

BOSTON BOROUGH COUNCIL

At the meeting of Boston Borough Council held at the Conference Centre, Jakemans Community Stadium (Boston United), Pilgrim Way, Wyberton, Boston, PE21 7NE, on Monday, 2nd August, 2021 at 6.30 pm

Present:

The Mayor (Councillor Frank Pickett), in the Chair
Councillors Tom Ashton, Tracey Abbott, Alison Austin, Richard Austin BEM, Alan Bell, Peter Bedford, Katie Chalmers, George Cornah, Anton Dani, Anne Dorrian, Deborah Evans, Martin Griggs, Neill Hastie, Martin Howard, Jonathan Noble, Judith Skinner, Paul Skinner, Yvonne Stevens, Chelcei Trafford, Judy Welbourn, Nigel Welton and Stephen Woodliffe

Officers –

Interim Deputy Chief Executive (People), Interim Assistant Director – Organisation and Corporate Services and Deputy Monitoring Officer, Democratic Services Delivery Manager, Civic & Member Services Officer and Democratic Services Apprentice

13 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Viven Edge, Paul Goodale, Brian Rush and Peter Watson and the Chief Executive, Monitoring Officer and Section 151 Officer.

14 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

Councillor Tom Ashton made a declaration that whilst he was also an elected member of East Lindsey District Council he would deliberate and determine the business of the meeting in his role as a Member of Boston Borough Council

15 SOUTH EAST LINCOLNSHIRE COUNCILS PARTNERSHIPS

The Leader of the Council, Councillor Paul Skinner, introduced a report by the Interim Deputy Chief Executive (People) setting out proposals to extend the strategic alliance by entering into a partnership with South Holland District Council.

The report stated that at the meeting of the Council held on 28 June 2021, it had been agreed in principle to the formation of a three Council partnership to be known as the South East Lincolnshire Councils Partnership (SELCP), building upon the foundations of the existing alliance between Boston Borough Council and East Lindsey District Council.

In making the in principle decision to support the SELCP, the current Joint Chief Executive was placed at the disposal of South Holland District Council on an interim basis to produce a Business Case, a draft structure for integrated shared management arrangements (tiers 1 to 3) and a Memorandum of Agreement to provide a framework for how the relationship between the Councils would be governed.

The documents had been produced and were appended to the report for consideration.

In developing the Business Case detailed consideration and reference had been given to examples of successful partnerships which had been established across the local government sector.

The establishment of the partnership had been split into three distinct phases:-

- Phase 1 – Set Up (April 2022) – development of an Annual Delivery Plan for each Council and the establishment of wider governance and performance arrangements within the partnership.
- Phase 2 – Accelerate (2022/23) – a programme of service reviews to commence in order to seize opportunities created by the new partnership, along with a wider programme of policy development and alignment (where there was appetite).
- Phase 3 – Embed (2023/24) – a focus on ambitious growth.

The financial analysis which supported the business case identified a financial opportunity of up to £42m available to the Councils collectively over the next ten year period through partnership working if all opportunities to integrate services (beyond a shared management structure) were embraced. Exploring wider service integration, where appropriate, would reduce pressure on the Councils' budgets whilst creating capacity to invest in local priorities to achieve better outcomes for communities.

Through combined working the Councils' as a partnership would collectively have a stronger voice locally, regionally and nationally, when seeking resources to further their priorities.

A key benefit of working together in respect of the workforce, would be the support available for the development of its officers, to provide greater opportunities to broaden skills, develop knowledge and progress in their careers. The partnership had a commitment of no compulsory redundancies.

The Memorandum of Agreement set out the purpose and aims of the shared management, agreed areas of joint working, the basis on which the Councils would operate and the principles by which the relationship would operate, fundamental to the success of the partnership.

Council had previously agreed on an interim basis, the sharing of the Joint Chief Executive for the purpose of developing a Business Case, Memorandum of Agreement and the proposed management structure for tiers 1 – 3, as set out in the report. The opportunity would be to take forward proposals to share a wider Senior Management Team which would make better use of limited resources and put all Councils in a stronger position to develop other shared roles or services that could achieve further efficiencies and improvements.

Each Council would retain its own sovereignty, identity and priorities but with common goals and shared commitment to develop improved effectiveness and deliver further efficiencies to their local communities.

The report also proposed the appointment of the Head of Paid Service, Monitoring Officer and Section 151 Officer, all statutory posts which required full Council approval.

The three roles would form part of the integrated shared management arrangements for the SELCP.

The sharing of the statutory officers and associated costs would be based on the population ratio apportionment which underpinned the partnership; South Holland DC 31%; Boston Borough Council 23% and East Lindsey DC 46%.

It was proposed that delegated authority be granted to the Head of Paid Service, in consultation with Council Leaders, to implement the management structure and associated appointments from within the existing senior staffing partnership cohort (Tiers 2 and 3), subject to there being no material changes to the proposed structure following consultation with the officers affected. It was anticipated that consultation would begin once the decision had been taken by Council, and the full structure in place in advance of the partnership commencing on 6 September 2021.

As requested at the meeting of the Council on 28 June, a Member Briefing on the proposals had been held on 14 July, and considered by the Corporate and Community Committee on 20 July. Further scrutiny had been undertaken by the Joint Scrutiny Panel (ELDC and BBC) on 21 July. Comments from both scrutiny meetings and from the Joint Performance Monitoring Panel and Policy Development Panel (SHDC) were appended to the report.

In response to comments from the scrutiny forums it was proposed the change the name of the alliance to the South and East Lincolnshire Councils Partnership to acknowledge the geographical areas of all three authorities.

During debate Members expressed a consensus of support for the proposed partnership recognising the benefits it would bring for all three authorities, including:-

- Greater strength and resilience with a wider workforce;
- Opportunities to realise the ambitions of the Corporate Plan;
- Louder voice for negotiation and lobbying;
- Opportunities for senior officers to concentrate on areas of specialism rather than spread across several services areas;
- Achieve savings targets whilst maintaining services;
- Career development for staff;
- Pre-empt local government re-organisation or devolution across the county

Concern was expressed regarding a perceived expansion of bureaucracy and proposed salaries for senior officers. The projected budget gaps stated in the report were speculative as future funding arrangements from central government were unknown. There was no democratic mandate for the partnership as public consultation had not been undertaken. Local Government reform was not inevitable and avoiding devolution was not a good reason to extend the alliance.

In summing up the Leader commented that for any partnership to be successful it had to be built on trust, good leadership and communication and would require constant working on, nurturing and developing. It was not feasible for the Council to adopt a stand still attitude as this would result in going backwards, it was necessary to work with

partners to ensure the future success of the Council for the benefit of communities and the local economy.

It was moved by Councillor Paul Skinner, seconded by Councillor Nigel Welton and

RESOLVED

1. To approve the business case (at Appendix A) for, and to approve entry into, a South and East Lincolnshire Councils Partnership between Boston Borough Council, East Lindsey District Council and South Holland District Council.
2. To delegate to Michelle Sacks, Deputy Chief Executive (Place) in consultation with the Leader, approval of the final terms for, and the signing and sealing of, the Memorandum of Agreement (draft at Appendix B) following due diligence; and simultaneously terminate the existing Memorandum of Agreement between Boston Borough Council and East Lindsey District Council.
3. That, subject to similar decisions to be taken by the other two Councils, Rob Barlow becomes the Joint Chief Executive and Head of Paid Services of South Holland District Council, East Lindsey District Council and Boston Borough Council from 3 August 2021. Mr. Barlow shall remain formally employed by East Lindsey District Council, and this Council agrees that he continues to be placed at the disposal of this Council and at the disposal of South Holland District Council under Section 113 of the Local Government Act. Thereafter, East Lindsey District Council will contribute 46% of the cost of Mr Barlow's remuneration, Boston Borough Council will contribute 23% and South Holland District Council 31% of the same.
4. That, subject to similar decisions to be taken by the other two Councils, Mark Stinson becomes the Joint Monitoring Officer of South Holland District Council, East Lindsey District Council and Boston Borough Council from 3 August 2021. Mr. Stinson shall remain formally employed by South Holland District Council, and this Council agrees to him being placed at the disposal of this Council as well as East Lindsey District Council under Section 113 of the Local Government Act 1972 and formally designates him as Monitoring Officer effective from 3 August 2021. Thereafter, East Lindsey District Council will contribute 46% of the cost of Mr Stinson's remuneration, Boston Borough Council will contribute 23% and South Holland District Council 31% of the same.
5. That, subject to similar decisions to be taken by the other two Councils, Christine Marshall becomes the Joint Section 151 Officer of South Holland District Council, East Lindsey District Council and Boston Borough Council from 3 August 2021. Ms Marshall shall remain formally employed by South Holland District Council, and this Council agrees to her being placed at the disposal of this Council as well as East Lindsey District Council under Section 113 of the Local Government Act 1972 and formally designates her as the officer responsible for the financial affairs of the authority under Section 151 of the Local Government Act 1972 effective from 3 August 2021. Thereafter, East Lindsey District Council will

contribute 46% of the cost of Mrs Marshall's remuneration, Boston Borough Council will contribute 23% and South Holland District Council 31% of the same.

6. To authorise the Joint Chief Executive and Head of Paid Service to commence consultation immediately on the proposed integrated shared management structure (included in Appendix A) and subject to there being no material changes to the senior management structure following consultation with officers, delegated authority be given to the Head of Paid Service in consultation with the Council Leaders to implement the said structure and associated appointments from within the existing senior staffing partnership cohort (Tiers 2 and 3).
7. To establish a Joint Chief Officer Appointment Panel and a Joint Appointment Appeals Committee, with terms of reference as agreed and set out in the Memorandum of Agreement, and that the Monitoring Officer be authorised to make any necessary changes to the Constitution.
8. Council via its Overview/Scrutiny process to undertake a review of the Partnership after 12 months and to report back to Council.

(Councillor Noble requested his abstention from voting be recorded)

(The meeting ended at 7.20 pm)