

# JOINT SCRUTINY PANEL OF THE STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP

## Joint BBC/ELDC Scrutiny of the proposal for SHDC to become part of the Partnership

**Councillors ELDC:** F. Martin (Chairman), E. Mossop, H. Matthews, S. Devereux, D. Mangion

**Councillors BBC:** S. Woodliffe, J. Welbourn, J. Skinner, A. Dani, K. Chalmers, P. Goodale (Vice-Chairman), T. Ashton

**Officers:** James Gilbert (Interim Deputy Chief Executive (People)), Rebecca James (Scrutiny Officer)

**Witnesses:** Councillor Craig Leyland (Leader, ELDC), Councillor Paul Skinner (Leader, BBC), Councillor Graham Marsh (Deputy Leader, ELDC), Rob Barlow (Joint Chief Executive), Nathan Elvery (Strategic Advisor to BBC, ELDC and SHDC)

### Introduction

When the Strategic Alliance was first established in July 2020 it was recognised that there might be an opportunity for a third partner to join. South Holland District Council has approached the Councils to indicate their interest at joining the alliance. The initial proposal was agreed in principle by all 3 Councils; further decisions are required in July/August, and October. This joint scrutiny panel was tasked by BBC and ELDC to review the report and associated documentation in advance of the next Council decisions.

In advance of the meeting Members received the draft Council report, the draft Business Case, and draft Memorandum of Agreement.

### Panel Discussion / Analysis

Following the Joint Chief Executive's presentation of the draft Business Case the following comments were made by councillors:

- That the workforce development strategy needs to manage the cultural differences and priorities of each council, and bring together teams the way it has done for the existing alliance;
- There is a need to grasp this opportunity and preserve the democratic accountability of the three areas;

- There are three effective councils that can work together whilst keeping their local connection and local identities. There is a need to be innovative and show leadership;
- Calling the partnership the 'East Lincolnshire Councils Partnership' was considered to better reflect the geographical location of all three areas;
- There is a need to align email addresses to ensure residents are clear on where council staff are contacting them from;
- Councillors were keen to ensure that officer time will be fairly split to ensure action where and when it is needed;
- The scrutiny of the current strategic alliance has not yet taken place and councillors are keen to ensure that recommendations from that panel can feed into the new partnership;
- Recommendations from Boston Borough Council's scrutiny were considered, including the issues of identity, funding, housing, and engagement.

Following a number of questions from councillors, the following information was provided:

- MOA states that staff are employed by their own council and the sharing of the Management Team is through Section 113 of the Local Government Act;
- 'Partnership' is a description of how we will work and not a legal entity;
- Regarding devolution, the government want to hear about successful options for different ways of working together, we have worked well as an alliance, and need to progress this and showcase the possibilities of a 3-way partnership in terms of key issues such as flooding, tourism, coast. That way we can be taken much more seriously;
- The partnership will protect our democratic accountability, enable us to stay close to our communities but make our voice heard by government so we can deliver for all our districts;
- We have common issues to all 3 councils: deprivation; rural isolation; low wages; poor transport. The current alliance brought capacity and skills and a new 'one team' partnership will allow us to demonstrate how staff and councillors can work together for residents from all areas;
- Consultation on the Management Structure will be 30 days so there will be no need for an interim structure;
- This partnership is about grasping the opportunity to do what we want to do, rather than others deciding the direction. We are future proofing our existence so we can work meaningfully at a local level;
- South Holland were actively looking for a partnership within Lincolnshire, they saw the way we have been working as an alliance and were keen to take advantage of people with current experience of successful partnership working. We already have a relationship with them through PSPS Ltd. Which has worked well;

- The partnership makes sense geographically and economically;
- Regarding the senior staff structure, the reduction has been planned carefully and will be reviewed in 12 months' time to ensure it is working as planned;
- It was noted that the new partnership would not 'solve' deprivation issues, but it does put all 3 councils in a better position to help tackle issues through health, education, and skills partnerships. Dealing with covid has highlighted vulnerable residents and areas, this knowledge can help us find a better way forward.

## **Recommendations**

1. To consider dropping the 'South' from the name of the Partnership, so it becomes the 'East Lincolnshire Councils Partnership';
2. To ensure that the strategic direction of the new partnership focuses on key areas such as education, skills, deprivation, and environmental ambition;
3. To use the 'bigger voice' that the three councils will have to ensure opportunities are created for more partnership working, greater funding, and increased influence;
4. To create a new way of working, ensuring that the work the councils do is meaningful;
5. To take full advantage of the levelling-up agenda to make sure no area is left behind;
6. To ensure service areas have some 'good to go' proposals, ready for any funding opportunities that are presented;
7. To bring forward the recommendations from the scrutiny of the current alliance, so we can learn the lessons for the new partnership;
8. To ensure the new partnership looks to work with all of our diverse communities to encourage maximum engagement from residents.