

## Executive

**Agenda  
Item:**  
  
**A.1**

Meeting Date: 28<sup>th</sup> September 2020  
Portfolio: Leader's Portfolio  
Key Decision: No  
Within Policy and Budget Framework: Yes  
Public / Private: Public

Title: **Local Government Reorganisation – Developing Options**  
Report of: Chief Executive  
Report Number: CE 05/20

### **Purpose / Summary:**

The purpose of this report is to seek support for working with Eden District Council, Allerdale Borough Council and Copeland Borough Council on developing options for two unitary councils and a combined authority with an elected mayor to serve the residents and businesses of Cumbria.

### **Recommendations:**

It is recommended that the Executive:

1. Authorise the Carlisle City Council officers to work with Allerdale, Copeland and Eden on the development of an outline bid for two unitary councils, a combined authority and elected mayor for Cumbria.
2. Authorise the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Leader and Deputy Leader and the Corporate Director of Finance & Resources to identify funds of up to £25,000 to support that work.
3. Note that the final submission of an outline proposal will be subject to council endorsement.

### **Tracking**

Executive:	
Scrutiny:	

Council:	
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## **1. BACKGROUND**

UK Government appears to be keen to agree devolution deals and establish combined authorities and elected mayors across England. To that end, Simon Clarke MP (then Minister for Regional Growth and Local Government) met with Cumbrian leaders on 9 July 2020. At that meeting it was confirmed that local authorities in Cumbria could ask the Secretary of State to invite proposals for local government reorganisation in Cumbria and that multiple proposals could be submitted covering the same area.

Further to that meeting the Deputy Leader of Allerdale, the Leader of Carlisle City Council and the Mayor of Copeland wrote to the Minister to ask that the local government reorganisation process for Cumbria be started. To date there has been no response to the letter.

We await a response in order to understand precisely how the process will work, but it seems that we will be invited to submit outline proposals in advance of developing a more detailed business case. Presumably this is so that Government can 'sift out' those proposals that don't match their criteria and then invite more detailed proposals and conduct some consultation.

The Cumbrian district council leaders are in agreement that, if reorganisation is to happen, then it should be based on two unitary councils covering Cumbria. Some favour the creation of a 'Morecambe Bay' unitary that would include South Lakeland, Barrow and Lancaster City (along with a 'North Cumbria' comprising Allerdale, Carlisle, Copeland and Eden). It is not clear whether Government will consider further development of outline proposals that cross existing county boundaries. Others favour a pair of unitaries based on triplets of existing district boundaries. The only possible coterminous triplets are Allerdale/Carlisle/Eden plus Barrow/Copeland/South Lakeland or Allerdale/Carlisle/Copeland plus Barrow/Eden/South Lakeland.

Local government reorganisation is a means to an end. Government want to reorganise local government to establish effective and convenient local government and provide the basis for devolution deals, combined authorities and elected mayors.

Cumbria County Council's cabinet agreed, at its meeting on 3 September 2020, to submit a strategic business case for one unitary council for Cumbria. That document is silent on both a combined authority and an elected mayor.

In anticipation of a request to submit proposals, this report seeks authority from the Executive to work with colleagues at Allerdale, Copeland and Eden and commit resources

to developing an outline proposal. This would be based, in accordance with district leaders' wishes, on two unitary councils, a combined authority and an elected mayor thus ensuring that Cumbria can benefit from a devolution deal and the advantages of a combined authority and mayor leading and representing the sub-region. As far as possible this work will be seamless with the work that Barrow and South Lakeland are developing so that Government are presented with coherent options. Even more importantly, the residents and businesses of Cumbria can too have the opportunity to have their voices heard on this important issue.

**LEGAL –** The current, relevant legislation for the reorganisation of local government is the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007, however, it is anticipated that new legislation/regulations will be forthcoming to set out how to deal with reorganisation as envisaged in the Report. The preparation and submission of a proposal is an Executive function but, as the report makes clear, Council will express an important view in the process.

**FINANCE –** A non-recurring budget of £25,000 is proposed to support work which is deemed necessary in developing options for Local Government Reorganisation in Cumbria. If this work is supported by Members, a budget will be identified and vired from within existing base budgets under the Council's Scheme of Virement and which is in accordance with the Chief Executive's delegated powers.