

SERVICES IN A UNITARY STRUCTURE

ADULTS AND COMMUNITIES

Introduction

1. Consideration of a possible unitary structure for Leicestershire presents an opportunity to consider whether to redesign how services are delivered by local government, and if so what form the redesigned structure should take. The focus is on how better outcomes can be delivered for residents, local business and partner organisations, and how local government can best work with those organisations recognising the challenging times ahead as a result of public sector finance restraints. This appendix, and other appendices prepared in part to facilitate discussion at scrutiny bodies, set out the opportunities that a unitary structure could afford to each service, as well as some examples of best practice from the county unitary councils established in 2009.
2. This appendix should be read alongside the appraisal of options in the Cabinet report. In the 'Opportunities' section and case studies which follow, some of the changes highlighted offer the greatest benefits in a single unitary structure.

Background

3. A range of services relating to adults and communities are provided by the two tiers of local government. In Leicestershire, the County Council is responsible for adult social care services, libraries, museums and adult education; District Councils are responsible for housing services, arts development and some heritage services.

Opportunities for the Service presented by a Unitary Structure

4. Services can be better delivered by unifying the services now provided by eight councils. Some of the main opportunities and advantages of this would be:
 - Simplifying services for residents, dealing with a unitary council, providing a single point of contact and easier access to local authority services.
 - Consistency of social care housing and cultural services, one overarching policy, one set of service standards, clear expectations.
 - Reducing administrative and back office costs, without impacting on front line services, enabling more efficient delivery of outcomes for residents.
 - Reducing running costs, for example all eight authorities currently operate client and resident financial and income services– this could be done much more efficiently under a unitary council with rationalisation of revenue and benefit, financial assessment and means testing services.

- Economies of scale – a unitary council would be in a much stronger buying position and better placed to procure and negotiate contracts to achieve best value for Leicestershire residents.
 - Opportunities to explore the combination of services currently delivered by several councils; for example, leisure and cultural services, and housing and accommodation services currently provided by the districts with heritage and learning services together with care and support services currently provided by the County Council, leading to more streamlined, efficient and cost effective service delivery.
5. From a strategic perspective, the Adults and Communities department aims to promote peoples independence, and support local communities through the commissioning and delivery of social care service and cultural enrichment. A unitary authority would facilitate the following strategic opportunities:
- Coherent, universal place making strategies incorporating many elements currently delivered across several councils for the planning, coordination and delivery of accommodation based care services. To provide investment in terms of capital and/or land over a significant period (2019 – 2037) to increase the range of accommodation that exists across the County for individuals receiving support from adult social care. To meet the challenge of an aging population, future accommodation based support must be designed that individuals would both choose to live there and for those with assets, will choose to finance it themselves. There are a number of specific factors that relate to the future of Extra Care and residential care particularly for older people that will be evaluated as the project progresses.
 - A single voice to promote culture and heritage services to governmental and funding bodies such as the Arts Council, Heritage Lottery fund and Heritage England.
 - Clear Accountability for the local government contribution to improving the health and wellbeing of local residents and delivery of services in partnership with the NHS. For example reductions to delayed transfers of care require a unified response to address housing, social care and other regulatory provision.
 - Efficient and streamlined delivery processes in areas where there is duplication of delivery such as the provision of assistive technology and lifeline services to provide a county wide unified offer to residents

Existing unitary council best practice case studies

6. Wiltshire Council, secured the best value from its budget for adult social care through re-procuring its monitoring and response service and wanted to introduce telecare for any of its service users who could benefit. The council developed a business case for mainstreaming telecare and then to manage the transition to the new arrangements. The business case showed that telecare could save the council £2 million a year by reducing the reliance on

domiciliary and residential care, and also identified an opportunity to offset costs by offering the telecare service to private paying customers and designed a benefits framework and roadmap to enable the council to realise the savings.

This was a radical transformation for both organisation and service users. The Council migrated 3,000 customers onto the new monitoring and response provider, safely and without service disruptions. Training took place for 250 council staff to refer service users for telecare. Wiltshire County Council and its providers are now actively promoting telecare to over 10,000 target customers across the county.

7. Cornwall Council has developed a Strategic Business Case to deliver accommodation based care across the County. The purpose of this Strategic Business Case is to transform housing with care and support for older people and adults with learning disabilities who have eligible adult social care needs. The implementation will involve working collaboratively with housing and registered providers to stimulate the market to deliver extra care housing and supported living. This is expected to deliver improved outcomes for individuals living in these forms of housing, as well as provide cost avoidance through diversion away from more expensive and less personalised institutional forms of care. Implementation is enabled by working in partnership both internally (for example with social care staff and with housing) as well as externally (with providers and developers, and with health). Adult Social Care working with colleagues in the housing, planning and economic growth services, ensures that housing for people with eligible social care needs is well placed to be fully represented in local plans and strategic documents to influence the future direction and development of older people's housing and care services.

Adult Social Care Services

Current

8. Leicestershire County Council commissions and provides adult social care and wellbeing services as required to meet the needs of the local population. This includes
 - (i) advice information and guidance,
 - (ii) assessment and determination of eligibility for funding
 - (iii) support planning and review of care requirements,
 - (iv) charging and financial assessment
 - (v) Protection from harm and abuse
 - (vi) Market shaping, market oversight and development
 - (vii) Care support
 - (viii) Transitions for young people from children's services

9. The districts have responsibility for related functions such as housing, planning, and some matters connected to benefits. The approach and delivery model for housing strategy and development duties currently varies across the districts. There are people currently who are temporarily accommodated in residential placements due to the urgency of the presenting situation, but they would be better placed in community accommodation. The issue is often the time it takes to access accommodation managed by district councils.
10. In some areas, such as assistive technology and equipment to support people to remain in their own home, there is a definite overlap between services; these services are both duplicated and fragmented within two tier authorities leading to increased ambiguity and bureaucracy for local residents and increased cost to local government. Currently there are some district councils who offer lifeline services and others who do not; some offer broader assistive technology support as does the County Council whilst others do not.
11. Whilst the 'Lightbulb' partnership has sought to standardise processes for housing related support across the district councils, the offer to residents remains variable. For example, some Leicestershire districts do not currently allocate all their Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) allocations whilst other districts have needs which cannot be met within their allocation.
12. There are presently unknown influences arising from future charging mechanisms for adult social care. A Government Green Paper on social care is expected later in 2018, following the decision in July 2015 to postpone the introduction of a cap of lifetime social care charges and a generous means-testing regime. It is still expected that a cap on lifetime social care charges will be introduced.
13. A cap and floor mechanism would need additional regulation and safeguards for early work and implementation, to prevent qualifying assets from being protected or excluded by individuals and families. Means testing will be resource-intensive for local authorities and combining this new function with existing district responsibilities for benefits and housing would be efficient in a unitary structure.

What could a unitary structure's adult social care offer be?

14. Moving to a unitary authority presents significant opportunities to join up budgets, strategy, planning and delivery to provide a coherent offer for the public across statutory and discretionary activities relating to adult social care. The examples given below demonstrate how a unified provision delivers improved outcomes for service users and ensures financial sustainability for the future. Within the areas of adult social care and communities and wellbeing, a unitary structure would facilitate a more effective approach to delivering strategic objectives relating to:
 - Strong Economy
 - Wellbeing and Opportunity
 - Keeping People Safe
 - Great Communities

- Affordable and Quality Homes

15. Preventative approaches and demand reduction: The key to long term sustainability of the health and care system is maximising the independence and self-reliance of individuals and communities. A unitary structure for Leicestershire would be able to pull together local understanding of the needs of communities, co-ordinate a wide range of place based initiatives to create an enhanced model for improving community capacity across Leicestershire. For example there is strong evidence that loneliness has a major impact on older people's use of health and care services. A unitary council for Leicestershire would provide a more co-ordinated approach to tackling loneliness, implement best practice more consistently across the county and streamline the support offered to individuals.
16. Supporting People at Home: Unitary councils elsewhere in England have been able to develop a more integrated health and social care offer, working with local NHS partners to take advantage of the enhanced range of services which the unitary council controls. The development of Home First services to support people at home, prevent hospital admissions and improve hospital discharge, and community based neighbourhood health and social care teams would be enhanced through having a unitary authority responsible for housing/homelessness, public health and social care. Patients, service users and families would see improvements through the reduction in duplication and the number of agencies involved, as well as the benefit of more streamlined processes. There would be opportunities to develop an integrated support offer using voluntary and community sector projects, partnership with CCGs and locality primary care, focusing on people who are high consumers of health and care services, embedding existing district council functions into the integrated health and care locality teams, to address the challenges of specific conditions at a local level.
17. Housing Provision: Having a unitary council responsible for housing stock would allow flexibility in the provision of housing to people with Learning Disabilities, Mental Ill Health and Autism. A single strategic housing authority which also commissions social care, has planning responsibilities, and delivers wider infrastructure, would allow the new council to prioritise the development of housing to meet the needs of older adults, people who have frailty and disabled people to provide lifetime homes and alternatives to long term residential care. A unitary council for Leicestershire would create opportunities to develop housing solutions to improve delayed transfers of care from hospitals where the availability of housing can contribute to delayed discharges. The focus would be on improving individual patient care, however over time, a more proactive housing strategy could be developed which both addressed locality level resources and specific demographic features, but also a county-wide strategic housing approach. This would enable patients from hospital to be relocated to more appropriate accommodation for example due to increased level of disability; or because of vulnerability such as homelessness, domestic violence or where there is a safeguarding/exploitation issue.

18. Housing Strategy: A unitary council for Leicestershire would be able to create a single Local Plan to plan for the very significant challenges of meeting the housing needs of an ageing population without the complexity of separate plans and separate housing authorities. A unitary council would allow for adequate resources to be put towards a dedicated strategy and development function. For example, it is currently difficult to provide Lifetime Homes for people with specific housing needs. An integrated approach may help in tackling the shortfall in affordable and retirement housing by extending best practice across the county. This would be of particular benefit to those people who are seeking greater independence and/or are trapped in institutional accommodation or family settings such as care leavers, people with mental health problems in residential care and adults with learning disabilities seeking an independent supported living environment.
19. Assistive Technology, Adaptions and Equipment: A unitary approach for Leicestershire would bring together assessment, funding and delivery of major adaptations, minor adaptations, telecare including lifeline services, community equipment provision and assistive technology and thereby reduce duplication and improve access and responsiveness.. Overall funding and resource allocation can be directed through a more strategic approach to reflect needs across the county. The Lightbulb programme has shown the benefits that can be achieved through taking a 'one council' approach, however these benefits could be further enhanced through development of a unitary council. without the requirement for 8 different governance arrangements
20. Wellbeing: Under the Care Act 2014, upper tier councils, including unitary councils, have a specific duty to meet the wellbeing needs of local people. However, wellbeing cannot merely be met through the provision of adult social care or public health services. District Councils also have many functions and services which contribute to the wellbeing of individuals and communities. Housing and infrastructure services, culture and heritage provision, environmental and regulatory services all contribute to the development of wellbeing. A unitary council would both direct and deliver the full range of provision that enhances wellbeing.

Communities and Wellbeing

Existing unitary council best practice case studies

21. Wiltshire Council is working to deliver a series of Community Campuses that will provide a range of services tailored to local needs of the local community. The Council is also developing Health and Wellbeing Centres across the county. The services offered within a community campus depend on the requirements of the local area and can range from community and clinical space, leisure facilities, catering facilities and youth services alongside specialist services such as housing, revenues and benefits, library, pre-school, fitness suite, and children's centre services. The administrative hubs and campuses provide a safe place to do business, deliver customer services and to integrate with the community and hosts other

public services such as the local Army cadets, Police, History Society and a range of private businesses that lease space to generate revenue.

The campus in Salisbury hosts the headquarters of the Dorset and Wiltshire Fire and Rescue Service. Wiltshire Citizens Advice also moved into the premises in 2016. At Springfield Community Campus (in Corsham) people can visit the library and cafe and try out the gym but the Centre is also a real community hub drawing in local groups to use the facilities. Wiltshire Police has a presence at the Centre, which will also soon be a base for Wiltshire Health and Care. Council staff are also able to use the facility to work from. Social workers work with electronic tablets where they can log key information while on the move, cutting travel time and making administration quicker so they can concentrate on the needs of their clients.

22. The sharing of facilities with key partners is now prevalent throughout the new community campuses, which provide improved facilities and services to local communities across the county. There is a strong feeling that there is one public sector for Wiltshire.

Current position

23. Presently, Leicestershire County Council is responsible for communities and wellbeing services relating to libraries, records, museums, heritage, adult education, creative learning.
24. District Councils provide leisure centres, and other wellbeing and community services on a discretionary basis.
25. Creative Leicestershire, which supports creative businesses, is hosted by the County Council and contributed to by some District Councils.
26. Given that some of this offer is non-statutory, the move to a unitary structure would enable economies of scale and future-proof services which contribute towards thriving communities, and which are valued for wellbeing.

What could a unitary structure's communities and wellbeing offer be?

27. A coherent provision would result from a unitary organisation across wellbeing and community services, and would be structured with the following themes in mind:
- Cultural/Leisure/Learning offer: A unitary council would present an integrated and holistic culture/leisure and learning offer to the people of Leicestershire. For example, a "culture and learning passport" could improve access to a range of integrated and complementary services that are currently provided in a fragmented fashion. The passport would also allow residents to access services and opportunities across a wider area.
 - Routes into Volunteering: Pathways for people into volunteering would be simplified through an integrated offer comprising support to both

individuals and community led organisations. Currently there are various routes of access and a range of different volunteering opportunities administered separately across the 8 local authority areas, however the establishment of a unitary council could provide a single coordinated volunteering offer

- Adult and Community Learning: A unitary council would enable a larger integrated adult and community learning offer and maximise funding drawn from the Employment and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA)
- External Funding: Leicestershire residents would see a growth in cultural/learning activity by the strengthened position of a unitary council, increasing the ability to lever in external funding from agencies such as Arts Council England, Heritage Lottery Fund and the Employment and Skills Funding Agency. A single point of contact would make it easier to do business with a variety of external funders.
- Efficiencies: A unitary authority would drive out efficiencies of scale by pooling budgetary and asset resource, reducing duplication, and maximising use of assets.