
**EXCERPT FROM THE MINUTES OF THE
EXECUTIVE
HELD ON 4 AUGUST 2003**

EX.182/03 REGIONAL GOVERNMENT UPDATE (Non-Key Decision)

Portfolio Leader

Subject Matter

To consider a report from the Town Clerk and Chief Executive (CE.13/03) setting out the current position on Regional Government and seeking clarification of the process for the submission of a first stage response to the Boundary Committee.

The Boundary Committee was seeking submissions from affected Councils with proposals to replace existing two tier Authorities with Unitary Authorities.

The Executive, on 7 July 2003, noted that a multi-disciplinary Officer Group would be established to prepare the Council's submission to the Boundary Committee and that meetings at Officer and Member level would be required with other Authorities in Cumbria over the coming months to exchange statistical information and, where possible, agree common proposals to be put forward to the Boundary Committee.

The Executive had also agreed to the request from the Cumbria Branch of the Local Government Association to enter into a concordat to ensure the continuation of joint working, providing all other Cumbrian Local Authorities were also in agreement.

It had been further agreed that the Executive would submit responses as required to the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister and Boundary Committee supporting the Council's policy on Unitary Local Government.

To support the Council's submission, the Council agreed to the carry forward of £30,000 to provide funding, part of which would permit a research study by the University of Northumbria (CRED) into the Council's stated preferred option and to establish information if required to support any future option(s).

Details of the City Council's agreed position on Regional Government were submitted.

The Review Team have asked that Local Authorities collaborate wherever possible when making their submissions and, if possible, a single submission from all Districts and the County should be made and they would prefer submissions which deal with the whole County.

The submission would need to address how a Unitary Authority will deal with the full range of Local Authority services, including education and personal social services in broad terms and discussions would be required with partners and the County Council to facilitate this. Similarly, the County Council may require information from District Councils to support their preferred option. There is no doubt that the Council's submission must address delivery issues across the full range of Local Authority services and to show the potential for improving service innovation.

The Council was undertaking its own research through CRED which would make an assessment of the Council's stated preferred option for Unitary status against the Boundary Committee's Guidance. In doing so, it would need to compare and contrast this model with other options.

A copy of the current brief for CRED was submitted. CRED had commenced initial consultations with stakeholders, including MP's and political Group Leaders. The outcome would be reported back to the Executive for inclusion in the Council's submission in due course. A detailed project plan would be developed by an Executive Director to ensure that all the necessary steps to prepare the submission are co-ordinated. The Executive was also asked to indicate whether it wishes the bid to be from Carlisle City Council or, given the nature of the preferred model, a joint bid from Carlisle and Eden Councils or other Councils.

The Council's submission would be made available for public examination and consultation will take place through CRED with stakeholders, Local Strategic Partnership, Chamber of Commerce, City Vision Group and Parish and Town Councils.

A senior Commissioner or Deputy Commissioner and Members of the Review Team would be attending an informal meeting of the Council on 7 August 2003 to give Members further details of the process and requirements.

The CRED report, along with the Council's draft submission, would be submitted to a special meeting of the Executive and a special combined meeting of the four Overview and Scrutiny Committees was being arranged as part of the process. A special meeting of the full Council was scheduled for 4 September 2003 to endorse the submission.

Summary of options rejected

None

DECISION

1. That the progress with respect to the submission of a response to the Boundary Committee on Regional Government by the deadline of 8 September 2003 be noted.
2. That the brief given to the University of Northumbria (CRED) as detailed at Appendix 3 to Report CE.13/03 be noted.

3. That it is noted that an informal meeting of the Council is to be held on 7 August 2003 to allow senior representatives from the Boundary Committee to inform Members of the process.

4. That it is noted that the CRED report, along with the draft submission, will be presented to a special meeting of the Executive and a combined meeting of the four Overview and Scrutiny Committees for consideration.

5. That the submission be prepared on a joint basis with Eden District Council as both Councils had the same policy on the future structure of local government in Cumbria. It was noted that a meeting of all six District Councils in Cumbria was to be held on 7 August 2003 and the outcome of that meeting may provide scope for a joint submission to be made by all six District Councils in Cumbria to the Boundary Committee.

6. That the arrangements made for a special meeting of the City Council on 4 September 2003 to endorse the final submission be noted.

Reasons for Decision

The Executive was updated on the preparation of a submission to the Boundary Committee on Regional Government and agreed the necessary arrangements for consultation and consideration of a final submission by the City Council by the deadline date.



REPORT TO EXECUTIVE

PORTFOLIO AREA: LEADER

Date of Meeting: 4th August 2003

Public Yes

Key Decision: No

Recorded in Forward Plan: No

Inside Policy Framework Yes

Title: REGIONAL GOVERNMENT UPDATE
Report of: TOWN CLERK AND CHIEF EXECUTIVE
Report reference: CE 13 03

Summary

This report sets out the progress with respect to Regional Government and seeks the clarification of the process for the submission of a first stage response to the Boundary Committee.

Recommendations

The Executive is recommended to:

- I. Note the progress with respect to the submission of a response to the Boundary Committee on Regional Government by the deadline of 8th September 2003.
- II. Note the brief to CRED (Appendix 3).
- III. Note that a Special Informal Meeting of the Council is to be held on 7th August to allow senior representatives from the Boundary Committee to inform Members of the process.
- IV. Note that the CRED report along with the draft submission will be presented to a future meeting of the Executive and to request comments from Overview and Scrutiny Committees on the submission.
- V. Indicate whether the submission should be prepared on a joint basis with Eden District Council or other Councils as appropriate.

VI. Request that a Special Meeting of the Council be held prior to the 8th September to endorse the submission.

Contact Officer: Peter Stybelski

Ext: 7001

Lesley Dixon

Ext: 7016

1. BACKGROUND INFORMATION AND OPTIONS

At the last meeting of the Executive on 7th July 2003 consideration was given to a report from the Head of Legal and Democratic Services (LDS.41/03) which informed Members that the Boundary Committee for England has been directed to carry out reviews of the structure of Local Authorities in the North West, North East and the Yorkshire and the Humber in advance of proposed referenda on the establishment of regional assemblies in those regions.

The reviews commenced on 17th June 2003 and initial proposals to replace existing two - tier Authorities with Unitary Authorities in affected areas are required to be submitted to the Boundary Committee by 8th September 2003. The report outlined the review process and included a note of a presentation given by the Boundary Committee to relevant authorities in Widnes on 20 June 2003 and also a summary of Guidance issued by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister and the Boundary Committee on the conduct of the reviews.

1.1 Current Position

The full Council has considered the question of Regional Government at its meetings on 29th August 2002, 3rd December 2002 and 4th March 2003. Details of the Councils resolved position are set out in Appendix 1.

At its last meeting of the Executive on 7th July 03 the Executive noted that a multi-disciplinary Officer Group would be established to prepare the Council's submission to the Boundary Committee and that meetings at Officer and Member level would be required with other authorities in Cumbria over the coming months to exchange statistical information and, where possible, agree common proposals to be put forward to the Boundary Committee.

The Executive also agreed to the request from the Cumbria Branch of the LGA to enter into a concordat to ensure the continuation of joint working providing all other Cumbrian local authorities are also in agreement.

It was further agreed that the Executive will submit responses as required to the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister and Boundary Committee supporting the Council's policy on Unitary Local Government.

To support the Council's submission the Council has agreed the carry forward of £30,000 to provide funding, part of which will, permit a research study by the University of Northumbria (CRED) into the Council's stated preferred option and to establish information if required to support any future option (s).

1.2 The work of the Boundary Committee

A summary of the guidance prepared by the Boundary Committee is set out in Appendix 2 and a copy of the full version has been available for Members in Group Offices.

The Director of the Boundary Committee for England, part of the Electoral Commission, and the Review Team have now visited Carlisle to initiate the detailed process. The Committee is already undertaking a MORI poll across all districts in regions affected to establish communities views and will also undertake focus groups in each district.

The timetable is tight and is summarised as follows:

Stage One

The Council must make its formal submission by the 8th September 2003 and pre - submission material including a financial statement is required by the end of July 2003 (Council information, maps, performance information e.t.c.)

Stage Two

The Boundary Committee consider proposals and decide the options to be put forward to the public for consultation by the 1st December.

Stage Three

Draft proposals are published by the Committee on the 2nd December with a request for the views of local authorities and the public. Further public opinion research by MORI on the options put forward by the Committee. All representations on the draft proposals should be made by the 23rd February 2003.

Stage Four

The Boundary Committee will consider the responses and draw up final recommendations for the Deputy Prime Minister by 25th May 2004.

The Review Team have asked that local authorities collaborate wherever possible when making their submissions and if possible a single submission from all district/county should be made and they would prefer submissions which deal with the whole county.

The submission will need to address how a Unitary Authority will deal with the full range of local authority services including education and personal social services in broad terms and discussions will be required with partners and the county council to facilitate this. Similarly the county council may require information from district councils to support their preferred option. There is no doubt that the Councils submission must address delivery issues across the full range of local authority services and to show the potential for improving service innovation.

1.3 The Council's Preparations

As noted the Council is undertaking its own research through CRED which makes an assessment of the Council's stated preferred option for unitary status against the Boundary Committee's Guidance. In doing so it will need to compare and contrast this model with other options.

A copy of the current brief for CRED is attached as Appendix 3. CRED has commenced initial consultation and this will include discussions with stakeholders, including MP's and political group leaders. It is proposed that the work when complete will be reported back to the Executive for inclusion in the Councils submission in due course. A detailed project plan will be developed by an Executive Director to ensure that all the necessary steps to prepare the submission are co-ordinated. The Executive is also asked to indicate whether it wishes the bid to be from Carlisle City Council or given the nature of the preferred model a joint bid from Carlisle and Eden Councils or other Councils.

The Councils submission will be made available for public examination and consultation will take place through CRED with stakeholders, LSP, Chamber of Commerce, City Vision Group and Parish and Town Councils.

A senior Commissioner or Deputy Commissioner and Members of the Review Team have offered to attend an informal meeting of the Council (open to Press and Public) on the 7th August 2003 to give Members further details of the process and requirements.

It is anticipated that the CRED report will be available along with the Council's draft submission to a future meeting of the Executive and a special combined meeting of the three Overview and Scrutiny Committees would be very appropriate as part of the process. The Executive may wish to recommend a special meeting of the full Council in late August/ early September to endorse the submission.

2. CONSULTATION

- 2.1 Consultation to Date - please refer to previous reports.
- 2.2 Consultation is proposed with stakeholders, partners and Parish Councils

3. RECOMMENDATIONS

The Executive is recommended to:

- I. Note the progress with respect to the submission of a response to the Boundary Committee on Regional Government by the deadline of 8th September 2003.
- II. Note the brief to CRED (Appendix 3).
- III. Note that a Special Informal Meeting of the Council is to be held on 7th August to allow senior representatives from the Boundary Committee to inform Members of the process.
- IV. Note that the CRED report along with the draft submission will be presented to a future meeting of the Executive and to request comments from Overview and Scrutiny Committees on the submission.
- V. Indicate whether the submission should be prepared on a joint basis with Eden District Council or other Councils as appropriate.
- VI. Request that a Special Meeting of the Council be held prior to the 8th September to endorse the submission.

4. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

To allow the Executive and Council to prepare a submission to the Boundary Committee by the required deadline of 8th September.

5. IMPLICATIONS

The introduction of directly elected Regional Government and unitary structure across Cumbria will have a fundamental impact across Carlisle City Council. It is too early at this stage to assess the staffing and financial implications as these will be determined to large degree by the preferred model and the functions of the successor authority

Appendix 1 - Current Policy Position

The Council at its meeting on 29th August 2002 pursuant to Minute EX 224/02 and Minute EX 239/02 in response to the White Paper 'Your Region Your Choice, Revitalising English Regions' resolved the following:

1. The Council accepts the inevitability of elected Regional Government and strongly supports the proposition that the size of the Assembly should be set to ensure fair representation to all areas.
2. Carlisle City Council supports the principle of unitary Local Government and proposes that this should be based upon the successful partnership working being developed under the Carlisle and Eden Local Strategic Partnership and the Allerdale and Copeland Local Strategic Partnership together with the merger of South Lakeland District Council and Barrow Borough Council administrative and local strategic partnership areas.
3. The City Council supports the involvement of key stakeholders in regional affairs and this involvement should be determined locally however, it firmly believes that only democratically elected representatives should be full Members of the Regional Assembly.
4. The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, Government Office North West and the North West Regional Assembly be informed of the Council's views and that the City council asks the Executive to lobby in support of the Council's stated position.

This resolution was developed by the Council at its meeting on 3rd December 2002 following a Notice of Motion C.201/02 as follows:

The Council notes the publication by the Government of the White Paper on the regions 'Your Region Your Choice'. However, this Council remains to be convinced that the proposals within the White Paper will deliver the vision of devolved decision making.

The Council also regretted that the Government had proposed a form of Regional Government that would have far fewer powers than the Welsh Assembly and that some of the powers would be drawn from Local Government.

The Council further regretted that the Assembly would not be given democratic control over the "quangos" in the region.

The Council noted the proposals fail to meet all six key tests proposed by the Local Government Association for regional democracy to become a reality. The Council believed that cross party support needed for the proposals to succeed will not be forthcoming without significant amendment to the White Paper. The Council resolved, following the

Queen's Speech, to add its previous response to the Government's consultation on the White Paper in the terms expressed above.

Further to the above the Council at its meeting on 4th March 2003 agreed that the Council should submit the following views to the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister:

1. The "Soundings Exercise"

Whilst Carlisle City Council accepts the inevitability of Regional Government it has concerns about the level of accountability which can be achieved for the people of Cumbria. It has already made the ODPM aware of this view. However, it considers that the best way of deciding on the issue is to hold a referendum and allow people within the North West to decide for themselves. For the referendum to be effective then people need to fully understand what they are being asked to consider, this means providing full and objective information on the proposals. Carlisle City Council believes this issue should be clarified.

2. Timetable

If the North West Region is to be included in the first tranche Carlisle City Council considers it important that Authorities are given sufficient time to consider properly all the options and to provide timely and objective information for the Citizens of Carlisle before a referendum takes place.

3. Raising Public Awareness

There is very little in the guidance, which looks at the issue of Public Awareness. If people are being asked to vote in a referendum then they need to be aware of all the issues and implications of a proposed Regional Assembly and Local Government Review. Carlisle City Council requests that there is enough time to do this properly.

The Boundary committee for England

June 2003

A Summary

The document has five main sections (a summary, the statutory framework, the Boundary Committee's approach, evidence and argumentation and finally the process and timetable for the conduct of reviews) and three appendices looking at preliminary information, a financial return proforma and a map of the regions and two tier areas under review.

Each of the following sections provides a short summary of the main points from the guidance and follows the chapter headings in the guidance document.

Summary

The Boundary Committee's task is to:

"(...) recommend to the Secretary of State patterns of wholly unitary local government structure (...)". In doing so:

- The Committee will carry out a four-stage review of the two tier authorities affected;
- Must recommend at least two options for structural change for each two-tier county area in the region;
- These patterns will be the subject of a referendum by electors in the two tier areas;
- The Committee will be able to review and make recommendations for changes to the boundaries of existing single-tier authorities adjoining two-tier areas;
- The Committee can't review the boundaries of regions as part of these local government reviews.

The guidance sets out the information needed from local authorities and other key stakeholders.

It outlines the evidence it will wish to consider in formulating the Committees recommendations.

In particular the proposals will need to address the implications of any proposed structures:

- on local authority performance;
- the effective delivery of services; and
- the ability of local authorities to fulfil their leadership role and community engagement duties.

For more detail on these issues see also the ODPM's Guidance to the Committee. We have a copy, but it is also available at www.odpm.gov.uk .

1. Introduction

The purpose of the guidance is to:

1. to summarise the approach to the review; and
2. to set out and summarise the evidence sought by the Committee from local authorities.

The introduction restates that the committee must recommend at least two options for structural change. "No change" is not an option. In the view of the Boundary Committee local authorities and other interested parties should work together to produce jointly agreed, evidence based proposals for their area.

"Proposals that are based on consensus and supported locally are likely to carry particular weight with the Committee".

The Committee recognise the resource intensive nature of the work involved and stress the need for good planning. Local authorities are advised that the level of member and officer input in the formulation of proposals will be considerable and shouldn't be underestimated.

2. The Statutory Framework

The Regional Assemblies (Preparations) Act 2003 and The Local Government Act 1992 provide the background to the review. As part of the review the Committee can recommend:

- the abolition of a local authority whose functions had been transferred to another local authority;
- the creation of new local government areas ie. A district or a county;
- alterations to local government areas;
- any joint arrangements which may be required for the exercise of strategic and other functions, particularly if this were to involve the transfer of county functions to districts whether on existing or altered boundaries;
- the exercise of strategic land use planning, mineral and waste planning functions; and
- alterations to the number or coverage of police areas and the membership of police authorities where appropriate.

3. The Boundary Committee's Approach

This chapter begins with the Committee restating that the option for no change is not available.

In formulating their proposals the Committee will need to answer the question:

"(...) which wholly unitary structures are likely to provide the best overall delivery of local services in the existing two tier county areas of the region, assuming the existence of an elected regional assembly?"

The Committee want their proposals to respond and reflect local circumstances and the preferences of local people. They therefore stress the importance of consensus and partnership working between authorities.

"We consider that a positive and proactive approach (...) on the part of local authorities and other interested parties is far more likely to produce proposals that achieve widespread support".

The guidance suggest that lead officers are nominated who can work closely with the Committee and between authorities to ensure effective cross-cutting and a consensual approach.

The Committee will need to see well argued proposals supported by detailed reasons and evidence. *"The lack of cogent argument and evidence reduces the value of a submission".*

Representations and submissions should address the statutory criteria in s14(8) of the 2003 Act.

Submissions that present a well argued case, address the statutory criteria, achieve a good level of consensus and are backed by evidence are likely to carry more weight.

The role of the Committee

Members of the Committee and staff will be able to advise and guide other key stakeholders as they prepare their submissions.

Briefing sessions will be held in each region (Halton on 20/603?) will be held to explain the process and the information required in the submission.

The briefing sessions will be followed by working meetings between the Committee's staff and local authority officers. The purpose of these will be to:

- discuss work already done;
- how it fits with the Committee's expectations; and
- agree further information and evidence that would assist in making recommendations.

Pre-submission material

This is detailed in Appendix 1. Two sets of the pre-submission material are required for each area, as soon as possible during stage 1 of the review.

Each review authority may submit its own return, alternatively the Committee would welcome a composite document relating to all the authorities under review.

1. Evidence and Argumentation

The recommendations of the Boundary Committee must have regard to the guidance provided by the Secretary of State (www.odpm.gov.uk)

Local government Act 2000 places local authority performance at the heart of the Government's aims for achieving more effective delivery of local services. So in reaching conclusions about new unitary structures the committee will want to assess the impact of management structures, executive and scrutiny functions and community engagement on an authority's performance. They will want to consider available performance data, including CPA findings, BVPIs and peer reviews. All performance related data should be made available, although the Committee are aware that it can only be used as a broad indicator of future performance.

ODPM guidance to the Committee suggests that **quality political management** is one of the significant determinants of high performing councils. The committee are interested to see any objective assessments of this. Based on the evidence they have seen high quality political leadership, good managerial skills and a high level of innovation are common to high performing councils.

Emphasis is also placed on the **community strategy or leadership role**. The Committee will wish to see evidence of the stage reached on the implementation of local strategies, the approach being taken and how the unitary authority proposed would engage the local community while undertaking broader functions. This is particularly important for an authority covering a large geographical area or with many diverse communities. The proposal in this instance would need to look at how it would engage with citizens. It should also address the role of parish and town councils and their role in community engagement. In the case of a new unitary authority based on the amalgamation of existing district, the

proposals would have to include their record on community engagement activities and how the new unitary authority would build on these.

The experience of those shire unitary district authorities might be useful here.

The Committee will also need to consider the relationship between new unitary authorities and the agencies and bodies in the area including the business, voluntary and community sectors. It should include the extent to which particular patterns of unitary authorities may facilitate more effective working relationships with key partners. The views of these partners and agencies will be particularly relevant. It would be helpful if such views were to be canvassed in the development of proposals.

Performance and local authority size

There has been much debate about this relationship, but in the view of the Committee there is no definitive evidence that smaller performs better or vice versa. Work that has been carried out in this area has highlighted the benefits of both. The Government's stated priority is to improve local authority performance in delivering high quality services regardless of their type, composition and size.

The Committee in considering proposals will need to be persuaded that the proposed unitary authority, as well as reflecting the identities and interests of the local community, would be capable of securing effective and convenient local government. It will therefore expect to see convincing argument as to how the issues of community engagement and economies of scale would be addressed whatever size of authority.

Community identity

A number of factors should be borne in mind here. We will need to consider how community identity is reflected. Some pointers might include work/travel patterns, local partnerships or shopping areas. There will be no need to carry out public opinion research as part of the review process, but related research previously carried out by local authorities would assist. The Committee has already commissioned public opinion research into affective (subjective views of community) and effective (objective evidence that might identify communities ie. geography or travel to work patterns).

Financial model

The ODPM had provided a model for the calculation of the 'cost of being in business'. It doesn't look at the transitional or on-going costs of change, but research on the modelling costs of local government re-organisation is available on the ODPM website (www.odpm.gov.uk).

The model provides a useful starting point for comparing the costs of different options based upon a limited number of well defined costs. In the view of the Committee cost cannot be a determining factor in decisions about unitary status.

As part of the review process local authorities are required to submit the relevant data to the Committee for consideration. Price Waterhouse Coopers are financial consultants for the review and will assist the Committee in the collection and analysis of financial data. The financial return pro-forma is provided at Appendix 2 of the Guidance. This should be signed off by the responsible financial officer and returned to the Committee by the 31st

July 2003. Chief Financial Officers will be invited to a briefing meeting with Committee staff and PWC to discuss the financial component of the review. The Audit Commission will be assisting the Committee in the process.

5. Process and timetable for the conduct of reviews

The reviews will follow a four-stage consultation process:

- Stage 1 – during this stage local authorities are asked to provide the pre-submission material detailed in Appendix 1. This material should also be made available locally and its availability made known to interested parties including local political groups. All individuals and organisations submitting representations during stages 1 and 3 are asked to make them available to the relevant local authorities. The local authorities should place these on deposit for public information.

The Committee encourages local authorities to work together to develop joint proposals for a new unitary structures. For each review area the Committee hopes to receive a single document, which addresses all the realistic options and which is agreed between all the local authorities in the area.

This stage of the review process is not restricted to local authorities. Public opinion research is being commissioned during stage 1, the results of which should be available towards the end or early in stage 2.

- Stage 2 – during this stage the Committee will consider the proposals received during Stage 1. After fully considering the proposals the Committee will prepare and issue a report on its draft recommendations.
- Stage 3 – consultation on the Committee's draft recommendations takes place during this stage. Draft recommendations will be sent to all those who received a copy of the commencement letter, key stakeholders and will be available on the website. Its availability will be publicised in the press and local authorities will be asked to place copies on deposit. It will be available in local libraries and other suitable information points. The Committee intends to produce a summary leaflet for circulation to all homes in the area.

The draft recommendations will cover a range of options. All representations received during Stage 3 will be made available for inspection at the Committee's offices at the end of the Stage 3 consultation. Further public opinion research will take place to assess public views on the draft recommendations.

Stage 4 – all representations made during the Stage 3 will be considered. Final recommendations will be reached and a report submitted to the Secretary of State.

Copies of the final report will be sent to all statutory consultees and those who made representations during Stage 3. Local authorities will be asked to place the final report on deposit for public inspection.

Appendix 3

*Centre for
Regional
Economic
Development*



CARLISLE CAMPUS

REVIEW OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT IN CUMBRIA –

RESEARCH PROPOSAL

ON BEHALF OF CARLISLE CITY COUNCIL

JULY 2003

A. INTRODUCTION

This document outlines a research proposal to be carried out by the Centre for Regional Economic Development, Northumbria University, on behalf of Carlisle City Council.

The research aims to carry out a review of local government in Cumbria in order to inform the response of Carlisle City Council to the current Local Government Review (LGR) being carried out by the Boundary Committee. The review by the Boundary Committee is part of the ongoing development of the regionalisation agenda within England and is a precursor to the forthcoming referenda on regional assemblies that will take place next year.

As the proposed research aims to directly inform Carlisle City Council with regard to their response to the LGR by the Boundary Committee, the criteria adopted by the Boundary Committee in carrying out their review of local government forms the basis of the aims and objectives of this proposal.

Therefore, the overall aim of the research will be to provide an objective assessment of relevant aspects of local government in Cumbria. This will be achieved by:

1. Consideration of Carlisle City Council's preferred option for unitary structures in Cumbria (i.e. the three unitary authority option: Carlisle-Eden; Allerdale-Copeland; Barrow-South Lakeland) for and against a number of potential unitary structures in Cumbria as way of comparators,
2. Gathering of supporting evidence to underpin the arguments, and
3. Production of a report which will outline the various arguments and present the evidence to assist Carlisle City Council in providing their response to the Boundary Committee,

The report will address the question outlined in the *"Guidance and procedural advice for the local government reviews"* as to:

"which wholly unitary structures are likely to provide the best overall delivery of local services in the existing two-tier county areas of the region assuming the existence of an elected regional assembly?"

B. REVIEW OF BOUNDARY COMMITTEE GUIDANCE

As the research is directly influenced by the current review of local government being carried out by the Boundary Committee, this section examines the guidelines in order to draw out the main issues and criteria that should be borne in mind when carrying out a review of local government in Cumbria.

It is anticipated that the review by the Boundary Committee will focus upon a number of criteria that are explicitly stated in the Guidance:

- a. assume that there is an elected assembly for the region
- b. recommend structural change for so much of the area of the region as is comprised of the areas of all of the relevant (i.e. two-tier) local authorities in the region.
- c. have regard to the need to reflect the identities and interests of local communities
- d. have regard to the need to secure effective and convenient local government; and
- e. have regard to the guidance issued by the Secretary of State

(Source: Guidance and procedural advice for the local government reviews, p.7)

Based upon these broad criteria, from the perspective of the submission(s) of the district local authorities in Cumbria, there are two clear criteria that will be considered:

- 1. The need for unitary local authorities to secure effective and convenient local government**
- 2. The need for unitary local authorities to reflect the identities and interests of local communities**

These twin criteria will therefore be the focus of the proposed research. Each of them can be considered in more detail, based upon the information contained in the Guidance:

1. Effective and convenient local government

The Guidance states that there are a number of common factors that seem to be present in most high performing councils. In particular, much discussion is afforded to the issues surrounding political leadership. At various points the Guidance notes that a number of aspects of political leadership will be considered, including:

"taking account of the new styles of political management....we will want to assess the impact that management structures, executive and scrutiny functions and community engagement have on an authority's performance." (Section 4.4, p.11)

"The ODPM Guidance to us suggests that the quality of political management is one of the most significant determinants of high-performing councils...it would appear that high performing

authorities have a number of factors in common, including high quality political leadership, good managerial skills and a high level of innovation.” (Section 4.7, p.11)

It is therefore anticipated that the research will, for each of the proposed unitary models considered, give due attention to the following criteria:

Criteria 1: Political Leadership (including the issues of management structures, executive and scrutiny functions, and community engagement)

Criteria 2: Managerial Skills

Criteria 3: Level of Innovation

In addition to these three factors, the Guidance also notes that performance data will be considered. This includes Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) findings, Best Value Performance Indicators (BVPIs) and peer reviews.

However, as noted in the Guidance (4.6), there are a number of issues about the use of performance data on existing local authorities (County and District) as an indicator of future performance of unitary local government.

Therefore, whilst BVPIs and CPA data will be used to consider the performance of the existing councils, this can only be used as a broad indicator of future performance of unitary authorities.

Notwithstanding these issues, these three sources of performance data will be included within the research through the consideration of another criteria:

Criteria 4: Performance of Councils

The Guidance also gives significant consideration to the Community Strategy role of the local authority and in particular the Boundary Committee states that

“...where it is proposed that a unitary authority is based on an existing district or county council, we would wish to receive evidence on the stage reached on the implementation of local strategies, the approach being taken, and that the new unitary authority would engage the local community while undertaking its broadened functions.” (Section 4.10, p.12)

Furthermore,

“...if a proposed unitary authority covered a large geographical area or many diverse communities previously administered...proposals would need to discuss how an authority of such a size would engage with its citizens. They should also address the role parish and town councils, where they exist, might play in the engagement process.” (Section 4.10, p.12)

"If, on the other hand, a new unitary authority were to be based on an amalgamation of existing district councils, the proposal would need to include the record of each authority's community engagement activities to date and discuss how the new unitary authority would build on these strategies." (Section 4.10, p.12)

The research will therefore include consideration of community strategy (and other relevant strategy) development under the following:

Criteria 5: Community Strategy (and other local strategies)

The Guidance (4.11) also emphasises that the relationships between new unitary authorities and the agencies and bodies in the area should be considered. Therefore, the research will consider the relationship between any proposed unitary authority and:

- Business
- Voluntary
- Community
- Other public sector (and quasi-public sector) agencies and organisations

Consideration of the relationships between the above stakeholders and the unitary local authority will be dealt with under:

Criteria 6: Relationship between proposed unitary authority and key stakeholders

2. Identity and interests of local communities

The issue of the identity and interests of local communities is the second high level factor that should form the basis of the review. As indicated in the Guidance (4.19 to 4.20) this will include the identification of, or the defining of, a community.

This part of the research will therefore consider both the issue of defining a community – where the guidance offered by the Boundary Committee includes using information such as:

- History of the area
- Socio-economic make up
- Ethnicity
- Community of interest

In addition, information about the manifestation of a community will be useful. It is suggested that data such as the following could be used:

- Work/travel patterns (travel to work areas, travel to school areas)

- Local partnerships
- Shopping areas

Therefore the research will consider the issue of community identity under:

Criteria 7: Community Identity

Therefore, the review of the guidance from the Boundary Committee has resulted in the identification of seven criteria, all of which will be considered within the proposed research.

C. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF RESEARCH

Based upon the above discussion, the overarching question that the research will assist in answering is:

“Which wholly unitary structures are likely to provide the best overall delivery of local services in the existing two-tier county areas of the region assuming the existence of an elected regional assembly?”

There are two high level criteria upon which the research will be based:

1. The need for unitary local authorities to secure effective and convenient local government
2. The need for unitary local authorities to reflect the identities and interests of local communities

Based upon these criteria and the review of the *“Guidance and procedural advice for the local government reviews”* issued by the Boundary Committee (see Section B above), there are seven criteria that will be considered as part of the research into unitary local government in Cumbria:

Criteria 1: Political Leadership (including the issues of management structures, executive and scrutiny functions, and community engagement)

Criteria 2: Managerial Skills

Criteria 3: Level of Innovation

Criteria 4: Performance of Councils

Criteria 5: Community Strategy (and other local strategies)

Criteria 6: Relationship between proposed unitary authority and key stakeholders

Criteria 7: Community Identity

The following section outlines the methodology for the research which will be used to address each of the seven criteria listed above.

D. METHODOLOGY

It is anticipated that the research will use a combination of existing (secondary) sources of information and data as far as possible, but in addition, significant primary data collection will be used when possible within the timescale.

Secondary Data and Information

In general, the following list of information/sources will be used to inform analysis of all seven criteria:

- All available Best Value documentation and data
- All available Comprehensive Performance Assessment documentation and data
- All available strategies and plans for the six district council and the County council
- Recently published County, district and ward level data from Census 2001
- All available relevant population, social and economic data
- All available previous reports and documentation relating to the most recent previous review of local government in Cumbria (1994-95)
- Any available current/recent reviews of local government in similar areas (i.e. two-tier local government)
- Policy documentation and academic literature on the issues surrounding (i) effective and convenient local government and (ii) local government that reflects the identities and interests of local communities

It is of course anticipated that the above detailed information, where it is currently held by each of the local authorities (including the County Council), will be made available to the research team, and that it will be provided to the research team as soon as possible after the commencement of the project (i.e. week commencing 7th July 2003).

In addition, it would be useful if the CRED research team could receive copies, from each of the seven councils, of the range of preliminary information required by the Boundary Committee (outlined in Appendix 1 of the Guidance document) as soon as it is available.

Primary Data and Information

In addition to the aforementioned existing data and information, primary research will be carried out. This will take the form of:

- Consultation (through a combination of face-to-face interviews, telephone interviews and communication by letter and/or email) with officers and members of all six district councils and the County Council

- Consultation (through a combination of telephone interviews and communication by letter and/or email) with all Parish and Town Councils in the County
- Consultation (through a combination of face-to-face interviews, telephone interviews and communication by letter and/or email) with all MP's whose constituencies are within the County boundaries
- Consultation (through a combination of face-to-face interviews, telephone interviews and communication by letter (and/or email)) with a sample of partner agencies and key stakeholders– this will include the Local Strategic Partnerships, business sector, community sector, voluntary sector and other public sector bodies and agencies (e.g. the Police, Primary Care Trusts, Government Office North West, NWDA, TUC).

The aim of the primary research will be to gather the opinions, experiences, perceptions and attitudes from a wide range of organisations and individuals. This primary research will cover all aspects of the local government review, and will therefore inform analysis of all seven criteria that will be considered as part of the research.

In addition, consultations with such a wide range of organisations and individuals will allow the research team to gather other sources of evidence (data, documentation, strategies) in addition to those listed above, which may help to inform the research study.

In terms of the number of interviews/consultations, it is anticipated that within the time available a total of 20 to 30 face-to-face interviews can be achieved. In addition, there will be a further similar number of telephone (or e-mail) interviews/consultations as well as further written communications aimed at ensuring the widest possible consultation in the time available.

Models of Unitary Local Government considered in the Research Study

As directed by representatives of Carlisle City Council, the research study will focus the preferred option of the three unitary, as outlined below, and compares this model with other options as necessary.

PREFERRED OPTION: THREE UNITARY AUTHORITIES FOR CUMBRIA

Proposed Structure

Unitary council 1: Combination of Carlisle City Council and Eden District Council

Unitary council 2: Combination of Allerdale Borough Council and Copeland Borough Council

Unitary council 3: Combination of South Lakes District Council and Barrow Borough Council

Meetings with Project Steering Group

It is also proposed that, due to the short time scale within which the research has to be completed, in addition to the integral role that the council itself will play in the research (including the provision of various forms of data and documentation) as well as being one of the groups of consultees within the research, that weekly meetings take place between a representative of the CRED research team and a representative of the Project Steering Group.