

**RECORD OF EXECUTIVE DECISION
BY CABINET**

ITEM:	Devolution and Local Government Reform in Worcestershire
Cabinet Members Present:	Councillors Simon Geraghty (Chairman), Marc Bayliss, David Chambers, Marcus Hart, Adam Kent, Steve Mackay, Richard Morris, David Ross and Emma Stokes.
Date of Decision:	20 March 2025
Purpose:	To consider the Options appraisal and interim plan regarding the various models of Local Government Reorganisation in Worcestershire.
DECISION:	<p>Cabinet:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Noted the content of the letter from Jim McMahon, Minister of State for Local Government and English Devolution inviting proposals for a single tier of local government and associated guidance dated 5 February 2025 (Appendix 1). b. Noted the independent Options Appraisal and Interim Plan prepared by Price Waterhouse Cooper LLP (PwC) regarding the likely costs, benefits and ongoing commitments which would arise from various models of Local Government Reorganisation in Worcestershire (Appendix 2). c. Noted the feedback from members on the Options Appraisal and Interim Plan of meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Performance Board on 18 March 2025. d. Authorised the Chief Executive to submit the County Council’s Options Appraisal and Interim Plan (referred in recommendation b) to MHCLG on the basis that a single unitary council for Worcestershire is the preferred option based on the analysis contained within the document. The Chief Executive is authorised to make minor factual

	<p>amendments in consultation with the Leader prior to the submission to MHCLG.</p> <p>e. Noted the Draft Interim Plan produced by the Worcestershire Leaders Board and authorises the Chief Executive to also submit this to MHCLG (Appendix 3) but agreed the preferred option of one single unitary Council for Worcestershire as set out in recommendation d).</p> <p>f. Noted the submission date of 28 November 2025 for the final proposal for a single tier of local government.</p> <p>g. Authorised the Chief Executive (In consultation with the Chief Financial Officer and the Assistant Director for Legal and Governance) to undertake the work necessary and to instruct PwC, in accordance with the Council’s Contract Standing Orders and Procurement Code by using a call off from a Crown Commercial Services Framework, to develop the final proposal for Local Government Reorganisation which would be submitted by 28 November 2025.</p> <p>h. Noted that the submission of the final proposal to MHCLG will be subject to the consideration and approval by both Cabinet and Council in the Autumn 2025.</p>
<p>Reason(s) for the Decision:</p>	<p>Following the publication of the English Devolution White Paper and receipt of a letter from the Minister of State for Local Government and English Devolution, the County Council and District Councils were invited to submit proposals by 21 March 2025 as to how they could reform their current structure to provide a single tier of governance as a step towards future regional strategic authorities.</p>
<p>Alternative Options Considered:</p>	<p>As detailed in the report.</p> <p>a) A single unitary council for the whole of Worcestershire, estimated population of 614,000;</p> <p>b) Two unitary councils for Worcestershire, one made up of the three southern districts of Malvern Hills, Worcester City and Wychavon (population 323,000) and the other made up</p>

	<p>of the three northern districts Bromsgrove, Redditch and Wyre Forest (population 291,000).</p> <p>c) A single tier proposal involving areas neighbouring Worcestershire.</p> <p>The report also considered 'no change' but concluded that the message from government was clear that there was no opportunity to opt out of the process.</p>
<p>Conflict of Interest (any declared by a consulted Cabinet Member/any dispensation granted)</p>	<p>Marc Bayliss and Steve Mackay declared an interest in relation to their respective roles at West Mercia Police and Crime Commission.</p>
<p>Date the decision is due to take effect:</p>	<p>20 March 2025. The Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Performance Board (OSPB) agrees that this decision is exempt from call-in as the interim plan on Local Government Reorganisation has to be submitted to MHCLG by 21 March 2025.</p>

HAZEL BEST, ASSISTANT DIRECTOR, LEGAL AND GOVERNANCE