



Contact: Office of the Chief Executive
Telephone: (01524) 582501
E-mail: chiefexecutive@lancaster.gov.uk
Website: www.lancaster.gov.uk

LANCASTER
CITY COUNCIL

Promoting City, Coast & Countryside

By email

9 November 2020

Dear Clerk

Local Government Reform | Morecambe Bay Proposals

Movement towards local government reform and new models of devolved government has gathered pace in Lancashire and Cumbria, over the last few months. This has given rise to wider and more urgent discussions and a greater degree of debate. This debate has been given added urgency **as the government has now set deadlines for proposals.**

Lancaster City Council recently agreed to explore local government reform and devolution options and to develop a high-level case for a new unitary council for the area comprising the three districts around Morecambe Bay; Barrow, Lancaster and South Lakeland; collectively being described as "The Bay".

Since the previous Council meeting, the Government has requested unitary proposals for three areas in England including Cumbria, with a deadline of 9th November for outline proposals and 9th December for a full business case proposition. On 5th November, Lancaster City Council agreed to submit an outline case to Government (attached) and go forward in making such a proposal with its Cumbrian partners.

The mood music from Government has been growing in volume over the past year and we have heard various statements and comments from ministers in this vein. It was expected that the Government's intentions will be made clearer in a Government white paper on devolution, which was anticipated in autumn, but is now delayed until the new year. It had been hoped that this delay might allow councils to focus on COVID, but although that argument has been made the government has pushed head with its quite short timeframes.

There will, of course, be many differing perspectives on the rationale and benefits or otherwise of change. Some may believe that as an invitation has not been issued for re-organisation proposals in Lancashire, that there is an option to sit this out and hope the process goes away. We believe that this approach would leave Lancaster with a paucity of options.

It is highly unlikely that the status quo in Lancashire will be allowed to remain. At which point, a newly reorganised Cumbria is unlikely to be reorganised again, and the option proposed for Lancaster within Lancashire of combining with Blackpool, Fylde, Wyre and Ribble Valley does not build on a community or economic base. Therefore, the development of a well thought through option that serves our residents and our region must be done now.

Office of the Chief Executive
Kieran Keane
Chief Executive
Town Hall
Dalton Square
LANCASTER
LA1 1PJ

Invitation to Stakeholder Meeting

With our council's support, we will progress from this outline case to a full business case by early December. In developing the case we are keen to engage with residents, local businesses and organisations to understand what they might want from a new unitary council and potential devolution discussions.

As a significant and valued stakeholder in our district, we would welcome the opportunity to meet with you shortly to discuss the issues in more depth, alongside other local town and parish councils. Our office will contact you to make arrangements to this end.

Meeting with PA Consulting

We have asked PA Consulting to support the development of these proposals. To assist with this work, Tim Pope and Nathan Elvery from the PA team would find it helpful to meet with you to understand your perspectives on the potential impact of any change and your own priorities. These sessions will be one-to-one so and we would encourage you to be completely open with any perspectives and issues.

If you would be happy to meet over the next three weeks, the PA team would be grateful if you could contact Lotte Adams (lotte.adams@paconsulting.com) who will coordinate and schedule a session with you.

Yours sincerely and with kind regards



Dr Erica Lewis
City Councillor for John O'Gaunt Ward
Leader, Lancaster City Council

07597 520 444



Kieran Keane FCCA
Chief Executive
Lancaster City Council

01524 582501