

<b>TITLE:</b>	<b>PROPOSAL FOR FUTURE UNITARY STRUCTURES: STAKEHOLDER CONSULTATION</b>
<b>TO/ON:</b>	<b>EXECUTIVE – 11<sup>TH</sup> JUNE, 2007</b>
<b>BY:</b>	<b>DIRECTOR OF CORPORATE ADMINISTRATION AND POLICY</b>
<b>PORTFOLIO:</b>	<b>LEADER</b>
<b>STATUS:</b>	<b>REPORT</b>

## **1. PURPOSE**

- 1.1 To note the announcement on the 27<sup>th</sup> March 2007 from the Secretary of State for the Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG) regarding the results of the stage one assessment for potential future unitary structure. The report also sets out the consultation process for short-listed proposals announced by the Government and details the proposed arrangements for the preparation of a response to the consultation by the deadline of 22<sup>nd</sup> June, 2007.

## **2. BACKGROUND**

- 2.1 As members will be aware, the Local Government White Paper (Strong and Prosperous Communities) contained within it an invitation for local authorities in Shire areas to make proposals for Unitary Local Government, or to establish partnerships of a County and all District Councils in the County area to pioneer as pathfinders new models of two tier working.
- 2.2 Two bids were subsequently submitted by the deadline date of 25th January 2007 covering the County Durham area – one bid from the County Council for a single unitary authority and another counter bid, by six districts (excluding the City of Durham Council). These, together with another 24 bids, were subject to a “stage one” evaluation by the DCLG and assessed in terms of their likelihood to deliver improvements against five specified criteria. Following this assessment, 16 bids (a list is attached at Appendix A) have been short-listed to go forward to a period of stakeholder consultation.
- 2.3 Members will be aware that the proposal put forward by Durham County Council has been put forward to “stage 2”, the stakeholder consultation stage. The District bid was rejected by DCLG and has not been short-listed.
- 2.4 Details of the Stakeholder Consultation process and a list of the consultees (set out at Appendix B) was announced on 27th March 2007. As agreed at Full Council on 10<sup>th</sup> April, 2007, given the list of consultees excluded residents, it was determined that the Council would fund a referendum to establish the views of local people towards such a fundamental change. The results of the

referendum are expected on 15<sup>th</sup> June, and will form part of the consultation submission to the Secretary of State.

### **3. MATERIAL CONSIDERATIONS**

3.1 Work on the response to the consultation is currently ongoing and is being carried out in partnership with all seven Durham Districts.

3.2 Views are sought by the DCLG as to whether we consider the proposal for a Single Unitary Council would achieve the outcomes of the original submission criteria, namely

(a) The change to the future unitary local government structure must be:

(i) Affordable, i.e. that the change itself both represents value for money and can be met from the Council's existing resource envelope; and

(ii) Supported by a broad cross section of partners and stakeholders; and

(b) The future unitary local government structures must:

(i) Provide strong, effective and accountable strategic leadership;

(ii) Deliver genuine opportunities for neighbourhood flexibility and empowerment; and

(iii) Deliver value for money and equity on public services.

3.3 The latest draft of the joint submission, based on these five themes, will be circulated at Executive. Members should note that given the Referendum does not close until the 14<sup>th</sup> June 2007, it will not be possible to finalise the submission prior to Executive meeting.

### **4. RECOMMENDATION**

4.1 To note the approach being taken to prepare the Council's response to the consultation proposals for future unitary structures and to agree that the Chief Executive Officer is delegated to approve the final submission in consultation with the Leader of the Council.

**Successful Proposals for Future Unitary Structures:  
List of Authorities / Proposals put forward for Stakeholder Consultation**

Bedfordshire County Council - for a single unitary authority for the county

Bedford Borough Council - for a unitary Bedford

Cornwall County Council - for a single unitary authority for the county

Cheshire County Council - for a single unitary authority for the county

Chester City Council - for two unitary authorities for the county

Cumbria County Council - for a single unitary authority for the county

Durham County Council - for a single unitary authority for the county

Exeter City Council - for a single unitary authority for the city

Ipswich Borough Council - for a single unitary authority for the borough

North Yorkshire County Council - for a single unitary authority for the county

Northumberland County Council - for a single unitary authority for the county

Northumberland Districts - for two unitary authorities for the county

Norwich City Council - for a single unitary authority for the city on existing boundaries

Shropshire County Council - for a single unitary authority for the county

Somerset County Council - for a single unitary authority for the county

Wiltshire County Council - for a single unitary authority for the county

**Proposals for Future Unitary Structures: Stakeholder Consultation**

**List of Key Stakeholders**

Arts Council England  
Association of Chief Police Officers  
Association of Council Secretaries and Solicitors  
Association of County Chief Executives  
Association of Electoral Administrators  
Association of Larger Local Councils  
Association of Local Authority Chief Executives  
Association of Police Authorities  
Audit Commission  
Broads Authority  
CBI and other significant business organisations in the area.  
Chambers of Commerce  
Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy  
Chief Cultural and Leisure Officers Association  
Chief Constables  
Chief Fire Officers  
County Associations of Local Councils  
Electoral Commission  
English Heritage  
Environment Agency  
Fire and Rescue Authorities  
Health and Safety Executive  
Highways Agency  
Jobcentre Plus  
Local Government Association  
Local Probation Boards  
Local Strategic Partnerships  
Metropolitan Passenger Transport Authorities  
National Association of Local Councils  
National Federation of Arm's-Length Management Organisations  
National Park Authorities  
Natural England  
New Local Government Network  
NHS Foundation Trusts  
NHS Health Trusts  
Police Authorities  
Primary Care Trusts  
Public Sector People Managers Association  
Public Sector Unions  
Regional Assemblies  
Regional Development Agencies  
Society of County Treasurers  
Society of District Council Treasurers  
Society of Local Authority Chief Executives  
Society of Local Council Clerks

Sport England  
Strategic Health Authority  
The Learning and Skills Council in England  
Universities and Colleges  
Voluntary Sector Organisations  
Youth Justice Boards