

BCA/17/22 FUTURE OPTIONS FOR "WORKING TOGETHER" BETWEEN BABERGH AND MID SUFFOLK DISTRICT COUNCILS

The Chief Executive gave an introduction to report BCa/17/22 which gave a balance of positive and negative reasons for merging into one Council. In order to ensure the two districts were in the best possible position to respond to, and take advantage of, the emerging opportunities and challenges within Local Government and Suffolk both Council Leaders had requested the Chief Executive to investigate the various options available to further evolve the Councils partnership working.

It was stressed no formal decision would be made but the recommendation was to endorse the approach of creating one new, larger District Council and to conduct stakeholder, public and staff engagement.

Councillor Jenkins moved the recommendations which were seconded by Councillor Osbourne.

The Chairman, Councillor Jenkins, pointed out Cabinet were in listening mode. The next steps, if approved, would be to move the process forward. There would be no change to services but the Council were committed to working with other partners. The budget had been scrutinised and cut as much as possible but there was a compelling case for delivering savings and service by merging into one Council.

The Chairman, Councillor Jenkins, then invited questions from Councillors Ridley, Carpendale, Cresswell, McCraw and Arthey to which Cabinet members responded in relation to the timing of the decision, the high level financial aspect of the proposal, the cost of public consultation and the lack of business case. The first step would be to conduct public consultation, there was no control over the Boundary Committee timing and that the Business Case would be developed at the same time as the consultation. A formal decision would then be made from the Business Case which would go before Overview and Scrutiny Committee as well as Full Council. The Chief Executive also explained a comparison had been completed with Suffolk Coastal in respect of a similar exercise and their telephone poll cost had come to around £20,000.

Concern expressed at the amount of public consultations already taking place. In response Councillor Jenkins explained the Chief Executive had outlined reasons but was happy to amend the recommendation so it included as 2.1b:

*"Subject to the outcome of public engagement a draft (DCLG compliant) business case for the dissolution of BMSDC's and creation of a new single district council for the area could be considered by each Council."*

This amendment was moved by Councillor Jenkins and seconded by Councillor Osborne.

Cabinet members recognised doing nothing was not an option, the overriding factor would be the savings made and the delivery of a service.

By a unanimous vote:

**RESOLUTION 1**

*That the approach of formally dissolving the two district councils; and creating a new larger District Council be provisionally endorsed.*

**RESOLUTION 2**

*That the council's utilise the Transformation Funding to jointly conduct stakeholder, public and staff engagement during Autumn 2017.*

**RESOLUTION 3**

*That subject to the outcome of the public engagement a draft (DCLG compliant) business case for the dissolution of BMSDC's and creation of a new single district council for the area could be considered by each Council.*