

**NORTH WEST LEICESTERSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL**

**CABINET – TUESDAY, 24 JULY 2018**

Title of report	<b>UPDATE ON COUNTY COUNCIL'S INTENTION TO CONSIDER UNITARY PROPOSALS AND A STRATEGIC ALLIANCE FOR THE EAST MIDLANDS</b>
Key Decision	a) Financial No b) Community No
Contacts	Chief Executive 01530 454500 <a href="mailto:Bev.smith@nwleicestershire.gov.uk">Bev.smith@nwleicestershire.gov.uk</a>
Purpose of report	To note and consider the County Council's intentions to consider unitary proposals and a strategic alliance for the East Midlands.
Reason for decision	To ensure the District Council is in a position to fully consider and respond to any proposals in a timely manner.
Council priorities	Value for Money
Implications:	
Financial/Staff	Work on the financial and staffing implications will form part of the wider discussions and negotiations. Initial work will be funded through existing budget provision. There will be resource and capacity issues associated with both the assessment of any proposal and/or the development of alternative proposals.
Link to relevant CAT	None.
Risk Management	Risks and mitigations are identified and addressed in the Communications Plan.
Equalities Impact Screening	Not required at this stage however a full Equality Impact Assessment would be completed for any detailed proposals.
Human Rights	None discernible.
Transformational Government	Not applicable.
Comments of Head of Paid Service	The report is satisfactory
Comments of Section 151 Officer	The report is satisfactory

Comments of Deputy Monitoring Officer	The report is satisfactory
Consultees	None.
Background papers	Report and decision notice of the County Council Cabinet meeting held on 6 July 2018. These are attached as Appendix A.
Recommendations	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>1. TO NOTE THE COUNTY COUNCIL'S INTENTION TO DEVELOP PROPOSALS FOR UNITARY GOVERNMENT AND EAST MIDLANDS STRATEGIC ALLIANCE</b></li> <li><b>2. TO APPROVE THE COMMUNICATION PLAN, AS SET OUT IN APPENDIX B</b></li> <li><b>3. TO NOTE THE COUNCIL'S CHANGE TO THE SCHEDULE OF MEETINGS IN ORDER TO ACCOMMODATE THE COUNTY COUNCIL'S CONSULTATION PERIOD, AS SET OUT IN PARAGRAPH 6.1.</b></li> </ol>

## 1.0 CONTEXT AND BACKGROUND

1.1 On 6 July 2018 Leicestershire County Council Cabinet met to consider a report on local government reform in Leicestershire. This followed a decision of the Conservative Group to agree in principle that the County Council should develop proposals for a unitary structure for Leicestershire. The report is attached as Appendix A and provides a framework and timetable for the consideration of the proposals.

1.2 This report seeks to:

- Set out the proposed actions and governance timetable to facilitate North West Leicestershire's response to forthcoming consultation in respect to the County Council proposals;
- Set out the council's approach to communication and consultation with North West Leicestershire's communities, stakeholders and partners;
- Identify the initial actions that will need to be taken to ensure that any future proposals either by the County Council or by District Councils are robustly assessed to inform members in their future decision making.

1.3 Government finances continue to reduce year on year with particular pressures on health and social care budgets and local authorities face future uncertainty with the outcome of the fair funding review and business rate changes. Public sector reform is a live debate in many areas of the country and can provide an opportunity to look at new collaborative proposals to improve how local government works within our localities. District Councils are closely connected to their communities and can contribute to improving the sustainability of health and social care provisions through close effective partnerships. However with funding forecasts for all tiers of local government post 2020/2021 being particularly challenging there is a clear driver for reviewing the current arrangements to ensure local government is sustainable and can continue to deliver quality services for our communities.

The Council will need to robustly assess any future proposals for change considering not only the potential financial benefits, but also

- Place – community
- Scale – impact on customer service and accessibility
- Geography
- Democratic accountability
- The need and consensus of the community
- Economic Functioning areas - Impact on economic growth within Leicestershire
- Linkages to wider strategic economic partnerships/alliances

## **2.0 PUBLIC SECTOR REFORM MODELS AND UNITARY PROPOSALS**

2.1 There are a number of different models operating within the UK from the traditional County/Unitary two tier model to more collaborative district and unitary models. There are also a number of areas that have taken the decision to review local government structures, led by both County Council and District Council. These examples will provide useful case studies for North West Leicestershire in its considerations and assessment of proposals. Previous guidance from Government back in 2016 was that:

*‘where an area has plans for its governance arrangements to be changed and proposes this to the Secretary of State, it must provide evidence as to how its proposals are likely to result in the provision of better local public services, significant cost savings, greater value for money, stronger and more accountable local leadership, and sustainability in the medium to long term. It is of course open to any body or person to make representations to the Secretary of State either in support of or in opposition to such proposals. As we have made clear during discussions with areas, whilst size is an important consideration for areas considering governance changes, there is no maximum or minimum permitted sizes.’*

2.2 Despite the statement that there was no maximum or minimum size, DCLG had however indicated in response to the proposals from Dorset for reorganisation that they regarded the minimum size for a unitary to be around 300,000 population and a maximum of around 700,000.

2.3 Since then the government has produced statutory guidance under the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 by the then Secretary of State Savid Javeed, in relation to the Northamptonshire situation and the invitation on 27 March 2018 to the Northamptonshire councils to submit proposals for unitary government. Whilst this related to the situation in Northampton, it is likely that similar criteria would be applied to any other proposals which would come forward from areas.

In particular the guidance states:

*A proposal should seek to achieve for the area concerned the establishment of a single tier of local government that is the establishment of unitary authorities;*

- a. Which are likely to improve the local government and service delivery across the area of the proposal, giving greater value for money, generating savings, providing stronger strategic and local leadership, and which are more sustainable structures;*
- b. Which command a good deal of local support as assessed in the round overall across the whole area of the proposal; and*

- c. *Where the area of each unitary authority is a credible geography consisting of one or more existing local government areas and having a substantial population that as a minimum is substantially in excess of 300,000.*

2.4 In addition in a parliamentary question asked on 18 April about the unitary councils the Minister Rishi Sunak MP replied:

*'the Secretary of state has issued this guidance including population size, having regard to past reorganisations, the Northamptonshire County Council Best Value Inspection Report of March 2018 and research, including that from the County Council's Network in 2016 into lessons from previous unitarisation which found that the scale of the unitary was key, with larger authorities able to deliver economies of scale while smaller unitary councils were more likely to be less reliant'*

2.5 As we await the publication of the County Council's proposals, business case and details of the types of models that are proposed, North West Leicestershire members will need to consider the risks, costs, benefits and opportunities that public sector reorganisation affords and the direct impact on the communities of North West Leicestershire. It is likely that we will need to consider a number of different models

- o Remaining as a multiple tier local government (Parish/Town, District and County)
- o One County Unitary model
- o A combination of a number of Unitary models across Leicestershire – taking account of the government guidance with regards to the preferred population size for any unitary it is likely that consideration would need to be given to a two unitary model either North/South or East/West.
- o Greater collaborative models involving District Council mergers

### **3.0 STRATEGIC ALLIANCE**

3.1 In consideration of any proposal the council will also need to take account of the wider partnership framework that exists within the East Midlands. There is a clear reference within the County Council report to the ongoing work investigating the opportunities that a Strategic Alliance would have for Leicestershire, Lincolnshire, Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire. Enhanced collaboration at this level could provide a unified strong voice promoting and delivering economic growth across our region.

3.2 The Leader of the County Council is on the record as saying that he feels it is important for a Strategic Alliance to be formed in the East Midlands to counter the influence which the West Midlands has through its Combined Authority and Elected Mayor, such influence being evident in Government funding allocations and devolved responsibilities. The Leader of the County Council has said that he has met with Leaders of the other Upper Tier Councils in the East Midlands with a view to progressing an Alliance, first through discussion with the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government.

3.3 It is not yet known how a Strategic Alliance would operate and what would be the most effective and efficient way to deliver the aspirations, and how this would influence future public sector reform proposals. This would need to be a consideration of the Council when the final proposals are shared.

## **4.0 PROPOSED INITIAL ACTIONS**

4.1 To support the Council in its response officers have undertaken the following work:

- Initiated a communication strategy for internal and external use
- Set up an in house project team led by the Chief Executive to oversee the possibility of local government reorganisation and all that arises from it. This project team will consist of officers with legal, financial, communication, community and organisational development specialisms
- Taken external legal advice in order to inform the Council on the statutory stages for any local government reform and relevant statutory instruments
- Commenced discussions with Leicestershire's District Council Leaders and Chief Executives on the current proposals

4.2 The intention is to engage with the County Council Leader and Chief Executive as soon as the proposals are published.

4.3 There is likely to be a need to commission further work, either to consider the County Council proposal or to consider alternative proposals to ensure that members have a robust analysis of all options. Initial work will be funded through existing resources and budgetary provision with the approval to find further expenditure for 2018/2019 sought from Cabinet as necessary. There will be resource and capacity issues associated with both the assessment of any proposal and/or the development of alternative proposals.

## **5.0 COMMUNICATION AND ENGAGEMENT**

5.1 It is important that, as the proposal progresses through the various decision-making stages, we keep our stakeholders – including staff, members and partners - well informed of the current NWLDC position and decisions made by other authorities, including Leicestershire County Council.

5.2 A communications and engagement plan has been drafted to ensure good communication throughout the process. This is attached as Appendix B. This is an evolving document that will be used to guide our communication as the process develops.

5.3 The Key Communication Messages are as follows:

- The idea of unitary authorities is not new – other authorities have investigated the possibility and some have gone through the process
- The proposal for Leicestershire is in its very early days
- NWLDC would like more evidence and investigation into the options before it decides which option it will support
- NWLDC will not dismiss any model until we assess the evidence showing benefits and risks for North West Leicestershire communities
- Any decision made by NWLDC on this will be in the best interests of people living and working in North West Leicestershire
- Our focus will be to continue to provide quality services to our community

- We will engage and communicate with our community, key stakeholders and partners in an open and transparent way to help explain and demystify any proposals to change the way local government works in Leicestershire

5.4 It will be necessary to review the schedule of meetings to ensure that there is robust scrutiny of any proposals and timely decision making to respond to the initial consultation on the proposals. NWLDC staff will receive regular updates via the intranet, staff emails, staff roadshows and communication with managers. This is imperative to reassure staff and ensure adequate engagement opportunities during a potentially unsettling period of time.

5.5 North West Leicestershire residents will also be a priority; we will use all the communication tools and networks available to us to ensure they are well informed and have the opportunity to engage with the process and inform our decision making. For example, any consultation held by Leicestershire County Council will be promoted throughout all our internal and external networks, as well as on the NWLDC website and social media channels.

Our Key principles applied to all communication on this matter will apply:

- We will communicate with the right people at the right time in the right way.
- We will make members and staff know of upcoming progress and decision points ahead of time.
- Following decisions or progress, we will update staff and members at the earliest opportunity with an overview and the NWLDC position.
- We will liaise with the media in an open and transparent way to ensure NWLDC's position is clear and residents are made aware.
- We will share information from ourselves and other authorities on the matter using all our communication tools, including social media and our website.

5.6 In consultation with the Leader of the Council we have issued an initial press statement which confirms the current position and the need to have an 'open mind' to all proposals for reorganisation with the primary aim being that any move away from the current structures would need to be for the benefit of the communities in North West Leicestershire. The relationship with our District Council and City and County Council partners is vital in delivering effective and co-ordinated services to our residents. We recognise the importance of maintaining regular communication with the joint leaders throughout the coming months.

## **6.0 PROCESS FOR PUBLIC SECTOR REFORM**

6.1 The power to enact a 'Merger' of either Districts or District/County is derived from the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 as amended by the Cities and Local Government Devolution Act 2016 and the process would in outline involve:

- The Councils internally setting out their proposals for the merger (e.g. its benefits, reasoning, impact assessments, new constitutional structure, boundaries, business case and so on) and developing proposals which would be the subject of consultation.

- The Councils engaging and consulting with the public, stakeholders, bodies and organisations within their area in respect of the proposed Merger, ensuring that proposals are effectively communicated. Discussions with government would also be recommended.
- The proposals being developed following the consultation by the Councils which includes how through the merger the criteria would be satisfied and so outlines the benefits which would accrue
- An agreement to proceed with the proposals through simultaneous Cabinet meetings would need to be made. Whilst it is an Executive function the Leader has indicated that full member engagement would be essential through Full Council prior to the final decision made by Cabinet .
- The councils securing delegated authority for the necessary officers (usually the Chief Executive) to act and enable the Secretary of State to make regulations under the 2016 Act enabling re-organisation to take place
- The submission of the merger proposals to the Secretary of State
- A consultation and representation period by the Secretary of State
- A decision by the Secretary of State to accept or decline the proposed merger
- If accepted, proceeding with Modification of Boundary Change Enactments Regulation and Local Government Changes Order (which relates to the governance, member appointment, electoral matters, transitional duties and so on)

6.2 Whether the proposal was to create new district councils by the merger of two or more councils, or to create a unitary between a county and districts the process outlined above would apply. Reorganisations tend to also put transitional duties on the councils involved requiring them to take necessary steps for the further transfer of functions, property, rights and liabilities and to co-operate with each other to further the purposes of the reorganisation Order.

## **7.0 TIMETABLE**

7.1 As referred to above, it will be necessary to review the schedule of meetings to ensure that there is robust scrutiny of any proposals and timely decision making to respond to the initial consultation on the proposals. Therefore the following changes have been suggested.

County Meeting/Actions	Date	Reason for meeting
Cabinet	2.00pm Tuesday 16 October 2018  <i>(Report available 8 October)</i>	To consider the outline proposals and agree to engage with stakeholders on options.  Proposed stakeholders to include <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Residents</li> <li>• District councils</li> <li>• Businesses</li> <li>• MPs</li> <li>• Universities</li> </ul>
<p><b>SUGGESTED CHANGE TO SCHEDULE</b></p> <p><b>Cabinet is scheduled to meet Tuesday 16 October at 5.00pm. The same day as County. It may be necessary to delay the start time of NWL Cabinet.</b></p>		
5 x Scrutiny Committees	Health – 7 Nov Env & Transport – 8 Nov Child'n & Families – 12 Nov Adults & C'munity – 13 Nov Commission – 14 Nov	To enable comment on the outline proposals as set out in report above.
<p><b>SUGGESTED CHANGE TO SCHEDULE</b></p> <p><b>Council is due to meet on Tuesday 20 November (only 3 days before County Council meets to consider the outcomes). We will amend the Full Council date to the 13 November in consultation with the Chairman of the Council. The print deadline for the Council report would be 5 November.</b></p>		
Cabinet	Friday 23 November 2018  <i>(Report available 15 November)</i>	To consider the outcome of the stakeholder engagement and the way forward.
County Council	Wednesday 5 December 2018  <i>(Report available 27 November)</i>	To debate the proposed way forward as recommended by the Cabinet.
<p><b>SCHEDULE</b></p> <p><b>Cabinet is due to meet on 11 December and can discuss the decision made by County</b></p>		
Full public consultation	Early 2019	A full public consultation on more detailed proposals.
Implementation date	May 2021	As reported.





## **CABINET – 6<sup>TH</sup> JULY 2018**

### **REPORT OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE**

## **EAST MIDLANDS STRATEGIC ALLIANCE AND UNITARY GOVERNMENT IN LEICESTERSHIRE – TIMETABLE FOR CONSIDERATION**

### **PART A**

#### **Purpose of the Report**

1. The purpose of this report is to advise the Cabinet, following the decision of the Conservative Group to agree in principle that the County Council should develop proposals for a unitary structure for Leicestershire, of the timetable for consideration of these matters.

#### **Recommendation**

2. It is recommended that -
  - (a) The Chief Executive and Director of Corporate Resources be requested to work with counterparts in the region in the development of a Strategic Alliance for the East Midlands;
  - (b) Work be undertaken on the development of a unitary structure for local government in Leicestershire;
  - (c) The following timetable for consideration of the above be approved:-

Cabinet	16 <sup>th</sup> October	to consider outline proposals and agree to engage with stakeholders on options
Scrutiny Commission	14 <sup>th</sup> November	to comment on the outline proposals
Cabinet	23 <sup>rd</sup> November	to consider the outcome of stakeholder engagement and the way forward
County Council	5 <sup>th</sup> December	to debate the proposed way forward recommended by the Cabinet.

### **Reasons for Recommendations**

3. To provide a framework and timetable for consideration of proposals for a unitary structure for Leicestershire in the context of a Strategic Alliance for the East Midlands.

### **Timetable for Decision (including Scrutiny)**

4. The Leader has discussed with the Leaders of the Opposition Groups the question of scrutiny consideration of the proposals and it has been agreed that they will be considered by the Scrutiny Commission and the scrutiny committees. As per the proposed timetable in paragraph 2(c) above, it is proposed that the Scrutiny Commission consider the proposals at its meeting on 14<sup>th</sup> November 2018 with the timetable of meetings for scrutiny committees to be considered further.

### **Policy Framework and Previous Decisions**

5. In November 2015 the Cabinet considered a report on the proposed establishment of a Combined Authority for Leicester and Leicestershire, comprising the County Council, Leicester City Council and the seven district councils. The proposal was submitted to the Government in December 2015. Despite widespread local support, this proposal was considered 'unambitious' by the Government, which indicated that it was looking for an arrangement which would make a greater impact on regional economic growth as advocated by some MPs and representative bodies of commerce and industry.
6. A letter has been sent from the Leaders of Leicestershire, Nottinghamshire, Derbyshire and Lincolnshire to the Secretary of State, seeking a meeting to discuss the proposed East Midlands Strategic Alliance.

### **Resource Implications**

7. In 2013 the Council commissioned Ernst and Young (EY) to report on unitary local government. All members of the County Council and the District Council Leaders were provided with a copy of that report. The cost of that work was reported to the Council in February 2014 as £45,000. The Leader asked officers to review the EY report and the consideration which has been given to unitary status by other County Councils. That work was undertaken within existing budgets. Further work will now be undertaken on this matter with a view to reporting the outcome to the Cabinet in October. It is anticipated that work will be undertaken within existing budgets.

### **Legal Implications**

8. Matters now under consideration are deemed to be 'Executive Functions' and therefore for the Cabinet to determine. However, given the significance of the decision it is advised that the matter should be referred to the full Council for consideration and debate, as is the wish of the Leader of the County Council.

The Director of Law and Governance has been consulted on the content of this report.

**Circulation under the Local Issues Alert Procedure**

9. As this is a matter which will affect all areas of the County, a copy of this report is being circulated to all members of the County Council.

**Officer to contact**

Mo Seedat  
Head of Democratic Services  
Tel 0116 305 6037 Email – [mo.seedat@leics.gov.uk](mailto:mo.seedat@leics.gov.uk)

## **PART B**

### **Background**

10. The Leader of the Council has advised that at a meeting of the Conservative Group on Tuesday, 26<sup>th</sup> June 2018 a decision was taken to agree in principle that the County Council should develop proposals for a unitary structure for Leicestershire. This was in the context of developing a Strategic Alliance for the East Midlands to counterbalance the growing power and influence of the West Midlands Combined Authority.

### **Next Steps**

11. At the request of the Leader, officers of the County Council will work with counterparts in Derbyshire, Nottinghamshire and Lincolnshire County Councils to develop a Strategic Alliance and the powers it would be seeking as part of a devolution agreement with the Government. The three unitary cities in the East Midlands will be consulted along with other stakeholders including MPs and the LEPs. With regard to proposals for a unitary structure officers will now build on the initial work undertaken and draw up proposals for consultation. The outcome of this work will be reported to the Cabinet in October.

### **Equality and Human Rights Implications**

12. In developing the proposals for a Strategic Alliance and proposals for a unitary structure, officers will need to have regard equality issues and how the proposals might impact on those groups with protected characteristics.

### **Background Papers**

Media release Friday, 29<sup>th</sup> June

<https://www.leicestershire.gov.uk/news/right-time-to-start-'new-council'-conversation>

Report to the Cabinet 18<sup>th</sup> November 2015 - "Combined Authority" and minutes of that meeting

<http://politics.leics.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=135&MID=4232>

**CABINET****FRIDAY, 6 JULY 2018****DECISIONS****Published on: Monday 9 July 2018**

Set out below is a summary of the decisions taken at the meeting of the Cabinet held on Friday, 6 July 2018. The wording used does not necessarily reflect the actual wording which will appear in the minutes.

The Constitution allows for the call-in of non-urgent Key Decisions. Action to implement these decisions will be taken on the expiration of 5 working days from the date of this decision sheet unless they have been called-in. This document will be amended as soon as a decision has been called in.

If you have any queries about any matters referred to in this decision sheet please contact Anna Poole (Tel. 0116 305 2583).

**ITEM 20****URGENT ITEM - EAST MIDLANDS STRATEGIC ALLIANCE AND UNITARY GOVERNMENT IN LEICESTERSHIRE.**

- (a) That the Chief Executive and Director of Corporate Resources be requested to work with counterparts in the region in the development of a Strategic Alliance for the East Midlands;
- (b) That work be undertaken on the development of a unitary structure for local government in Leicestershire;
- (c) That the following timetable for consideration of the above be approved:-

Cabinet 16th October	to consider outline proposals and agree to engage with stakeholders on options.
Scrutiny Commission 14th November	to comment on the outline proposals.
Cabinet 23rd November	to consider the outcome of stakeholder engagement and the way forward.
County Council 5th December	to debate the proposed way forward recommended by the Cabinet.

**REASONS FOR DECISION:**

To provide a framework and timetable for consideration of proposals for a unitary structure for Leicestershire in the context of a Strategic Alliance for the East Midlands.

# **Unitary authority proposal NWLDC communications plan**

**V1**

**Last updated: 20 July 2018**

# Background

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- In June 2018, Leicestershire County Council's (LCC) Conservative Group agreed in principle that LCC should develop proposals for a unitary structure for Leicestershire
- The implications of public sector reform proposals are complex and there is a need to ensure regular, clear communication to our staff, members, community and stakeholders and partners from the outset of the proposal through to a decision
- A communications and engagement plan has been drafted to ensure good communication throughout the process. This is an evolving document that will be used to guide our communication as the process develops
- This version of the communications plan focusses on responding to the County Council proposals and will develop as the project progresses.

# Key messages (as at July 2018)

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1. The idea of unitary authorities is not new – other authorities have investigated the possibility and some have gone through the process
2. The proposal for Leicestershire is in its very early days
3. NWLDC would like more evidence and investigation into the options before it decides which option it will support
4. NWLDC will not dismiss any model until we assess the evidence showing benefits and risks for North West Leicestershire communities
5. Any decision made by NWLDC on this will be in the best interests of people living and working in North West Leicestershire
6. Our focus will be to continue to provide quality services to our community
7. We will engage and communicate with our communities, key stakeholders and partners in an open and transparent way to help explain and demystify any proposals to change the way local government works in Leicestershire

**\* (All subject to change as NWLDC develops its position):**



# Spokespeople

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## **Councillor Richard Blunt – Leader of NWLDC**

As the political lead, Councillor Blunt will be the main spokesperson and will carry out the majority of media interviews and other publicity opportunities

## **Councillor Alison Smith MBE, Deputy Leader of NWLDC**

As Deputy Leader, Councillor Smith will be quoted and will carry out media interviews where Councillor Blunt is not available

## **Bev Smith – Chief Executive**

As the project lead, Bev will also be available for media interviews and publicity opportunities where the councillor is unavailable, or where the nature of the interview requires particular technical knowledge. Bev will be the person responsible for communicating with staff and members.

# Objectives

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- To remain well briefed on the project and feed information to the right people at the right time
- To be clear internally and publically about NWLDC's position
- To ensure our key partners in the district councils and LCC / Leicester City Council understand NWLDC's position at any given time
- To keep all stakeholders well informed about the process and progress, with particular emphasis on staff communication – ensuring they are well informed and reassured throughout the process
- To share information from partners with all stakeholders in North West Leicestershire
- To ensure residents, staff, members and other stakeholders are well informed and have the opportunity to take part in consultations

# Scope, tools and evaluation

## Scope

- Proactive communication with staff and members
- Proactive communication with partners and stakeholders
- Proactive communication with the media
- Responsive communication to media and individual enquiries
- Sharing partner information (e.g. consultation details) using NWLDC communication tools (e.g. social media channels) and networks (e.g. parish liaison group)

## Communication tools

- Internal i-Net articles
- i-Net blogs
- Staff Roadshows
- Staff FAQs
- Member bulletin
- Media statements
- News releases
- Website
- Social media

## Evaluation

### Outputs monitored

- Number of news releases
- Number of media statements
- Number of staff updates
- Number of member updates
- Amount of social media activity

### Messages received

- Media coverage and social media activity is accurate and balanced / positive

### Messages understood

- Misinformation is minimised
- People understand NWLDC's position

# Communication principles

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We will communicate with the right people at the right time in the right way.

We will make members and staff know of upcoming progress and decision points ahead of time.

Following decisions or progress, we will update staff and members at the earliest opportunity with an overview and the NWLDC position.

We will liaise with the media in an open and transparent way to ensure NWLDC's position is clear and residents are made aware.

We will share information from ourselves and other authorities on the matter using all our communication tools, including social media and our website.

# Key dates

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**Tuesday 16 October:** LCC Cabinet to consider outline proposals

**Tuesday 16 October:** NWLDC Cabinet to meet to consider outline proposals (later start time)

**Tuesday 13 November:** NWLDC Cabinet meeting (may be rearranged)

**Tuesday 13 November:** NWLDC Full Council meeting to consider outline proposals and LCC decision

**Wednesday 14 November:** LCC Scrutiny Commission to comment on outline proposals

**Friday 23 November:** LCC Cabinet to consider stakeholder engagement and agree way forward

**Wednesday 5 December:** LCC Full Council to agree way forward recommended by Cabinet

**Tuesday 11 December:** NWLDC Cabinet to meet to discuss decision made by LCC

**Early 2019:** LCC proposed full public consultation on more detailed proposals

**May 2021:** LCC suggested implementation date (when LCC elections are due to be held)

# Risks

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## Risk

Staff morale, recruitment and retention is negatively impacted due to level of uncertainty.

Members do not understand the process and feel disengaged in consideration of any proposals.

Lack of information or two way communication between NWL officers / members and authorities proposing public sector reform leads to misrepresentation of information to members impacting on final decision making process.

## Mitigation

Internal communication plan developed and implemented at all key decision points. Staff FAQs developed and publicised. 'Open door' policy for staff who have questions.

Senior management / politicians to stay close to the project to remain aware of progress.

Communication plan in place with key dates scheduled. Regular, consistent communication around decision making meetings (e.g. LCC Cabinet, Full Council).

Opportunities for scrutiny at key decision points through Policy Development Committee.

Open and transparent communication with the LCC and district councils through leaders meetings and 1-2-1 meetings.

# Risks

## Risk

Lack of understanding of NWL position leads to misunderstanding amongst partner organisations which in turn negatively impacts future relationships.

Partner organisations work independently and NWLDC is kept out of the loop on information

Leaked information leads to misunderstanding of NWLDC position

Members / staff hear about progress with the proposal before hearing NWLDC position

## Mitigation

Open and transparent communication of NWL position and considerations at key points.

Regular communication with district leaders and LCC / City leaders as appropriate.

Senior management / politicians to stay close to the project to remain aware of progress.

Good links with Communications Team to ensure responsiveness to any issues.

Senior management / politicians to stay close to the project to remain aware of progress.

Good links with Communications Team to ensure responsiveness to any issues.

Latest position statement always in draft form ready to issue if necessary.

Senior management / politicians to stay close to the project to remain aware of progress.

Communication plan in place with key dates scheduled. Regular, consistent communication around decision making meetings (e.g. LCC Cabinet, Full Council)