

CONSENT TO URGENT DECISION	PART 1 (to be completed by the person seeking consent)	
Proposed Decision Maker <i>(please name person or body proposing to take decision, if an officer also state title)</i>		Date for Decision
Councillor Isobel Seccombe – Leader of the Council		10 th January 2025
Title: English Devolution White Paper – County Council Elections 2025		

Summary of matter

On 16th December 2024, the Government published a policy paper entitled 'English Devolution White Paper' which focusses on two aspects of reform (i) widening devolution across England through the creation of Strategic Authorities to which centrally held Government powers would be devolved and (ii) a programme of local government reorganisation to create new unitary Councils, both of which are considered by the Government to be essential to driving its growth mission and delivering better outcomes for residents. The White Paper confirms that the Government intends to work at pace and to ambitious timeframes in the delivery of devolution and local government reorganisation.

Recognising that County Councils in England are scheduled to have elections in May 2025, the White Paper indicates that the Government would consider taking decisions to postpone local elections.

The Minister of State for Local Government and English Devolution therefore wrote to Warwickshire County Council on 16th December 2024, along with other upper tier Councils across the country, asking for a view on or before Friday 10th January 2025 regarding the potential postponement of the May 2025 County Council elections.

There are two options open to the Council in considering the request from the Minister of State for Local Government and English Devolution (i) Not to respond and await an indication from Government in the New Year as to which Councils it intends prioritising for devolution and local government reorganisation (ii) To respond to the Minister of State setting out whether the County Council would wish for Warwickshire to be considered for delivering local government reorganisation and devolution to the Government's ambitious timeframe and as a result whether it would be open to the postponement of the elections.

Not to respond would mean that Warwickshire would be unlikely to be considered in the first tranche of Councils and would be less well placed to influence the Government's proposed timescales with less opportunity to influence and shape the geographical landscape of devolution and reorganisation within which Warwickshire sits. Given that Warwickshire has already secured a Level 2 Devolution Deal with Government, Warwickshire is well placed to amplify and accelerate its devolution aspirations for the county, delivering growth for the local economy and benefits for residents.

Responding proactively and positively to the Minister by the deadline set places Warwickshire in an optimal position, retaining the option for Warwickshire to move forward at a faster pace and with the opportunity to shape and influence future decisions at an early stage.

Proposed Decision

That the Leader of the Council responds to the Minister of State for Local Government and English Devolution signalling the County Council's willingness to be considered for delivering local government reorganisation and devolution to the Government's ambitious timeframe and recognising that, as a consequence, the Government may decide that it is necessary to postpone the May 2025 County Council elections.

Reasons for urgency

In light of the timescale set by the Government for a response (on or before 10th January 2025) the proposed decision is urgent and cannot reasonably be deferred.

For the reasons set out below, it is considered to be impracticable to comply with Council Standing Orders 16 and 17 and to meet the Government's deadline of 10th January 2025 for a response.


The Government's correspondence was received on 16th December 2024, following which it has been necessary to engage in dialogue and to seek advice from officers before a decision could be taken. This, together with the public holidays over the period and the Government's required response deadline, has meant that it has not been possible for a Leader report to have been prepared in sufficient time for a key decision to be added to the Forward Plan in the usual way as required by Standing Order 16 and/or for the procedure at Standing Order 17 (General Exception) to be followed. Therefore, in order to meet the Government's timeframe for a response, and for the reasons set out below and in more detail in the Leader report, the decision can be considered urgent pursuant to Standing Order 18 and as a result can be implemented with immediate effect.

Although the decision to postpone elections is a matter for Government, by not responding by the Government deadline of 10th January 2025, Warwickshire would be unlikely to be considered in the first tranche for devolution and local government reorganisation. This could be disadvantageous to Warwickshire's economic growth, residents, local communities and businesses. The decision is urgent because the delay that would be likely to be caused by call-in of the proposed decision would seriously prejudice the Council and the public interest in that it would not allow Warwickshire to respond by the deadline of 10th January 2025 and in turn would not afford Warwickshire the best chance of securing advantage through early implementation of the Government's White Paper policies.

Would the recommended decision be contrary to the Budget and Policy Framework? *[please identify relevant plan/budget provision]*

No

PART 2 (to be completed by the person giving consent)

Name	Councillor Warwick
Office Held	Chair of Resources and Fire and Rescue Overview and Scrutiny Committee
	
Date consent is given	31/12/2024