

EXECUTIVE

TUESDAY, 16TH FEBRUARY, 2021

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION SHEET

Agenda No Item

7. **Supplementary Information Sheet (Pages 1 - 2)**

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EXECUTIVE

16 FEBRUARY 2021

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION

Procedure for the discharge of business at this meeting

The Leader of the Council, as chairman of the Executive, welcomes the attendance of members of the public and non-Executive councillors at this meeting of the Executive.

The procedure for dealing with each item of business shall be as follows:

1. Lead Councillor to introduce report on the matter
2. Non-Executive councillors invited to ask a question or comment, for which they will have a maximum of **five** minutes each
3. Lead councillor to respond to comments and questions
4. Executive debates the matter
5. Chairman to invite Executive to make decision on the matter

AGENDA ITEM 5: GYPSY AND TRAVELLER TRANSIT SITE PROVISION IN SURREY

Lead Councillor: Councillor Joss Bigmore, Leader of the Council

Lead Officer: Samantha Hutchison, Community Wellbeing Manager

AGENDA ITEM 6: COLLABORATION BY COUNCILS IN SURREY

Lead Councillor: Councillor Joss Bigmore, Leader of the Council

Lead Officer: James Whiteman, Managing Director

RESPONSE TO EXECUTIVE FROM THE JOINT EXECUTIVE ADVISORY BOARD

At its meeting held on 15 February 2021, the Joint Executive Advisory Board considered a report which informed councillors of discussions being held with other Surrey councils in respect of possible future local government structures in the County and opportunities for closer partnership working. The report sought views from councillors in this regard to assist with shaping the future direction of this work having, at this stage, a particular focus on closer partnership working with Waverley Borough Council (Waverley).

The Board received an introduction and overview from the Leader and Deputy Leader of the Council followed by a presentation given by the Managing Director and the Strategy and Communications Manager. The presentation outlined the background, unitary council options, collaboration opportunities, working with Waverley, Guildford - Waverley options, service by service option, single officer team option, and specific matters for the Board to consider.

The following points and views arose from ensuing questions, comments and discussion:

1. Whilst the restructuring of Surrey from a two tier to a unitary system of local government was welcomed, it was felt that a structure of three unitary authorities for the County was the best model as a single or two unitary authorities would be too large in scale resulting in democratic deficit and loss of local decision-making. Although none of the various

unitary options should be discarded at present, 3c was the preferred proposal whilst 3g was recognised as having some merit.

2. A councillor was of the view that a group of local authorities was able to submit a restructuring proposal to the Government and therefore a unanimous decision across Surrey would not be required to support a unitary bid from borough / district councils.
3. The financial status of neighbouring authorities in Surrey should be taken into account as part of any unitary authority proposal.
4. Although public consultation would form a valuable part of unitary authority proposals and options, it was suggested that councillors should also play their role as elected community representatives in this regard and that public engagement should feature clear explanatory material.
5. Collaboration with Waverley was welcomed as a means to deliver savings through economies of scale and reduced duplication and to support the future case for a multi-unitary option. Although there were similarities between this Council and Waverley, there would be risks associated with merging two local authorities, such as a divergence of priorities, aims and manifestos, which would require careful negotiation including contract clauses and dispute resolution. Whilst Option A, service by service business cases, offered a gradual approach to merging to minimise further disruption following the implementation of the Future Guildford transformation programme, it would be time consuming to progress and achieve savings. Although Option B, single officer team, would realise greater savings, it would require careful management to achieve an equal balance between the two authorities. The engagement of the Local Government Association (LGA) to support the work with Waverley and develop an options appraisal for further consideration by both councils was supported.
6. Although past discussions with Waverley in respect of collaboration had not come to fruition, it was felt that there were currently strong financial and governance drivers to pursue such an initiative and indications that Waverley was committed to do so.
7. A collaboration with Waverley would seek to ensure adherence to shared values that sought to deliver excellent services designed to meet residents' needs.
8. Collaboration discussions with Woking Borough Council had not progressed as that authority was currently experiencing changes in both political and officer leadership resulting in perceived uncertainties regarding its future direction.
9. Other councils which had collaborated could be approached to ascertain the success and financial savings achieved as a result.
10. In the event of collaboration with another borough(s), it was suggested that consideration should be given to establishing a regional planning regime in respect of Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty to provide a holistic approach. This could involve merging Local Plans.
11. As some areas of collaboration would be more straightforward to achieve than others, the support of the LGA to assist with addressing the more complex aspects was welcomed. Cross collaboration in areas such as procurement and economic development would be beneficial whilst tackling climate change should remain as a county wide initiative. Compatibility of ICT systems utilised by collaborating councils was an important factor and an associated audit was being undertaken to inform this.

The Chairman summarised the discussion and identified the following recommendations of the Board for submission to the Executive:

1. In the event of a local government reorganisation in Surrey, a model of three unitary authorities for the County be pursued.
2. Collaboration with Waverley is welcomed and the assistance of the LGA be sought to explore the details, concerns and potential financial savings.
3. The option of including Woking Borough Council in a collaborative partnership in the future be retained.