
COUNCIL

Thursday, 3rd February, 2022

Present: Councillor Kath Pratt (Mayor), Councillors Judith Addison, Dominik Allen, Josh Allen, Mohammad Ayub, Noordad Aziz, Peter Britcliffe, Andrew Clegg, Munsif Dad BEM JP, Diane Fielding, Melissa Fisher, June Harrison, Marlene Haworth, Carole Haythornthwaite, Michael Hindley, Terry Hurn, Abdul Khan, Chris Knight, Sajid Mahmood, Patrick McGinley, Michael Miller, Caroline Montague, Tim O'Kane, Dave Parkins, Bernadette Parkinson, Miles Parkinson OBE, Joyce Plummer, Steven Smithson and Kate Walsh

Apologies: Councillors Loraine Cox, Paul Cox, Susan Hayes, Eamonn Higgins, Jenny Molineux and Paddy Short

241 Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors Loraine Cox, Paul Cox, Susan Hayes, Eamonn Higgins, Jenny Molineux and Paddy Short.

242 Declarations of Interest and Dispensations

Councillors Aziz, Britcliffe, Dad and Hurn declared a personal interest in Agenda Item 3 - Our New Deal for a Greater Lancashire, due to their roles as elected Members of Lancashire County Council.

Councillors Fisher and Miller declared a personal interest in Agenda Item 3 - Our New Deal for a Greater Lancashire, due to their employment by Lancashire County Council.

There were no declarations of dispensations submitted.

243 Our New Deal for a Greater Lancashire

Members considered a report of Councillor Miles Parkinson OBE, Leader of the Council, providing an update on work undertaken towards the development of strengthened joint working, a long term strategic plan and a County Deal for the Lancashire area and seeking agreement to progress this work.

The report presented a paper at Annex A which was being considered by the Full Council of each of the fifteen local authorities in Lancashire, i.e. the county council, two unitary authorities and each of the 12 district councils.

The intention was that the document would set out the general principles and high level priorities of a long term strategic plan and County Deal. As progress was made, more details about specific asks would be developed and there would be opportunities for all of the partner authorities to contribute to and influence that, including identifying specific schemes and activities.

This report covered:

1. **Lancashire 2050**, which set out the headline themes which could be included in a long term strategic plan and ambition for Greater Lancashire.
2. **Our New Deal for a Greater Lancashire**, which set out an initial scope and was a first phase of work that could begin to frame a set of devolution asks as part of a County Deal.
3. **Governance**, which set out information about the governance options to oversee the long-term plan and deliver the deal, and the principles agreed by Leaders for any governance arrangements.

The Leader provided a general introduction to the paper, which included the following points. The Government had recently published its Levelling Up White Paper, which had been referenced in the paper. This new announcement would be taken into account when developing the Lancashire proposals.

The development represented a collective agreement by the 15 Lancashire Leaders who had been working on this project since 2014. Initial discussions had proved difficult, but subsequent discussions had tried to move the matter forward. Councillor Parkinson had been a key stakeholder at the table and Hyndburn had played his part in trying to build consensus despite the difficulties. All of the Leaders were currently working together for the benefit of Lancashire's 1.5M residents and 54,000 businesses. The region had a thriving 3.4bn economy.

Accordingly, Leaders had agreed a roadmap to deliver a shared vision, which would include the devolution of some powers from Whitehall. The proposals presented were a base model only and Leaders would take instruction from their individual councils. However, there was a need for all councils to show a commitment and not to be divided. Council Leaders were moving forward together and positive conversations were being held with the Government. There was optimism that a great deal could be agreed which would benefit all.

Lancashire Leaders were seeking devolved powers based on 4 core themes:-

- Economic growth and investment;
- Transport, connectivity and infrastructure;
- Early years, education, adult skills and employment workstream; and
- Environment, climate change and housing quality.

The proposed agreement was a first step and, as further stages were developed, these would be brought back to the partner councils. Accordingly, the document before the Council represented the beginning, not the end of the process.

The total indicative value of the request to Government was around £5.6bn over a seven year period. The deal could triple funding into the area and would be the largest devolution deal to date. The request was evidence-based and would be transformational. To facilitate this ambition a formal body would need to be created to make shared decisions. The 15 Leaders were clear that this was right for Lancashire. There was no need to implement a Mayoral Combined Authority model, as adopted by other regions. What was proposed was a collective agreement. The project was being led by an Executive Group comprising 5 Conservative and 3 Labour authorities and even included Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council who had previously championed an extended unitary structure for East Lancashire. The proposed deal was not about merging or abolishing any existing councils. Each

authority would be retained. The key aim was to ensure devolved decision-making from Whitehall to Lancashire.

The outcome of this stage would be referred back for further scrutiny and agreement. However, the end product would be best for Lancashire as a whole. Individual councils should focus on what they agreed upon, not on their differences. If all went well, the new deal could be in place in around 18 months time. The Leader encouraged all Members to support the outline deal.

Councillors Britcliffe, Dad, Haworth and Parkins spoke in favour of the proposals. There was a general acceptance that this was a first step in the right direction and that there would be further opportunities to discuss and approve the detail as the proposals developed.

Councillors Aziz, Hindley, McGinley, O’Kane and Walsh expressed concern or outlined particular reservations about the proposals. These were broadly based on a view that there was insufficient detail in the proposals at this stage to enable an informed decision to be made. The comments included:

- Concern that the Government would not keep its promises around devolved powers;
- Concern that the proposals were Executive-led, with insufficient non-executive scrutiny;
- Concern that the additional funding sought would be relatively small on a per capita basis;
- Concern that larger towns in Lancashire might swallow up the majority of any additional funding received;
- The need for additional consultation with the trades unions;
- Concern that education in Hyndburn would not be properly funded under the deal;
- Concern that the Government’s White Paper had watered down the type of deal that could now be achieved and that Lancashire was not mentioned as one of the 9 initial County Deal areas announced;
- A view that the proposals lacked ambition, clarity and a strong overall vision;
- The on-going possibility of future local government reorganisation in Lancashire based on unitary structures.

The Leader of the Council responded to the points made and summarised the case for supporting the proposals. Each of the Leaders had taken the proposals back to their respective councils, but it was disappointing to note that one authority had not fully endorsed the proposals as envisaged. However, this should not hold back the other partners. £5.6bn was not a small amount of money and a ‘grown up’ approach would need to be adopted by all participants. Lancashire businesses needed extra funding and a lack of agreement was potentially holding them back. The reservations expressed today would be considered as the proposals developed further. It was reiterated that tonight’s decision was not the final deal. That would require all partners to engage in a ‘grown up’ debate. The formal governance structure of the County Deal had not yet been agreed. Previously, 1 or 2 authorities had vetoed progress, but the time was now right to move on. A minority should not seek to impose their views on the majority and each authority might need to compromise on some issues for the sake of all.

In accordance with Council Procedure Rule A16.5, six Members present at the meeting called for a recorded vote.

The **MOTION** was then put to the **VOTE**.

For the Motion

Councillors Kath Pratt (Mayor), Judith Addison, Dominik Allen, Josh Allen, Mohammad Ayub, Noordad Aziz, Peter Britcliffe, Andrew Clegg, Munsif Dad BEM JP, Diane Fielding, Melissa Fisher, June Harrison, Marlene Haworth, Carole Haythornthwaite, Terry Hurn, Abdul Khan, Chris Knight, Sajid Mahmood, Jenny Molineux, Caroline Montague, Michael Miller, Dave Parkins, Bernadette Parkinson, Miles Parkinson OBE, Joyce Plummer, Steven Smithson Kath Pratt (Mayor)

Against the Motion

Councillor T O’Kane

Abstentions

Councillors Michael Hindley, Patrick McGinley and Kate Walsh

Accordingly, the **MOTION** was **CARRIED** and it was:-.

Resolved

That the Council:

- (1) Supports the outline "Our New Deal for a Greater Lancashire" at Appendix 1 of Annex A as the initial draft basis for further discussion and development of a possible County Deal for the Lancashire area.**
- (2) Agrees the principles of governance as set out in Appendix 2 of Annex A for any future deal.**
- (3) Agrees that the Leader of the Council continues to work with Lancashire Leaders in line with the principles agreed in recommendations (1) and (2) above, and notes that any formal proposals will require approval by Full Council at the appropriate time.**

Signed:.....

Date:

Chair of the meeting
at which the minutes were confirmed