

LEADER DECISION

Decision:

(i) Details of decision

SURREY COUNTY COUNCIL RESPONSE TO THE GOVERNMENT CONSULTATION ON PROPOSALS FOR A NEXT GENERATION FUND

- (i) That the draft Surrey County Council response to the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills consultation on proposals for a Next Generation Fund, attached as Annex 1 to the submitted report, be endorsed.
- (ii) That authority be delegated to the Lead Manager for Environment and Economy to make any further changes to the Surrey County Council response in consultation with the Leader, ahead of the consultation deadline, in particular to reflect the views of the Surrey Strategic Partnership Leadership Group which will be discussing broadband at its meeting on 10 March 2010 and the views of the Environment and Economy Select Committee who will be discussing this item at their meeting on 11 March 2010.

(ii) Reasons for decision

To ensure that Surrey County Council's views are made known to Government and to increase the chances of the Next Generation Funds being deployed in Surrey.

(iii) Details of any alternative options considered and rejected

None

(iv) Details of any consultation and representations received not included in the published report

Attendees:

Carol Coleman, Chairman of Environment and Economy Select Committee
Damian Testa and Lee McQuade, Environment and Infrastructure Directorate

The Leader asked, and it was confirmed by officers, that they were aware of the comments made by David Harmer, relating to paragraph 6 of the report. He also stressed that it was important to ensure that the initiative should benefit the whole of Surrey and not just the urban parts of the county.

Conflicts of Interest

(Any conflict of interest declared by any other Cabinet Member consulted in relation to the decision to be recorded)

None

Dispensation

(Any dispensation granted by the Standards Committee in respect of any declared conflict of interest to be noted)

None

Decision taken by:

(i) Name: Andrew Povey

(ii) Portfolio: Leader

Date of Decision: 10 March 2010

Date of Publication of Record of Decision: 10 March 2010

Date decision effective (i.e. 5 days after date of publication of record of decision unless subject to call-in by the Environment and Economy Select Committee): 18 March 2010

LEADER DECISION

Decision:

(i) Details of decision

SURREY COUNTY COUNCIL RESPONSE TO THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ASSOCIATION'S CONSULTATION ON FREEDOM TO LEAD: TRUST TO DELIVER

That the response, as set out in Appendix 1, be approved.

(ii) Reasons for decision

To respond to the Local Government Association consultation document.

(iii) Details of any alternative options considered and rejected

None

(iv) Details of any consultation and representations received not included in the published report

The Leader's response was tabled at the meeting.

Conflicts of Interest

(Any conflict of interest declared by any other Cabinet Member consulted in relation to the decision to be recorded)

None

Dispensation

(Any dispensation granted by the Standards Committee in respect of any declared conflict of interest to be noted)

None

Decision taken by:

(i) Name: Andrew Povey

(ii) Portfolio: Leader

Date of Decision: 10 March 2010

Date of Publication of Record of Decision: 10 March 2010

Date decision effective (i.e. 5 days after date of publication of record of decision unless subject to call-in by the Corporate Management Select Committee): 18 March 2010

Surrey County Council – LGA: Freedom to lead, trust to deliver – Consultation response

Q1: *Do councils and their local partners support this ambitious level of devolution and local autonomy?*

Freedom to lead – Yes please!

Surrey County Council and its partners supports the ambitious level of devolution and autonomy as it believes that more power and accountability should be at a local level as this would allow democratically elected councils to better serve their residents.

Q2: *Are these the right principles? Are there others that we should be thinking about?*

Surrey County Council believes there is considerable scope for reform of public services which makes better use of local government, its strengths, accountability and the structures that are in place.

In embedding representative democracy, our belief is that some other bodies could be removed which would reduce duplication and save costs and make it all easier for the public to understand.

The principles could be extended to include the general ability to commission services on behalf of the residents and the general ability to charge for services.

There should be one inspection regime and inspection should be without notice. In order for these changes to work, finance must not be ring fenced.

Q3: *Seen from the local perspective, are the elements of this 'offer' the right ones?*

Yes, but there needs to be flexibility to allow councils to develop at their own pace, some like Surrey County Council would like to move ahead more quickly.

Q4: *As a local councillor, how could your role be developed?*

Councillors need the opportunity to undertake necessary training and to be able to acquire the relevant knowledge to make informed decisions. They will require the knowledge of a wider range of services and their interaction.

We need to be able to identify and support future leaders as well as maximising the potential of all councillors. The latter is particularly important in terms of developing councillors' community leadership role.

Leadership academies are welcomed, as are schemes such as peer mentoring across councils and these should be strengthened and developed

further. Opportunities such as exchange programmes or cross-authority shadowing could be investigated to help councillors gain a wider experience and understanding of best practice elsewhere.

In terms of community leadership, further opportunities could be supported at a regional and local level, which bring councillors in two-tier areas or across county boundaries together for their training needs. This offers value for money in terms of delivery and helps to enable not only a consistent approach to learning and development but also provides an opportunity to do this around local issues of real importance to participants. This in turn leads to improved outcomes with councillors gaining the training they need while supporting the total place agenda.

Q5: *Seen from the perspective of those who hope to form the next government, how far will these measures help? What other changes and reforms should the local government sector be looking to?*

It is believed that the next government wishes to reduce the extent of central government control, reduce bureaucracy and the over-demanding inspection regimes.

Current inspection regimes are seen as about imposing government policy rather than a methodology to improve public services.

The measures in this proposal would give considerable support to a government with an agenda focussed on removing bureaucracy.

Local Government should be looking for more general freedoms and removing barriers to the commissioning of any services that is in the interests of their residents. Freedoms given under the Sustainable Communities Act should be available to all authorities.

Q6: *Do these proposals feel like the right route to greater devolution and a clearer framework for local accountability? Are there elements that are missing?*

A more streamlined governance structure will give a clearer framework of local accountability and would help members of the public to understand which body is responsible for particular items of service.

In Surrey the Police have already stood up and said publicly that they will ignore national targets if they do not fit what is right for Surrey.

Surrey County Council would wish to decide which are appropriate targets to meet on behalf of the people of Surrey.

Q7: *Do these proposals involve an appropriate level of devolution of decision-making? Are there risks to maintenance of centrally determined priorities, or minimum national standards for universal services?*

The proposals need to be expanded to clarify the extra devolution of decision-making. The removal of quangos and regional bodies would allow greater devolution to democratically elected bodies. The removal of separate police

authorities, CDRPs and LSPs would allow cost savings and better integration of local services.

Central Government could still set minimum standards with local bodies building on these according to their own judgements.

Central Government can set a policy framework and can make clear its desires for its priorities. The advantage of greater devolution is that Central Government priorities could be adjusted locally to suit the particular area.

Q8: *The common theme of these proposals is for further evolutionary reform of public services and the machinery of government, but at a significantly faster and more radical pace. Is this the right approach, or do we need 'big bang' constitutional change?*

The rapid but evolutionary development of the proposals is felt to be the correct approach with the ability of each council to move ahead at the pace, which would suit itself. Surrey County Council will be happy to lead on these changes.

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