

Council

Wednesday, 17 January 2024

Decisions

Set out below is a summary of the decisions taken at the meeting of the Council held on Wednesday, 17 January 2024. The wording used does not necessarily reflect the actual wording that will appear in the minutes.

3 Lancashire Devolution Deal

Resolved:

1. That Council agrees the response below should form the basis of South Ribble Borough Council's response to the consultation:

"South Ribble Borough 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.

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

Unfortunately, the proposals currently being consulted on are unlikely to lead to those benefits and so South Ribble Borough 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. South Ribble Borough Council believes that responsibility for future rounds of UKSPF should remain with district councils.
- b) The provision of £6 million of capital investment to Samlesbury 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 South Ribble where the borough as a distinct area is not represented. The proposal includes reference to Network North funding. The announcement from government on Network North included the A582 improvement scheme and the council would like clarity on how this scheme will be supported by the CCA.
 - 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, South Ribble Borough 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. South Ribble Borough 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.
2. That the Chief Executive be asked to share the council's response to the consultation with local MPs representing the borough.