

17 February 2022

Report of the Leader of the Council**Establishment of the Staffordshire Leaders Board****Exempt Information**

None

Purpose

To enable Cabinet to consider joining the proposed Staffordshire Leaders Board. The Council along with County Council and the other 7 District and Borough Councils have been meeting to formalise a new Leaders Board to facilitate closer and stronger two tier working and to position this group to enter into discussion with Government for a formal "County Deal".

Recommendations

1. To agree participation in the Staffordshire Leaders Board based on the terms of reference/Constitution attached to this report
2. To appoint the Leader of the Council as the Councils representative on this board, with the Deputy Leader as the substitute member.

Executive Summary

At a meeting of the Leaders and Chief Executives of the County, District and Borough Councils in Staffordshire on the 2 December 2021 the Leaders discussed the strength of the relationship between the nine local authorities and the joint working that was already taking place.

The meeting also considered the opportunities that existed to take this work forward by further joint working, and how this might be further enhanced with the support of a devolution deal ("County Deal") from Government providing additional powers and funding.

The Leaders identified a range of areas where further joint working might be explored in 2022 including:

- a. Climate Change – bringing together strategies, skills and expertise for reaching Net Zero.
- b. Waste – strengthening the waste partnership, exploring greater collaboration on waste collection, and improve recycling.
- c. Economy – continuing to create the right conditions for economic growth, and the creation of more, better-paid jobs and opportunities for the people of Staffordshire.
- d. Improving Public Services – Making it as simple and easy for the people of Staffordshire to interact and engage with local public services.
- e. Health Inequalities –In support of the establishment of the Integrated Care System and the Health and Wellbeing Board, there is an opportunity for local government partners in Staffordshire to work better, together to tackle many issues that have a significant impact on health, such as housing, parks and open spaces, leisure centres and employment.

The Leaders also considered how a County Deal might support joint working within

Staffordshire. It was felt that a County Deal should not be seen as a one-off bid, but the start of a new, ongoing dialogue with central government, that builds on Staffordshire's strengths, and addresses national challenges at a local level. A County Deal will accelerate delivery of the local authorities' ambitious programmes, improve public services, deliver on the Levelling Up agenda, and produce excellent returns for both the people of Staffordshire and the UK. Initially, the Leaders propose to focus on the following priorities:

- a. Climate Change – To place Staffordshire as a leading location for the green economy.
- b. Social Care – To address recruitment pressures in care, ease the pressure on the NHS, and develop innovative solutions that allow Staffordshire people to stay independent, healthy and living at home, for as long as possible.
- c. Logistics – To support the Logistics sector to be innovative, cleaner, greener and higher value.

To allow Staffordshire to achieve the above, a full range of additional powers and funding would be required from Government. In exchange for these powers Staffordshire would deliver significant benefits for the people of Staffordshire and beyond, making a significant contribution to the Levelling Up agenda. This would include a significant increase in the number of local green economy jobs, a carbon neutral Staffordshire, and transformed logistics and social care sectors,

In order to drive this agenda forward the Leaders recognised that the existing informal networking arrangements needed to be put on a more formal footing. They decided that a Joint Committee would provide them with a vehicle that has the status and authority to speak to Government on behalf of the nine authorities, and that has the ability to make decisions itself to drive the existing joint working forward.

The Leaders therefore decided to take back a proposal to each of their respective Cabinets proposing that their existing informal meetings are formalised as an Executive Joint Committee to be called the Staffordshire Leaders Board. The remit of the Leaders Board will be:

- a. To lead and oversee the development of a county devolution deal for Staffordshire with HM Government.
- b. To lead and oversee the alignment of relevant local authority action on Climate Change, Waste and Sustainability.
- c. To lead and oversee the alignment of relevant local authority plans for Enterprise and Government Funding and Investment streams.
- d. To lead and oversee the alignment of local authority interaction with the Health sector in Staffordshire.
- e. To lead and oversee the alignment of relevant local authority plans for future Infrastructure.
- f. To lead and oversee the alignment of relevant local authority plans in relation to Housing and Homelessness.
- g. To initiate, lead and oversee Staffordshire-wide joint initiatives to enhance local government efficiency and effectiveness.
- h. To act as a local public sector decision-making body for strategic economic growth.
- i. To act as a conduit to other sub-regional and regional bodies such as the Local Enterprise Partnerships and the Midlands Engine.
- j. Where appropriate, to agree shared priorities and bids for funding to existing and new funding sources such as Local Growth Funds and the Shared Prosperity Fund.
- k. To monitor and evaluate projects and programmes of activity commissioned directly by the Committee.
- l. To communicate and, where unanimously agreed, to align activity across Staffordshire on a range of other key public priorities that affect citizens.

m. To prioritise and make decisions on the use of the funding that the Committee may influence or control.

The Leaders Board will consist of the Leader from each of the nine local authorities and will operate on the basis of one member, one vote.

Each of the constituent authorities own scrutiny will undertake scrutiny arrangements.

The arrangements make provision for the Board to admit Stoke-on-Trent City Council to its membership as an equal member in the future.

The full Terms of Reference/Constitution proposed for the Leaders Board are attached as Appendix 1.

Options Considered

None

Resource Implications

There are no immediate and no significant financial implications arising from the establishment of the Leaders Board in itself. It is intended that it will derive its support from its constituent members. As and when individual projects are commissioned the board will consider the resource requirements necessary to deliver those projects.

The administrative costs of supporting the committee are still to be determined but are not likely to be significant – these will be met equally by the constituent authorities and can be met from within existing budgets.

Legal/Risk Implications Background

The Joint Committee will act as a Joint Committee under Section 9EB of the Local Government Act 2000 and pursuant to Regulation 11 of the Local Authorities (Arrangement for the Discharge of Functions) (England) Regulations 2012.

Equalities Implications

None directly arising from this report

Environment and Sustainability Implications (including climate change)

Climate change and sustainability are noted as a key priority for the Leaders board.

Background Information

None

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List of Background Papers

Nil

Appendices

Appendix 1 terms of reference

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