

Cabinet

19th March 2009



Local Government Reorganisation

Report of George Garlick, Chief Executive (Cabinet Portfolio Holder Councillor Simon Henig, Leader)

Background

1. This report provides an update on the LGR programme.

Current Position

2. As Cabinet were informed last meeting an update report has again been prepared for County Council this time for their meeting on 17th March. A copy of this report is therefore attached.
3. Since the County Council report was prepared the main development has been sight of a draft report from the Department of Communities and Local Government (CLG) following their stocktake visit 6th February. This report is to be forward to the Minister for Local Government John Healey.

CLG Stocktake Report

4. The key findings identified in the report from CLG confirm that significant progress has been made over the last few months. There is recognition of a clear vision for the new council with a strong focus on the economy and skills, together with a desire to instil a new culture across the new Council.
5. CLG identified a number of improvements in services which will benefit the residents of County Durham including;
 - Green waste initiative
 - Extension of the free swimming provision,
 - Improvements in the Housing and Planning services,
 - Improved access with the single website and telephone number
 - Launch of the Area Action Partnerships.
6. CLG also noted that the preconditions for change will be in place for the new Council allowing opportunities for transformation over the next few years.
7. The report is still be finalised but once agreed will be shared with Members.

Members Seminars

8. Following the series of seminars held during the last 6 months it is planned to continue these after Vesting Day. The next seminar has therefore been booked for 22nd April at 12.30pm and 6.30pm.
9. This seminar will update Members on the situation post Vesting Day and to provide an update on the new Comprehensive Area Assessment which is to replace the CPA inspection.
10. Members are also reminded of the seminar planned for 26th March which will cover any last minute developments for Vesting Day and provide Members with an opportunity to raise any remaining queries they have on how the new Council will operate.

Recommendation

11. Cabinet are asked to note this latest progress report on the LGR programme.

Contact: Roger Goodes Tel: 0191 383 5714

Appendix A

County Council

17 March 2009

LGR Update



Report of George Garlick, Chief Executive (Cabinet Portfolio Holder Councillor Simon Henig, Leader)

Purpose of Report

1. This report provides an update on the LGR programme.

Current Position

2. With less than three weeks to Vesting Day the key focus is on ensuring the final arrangements for the new Council are in place and the changeover occurs without any impact on service provision.
3. Final policies are being discussed and agreed with Members and the new Constitution is to be considered by Council at this meeting.
4. Staff will all by now know which service grouping they are aligned to. For some groups of staff e.g. democratic services and corporate policy, their work will change from 1st April, and it is therefore important that these staff are confident in their transitional roles and are actively contributing to the success of the new Council after the 1st.

Senior Management Structure

5. Dates for the interviews for 5 of the vacant 8 Heads of Service posts have now been confirmed for the last week in March/first week in April. The advert for the remaining 3 posts will be issued after the Easter holidays.

HR

6. The recruitment exercise for the management teams who will report to the Heads of Service (tier 4) is now well underway and interviews have been scheduled for the period from 23rd March to 9th April. Over 200 candidates from across the County and District Councils have been identified for the posts.
7. HR teams across the County are also ensuring staff are advised of their interim management arrangements from 1st April which will remain in place until the restructure is completed.

8. Planning for the next stage of the restructure is now happening and details of this will be shared with staff and Members shortly. It is hoped that this can be completed as a single exercise rather than continuing the layered approach taken to date.

Area Action Partnerships (AAP)

9. The last LGR update to Council contained the proposed timetable for the AAP launch; this is still subject to change and any changes will be advised to Members as soon as possible.
10. Cabinet will be receiving a report on 19th March detailing the final recommendations for the AAPs including terms of reference, codes of conduct, funding guidance, selection procedures for Councillors and the general public and training plans for AAP board members.
11. In addition communication plans are well advanced with information being sent to Town and Parish Councils, VCS groups, Citizen Panels and media contacts, confirming the launch events, and to encourage attendance by as many people as possible.

'Must haves'

12. Although some 'must haves' (the critical day 1 projects) have changed from their original scope to take account of other developments and to minimise risks on Vesting Day, progress remains good with no projects currently giving any major cause for concern. Whilst the actual number completed is only 37, a further 42 are almost complete. As mentioned previously some of these projects can't actually complete until Vesting Day.

Day 1 Planning

13. Members will shortly receive a detailed briefing pack confirming the plans for day 1; including local Member support arrangements, key contacts and accommodation arrangements for Members across the County.
14. The temporary arrangements in place for Vesting Day will be reviewed with Members and changes made as appropriate prior to permanent arrangements being developed. The permanent arrangements will be incorporated into the wider staff restructure and reflect the recommendations of an accommodation review which will be undertaken after 1st April.
15. A Members seminar is planned for 26th March in order to review plans for day 1, confirm any last minute arrangements and resolve any outstanding issues.

Communications

16. The last edition of the County Council's newspaper Countywide has now been issued containing an eight page pull out on the new Council and adverts will be appearing in newspapers and on bus backs detailing the new arrangements.

Boundary Commission Review

17. Members may already be aware of the Boundary Committee's recent announcement on the number of councillors serving on the new Council. Following several months of consultation, the Committee has stated that it is minded to regard the present number of 126 councillors as proportionate to the scale of duties and responsibilities involved in the new organisation.

18. The next stage of the consultation will now consider the boundaries of the electoral wards and is due to begin on 17th March, ending in June.

Recommendations

19. The County Council are asked to note the contents of this report.

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