



Report To:	Leader's decision
Date:	20 March 2025
Subject:	Local Government Re-organisation – interim plan
Purpose:	To agree to submit an interim plan to Government by 21 March 2025
Key Decision:	No
Portfolio Holder:	Councillor Nick Worth, Leader of the Council
Report Of:	James Gilbert, Assistant Director - Corporate
Report Author:	James Gilbert, Assistant Director - Corporate
Ward(s) Affected:	All
Exempt Report:	No

Summary

Greater Lincolnshire is one of several areas in England that is invited by the Minister for Local Government to submit a proposal for Local Government Re-organisation.

The 21st March, 2025, is the deadline for the Government to receive interim plans, with final proposals expected by 28th November, 2025.

Greater Lincolnshire is earmarked by Government to go live with its new arrangements in April 2028.

Appendix A sets out the proposed interim plan submission to Government from this Council.

Recommendations

That the Leader:

- a) notes the criteria for Local Government Re-organisation, including the requirement for Councils to work together to develop proposals.
- b) approves the interim plan, set out at Appendix A, for submission to Government by 21st March, 2025, deadline.

Reasons for Recommendations

To allow this Council to submit an interim plan to Government for Local Government Re-organisation.

Other Options Considered

Not to submit an interim plan – this was discounted. Following engagement amongst Councillors, there is a view the Council should put forward an interim plan to Government. To not submit a plan would mean the Council would miss the opportunity for feedback from Government and may see a proposal taken forward by another Council that isn't considered by this Council to be in the best interests of residents.

1. Background

1.1. On 5 February, 2025, Minister McMahon wrote to all Council Leaders in Greater Lincolnshire. This letter, which was shared with all Councillors, confirmed the Government's ambition to create "simpler, more sustainable local government structures" and formally invited the Leaders in Greater Lincolnshire to collaborate on developing a proposal for Local Government Re-organisation based on the following criteria:

- A proposal should seek to achieve for the whole of the area concerned the establishment of a single tier of Local Government.
- Unitary Local Government must be the right size to achieve efficiencies, improve capacity and withstand financial shocks.
- Unitary structures must prioritise the delivery of high quality and sustainable public services to citizens.
- Proposals should show how councils in the area have sought to work together in coming to a view that meets local needs and is informed by local views.
- New unitary structures must support devolution arrangements.
- New unitary structures should enable stronger community engagement and deliver genuine opportunity for neighbourhood empowerment.

1.2. The letter, with detailed criteria, is included at Appendix B.

1.3. It should be noted that the Minister has made it clear that the Government expects areas to collaborate and jointly develop a single proposal for unitary Local Government. The method of collaboration is left to the discretion of the local area. Joint efforts are expected to address local identity and concerns.

1.4. Discussions with other Councils suggest that a range of proposals will be submitted to Government for feedback at this stage. Councils are currently sharing data with one another; however, this is currently limited to those in the Lincolnshire County Boundary.

1.5. The Government expects proposals to detail how communities are engaged. While community engagement might be limited in the interim plan due to timescales, there is an expectation that it will be a significant part of developing the full proposal.

1.6. This Council, via the Leader, is actively engaged in conversations regarding Local Government Re-organisation with the Leaders of Greater Lincolnshire's other Councils. Engagement continues to also take place between senior officers through the Chief Executive meetings and a range of other forums convened on the matter.

2. Report

2.1. Appendix A sets out an interim plan for submission to Government on, or before, 21 March 2025. It is a jointly prepared document by East Lindsey and South Holland District Councils.

2.2. The interim plan, which is for the whole of the Greater Lincolnshire region, splits the area into two Unitary Councils – North and South - based on the following model:

- **Northern Unitary** would comprise of the following existing Council areas – City of Lincoln Council, North East Lincolnshire Council, North Lincolnshire Council, West Lindsey District Council.
- **Southern Unitary** would comprise of the following existing Council areas: Boston Borough Council, East Lindsey District Council, North Kesteven District Council, South Holland District Council and South Kesteven District Council.

2.3. The Council understands that once the interim plan has been reviewed by Government feedback will be provided to inform how the Council might wish to progress with developing a full and more detailed final proposal for submission to Government by 28th November, 2025.

2.4. The model seeks to build on the solid foundations already developed by the South & East Lincolnshire Councils Partnership, which has delivered savings of £40m over the past three years through a joint service delivery approach.

2.5. Once feedback on interim plans is received from Government, Councils will be expected to continue working closely together throughout 2025 with a view to developing a single final submission to Government for Greater Lincolnshire for 28th November deadline.

3. Conclusion

- 3.1. The report sets out an interim plan for Local Government Re-organisation that if approved would be submitted by the 21 March, 2025, deadline.

Implications

South and East Lincolnshire Councils Partnership

The interim plan builds on the Partnership's existing success.

Corporate Priorities

The Council has a Partnership priority focused on being efficient and effective. The interim plans seek to put forward to Government an efficient and effective model of Local Government for Greater Lincolnshire.

Staffing

Local Government Re-organisation will have an impact on the workforce as it progresses and the Council is committed to ensuring colleagues organisation-wide are kept fully informed, along with Trade Unions.

Workforce Capacity Implications

If, following feedback on the interim plan, the Council progresses to develop a full submission for the November deadline, there will be a requirement for consultancy support to develop the proposal. There isn't the resource within the Council.

Constitutional and Legal Implications

The decision to submit an interim plan for Local Government Re-organisation is an Executive Function.

Data Protection

None

Financial

The interim plan would enable Greater Lincolnshire Councils to deliver in a more financially efficient model.

Risk Management

The Government has stated its intention to reorganise all two-tier local authority areas within this Parliament. In preparing for this, Councils are expected to work together to develop the best local government structure for the area. It is therefore important that all Councils engage in the process to ensure their area is appropriately represented in discussions and decisions. Not engaging in the discussions creates a risk that any future decisions regarding local government structures in Lincolnshire do not represent the best interests of this district.

Likewise, not submitting an interim proposal on 21st March 2025 risks the Council's priorities and interests not being taken into consideration by MHCLG when undertaking their assessments and making any final decisions. These risks are mitigated by regular and consistent engagement in LGR discussions at a local, regional and national level by both members and senior officers.

Stakeholder / Consultation / Timescales

Engagement has taken place with Councillors to inform the view on whether to submit an interim plan to Government. There has been limited wider consultation at this stage due to timescales. A full proposal, if developed, would require wider community and stakeholder engagement.

Reputation

None

Contracts

None directly from agreeing to submit an interim plan to Government. Local Government Re-organisation will have an impact on all Council contracts.

Crime and Disorder

None

Equality and Diversity / Human Rights / Safeguarding

None

Health and Wellbeing

None

Climate Change and Environmental Implications

None

Acronyms

None

Appendices

Appendices are listed below and attached to the back of the report:

Appendix A Local Government Re-organisation – Interim Plan

Appendix B Local Government Re-organisation – letter from Minister for Local Government

Background Papers

Background papers used in the production of this report are listed below: -

Document title

English Devolution White Paper

Where the document can be viewed

www.gov.uk

Chronological History of this Report

None

Report Approval

Report author:

James Gilbert, Assistant Director - Corporate

Signed off by:

Rob Barlow, Joint Chief Executive

Approved for publication:

Leader of the Council