

**FLINTSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL**

<b>Date of Meeting</b>	1 March 2017
<b>Report Subject</b>	The White Paper <i>Reforming Local Government: Resilient and Renewed</i> and Regional Working
<b>Report Author</b>	Chief Executive

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

Welsh Government has published a White Paper called *Reforming Local Government: Resilient and Renewed*. The White Paper is a statement of intent for the future of local government in Wales.

The White Paper replaces the earlier Local Government (Wales) Bill of the previous Welsh Government, a piece of draft legislation which had proposed a structural reorganisation of local government. In a change of policy direction the new White Paper advocates extensive regional collaborative working, supported by the unitary local authorities which are in existence, as an alternative to a structural reorganisation.

The White Paper re-includes some of the provisions of the earlier Bill, and adds new provisions, for local government governance, the powers and functions of local authorities, performance and improvement, the roles of councillors, local democracy, workforce, community councils and electoral reform.

This report invites the Council to make a response to the White Paper. The consultation runs until 11 April. The Welsh Government intent is to introduce a Bill into the legislative process in 2018.

A presentation on the White Paper will be made at the meeting to stimulate discussion.

North Wales is possibly the most advanced of the Welsh regions in collaborative regional working. The White Paper builds on some of the progressive work of North Wales and the other regions in advocating regionalism as the preferred model. The report provides a short commentary on the current arrangements for regional working as a guide.

## RECOMMENDATION

1.	That Council make a response to the White Paper.
2.	That Council notes the current arrangements for regional working in North Wales.

## REPORT DETAILS

<b>1.00</b>	<b>WHITE PAPER REFORMING LOCAL GOVERNMENT: RESILIENT AND RENEWED</b>
1.01	Welsh Government has published a White Paper called <i>Reforming Local Government: Resilient and Renewed</i> . The White Paper is a statement of intent for the future of local government in Wales. The White Paper replaces the earlier Local Government (Wales) Bill of the previous Welsh Government, a piece of draft legislation which had proposed a structural reorganisation of local government. In a change of policy direction the new White Paper advocates extensive regional collaborative working, supported by the unitary local authorities which are in existence, as an alternative to a structural reorganisation.
1.02	The White Paper reinforces the role and importance of local government in Wales. Whilst offering the facility for the voluntary merger of councils there is no intent to enforce mergers or to pursue the option of a wholesale local government reorganisation.
1.03	The paper sets out the rationale for regionalism and lists a series of tests against which the potential for enhanced regional working should be evaluated. The paper then lists a series of strategic and functional working areas where a form of regional working would be required, and a series of strategic and functional areas where the potential of regional working should be explored.
1.04	The strategic and functional areas where regional working is to be required are:- <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Economic development</li><li>• Transport</li><li>• Land Use Planning and Building Control</li><li>• Social Services</li><li>• Education Improvement</li><li>• Additional Learning Needs</li><li>• Public Protection</li></ul>
1.05	The strategic and functional areas where regional working is to be explored are:- <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Housing</li><li>• Waste</li><li>• Community Safety and Youth Justice</li></ul>

1.06	The paper also sets out ambitions to explore the options for the regional or national organisation of shared or 'back off' services.
1.07	The paper explores which geographies or 'foot-prints' should be set for regional working, and the options for the extent of mandatory regional working that Government should direct. The paper gives a preference for a model where a regional 'footprint' would be prescribed for some functions such as economic development, and where a framework would be set out for others with a choice of regional boundaries and combinations of public bodies such as public protection.
1.08	The paper then goes on to explore the funding, workforce and governance challenges of regional working and collaboration. The paper poses the option of a 'joint governance committee' for regional collaboratives as a variation of the long-standing joint committee model.
1.09	In the middle and later sections of the White Paper there are proposals for:- <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the repealing of the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009 which sets of the current arrangements for performance and improvement planning and their regulation</li> <li>• the reform of the governance and funding arrangements for Fire and Rescue Authorities</li> <li>• the governance models for councils, the roles of councillors and local democracy</li> <li>• the role and value of community councils</li> <li>• electoral reform including the minimum age of voting, digital access to electoral registration and voting, flexible arrangements for voting, and the local adoption of the single transferable voting system for local elections</li> </ul>
1.10	The White Paper carries forward from the earlier Bill the proposal to introduce the power of general competence as an enabling legal power for local authorities.
1.11	A presentation at the meeting will pull out the most important contents of the White Paper, explore their risks and benefits, and offer a suggested Council position to stimulate debate.
	<b>Current Regional Working in North Wales</b>
1.12	North Wales is in a strong position to respond to the White Paper as it is possibly the most advanced of the Welsh regions in collaborative regional working. The White Paper actually builds on some of the progressive work of North Wales, and some of the functional areas proposed for regional working have been advocated by Flintshire and partners in the region in earlier informal consultation by the Cabinet Secretary.
1.13	For North Wales there is no contention over geographical boundaries. The regional definition is undisputed and there is 'co-terminosity' whereby the six councils all fall exactly within the regional boundaries of the Health Board, North Wales Police and North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority.

1.14	<p>North Wales matches up to the proposed areas for directional or exploratory regional working as follows:-</p> <p><b>Economic Development:</b> all six councils in the region are committing to a new statutory joint committee to oversee the regional Economic Growth Strategy. The terms of reference of the Committee, and the scope of the developing Strategy, are fully consistent with the intentions of the White Paper.</p> <p><b>Transport:</b> transport planning and service commissioning will form part of the above as a specialist function. The former transport joint committee Taith was dissolved at the direction of the Welsh Government. The White Paper proposes a reversal of this position.</p> <p><b>Land Use Planning and Building Control:</b> for planning there are informal arrangements regionally for policy and practice sharing, setting and achieving performance standards, and sharing specialist resources such as the historic environment and natural environment. A number of pieces of important strategic work have been commissioned and completed jointly including the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) and strategic sites. There is an integrated joint regional service for minerals and waste planning (hosted by Flintshire). For Building Control there are informal regional arrangements for policy and practice sharing for a service which operates in a competitive fee-earning environment.</p> <p><b>Social Services:</b> there are informal arrangements regionally for policy and practice sharing, setting and achieving performance standards, and sharing specialist resources. There are several national and regional joint service models for commissioning services or overseeing professional practice including adoption services and safeguarding. There is significant joint work with the Health Board and other partners to develop and manage the commissioned care market. There are formal sub-regional integrated services including the North East Wales Community Equipment Service (Flintshire – Wrexham – Health Board EAST)</p> <p><b>Education Improvement:</b> all regions of Wales have in place an integrated School Improvement Consortium. In North Wales GWE is governed by a statutory joint committee. The consortium model could be expanded to take in more functions.</p> <p><b>Additional Learning Needs:</b> this function could potentially be imported into the education improvement consortium GWE, subject to a business case whereby the quality, responsiveness and viability of a regionalised service was assured.</p> <p><b>Public Protection:</b> there are informal arrangements regionally for policy and practice sharing, setting and achieving performance standards, and sharing specialist resources. Services are localised and are scaled according to the size and complexity of each county.</p> <p><b>Housing:</b> there are informal regional arrangements for policy and practice sharing, and a number of formal sub-regional arrangements for example the sharing of specialist posts, commissioned Supporting People services, co-procurement of stores services, a single integrated housing register, and</p>
------	--

	<p>creative housing schemes with registered social landlords such as Extra Care.</p> <p><b>Waste:</b> five of the six local authorities have a formal contractual partnership for non-recyclable domestic waste disposal. This partnership has the capacity to be expanded into recycle sales, procurement and possibly operational service integration.</p> <p><b>Community Safety and Youth Justice:</b> North Wales has a regional Safer Communities Board (SCB) for community safety, youth justice and criminal justice. There are informal and progressive arrangements regionally for policy and practice sharing, setting and achieving performance standards, and sharing specialist resources.</p> <p><b>Shared Services:</b> there are few formal regional arrangements for shared services in North Wales with an exception being the regional Emergency Planning Service (hosted by Flintshire). There are examples of the informal sharing of resources in professional networks such as specialist and peak-time case sharing in legal services. There are examples of the regional procurement of specialist goods and services such as ICT. On a sub-regional level there are formal arrangements such as the Joint Procurement Team (Denbighshire-Flintshire), the traded Occupational Health Services (Flintshire-Wrexham) and the partnership training function (Flintshire-Coleg Cambria).</p>
--	---

<b>2.00</b>	<b>RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS</b>
2.01	None at this early stage of the legislative process.

<b>3.00</b>	<b>CONSULTATIONS REQUIRED / CARRIED OUT</b>
3.01	Extensive consultation underpins the vision document as set out in the report.

<b>4.00</b>	<b>RISK MANAGEMENT</b>
4.01	None at this early stage of the legislative process.

<b>5.00</b>	<b>APPENDICES</b>
5.01	Appendix A - White Paper <i>Reforming Local Government: Resilient and Renewed</i> .

<b>6.00</b>	<b>LIST OF ACCESSIBLE BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS</b>
6.01	<p>None.</p> <p>Contact Officer: Chief Executive  Telephone: 01352 702101  E-mail: chief.executive@flintshire.gov.uk</p>

<b>7.00</b>	<b>GLOSSARY OF TERMS</b>
7.01	<p><b>White Paper:</b> a policy paper which sets out the intention to pass legislation and is published for consultation and scrutiny.</p> <p><b>Bill:</b> the piece of draft legislation which precedes an Act in the legislative process.</p>