

CABINET - 27 NOVEMBER 2014

100 PROPOSED MERGER OF THE WIRRAL AND LIVERPOOL CORONER AREAS AND CORONER SERVICES

Councillor Adrian Jones introduced a report by the Head of Legal and Member Services which provided details of the proposed merger of the Wirral and Liverpool Coroner Services which had arisen from the retirement of HM Coroner for Wirral, Mr Christopher Johnson, on 31 December 2013.

From 1 January 2014, both Wirral and Liverpool Councils had agreed to operate a joint coroner service on an interim basis, pending a decision being taken in relation to the merger of both the Wirral and Liverpool Coroner Areas. The interim arrangements had been duly endorsed by the Chief Coroner and Lord Chancellor/Ministry of Justice, and had ensured that both Councils, but in particular Wirral Council had in place effective coronial arrangements that were adequately resourced to meet all legal duties and obligations.

Attached to the report at Appendix 1 was the business case for the proposed merger of both coroner areas which created a single "Liverpool and Wirral Coroner Area" and the "Liverpool and Wirral Coroner Service".

The Head of Legal and Member Services sought the Cabinet's approval and agreement in respect of the business case and the proposal that Wirral and Liverpool Coroner Areas and Services merge to create the Liverpool and Wirral Coroner Area and Service, subject to formal targeted consultation to be undertaken by the Ministry of Justice and Parliamentary approval.

Councillor Adrian Jones informed that the proposals were in line with Government policy and the report set out the details of what the merger would mean, including the anticipated savings. The result would be a more efficient and strengthened Service. Councillor Jones also informed that other mergers had been considered and the details had been included in the report.

Councillor Phil Davies informed that this proposal was a good example of sharing a service with a neighbouring local authority.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the business case set out in Appendix 1 be approved and agreed;**
- (2) the business case be the subject to consultation by the Ministry of Justice;**
- (3) any recommendations of the Chief Coroner for England and Wales and any decision by the Lord Chancellor regarding a merging of the Wirral and Liverpool Coroner Areas be endorsed;**
- (4) the Head of Legal and Member Services be authorised to undertake any necessary actions, if permission is formally granted, to implement the**

requirement of any statutory instrument or Order to combine the Wirral and Liverpool Coroner Areas;

- (5) following formal guidance issued by the Chief Coroner regarding the appointment of Coroners, and subject to the outcome of consultation and the Lord Chancellor making the Order, it be recommended that the current Senior Coroner for the Liverpool Coroner Area (and the current Assistant Coroner for Wirral), Andre Rebello, be appointed as Senior Coroner for the new single jurisdiction to be known as the “Liverpool and Wirral Coroner Area”;**
- (6) the Head of Legal and Member Services be authorised, in consultation with both relevant Cabinet Members for Wirral and Liverpool Councils and the City Solicitor for Liverpool City Council, to undertake a joint recruitment exercise (in accordance with the requirements of the Chief Coroner, Lord Chancellor and Ministry of Justice) to appoint a full-time Area Coroner, if permission is formally granted to combine the Wirral and Liverpool Coroner Areas;**
- (7) the Head of Legal and Member Services be authorised, in consultation with both relevant Cabinet Members for Wirral and Liverpool Councils and the City Solicitor for Liverpool City Council, to undertake a joint recruitment exercise (in accordance with the requirements of the Chief Coroner, Lord Chancellor and Ministry of Justice) to appoint two further assistant coroners, if both Wirral and Liverpool Councils agree the business case set out at Appendix 1;**
- (8) it be agreed that the current interim arrangements approved and operated since 1 January 2014 continue until such time that the Council addresses the issues of amalgamation of the Wirral Coroner Area and a permanent Senior Coroner is appointed to cover Wirral;**
- (9) the Head of Legal and Member Services be authorised to take all necessary steps required to progress the amalgamation of the Wirral Coroner Area, in accordance with the directions of the Chief Coroner, Lord Chancellor and/or Ministry of Justice; and**
- (10) the Council be recommended to endorse the business case as set out in Appendix 1 to the report and the actions detailed above.**