, and spend in relation to the LGR Implementation Reserve. Officers had since provided further information on these matters. The LGR Programme Manager now presented an update.

Progress had continued to be made in delivering the LGR Programme and the Implementation Plan attached at Appendix 1 to the report had subsequently been updated to reflect the progress made and in light of comments made by the Joint Committees. The report provided details on progress made on the Implementation Plan since it had last been considered by the Joint Committee.

In terms of the development of draft Blueprints, the advice was now that these would be an Executive function of the Shadow Authorities, and it was anticipated that, when established, Members of Shadow Authorities would want to have the benefit of and give early consideration to the work carried out to date. Members would be able to discuss and steer this through a range of informal and more formal mechanisms to enable further development over the spring/summer and beyond as part of the Strategic Planning process.

For each Shadow Authority, the draft Blueprint would pull together at a high level, the work carried out on baselining and options appraisal to date, information relating to budget disaggregation/aggregation, provide a baseline statement as to what services, staff and budget each Authority was likely to have on Vesting Day. In a number of service areas, transitional arrangements might be required/recommended pending any preferred option being deliverable. The focus of draft Blueprints would be on making the transition to the new Authorities a safe, legal, and smooth one, whilst paving the way for further transformation, and longer-term options development/consideration should Authorities so wish. The development of draft Blueprints was further described in the updated Implementation Plan attached at Appendix 1 to the report.

Members sought confirmation that the task and finish groups and scrutiny would run independently of each other and queried how this would be resourced. The LGR Programme Manager confirmed that this was the case and added that the Leader and Executive Members would be considering the task and finish groups and that work had begun to assess the resource needs for the task and finish groups and supporting scrutiny.

A question was raised regarding how differences between the programme and Members' ambitions would be resolved and how decisions would be made if the Cumberland and Westmorland and Furness Councils had differing solutions. The LGR Programme Manager responded, that officers had given consideration to how Members would be supported in that process. She noted that many of the decisions would be interdependent, so one authority would be unable to decide on a shared service without the agreement of the other. As with all decisions, officers would look at the best recommendations and reasons for the decision which often had practical options and were provided to assist Members in making decisions. At the base was the need to be safe and legal and have a smooth transition into the new authority. The LGR Programme Manager highlighted that the report hinted at a member liaison group, which would discuss decisions with members once the executive had been established.

Members sought reassurance over the level of their involvement in discussions and refining blue prints between May and July and expressed concern over being presented with a *fait accompli*. Attention was drawn to the need for dialogue between the new Shadow Authority Members and the Implementation Team throughout the process. The Chief Executive and Senior Responsible Officer (Barrow Borough Council) responded, informing Members that work had begun to put together options to be presented to Members and that once the first Shadow Authority meeting had passed, officers would be working with Members to set up the task and finish groups.

Members felt it important to set out the timescales for Member involvement to ensure their involvement before decisions are made and that Shadow Authority Councillors should be providing guidance on acceptable outcomes to ensure that the new Council is able to arrive at the best possible solutions.

Further discussion raised a query regarding how much information would be available and which members would have access to this. The LGR Programme Manager responded, informing Members that the blue print focus was an iterative process with details currently being discussed with HR and Finance Officers. She added that the timing would, to, some extent depend on the mechanisms and timing for the new authorities but that there would be a principle of openness with Members and reassured

members that the plans would evolve as members work through choices around budget service levels.

Members emphasised the importance of the Forward Plan and felt it was crucial for the Cabinet members to have a detailed understanding of their Portfolios and of the associated budgets. The Technical Lead Legal and Democratic Work Stream and Monitoring Officer (South Lakeland District Council) set out the training programme for Shadow Authority Members going forwards and added that beyond 15 June, there would be a clear programme with wide ranging training sessions covering the full range of services which Members would be invited to co-design.

RESOLVED – That the updated Implementation Plan (April 2022) attached at Appendix 1 to the report be noted, pending the establishment of the two Shadow Authorities in May 2022.