

COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the Council of the Bolsover District Council held in the Council Chamber, The Arc, Clowne on Wednesday, 19 March 2025 at 10:00 hours.

PRESENT:-

Members:-

Councillor Duncan Haywood in the Chair

Councillors Rita Turner (Vice-Chair), David Bennett, Mary Dooley, Will Fletcher, Louise Fox, Steve Fritchley, Justin Gilbody, Donna Hales, Tom Munro, Rob Hiney-Saunders, Cathy Jeffery, Chris Kane, Tom Kirkham, Duncan McGregor, Clive Moesby, Jeanne Raspin, Sally Renshaw, Phil Smith, Janet Tait, Ashley Taylor, Catherine Tite, Vicky Waplington, Deborah Watson, Jen Wilson, Carol Wood and Jane Yates.

Officers:- Karen Hanson (Chief Executive), Steve Brunt (Strategic Director of Services), Theresa Fletcher (Director of Finance & Section 151 Officer), Jim Fieldsend (Director of Governance and Legal Services & Monitoring Officer), Pam Brown (Director of Executive and Corporate Services), Angelika Kaufhold (Governance and Civic Manager) and Matthew Kerry (Governance and Civic Officer).

CL93-24/25 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Anne Clarke, Rowan Clarke, Amanda Davis, Sandra Peake, John Ritchie and Emma Stevenson.

CL94-24/25 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations made at the meeting.

CL95-24/25 INTERIM PROPOSALS FOR UNITARY LOCAL GOVERNMENT IN DERBYSHIRE

Council considered a report of the Leader and presentation by the Chief Executive relating to the interim proposals for Unitary Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) in Derbyshire.

The Leader, Councillor Jane Yates advised Council that she and the Chief Executive had been attending the various meetings relating to LGR and introduced the interim proposals as detailed in the report.

The Chief Executive made a presentation and introduced the report and summarised the key points as follows:

- Since the last meeting of Council on 5th March 2025 work had taken place with the Leaders and Chief Executives of Derbyshire's Borough, District Councils and Derby City Council with the support of KPMG to review the various options for the

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establishment of unitary authorities in Derbyshire. There was consensus in the group that the submission made by Derbyshire County Council for a whole Derbyshire Unitary authority based on existing boundaries with Derby City Council remaining in its current form, effectively a doughnut council was not feasible. Derbyshire County Council had been invited several times to participate in the discussions but had not attended.

- The proposals would be considered at meetings for the boroughs and districts during this week (excepting North East Derbyshire District Council which had delegated authority to the Leader and cabinet to agree the submission). Derby City Council had not reached a decision and had requested additional time from Government to consider their options.
- The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) had made it clear that interim proposals would not be binding due to any political changes that might arise following the county council elections.
- At the recent DCN Conference, Jim McMahon OBE MP, Minister of State (MHCLG) had reported that positive conversations were taking place between councils and that there had to be balance between pace and deliverability. The Strategic Authorities would not become Super County Councils as the new unitary authorities would be the delivery body for local services. The new unitary councils had to be sustainable and be committed to neighbourhood governance.
- Appendix 3 to the report included the long list of options that had been considered. Appendix 2 was the proposed submission which included the two options namely North Derbyshire and South Derbyshire. It was confirmed that the proposals addressed the Government's criteria namely striking the right balance between maintaining local identity, supporting local needs and harnessing efficiencies and scale of the two larger unitary councils.
- It was confirmed that a thorough, robust and inclusive engagement programme that gathered perspectives from a broad range of stakeholders would be held to understand their requirements and views before a final option for Derbyshire was considered and submitted in November 2025.
- All the councils in Nottingham and Nottinghamshire were also working together to submit a proposal covering 3 options namely:
 - A new unitary combining Nottingham, Broxtowe and Gedling with a second new unitary covering the rest of Nottinghamshire.
 - A new unitary combining Nottingham, Broxtowe and Rushcliffe with a second new unitary covering the rest of Nottinghamshire.
 - Nottingham City to remain as a unitary authority with a single new unitary authority covering the remaining Nottinghamshire area.

During discussion the following comments were made and additional information was provided in response to questions:

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- Councillor Will Fletcher expressed his appreciation and thanks for the hard work of the Leader, Chief Executive, officers and all those involved in developing proposals on such tight timescales. The aim was to reduce duplication, costs, maximise efficiency and savings. The proposal from Derbyshire County Council would create savings of up to £126m as compared to £93m over five years for the two unitary authorities. Bearing this in mind and that we had to achieve the best level of savings to reinvest into services for our residents he would not be supporting the recommended proposal.
- In response to questions from Councillor Tom Munro the Chief Executive confirmed that the population figures for both options depended on which unitary Amber Valley Borough Council aligned with. In option 1 – the Northern Derbyshire population would be between 456k to 584k and option 2 – Southern Derbyshire between 494k to 622k. The aim was for populations of around 500k to ensure the new unitary councils would be financially sustainable. The existing Boroughs, Districts, Derby City Council and Derbyshire County Council would be abolished and the two new unitary authorities established with all existing services being transferred into them. A shadow authority could be formed from 2027 with a vesting date of April 2028 for the new unitary authorities. Government had made it clear that the transition of services had to be safeguarded with no gaps in service delivery especially for adult, education and social care. There was already a lot of experience and knowledge available to us from other large authorities which had already been through similar transition.
- Councillor Deborah Watson commented that this would result in the lowest level of local representation in Europe and queried whether the savings would result in reduced council tax and whether there was anything that could be done to safeguard the funding specifically for Bolsover.
- Councillor Steve Fritchley commented that it was a question between economy and democracy and that the County Council and cities couldn't manage on their existing funding.
- Councillor Clive Moesby reminded members that they had a duty to continue to deliver services to residents and reserves were generally ring-fenced to specific purposes. Government had already sought confirmation of the reserves held by different councils.
- Councillor Tom Kirkham asked whether assets important to local communities for example green spaces could be transferred to parish and town councils before the transfer of services to a unitary authority. In response the Chief Executive confirmed that Government expected parish and town councils to be the link between unitary authorities and residents and that any transfer of assets prior to transfer of services would be a council decision.
- Councillor Fritchley commented that the council's level of debt related to when it bought out the housing stock and was predominantly from the Housing Revenue Account. The council's assets were tremendous and could be transferred as had previously been done. The transfer of assets should be considered for the benefit of local residents and not left potentially to support level of debt coming from other authorities.

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- Councillor Carol Wood commented that some councils would be bringing significant levels of debt most likely not underpinned with assets to a new unitary authority. She questioned whether the best option would be for Amber Valley Borough Council to transfer to a new authority where its budget deficit would have less of an impact.

The Chief Executive concluded that discussions would be ongoing with the partner councils and that LGR could be a standing item on the agenda for Council meetings to provide regular updates and progress on the proposals.

Councillors had requested a recorded vote to be taken under Council Procedure Rule 14.4.

Moved by Councillor Jane Yates and seconded by Councillor Rob Hiney-Saunders
RESOLVED

(1) that approval be given to submit the interim proposals for local government reorganisation in Derbyshire as detailed in Appendix 2 to the report by the deadline of 21st March 2025;

(2) that the Chief Executive be authorised, in consultation with the Leader of the Council, to make any minor technical adjustments to the interim proposals that may be required prior to the deadline for submission;

(3) that the Chief Executive be authorised, in consultation with the Leader of the Council, to continue to participate in discussions with authorities across Derbyshire and Derby City Council to develop full detailed proposals for local government reorganisation in Derbyshire, in advance of the deadline of 28th November 2025, which will be the subject of a further report to Council;

(4) that it be noted that it was intended by Derbyshire's eight District and Borough Councils and Derby City Council to consult with residents and other stakeholders to inform the development of a full proposal for local government reorganisation in Derbyshire and Derby City.

For the motion (26)

Councillors David Bennett, Mary Dooley, Louise Fox, Steve Fritchley, Justin Gilbody, Donna Hales, Duncan Haywood, Robert Hiney-Saunders, Cathy Jeffery, Chris Kane, Tom Kirkham, Duncan McGregor, Clive Moesby, Tom Munro, Jeanne Rospin, Sally Renshaw, Phil Smith, Janet Tait, Ashley Taylor, Catherine Tite, Rita Turner, Vicki Waplington, Deborah Watson, Jen Wilson, Carol Wood and Jane Yates.

Against the motion (1)

Councillor Will Fletcher

CL96-24/25 CHAIRMAN'S CLOSING REMARKS

The Chair thanked people for their attendance and closed the meeting.

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The meeting concluded at 10:40 hours.