

Minutes of Council

Meeting date Wednesday, 17 January 2024

Committee Members present: Councillor Tommy Gray (Mayor), Councillor Gordon France (Deputy Mayor) and Councillors Sarah Ainsworth, Aaron Beaver, Julia Berry, Alistair Bradley, Michelle Brown, Mark Clifford, Alan Cullens, Karen Derbyshire, Margaret France, Danny Gee, Christine Heydon, Terry Howarth, Hasina Khan, Michelle Beach, Roy Lees, Adrian Lowe, Matthew Lynch, Samantha Martin, June Molyneaux, Alistair Morwood, Dedrah Moss, Beverley Murray, Alan Platt, Debra Platt, Aidy Riggott, Jean Sherwood, Craige Southern, Arjun Singh, Kim Snape, Ryan Towers, Jenny Whiffen, Neville Whitham, Alan Whittaker, Joan Williamson and Peter Wilson

Members present virtually (non-voting): Councillors Samir Khan and Pauline McGovern

Officers: Chris Sinnott (Chief Executive), Dave Whelan (Head of Legal and Procurement) and Ruth Rimmington (Democratic Services Team Leader)

Apologies: Councillor Alex Hilton, Zara Khan and Chris Snow

A video recording of the public session of this meeting is available to view on [YouTube here](#)

66 Declarations of Any Interests

No declarations of interests were made.

67 Lancashire Devolution Deal

The Executive Leader, Councillor Alistair Bradley, presented the report of the Chief Executive which presented a summary of the proposals to create a combined county authority (CCA) and a devolution deal for Lancashire, and to agree the principles of a response to the consultation.

Councillor Bradley expressed his disappointment by the need for this extraordinary meeting of the Council. He personally had done a great deal of work to progress devolution in Lancashire, and so was disappointed not to be able to support the current proposals.

His aspiration was for a devolution deal similar to that within Manchester and Liverpool. A number of authorities within Lancashire had expressed similar views.

At the start of 2022, the councils of Lancashire (including districts, the county council and unitary councils), agreed an outline proposal for a deal for Greater Lancashire. It was acknowledged that this had been challenging in some authorities.

They did this with the intention that it might provide the basis for discussions with the government in creating a devolution deal for the county. The deal included agreement to a series of principles for working together. These were set out in the report.

Since then, the position had changed. In May 2023 the upper tier authorities in Lancashire (being Lancashire County Council, Blackpool Council and Blackburn with Darwen Council), announced that they were in discussions with the government with the aim of creating a devolution deal for Lancashire.

The intention was that the deal would be a 'level two' deal under the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023, with a Combined County Authority which can only include upper tier authorities.

The proposals were now the subject of a consultation, and Councillor Bradley encouraged all members and residents to participate in the consultation process.

Councillor Bradley detailed the proposals which were set out within the report. The proposed consultation response from the Council was also detailed within the report.

Specific concerns about the proposals included

- management of future rounds of the UKSPF
- how the £6 million of capital investment will benefit the whole of the county area
- the need for proposals to be more detailed in recognising the nuances and needs of local areas
- the governance arrangements proposed

The Deputy Leader, Councillor Peter Wilson, supported the comments made by the Leader and noted the proposals were 'light touch' and did not include substantial capital investment across the county.

The Leader of the Opposition, Councillor Alan Cullens, noted it was not possible to change the legislation relating to this. The proposals included £20 million of capital investment and if the deal was rejected there would be no devolution for Lancashire for the foreseeable future.

Views were expressed that any proposals for a directly elected Mayor for Lancashire would not be supported, but this was not currently a proposal. The Police and Crime Commissioner was directly elected for the whole of Lancashire, but a Mayor would have a substantial budget and power in the hands of one person. It was felt by some that Chorley would benefit from the jobs created by the capital investments proposed.

Members debated the proposals, including Councillors Karen Derbyshire, Adrian Lowe, Craige Southern, Pauline McGovern, Aidy Riggott, Mark Clifford.

Supporting points made by the Leader, members expressed concerns relating to the loss of UKSFP funding from the Districts, that the proposals did not go far enough, the potential for further devolved functions and consolidated funding was ambiguous and that the deal was unambitious.

Members of the Opposition highlighted the UKSPF funding would be administered by the Combined Authority and that the consultation was being undertaken by Lancashire County Council.

Disappointment was expressed that the proposals were not supported and built on, following the collaborative work associated with Lancashire 2050 and joint working undertaken regarding UKSPF funding.

Chorley was represented by County members in addition to Borough Councillors. There were opportunities for Chorley with the proposals and work had been positive between partners in delivering functions in the proposals previously. Additional funds were proposed for Cosy Homes as part of the deal.

In response to a query from Councillor Aidy Riggott the Executive Leader noted a letter had been received from the Shadow Minister which echoed the concerns raised and considered future options.

There were also 'worked up' schemes, such as Coppull Railway Station and the Town Centre regeneration scheme which will benefit from the levelling up fund looking to the future. These could benefit from future devolution proposals.

The Executive Leader, Councillor Alistair Bradley proposed and the Deputy Leader, Councillor Peter Wilson seconded, the recommendation within the report.

A request was made by Councillor Alistair Bradley, seconded by Councillor Peter Wilson, under the Council Procedure Rule 17(2) for a recorded vote.

For: Sarah Ainsworth, Aaron Beaver, Julia Berry, Alistair Bradley, Michelle Brown, Mark Clifford, Karen Derbyshire, Gordon France, Margaret France, Danny Gee, Tommy Gray, Christine Heydon, Terry Howarth, Hasina Khan, Michelle Le Marinel, Roy Lees, Adrian Lowe, Matthew Lynch, Samantha Martin, June Molyneaux, Alistair Morwood, Dedrah Moss, Beverley Murray, Jean Sherwood, Arjun Singh, Kim Snape, Ryan Towers, Jenny Whiffen, Neville Whitham, Alan Whittaker, Joan Williamson, Peter Wilson

Against: Alan Cullens, Alan Platt, Debra Platt, Aidy Riggott, Craige Southern

Abstention: None

It was **Resolved (32:5:0)**

- 1. That the council agrees that the response set out at paragraphs 23 to 25 should form the basis of Chorley Council's response to the consultation.**
- 2. That the Chief Executive be asked to share the council's response to the consultation with local MPs representing the borough.**

Proposed response

23. Chorley Council recognises that devolution has the potential to secure significant benefits for Lancashire, bringing decision making and accountability closer to residents. Other areas of the north west, most notably Greater Manchester and Liverpool City Region, have already benefited from their devolution deals.

24. Effective devolution should encourage strong economic growth and increased productivity, alongside better health and wellbeing and strengthened public services.

25. Unfortunately, the proposals currently being consulted on are unlikely to lead to those benefits and so Chorley Council cannot support them. The council has some specific concerns about the proposals. These are set out below, referencing the relevant section of the consultation being referred to:

- a. The proposals for management of future rounds of the UKSPF in section one fail to recognise the success of the current round that is currently managed by district councils. Changing it to a more remote body with limited infrastructure to manage successful community schemes will make future success less likely. Chorley Council believes that responsibility for future rounds of UKSPF should remain with district councils.**
- b. The provision of £6 million of capital investment to Samesbury Enterprise Zone and £6 million to the Blackburn Technology Innovation Quarter (section one) is welcome investment in the county, but are small scale and limited in geographic impact. The council believes that the upper tier authorities proposing the creation of the CCA need to more clearly explain how future investment will be secured and prioritised, identifying how investment will benefit the whole of the county area.**
- c. The devolution of adult education and the core Adult Education Budget at section two is welcome, but the proposals beyond that are currently vague and undeveloped. The partners involved in the CCA need to more clearly explain how skills of a large and diverse county area will be served by programmes that are developed.**
- d. The proposals at section three demonstrate the importance for partners who are constituent members in recognising the nuances and needs of local areas, as it makes special arrangements for Blackpool Transport Services. This is important in a county the size of Lancashire, but fails to recognise the particular needs of other areas such as Chorley. The borough of Chorley borders Greater Manchester, and so any devolution deal and CCA need to clearly recognise the importance of cross-border travel to be successful. In addition, the borough has experienced significant growth over the last 15 years. As an area of growth, it has significant needs to strengthened public transport, such as an additional railway station in Coppull and strengthened bus services. The current proposals do nothing to address this and so needs to be strengthened.**
- e. Expanding eligibility criteria for Cosy Homes in Lancashire through an additional £2 million of funding at section four is supported, but it must be recognised that the scale of funding is extremely small across the whole county.**
- f. The proposals across sections five, six and seven do not appear to add anything that is not already in place across the council. While opening the potential for further discussions with the government and its agencies may be positive, it is not possible to support something with no detail. As with the other sections of the proposals, Chorley Council would welcome**

devolution in these areas, but the current proposals need to be stronger and more ambitious to realise Lancashire's potential.

- g. Section eight sets out the governance arrangements for the CCA and devolution deal. Chorley Council does not support the governance arrangements proposed.**

They fail to recognise the important role of district councils in understanding and representing local communities. While the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act sets out the rules for membership, the constituent members could provide full voting rights within the CCA constitution to encourage district engagement. In addition, the CCA partners should clearly set out a more comprehensive plan for ensuring that the new arrangements will not just make local government in Lancashire even more complex and confusing for residents, businesses and communities.

Chair

Date