

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, 28th June, 2021 at 6.30 pm

Present:

Deputy Mayor Councillor Tom Ashton in the chair.

Tom Ashton, Alison Austin, Richard Austin BEM, Peter Bedford, Katie Chalmers, Michael Cooper, George Cornah, Anton Dani, Anne Dorrian, Viven Edge, Deborah Evans, Paul Goodale, Martin Griggs, Neill Hastie, Martin Howard, Jonathan Noble, Judith Skinner, Paul Skinner, Yvonne Stevens, Peter Watson, Judy Welbourn, Nigel Welton and Stephen Woodliffe

Officers –

Deputy Chief Executive (Place) & Monitoring Officer, Interim Deputy Chief Executive (People) and Section 151 Officer. Democratic Services Officer and Democratic Services Apprentice.

10 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence are recorded from Councillors Tracey Abbott, Alan Bell, Frank Pickett, Brian Rush and Chelcei Trafford.

11 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Tom Ashton (Mr. Deputy Mayor acting as Chairman) noted that whilst he was also a 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

12 IN PRINCIPLE DECISION - EXTENDING THE ALLIANCE PARTNERSHIP TO INCLUDE SOUTH HOLLAND DISTRICT COUNCIL

Councillor Paul Skinner, Leader of the Council, presented a report by the Interim Deputy Chief Executive– People setting out details of the opportunities and benefits of extending the current strategic alliance partnership between Boston Borough Council (BBC) and East Lindsey District Council (ELDC) to include South Holland District Council (SHDC).

The report sought the Council's in principle support to extend the strategic alliance to create the South East Lincolnshire Council Partnership (SELCP), the formation of which would be subject to further documentation being approved at a future meeting of the Council. The report recommended that the Joint Chief Executive of BBC and ELDC also be appointed as Interim Chief Executive at SHDC to prepare the business case, draft a Senior Management staffing structure and a Memorandum of Agreement for the SELCP. The Leader reiterated that the report was merely seeking an 'in principle' decision.

It was noted that BBC and ELDC had formed a strategic alliance on 1 July, 2020, underpinned by a memorandum of agreement between the two authorities. Since that time, the alliance had achieved some significant benefits for the community, including:

- Progressed and implemented the alliance during the pandemic thereby increasing capacity to respond to the significant challenges presented by COVID-19.
- Delivered £872k in-year savings between the Councils in 20/21; increasing the saving to £1.214m for 21/22 budgets.
- Created a single Corporate Management Team and commenced a programme of service alignments delivering further efficiencies through removal of duplication (such as ICT systems).
- Submitted exemplar bids that secured over £70m in funding offers from the Government's Towns' Fund for Boston, Mablethorpe and Skegness; and further bids for £40m of Government Levelling up Funding for Boston and East Lindsey had been submitted.
- Raised the authorities profile as a regional voice with partners leading to £4m in green homes monies being secured from Government.
- Adopted a Workforce Development Strategy that focused on organisational development in line with a shared vision and a One Team approach. This included the development and adoption of a values and behaviours framework for the alliance.
- Both authorities were now shareholders in Public Sector Partnership Services (PSPS) Ltd providing alignment of key services including ICT infrastructure.

Over the course of recent months, discussions had taken place between the Leaders and Deputy Leaders of BBC, ELDC and SHDC on whether SHDC may wish to join the alliance. Those discussions had been positive and identified that there were benefits and opportunities to extend the alliance and form a South East Lincolnshire Council Partnership (SELCP).

Subject to the in principal decision being agreed, it was proposed to immediately form a Joint Scrutiny Panel with East Lindsey District Council to review the report and associated documentation in advance of the next Council decisions. The Panel would report back its findings to the respective Councils.

A number of Members voiced caution and strong concerns in respect of the report, questioning why it had not gone through the scrutiny process prior to Full Council. Referencing the serious issues that arose from non-scrutiny of the initial alliance, Members agreed that such a situation could not be allowed to happen again. The report tabled had not allowed time for questioning or consideration at scrutiny level and the standard protocol appeared to have been breached again. The report contained little information to enable Members to make a decision and members had a responsibility to the residents of the borough: a repetition of the process of the initial alliance would not be acceptable to anybody.

At this point in the meeting, Mr. Deputy Mayor (in the chair) intervened and reiterated the comment of Councillor Paul Skinner, that the report was simply 'In Principle' seeking agreement to task the Chief Executive with undertaking initial negotiations with South

Holland District Council to ascertain their views on a future alliance, the Chief Executive would bring his findings back for consideration. No decision had been made or would be made pending the outcomes of the initial negotiations.

Comments by members noted that there were more similarities between South Holland District Council and Boston Borough Council than there were between BBC and ELDC, including agriculture industry, and each had a working port. Further Members voiced their appreciation and respect of the Leader of South Holland District Council, Lord Porter, noting they would welcome working with him.

Referencing condition 3 within the report noting the formation of a joint scrutiny panel a Member asked if unaligned Members would be allowed to be a part of the panel and were advised that as both Councils had different Scrutiny protocols, and it would be the decision of each Council to nominate the members under their own protocols.

Recognising that the report was 'in principle' some members who noted their initial concerns when first reading the report, stated that they felt reassured by advice and clarification that it was only initial negotiations. They further stated they would be agreeable to supporting it providing it came back through the correct committee system ahead of any final decision making, to allow all members to be involved and the correct level to scrutiny to take place.

It was moved by Councillor Paul Skinner and seconded by Councillor Nigel Welton that:

Full Council:

- 1. To agree in principle that the current strategic alliance partnership between Boston Borough Council and East Lindsey District Council be extended to include South Holland District Council. The new alliance to be known as the South East Lincolnshire Council Partnership (SELCP) and its formation to be subject to a business case, draft shared management structure (for consultation) and memorandum of agreement being approved at future meetings of the three Councils.**
- 2. To approve the appointment of Boston Borough Council and East Lindsey District Council's Joint Chief Executive, Rob Barlow, as the interim Chief Executive and Head of Paid Service for South Holland District Council being seconded from East Lindsey District Council under Section 113 of the Local Government Act 1972, effective from 2 July 2021 for the period necessary to prepare the following for decision at a future meeting of the Council:**
 - A business case for the partnership between South Holland District Council, Boston Borough Council and East Lindsey District Council, to be known as the South East Lincolnshire Council Partnership (SELCP);**
 - A draft structure for the integrated shared management arrangements of the proposed new partnership of SELCP between Boston Borough Council, East Lindsey District Council and South Holland District Council, for the purpose of staff consultation; and**

- **A Memorandum of Agreement to support the SELCP between Boston Borough Council, East Lindsey District Council and South Holland District Council.**
- 3. To agree to immediately form a Joint Scrutiny Panel (as set out in this report) with East Lindsey District Council to review the report and associated documentation in advance of the next Council decision. The Panel to report back its findings to the Council.**

An amendment was moved by Councillor Anne Dorrian:

That the Business Case be presented at a Member briefing at Boston Borough Council and that the Business Case be forwarded to a Scrutiny committee at Boston Borough Council.

The mover and seconder of the substantive motion agreed to add the proposed amendment to the motion.

In conclusion having reserved his right to reply as Secunder, Councillor Welton thanked Councillor Dorrian for the additional recommendation agreeing that the business case should be taken through the committee system to allow inclusive consideration by all members.

Councillor Welton further reassured Full Council that there was no guarantee the third alliance would come forward, but by allowing the Chief Executive to undertake initial investigations, the feedback would enable all Members at both Councils the time to fully consider and debate the possibility of the alliance, knowing they were in full possession of the facts. Taking the business case through the Scrutiny process would allow open and public scrutiny.

The amended substantive motion was then put to the vote and it was:

RESOLVED:

That Full Council agree that:

- 1. To agree in principle that the current strategic alliance partnership between Boston Borough Council and East Lindsey District Council be extended to include South Holland District Council. The new alliance to be known as the South East Lincolnshire Council Partnership (SELCP) and its formation to be subject to a business case, draft shared management structure (for consultation) and memorandum of agreement being approved at future meetings of the three Councils.**
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 - **A Memorandum of Agreement to support the SELCP between Boston Borough Council, East Lindsey District Council and South Holland District Council.**
- 3. To agree to immediately form a Joint Scrutiny Panel (as set out in this report) with East Lindsey District Council to review the report and associated documentation in advance of the next Council decision. The Panel to report back its findings to the Council.**
- 4. That a Member Briefing be held on the proposals including the Business Case, and that it also be considered by a Boston Borough Council scrutiny committee prior to formal determination by Full Council.**

(The meeting ended at 7.30 pm)