

Meeting	Executive
Date	22 October 2020
Present	Councillors Aspden (Chair), Ayre, Craghill, Cuthbertson, D'Agorne, Runciman, Smalley, Waller and Widdowson
In Attendance	Councillor Myers

PART B - MATTERS REFERRED TO COUNCIL

52. Urgent Business: Devolution for York and North Yorkshire and Unitarisation - Update

The Interim Head of Paid Service presented a report which provided an update on government policy developments affecting both the possibilities for devolution and the future of local government in York and North Yorkshire.

The Chair had agreed to take this item under urgent business due to the very recent confirmation of the timescales for submission and the need to meet those timescales. A Regulation 11 notice had been published to the council's website, in compliance with special urgency procedures for key decisions.

On 23 July, Executive had approved a series of 'Asks' for a devolution deal. On 9 October, the Secretary of State had written to York and North Yorkshire council leaders, inviting them to submit proposals to replace 2-tier local authority structures with new unitary models by 9 November. As a unitary, York did not need to change to meet this requirement but was likely to be affected by the submissions of other authorities. Analysis of the likely submissions indicated that York would benefit significantly, in terms of the speed of devolution, the continuity of services, and the city's identity, by remaining a unitary on its existing footprint. It was proposed that a submission be made on this basis, together with a Partnership Agreement outlining how existing joint working with North Yorkshire County Council could be built on to achieve maximum efficiencies with a new North Yorkshire unitary authority.

In response to matters raised under Public Participation, the Chair noted that the proposals would be debated at Full Council and that he would be happy to meet with union representatives and to work with scrutiny and the Labour group moving forward. Members thanked officers for producing the report at short notice, and endorsed the proposed submissions as representing the best option for York at this point.

Recommended: That Council:

- (i) Note the letter from the Secretary of State (Annex 2 to the report) and the issues as set out in the report.
- (ii) Approve the submission to Government of a case for City of York Council remaining a unitary on its existing footprint.
- (iii) Delegate authority to the Interim Head of Paid Service to make a submission, in line with the decision above, within the Government's timescales.
- (iv) Approve the submission of a Strategic Partnership Agreement with North Yorkshire (Annex 4), which proposes areas of potential joint working between City of York Council and a new North Yorkshire unitary council to support efficient local government in the region.
- (v) Approve the submission of Devolution 'Asks' (Annex 1, as approved by Executive on 23 July 2020) alongside the unitary submission, subject to the permissibility within this process, in order to progress devolution discussions with Government as quickly as possible.

Reason: To ensure that an appropriate response, which benefits York, is submitted to Government within the required timescales.

Cllr K Aspden, Chair

[The meeting started at 5.33 pm and finished at 7.24 pm].