

<b>TITLE</b>	: LOCAL GOVERNMENT REVIEW OF TWO-TIER AREAS IN THE NORTH WEST		
<b>TO / ON</b>	: COUNCIL		23 JULY 2003
<b>REPORT FROM</b>	: THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL		
<b>STATUS</b>	: FOR PUBLICATION		

**1.0 TYPE OF DECISION**

1.1 What type of decision is to be taken:-

EXECUTIVE DECISION		COUNCIL DECISION	
Key		Non Key	YES

1.2 If a key decision, has it been included in the Forward Plan

Inclusion in Forward Plan	(Yes or No) N/A	Date of Plan	
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**2.0 SUMMARY**

The Secretary of State has decided that there should be a Referendum on Elected Regional Assemblies in the North West. The Boundary Committee for England has been directed by the Government to start a major Local Government Review of the two-tier areas of the North West (ie Cheshire, Lancashire and Cumbria). This is with a view to recommending the reorganisation of all existing two-tier Councils into a single level of local government. Stage 1 on the process ends on 8 September 2003 and involves the development and submission of proposals for wholly unitary patterns of local authorities. Bury MBC adjoins Rossendale Borough Council and one possible proposal for a unitary pattern of local authorities covering this area would be for part or all of the Rossendale area to join with Bury MBC.

### 3.0 **OPTIONS AND RECOMMENDED OPTIONS (with reasons)**

That the Council formulates a submission to the Boundary Committee by the deadline of 8 September 2003.

That the Chief Executive be given Delegated Power to submit the proposals subject to completing a financial appraisal and be satisfied that it is in the best interest of the residents of the Borough.

Reason for the decision:- To enable a proposal to be submitted to the Boundary Committee.

### 4.0 **THIS REPORT HAS THE FOLLOWING IMPLICATIONS**

#### **Corporate Aims**

This report is in line with the Council's Corporate Aims.

#### **Policy Framework**

This report is in line with the Council's Framework.

#### **Statement by Monitoring Officer**

The Council has been invited to submit representations/proposals regarding the Local Government Review in accordance with the Regional Assemblies (Preparations) Act 2003. Section 2 of the Local Government Act 2000 provides the power to do anything which is considered to be likely to achieve the promotion/improvement of the social, environmental and economic well-being of the Borough.

#### **Statement by Director of Finance and E-Government**

A full appraisal of the implications of any merger with Rossendale BC is underway, including an assessment of their assets and liabilities, their funding position, their performance in respect of key financial functions and their governance arrangements.

#### **Human Resource IT/Land and Property Implications**

A full appraisal of the implications of any merger with Rossendale BC is underway.

#### **Wards/Area Boards affected**

The proposal could impact on a number and/or boundaries of Area Boards.

<b>Scrutiny Panel's Interest</b>	Resource Scrutiny		
<b>Consultations</b>	Rochdale MBC, Rossendale BC and Leaders of all the Parties.		
<b>Call-in</b>			
<b>Briefings</b>	Executive Members/ Chair	YES	Chief Executive YES

## **5.0 INTRODUCTION**

- 5.1 The Secretary of State has decided there should be a referendum on elected regional assemblies in the North West. The Boundary Committee for England (as part of the Electoral Commission) has been directed by the Government to start a major local government review of the two-tier areas (District and County Councils) of the North West (ie Cheshire, Lancashire and Cumbria). This is with a view to recommending the reorganisation of all existing two-tier Councils into a single level of local government. The Committees' recommendations will then inform electors about the structure of local government that would be implemented in the event of a 'yes' vote in the referendum.
- 5.2 The Boundary Committee will be able to review and make recommendations for changes to the boundaries of existing single-tier authorities adjoining two-tier authorities, but only with a view to part of an existing two-tier authority being amalgamated into a single-tier area. This has implications for Bury MBC and Rochdale MBC, both of which share boundaries with Rossendale Borough Council.
- 5.3 The Committee will undertake a full stage review of the two-tier authorities within the North West and this will take about a year. The first stage of the process includes a twelve week public consultation. Submissions from local people, Councils and other organisations are invited by 8 September 2003.
- 5.4 The Boundary Committee will have regard to the following when making their recommendations:-
- a) the need to reflect the identities and interests of local communities;
  - b) resource considerations, including removal of duplication, economies of scale, purchasing power and reductions in overall management and support service costs; and
  - c) the quality of service provision, including responsiveness to local needs.

- 5.5. In formulating their recommendations the Committee will be looking mainly at one specific question, “which wholly unitary structures are likely to provide the best overall delivery of local services in the existing two-tier county area of the region, assuming the existence of an elected regional assembly?”
- 5.6 From this the Boundary Committee will prepare recommendations to be submitted to the Secretary of State. At least two options for unitary local government in each county council area must be put forward.

## **6.0 ISSUES**

- 6.1 In the Lancashire area it would appear likely that any proposals for setting up new unitary authorities will have to take account of the size of existing districts and consider amalgamations/boundary changes to create districts of a more viable size than that which exists at present. With a population of 65,600 Rossendale would struggle to remain as an independent district. As stated, Rossendale BC shares boundaries with Bury and Rochdale Councils. Not only that, the Irwell Valley is a strong geographical feature which links parts of Rossendale with Bury.
- 6.2 On the 9 July 2003 the Executive Committee authorised a community consultation exercise to be commissioned by the Council jointly with Rochdale Metropolitan Borough Council to ascertain the views of residents on possible options for unitary authority status in the area. The consultation was commissioned on an urgent basis in order to have the findings available by the end of August 2003.
- 6.3 The conduct of the review is to take place in four stages and stage 1 which involves the submission of local authority financial returns to the Committee and submission of proposals to the Committee ends on 8 September 2003. Thereafter in stage 2 (9 September 2003 – 1 December 2003) the Boundary Committee will publish draft recommendations. Given the deadline it is therefore proposed that should the Council resolve to submit a proposal to the Boundary Committee that the Chief Executive be given delegated power to carry out an assessment in financial and planning terms and submit proposals to the Committee by 8 September 2003.

### ***Background documents:***

### ***For further information on the details of this report, please contact:***

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