

RECOMMENDATIONS TO CABINET ON 6 OCTOBER 2015 FROM THE RESOURCES AND PERFORMANCE PANEL HELD ON 29 SEPTEMBER 2015

RP58 CABINET REPORT: DEVOLUTION

Prior to presenting the Cabinet Report, the Chief Executive gave a Powerpoint Presentation which had been given at a recent East of England LGA meeting by Andrew Campbell, Associate Director, LGA.

The Chief Executive explained that the Cabinet Report set out Norfolk's ambition for and approach to the Government's Devolution proposals contained in the 'Cities and Local Government Bill currently before Parliament.

The Panel noted that the approach which had been taken to date in Norfolk was set out in the letter 'Devolution – Letter of Intent' and associated paper 'The Norfolk Offer' (Appendix 1) which had been submitted by all of Norfolk's Council Leaders and the Chairman of the New Anglia Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP).

The Chief Executive advised that Norfolk Leaders were responding to an invitation for expressions of interest to be submitted to Government by 4 September 2015. The Leaders had expressed a clear view that devolution proposals should, if at all possible, be based on the New Anglia LEP geography, i.e. for both Norfolk and Suffolk.

Members were informed that the initial submissions for both Norfolk and Suffolk had been well received in Government and civil servants had made it clear that going forward the two proposals would be greatly strengthened if they could be combined into a single 'devolution deal.'

The Panel's attention was drawn to the following sections of the report:

- Background.
- Democracy and Governance.
- Functions.
- Negotiating the Norfolk and Suffolk (New Anglia) Devolution Deal.
- Options Considered.
- Policy Implications.
- Financial and Risk Implications.

The Chief Executive provided a verbal update outlining the amended proposal since the publication of the Cabinet Report and undertook to circulate a copy to Members.

The Panel was advised that a Special Council Meeting would be convened in November prior to the Comprehensive Review Assessment announcement on 25 November 2015. It was noted that all county and district councils would be holding a Special Council Meeting.

In response to questions from Councillor Chenery on the proposal for improved train services to London and the rail franchise, the Chief Executive explained that the Norfolk approach would help in influencing the Great Anglian franchise as well as pressing hard for capital improvements in Norfolk and Suffolk. He added that the Leader and himself had attended a recent meeting with the Cambridgeshire/Peterborough LEP and it had been agreed that a Cross Border Strategy would be drafted which would set out infrastructure arrangements and as well as proposals for improved road/transport links to the A47/A14 and the King's Lynn to King's Cross Rail Service.

Following questions from Councillor Devereux regarding health and social care and the profound impact on the NHS, the Chief Executive explained that the health and social care are best reached via a joint commitment to try to integrate the service and involve NHS England to develop a Business Plan to ensure the service was delivered.

Councillor Mrs Mellish expressed concern that because there were 15 other councils involved with the proposal agreement would not be reached at the same time and commented that the Borough Council would give more than it received. In response, the Chief Executive explained that the deal had to work with both parties and there would be no sign up to the proposal unless total agreement had been reached. The Chief Executive informed Members that he had recently attended an East of England LGA meeting with the Borough Council's Corporate Projects Officer. The Borough Council was in the forefront as it had sold 55 houses in Phase 1 of the Housing Project, a contract had been signed for the provision of an additional 600 houses and a separate contract had been signed under a Joint Venture Agreement with Norfolk County Council for the provision of 100+ houses. Other Councils had not progressed as far as the Borough Council in the housing market.

In conclusion, the Chief Executive explained that if the Borough Council was successful in obtaining its share of resource direct in Norfolk and Suffolk then it should welcome the opportunity to allocate the Government money available in a more effective and efficient way in order to benefit the people in Norfolk and Suffolk. The Chief Executive added that the Leader was taking a leading role in Devolution and that all the Service Managers within the Borough Council had been tasked to identify areas where savings and efficiencies could be made.

In response to questions from Councillor Mrs Mellish regarding the Norfolk County Council deficit and the involvement of the Borough Council, the Chief Executive explained that there were ways to assist Norfolk County Council to address their budget deficit and gave examples of health and social care, care and repair, disabled grant facilities, handypersons service, etc. He added that

by jointly working with the County Council and pooling budgets savings could be achieved.

Following questions from Councillor Morrison relating to the current position with the Norfolk Offer, the Chief Executive explained that initial work had been undertaken by Norfolk alone. In parallel, Suffolk had also worked on an offer alone. He advised that this had now been superseded as outlined above and undertook to circulate the amended proposal to Members.

Councillor Collop commented that the Borough Council were closer to Cambridgeshire and asked if their slower development would affect the Borough Council. In response, the Chief Executive explained that there would be no impact on the Borough Council.

RESOLVED: That the Panel support the recommendations to Cabinet as follows:

- 1) Note and endorse the submission of the Norfolk Letter of Intent.
- 2) Endorse the proposal to progress a joint Norfolk and Suffolk devolution deal.
- 3) Comment upon and support the proposed functions for inclusion in the devolution negotiations as outlined in Section 3 of the report.
- 4) To note that it will be a requirement that the Borough Council joins and participates full in a 'Combined Authority' for Norfolk and Suffolk in the event that an attractive devolution agreement is reached.
- 5) Authorise the Leader to pursue negotiations on behalf of the Borough Council to help to secure a devolution deal for Norfolk and Suffolk with Government.
- 6) That a further report be brought forward on the matter for a decision to be taken by Council.