


**Proposed Decision to be made by the Leader on  
or after 31 July 2020**

**Devolution and Local Recovery White Paper**

<b>Portfolio Holder</b>	<b>Leader of the Council</b>
<b>Date of decision</b>	<b>31 July 2020</b>
	<b>Signed</b> 

**Decision**

That at the request of Cabinet, the Leader asks the Chief Executive to take such preparatory steps as she considers necessary in advance of the Devolution and Local Recovery White Paper, anticipated in the Autumn, to enable the Council to consider the options for future local government reform for Warwickshire

**1.0 Reasons for Decision**

- 1.1. The Government has announced its intention to publish a White Paper on Devolution and Local Recovery. Exact timeframes are not yet known but the White Paper is expected in the early Autumn.
- 1.2 Set against the anticipated longer term impact of Covid on a wide range of issues including the local economy, the health and social care system and local government finances, announcements around the Government's White Paper are leading many Councils now to consider the options for local government reform and the role of devolution in our national recovery.
- 1.3 This report asks the Chief Executive to undertake preparatory work in advance of the White Paper being published to enable the Council to consider the potential options for Warwickshire

## 2.0 Background information

- 2.1 National commentary around the White Paper suggests that it is likely to be ambitious and far-reaching linked to recovery from Covid-19 and the Government's agenda around levelling up of the economy and building stronger communities. There is also an emerging view that the White Paper will include proposals for local government structural reform linked to greater devolution of powers to local areas.
- 2.2 To ensure that the Council is well prepared to respond to the White Paper, thought needs to be given as to what this could mean for Warwickshire, for our communities and businesses. The Council wants to be in a position to take the opportunities that it expects the White Paper to offer to create a better future for residents, communities and businesses that operate in Warwickshire.
- 2.3 Other Councils in Warwickshire have already indicated a similar wish to review the potential implications of the White Paper, including devolution, local government reform and alternative ways of working, in advance of its publication in the Autumn.
- 2.4 The Leaders of Warwick District Council and Stratford on Avon District Council issued a joint statement on 23 June 2020 ('Taking a Fresh Look at Warwickshire') setting out their intention to explore ways to work together for the benefit of the people of South Warwickshire and the wider County. The statement indicated that the Councils hoped this would pave the way for a wider dialogue with other local government partners with the view of forming a common position for debate with central government as the anticipated Devolution White Paper comes forward.
- 2.5 Rugby Borough Council on 21 July 2020 considered a report recommending that work should commence now on undertaking a review of the local government structures within the County. The report proposed that the review be jointly commissioned by all of the districts and boroughs and the County Council as well as engaging with the Warwickshire Association of Local Councils (WALC), representing parish and town councils.
- 2.6 The County Council recognises that there is a pressing need to consider the options and opportunities for Warwickshire in advance of the publication of the White Paper so that it can engage in the debate and seek to achieve the best possible future for the people of Warwickshire, including improving local decision-making whilst at the same time being as efficient and effective as possible.
- 2.7 With this in mind, the Council intends to consider whether there is a business case for a new single unitary Council for Warwickshire and also to identify possible alternative options. In doing so the Council will engage constructively with the County's District and Borough Councils some of whom have indicated that they are also considering local government reform. The Chief Executive has therefore been asked to look at all the potential options and undertake such preparatory work as is necessary to enable the Council to consider the options for future local government reform for Warwickshire in the Autumn.
- 2.8 The preparatory work will be completed with a view to it being presented to full Council at an extraordinary meeting to be held in September 2020.

### Financial implications

The cost of any commissioned work will be met from within existing budgets.

### Environmental implications

None

<b>Report Author</b>	Sarah Duxbury – Assistant Director Governance & Policy
<b>Assistant Director</b>	Sarah Duxbury – Assistant Director Governance & Policy
<b>Lead Director</b>	Monica Fogarty – Chief Executive
<b>Lead Member</b>	Cllr Izzi Seccombe – Leader of the Council

<b>Urgent matter?</b>	<i>No</i>
<b>Confidential or exempt?</b>	<i>No</i>
<b>Is the decision contrary to the budget and policy framework?</b>	<i>No</i>

### List of background papers (If applicable)

None

### Members and officers consulted and informed

Corporate Board – Chief Executive, Strategic Director for Resources

Legal – Assistant Director, Governance & Policy

Finance – Assistant Director, Finance

Democratic Services – Paul Williams

Councillors – Group Leaders

