Progress report on the South Norfolk/Broadland Council Feasibility Study

1. Purpose of the Report

In September 2017, the Full Councils of Broadland and South Norfolk mandated officers to develop a feasibility study to explore the opportunities for a strategic collaboration and one shared officer team supporting two autonomous councils. The purpose of this progress report is to provide Members with an update on the developments to date of the feasibility study work, including an overview of the member governance involved in its development, the initial focus areas for joint working which have been developed and the next steps for the full feasibility study. The work for this update will feed into the feasibility report for decision by Members in June and July 2018.

2. Background

In December 2017 the two Council leaders issued a joint statement of intent which set out the ambitions for the enhanced collaboration between the two councils. The joint statement can be found below:

Joint Statement of Intent by Leaders

Our joint statement of intent for this process as councils is clear. Both councils have similar scale and demographics and see shared services with each other as preferred partners as a positive looking position for the future.

We are progressing opportunities for a shared culture, shared management and one shared officer team that represent an evolution in the way we work for the benefit of our communities on a geography they can recognise and relate to.

Working more closely together on this locally led initiative offers both councils increased capacity and resilience, together with greater financial stability.

We want a local government that moves with the times and innovates, while retaining and attracting the most talented staff, offering them positive futures and career development opportunities.

In a world where we need to do more with less, a shared services partnership can make us more efficient and strengthen our hand when working with partners. It will also increase our ability to take advantage of commercial opportunities to deliver better value for our residents. We want to show strong leadership of place and are committed to building a larger and more prosperous local economy with quality jobs and homes, while ensuring those that rely upon us the most are not left behind.

Our residents and our businesses expect their local councils to work hard to maximise local quality of life for everyone. Our joint aim is for two strong councils, working together with the ambition and resources to make our combined area one of the best places to live and work in the country.
This shared services partnership can deliver on that promise.

Andrew Proctor, Leader Broadland District Council and
John Fuller, Leader South Norfolk Council (December 2017)

The joint statement followed a decision in September 2017 by Councillors at both Broadland District and South Norfolk Councils for officers to investigate the potential of creating a closer collaborative working arrangement between the two councils, while at the same time maintaining the two councils’ individual autonomy.

The report to Members in September set out the common opportunities and challenges facing both councils and the similarities of the two areas in terms of economy, people and place and the make-up of the organisations themselves. As well as this it identified the areas where the two councils were already working collaboratively to drive growth and improve outcomes for residents. The report set out that the two councils were operating in a changing local government landscape with regard to funding pressures and wider public-sector reform and that by working more collaboratively the two councils could better tackle these challenges, as well as potentially seizing some of the lost opportunities from the failed devolution deal.

In the paper brought to full councils, an indicative timeline was set out of 4-6 months to develop the feasibility study. In the early stages of the programme, both the Joint Lead Members Group, Cabinet and Joint Leadership Teams worked closely with an external facilitator from Shared Service Architects (a company supporting the development of shared services across the country) to develop the principles and focus areas for the feasibility, alongside an initial timetable for delivery. The final timeline which was developed included additional engagement aspects as well as a feasibility scoping phase during November and December. In addition, the final timeline included briefings to officer teams from services in January, ideas generation workshops with officers in February and March, and a Member progress report in March/April, to be followed by a decisions paper (Feasibility Study Report) to Members in June/July.

3. Members and Members groups

In order to oversee and support the delivery of the programme and provide strategic direction, informal member-led groups were established. Cabinets of both councils have also been involved throughout the process.

The following provides an overview of each informal member group supporting the process.

3.1 Joint Informal Lead Members Group

The main purpose of this group is to oversee the development of the feasibility study.
Membership

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Broadland</th>
<th>South Norfolk</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cllr. Greg Peck (Joint Chair)</td>
<td>Cllr. Kay Mason Billig (Joint Chair)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cllr. Chris Harrison</td>
<td>Cllr. Michael Edney</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cllr. Judy Leggett</td>
<td>Cllr. Charles Easton</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cllr. Steve Riley</td>
<td>Cllr. Trevor Lewis</td>
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3.2 Joint Informal Scrutiny Group

The purpose of this group is to support the development of the feasibility study and to scrutinise the recommendations coming through from the Joint Lead Members Group.

Membership

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Broadland</th>
<th>South Norfolk</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cllr. David Harrison (Joint Chair)</td>
<td>Cllr. Graham Minshull (Joint Chair)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cllr. Jonathan Emsell</td>
<td>Cllr. Christopher Kemp</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cllr. Lana Hempsall</td>
<td>Cllr. Keith Kiddie</td>
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3.3 Joint Informal Cabinet

This is an informal meeting of both Councils’ Cabinets. The group meets at key stages of the feasibility study development when needed.

Membership

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Broadland</th>
<th>South Norfolk</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cllr. Andrew Proctor (Leader)</td>
<td>Cllr. John Fuller (Leader)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cllr. Stuart Clancy (Deputy leader)</td>
<td>Cllr. Michael Edney (Deputy Leader)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cllr. John Fisher</td>
<td>Cllr. Kay Mason Billig</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cllr. Roger Foulger</td>
<td>Cllr. Barry Stone</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cllr. Trudy Mancini-Boyle</td>
<td>Cllr. Yvonne Bendle</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cllr. Shaun Vincent</td>
<td>Cllr. Lee Hornby</td>
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3.4 ‘Quad’

Quad is a group comprised of the two Council Leaders and Chief Executives. The main role of this group is to provide a cross-cutting strategic view of the programme
as a whole and unblock any key issues arising, whilst championing the collaborative work and early opportunities seized.

### 3.5 Informal networking for members

A networking event was held on 29 January, which provided Members and senior officers an opportunity to meet in an informal setting and ask questions to those directly involved in the feasibility study. A follow up informal networking event is scheduled (at the time of writing) for the 12th April 2018.

### 3.6 Member/Officer visits to other shared service authorities

On 11th January, Members chairing the informal member groups and senior officers visited East Suffolk to find out about the experience of collaborative working between Waveney and Suffolk Coastal Councils. Both Members and officers found this to be a helpful opportunity to see how other authorities had experienced sharing services and working more collaboratively and to discuss key lessons learnt which continue to be fed into the development of the feasibility study. Main areas discussed at the visit included:

- **Focussing on quick wins** - The process should start with the easy wins and not get too focussed on more complex issues around governance.

- **Communication is key** - good communication with Members, Staff, and residents is of high importance.

- **Enhanced opportunities for staff** - The one shared officer team had found greater opportunities for career development for existing staff and also attracted a high calibre of new staff.

- **Increased funding opportunities** - the Councils had found that collectively they could more easily attract funding and investment.

Following subsequent feedback from the Joint Member Groups, officers are arranging potential further contacts with other councils who have looked to undertake similar collaborative arrangements to identify a wider range of experiences and lessons learnt.

### 4. Officer governance

A number of teams across both authorities were set up to support the delivery of the feasibility study. Outlined below are the different groups, together with their responsibilities:
### 4.2 Joint Strategic Group

The Joint Strategic Group (JSG) comprises two CEXs, Broadland’s deputy CEX and South Norfolk’s 2 Directors. The main role of the group is to support the delivery of the feasibility study and provide strategic input to the development of the ideas feeding into the final report. Members of JSG have been supporting the key focus areas for this stage of the feasibility process. Alongside this, the JSG have also taken a leadership role in supporting the staff culture change across the two organisations throughout the feasibility development stages.

### 4.3 Joint Leadership Team

The Joint Leadership Team (JLT) includes the JSG, alongside the heads of service of both councils. JLT, as part of their role, provide specific service advice and direction to the feasibility study, as well as providing an additional channel of communication and advocates/champions for the process. Training for the JLT was provided by Shared Service Architects.

### 4.4 Programme Team

The Programme Team comprises a Core Programme Team (CPT), Strategic Support (which includes HR, Finance and Communications) and Quality Assurance. The CPT’s main role is to provide the operational support to the development of the feasibility study and programme management and governance. Training for the Programme Team was provided by Shared Service Architects.

### 4.5 Quality Assurance

A QA role is being provided by Emma Hodds (Head of Governance at South Norfolk Council) in her Internal Audit role across both Broadland and South Norfolk. The role of QA is to provide objective advice to the programme, monitor and review risks and to provide a challenge function.

### 4.6 Joint Unison, Staff Forum and Staffside

A joint staff and union consultative group has been established to share progress of the feasibility study work and to get staff feedback on the process being followed by the programme and proposals as they are delivered. The group includes both union and non-union representatives from both councils and provides an opportunity for them to ask senior leaders questions regarding the feasibility programme. Further staff engagement has been undertaken through team briefings and cascades via a news bulletin (Shared Voice), established to keep staff aware of developments and key issues and by the CEXs who have jointly held all-staff briefings at both councils.
5. Preferred Partner Model

At the beginning of the feasibility study, the Joint Lead Members Group and the Joint Informal Cabinet took part in a facilitated workshop with Shared Service Architects to discuss the type of strategic partnership to be progressed. Members agreed that they wanted to develop a preferred partner model. The key features of this model are captured in the below table:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Preferred partner</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Specific named partner(s)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cross-organisation efficiencies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shared management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organisational development led</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Co-ownership/co-creation relationship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strong cultural alignment</td>
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<tr>
<td>Interdependence</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

‘Shared services’ can be thought of as pockets of service areas that have been joined up. Our proposed model is not about ‘pockets of shared/joint working’ it is organisation-wide, ‘one shared officer team’. The more aligned we can be, the greater the productivity will be attained.

Alongside this, Members also emphasised that the partnership must:

- Be strategic in intent – more than a shared management arrangement.
- Focus on the delivery of better outcomes for residents, always acting with the customer/resident at heart.
- Be characterised by a single management team creating a new ‘shared culture’
- Be two autonomous councils.
- Recognise that there will be differences in service delivery models and priorities between the two councils.
- Create a new type of council (model/vehicle) that other partners will want to collaborate with or join.
- Afford new opportunities not available to the councils working alone.

6. Service Focus Areas for the Feasibility Study

As outlined in the paper taken to Full Councils in September 2017, the purpose of the feasibility study is to develop a more detailed case for working together, which explores in more depth the opportunities available and the options for implementing them. Following the facilitated sessions between Shared Service Architects, the Joint Lead Members Group and Joint Informal Cabinet it was agreed that the feasibility study would primarily look to address the two councils core strategic drivers, by prioritising those service areas/activities that impact directly on the strategic ambition
to drive economic and housing growth, and those enabling services that will support transformation across the two authorities in support of one shared officer team.

The following service areas have therefore been focussed on for the first stage of the feasibility study:

**Focus Area 1 - Services that will help enable transformation:**
- IT/Digital
- OD/HR
- Business Improvement and Customer Insight
- Marketing and Communications

**Focus Area 2 - Services that will help us achieve our ‘strategic intent’ of Driving Growth & Prosperity:**
- Economic Development
- Planning
- Strategic Housing

In order to facilitate the development of feasibility proposals for these service areas a number of activities have taken place with staff over the past couple of months to support initial information gathering and idea development:

- All staff briefing sessions to provide an overview of focus areas and principles established by informal joint member groups
- A facilitated workshop with Shared Service Architects and service leads to support collaborative behaviours and outline direction of travel
- Pen pictures of service areas developed to baseline key information including service priorities, staffing, budgets, infrastructure and challenges to inform the process of ideas generation
- Workshops involving over 70 staff from the focus service areas to develop ideas and proposals for collaborative working
- Service lead and Joint Strategic Group challenge workshops to prioritise, review and develop proposals coming forward

The emerging proposals for collaboration coming from these service areas are set out below. At this stage of the feasibility these are examples of those proposals being developed and more specific proposals will be developed for the June/July report.

**7. Initial ideas emerging from the Feasibility Study work**

A number of initial ideas have come forward by service areas as proposals for the feasibility report and more specific proposals will be developed for the June/July report. Set out in the tables 7.1 and 7.2 and described in the following sections are initial proposals that may have potential to help deliver the desired outcomes for collaborative working, namely:
- Achieving greater influence
- Joint collaborative working of service delivery
- Creating a platform for innovation
- Financial resilience and sustainability

### 7.1 Service areas to drive Economic Growth and Prosperity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Proposal</th>
<th>Influence</th>
<th>Collaborative Service Delivery</th>
<th>Innovation Platform</th>
<th>Financial resilience</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Economic Growth</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joint Economic Growth priorities and ambition delivery method</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alignment of core Economic Development business support services</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Planning</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Creating a Joint Strategic Planning/Growth Delivery Team</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rural Community Enabling Team</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Strategic Housing</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Joint Strategic Housing Statement and delivery approach/plan</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
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</table>

### 7.2 Service areas to help transformation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Proposal</th>
<th>Influence</th>
<th>Collaborative Service Delivery</th>
<th>Innovation Platform</th>
<th>Financial resilience</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Business Improvement (including Customer Insight)</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Develop joint strategic priorities, ambitions and approach to joint ‘delivery plans’</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joint approach to service reviews and approach to support transformation</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Joint approach to public affairs</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shared approach to data and customer insight</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shared approach to customer experience and understanding</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Communications and Marketing</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Joint internal communications and engagement</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shared approach to operational marketing and communication activities</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>HR and Organisational Development</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Shared policies and terms &amp; conditions to support one shared officer team</td>
<td>✓</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shared set of values and competencies to support a shared culture</td>
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<td>✓</td>
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<tr>
<td>Recruitment and retention joint approach to become the local council “employer of choice” in the region</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>IT/Digital</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Software rationalisation/integration opportunities</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sharing of low level infrastructure and hardware</td>
<td></td>
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<td>✓</td>
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<tr>
<td>Joint delivery of IT support</td>
<td></td>
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7.3 Key themes emerging from feasibility proposal developments

There have been a number of common themes emerging from the initial proposals including:

- Strategic opportunities to align strategies and policies to support collaborative working – a number of opportunities across service areas have been identified to potentially jointly develop strategies and policies to support both the organisations strategic ambitions (e.g. economic growth, strategic housing) and to support more efficient and effective ways of working through one shared officer team (e.g. shared HR policies)

- Operational opportunities to support more efficient and effective working – teams have identified a number of opportunities to improve working at an operational level including sharing officer expertise, joint procurement opportunities and improving processes.

- Common risks and constraints emerging – there have been a number of common risks identified in the feasibility proposals including ensuring capacity to support the day-to-day running of services whilst also supporting collaborative transformation, recognition that there may need to be some initial investment to support effective shared service working in some areas e.g. ICT systems, and ensuring effective engagement with members and staff to successfully deliver changes and move towards new ways of working.

- Developing options and route maps for delivery – following the initial development of feasibility proposals the next stage will be for officers to work up more detailed route maps and options for delivery for Members to consider.

The paragraphs below set out those feasibility proposals being developed by service areas, highlighting insights gathered and potential short, medium and long term opportunities and risks identified.

7.4 Proposals from Service areas to drive Economic Growth and Prosperity

This area focusses on the strategic intent of driving economic growth and a more strategic approach to planning as core drivers for collaboration, driving growth and prosperity for the people and places the two councils serve. The following is an outline of the ideas identified and proposals being developed for the feasibility report:

7.4.1 Economic Growth

**By working more collaboratively together we want to show strong leadership of place and are committed to building a larger and more prosperous local economy.**

- **Understanding our joint Economic Growth priorities and investigating a joint Economic growth ambition delivery method to deliver the Norfolk and Suffolk Economic Growth Strategy**

  The short-term benefits of this would be to gain a better understanding of the
types/sector strengths and business rates generation from rateable businesses across the new economic area, to enable an ‘offer’ and promotion of the Unique Selling Points (USPs) for the combined economic area and gain a clear understanding of the ‘added value’ that a combined approach to delivering growth can bring.

The longer-term benefits would be to achieve greater levels of inward investment as a result of stronger business clusters, a clear offer and proactive selling of the location leading to defining a larger economic area which is better positioned to take advantage of more central government initiatives such as growth zones. It will also support the two councils to enhance our partnership work with the Department for Work and Pensions to support the development of the labour market across our combined area. Organisational benefits would include greater levels of resilience between Economic Development teams and priority activities delivered more efficiently through more effective alignment of staff and resources.

- **Identification and alignment of core Economic Development business support services**

  This proposal will look at opportunities for shared services to support businesses. One aspect to be investigated is expanding the Broadland Council Training Services (BCTS) which has been operating successfully in an open and competitive market for over 25 years delivering business and community training services. Key benefits would include promoting and providing a high-quality training offer that businesses in both districts can rely upon; an increase in business start-up and growth alongside the enhancement of social mobility across both areas; a higher proportion of start-up businesses remaining in business after 12 months leading to increased income from Business rates as a result of more robust start-ups; additional jobs created as well as added value to the Growth Hub start up support offer.

7.4.2 Strategic Housing

**We are jointly committed to making our area one of the best places to live in the country, enabling the delivery of good quality homes that meet our residents’ needs.**

- **Developing a joint Strategic Housing Statement (including approach to affordable housing and housing with care) and delivery approach/plan**

  This proposal focusses on developing a joint way forward for the strategic housing activity which is defined as maximising the delivery of homes across all tenures to meet current and future needs of people and the local economy. This definition comprises only the aspects of strategic housing which contribute to the agreed strategic intent of driving growth and prosperity.

  The short-term benefits will be to use data-based evidence (housing need and supply) to help define and agree joint priorities for the strategic housing activity and the approach to delivering the priorities. The identification of
housing need for specific client groups and the delivery of supported housing and housing for older people will require on-going positive dialogue with Norfolk County Council, integrated commissioning teams and delivery partners. These discussions will focus on the capital and revenue funding required to enable delivery, and the locations of specific schemes to meet housing need.

7.4.3 Planning

**Working more closely together on locally led initiatives will offer both councils increased capacity and resilience for the benefit of our communities, enabling us to work across a geography they can recognise and relate to**

- **Creating a Joint Strategic Planning/Growth Delivery Team**

  This would be a joint, multi-disciplinary team to add value and expedite the delivery of major strategic sites in Broadland and South Norfolk, for example Long Stratton, Beeston Park and Rackheath. This team would consist of officers from Broadland and South Norfolk and would also work alongside officers from other authorities, notably Norfolk County Council. The delivery of major, strategic sites requires a multifaceted programme of work. The creation of a Joint Strategic Planning/Growth Delivery team will build upon the strong track record of a multi-disciplinary approach to the planning function at both Broadland and South Norfolk to date, but it will also take the next steps to help facilitate the delivery of the broader programme of work. This includes the Development Management function; infrastructure delivery and funding (including the preparation of ‘oven-ready’ projects and schemes); community engagement; and potential land acquisition/development opportunities.

  The intended long-term outcomes are:
  - To add value to the strategic sites and enhance the new and existing communities associated with these sites.
  - To speed up the delivery of the strategic sites.
  - Acceleration of the delivery of strategic sites would generate income from CIL, New Homes Bonus and Council Tax/Business Rates.

  The benefits of creating a Joint Strategic Planning/Growth Delivery team are:
  - Sharing and pooling existing expertise, including officers from Broadland, South Norfolk and Norfolk CC.
  - A more focused and dedicated resource for the delivery of the strategic sites.
  - A more holistic approach to the delivery of strategic sites.

  Costed options for the composition of the delivery team are being explored such as having a dedicated bespoke team or using existing resources with and without backfilling. There is potential that a consultancy budget would be required for specialisms which fall outside the expertise of South Norfolk, Broadland and other public partners. For example, viability appraisals,
quantity surveying, design work for ‘oven ready’ projects, technical highway advice/design.

- **Rural Community Enabling Team.**

  This is the proposal under the bid that secured the £220k funding from the Planning Delivery Fund. It is to help establish a team to work with a number of local communities that are likely to be experiencing significant growth through the Development Plan process.

  The objective is to set up at least 20 community planning groups and work with these to help them understand the planning process, to produce town/village appraisals and plans, and to produce ‘community planning statements’ for consideration under the Development Plan (local plan or Neighbourhood Plan). Other elements, if wished to be progressed by groups, could include Neighbourhood Development Orders and the identification of sites for residential development e.g. in response to 5 Year Housing Land Supply issues. This work will build on and expand the community planning and Neighbourhood Planning work that is currently undertaken by the planning policy teams.

  The size of the team will be at least 4.6 FTE posts, the main roles being undertaken by officers from the planning policy teams utilising their expertise in community planning/neighbourhood planning. This will be as a proportion of their overall time, reflecting the community planning element of their work. Additional posts may be suitable for those in other teams that are interested in secondment to gain experience in community planning, or as a temporary position for planning graduates or possibly through internship in holiday periods, or through secondment of Development Management Officer(s) to add their expertise for example for work on identifying housing sites.

  Funding has been provided for a 2-year project commencing 1 April 2018.

In addition, the following collaborative joint planning work items are being undertaken as part of the more day to day work the Planning team are doing within the current interim shared planning arrangements:

- Identify the similarities and differences between the two planning teams’ organisational and development management processes to move towards a best new approach for the benefit of our customers through the most efficient service. It is anticipated that this will be carried out during the next 3 months.

- Provide greater clarity of Greater Norwich groups with the Joint Head of Planning providing briefings to all relevant officers on the structure, work and governance of the Greater Norwich partnership. There are no other dependencies and no additional support or resource is required.

- Supporting more efficient and effective communications with our customers by developing the use of iMail for bulk email shots. There are no other dependencies and no additional support or resource is required. It is
anticipated this will be delivered during the next 6 months.

- Maximise opportunities for working closely with statutory bodies: The respective Planning teams have a lot of interaction with other bodies such as the Lead Local Flood Authority and the Highway Authority. The collaborative working arrangements allow for a light-touch review of these working relationships with the intention of strengthening this interaction wherever possible.

- Explore sharing specialist roles: Both Broadland and South Norfolk Councils have specialist officers whose posts are not replicated in the other authority. Examples include the following specialisms: green infrastructure; design; and landscape. The collaborative working arrangements will enable exploration of how these specialisms can be shared across the two authorities in an acceptable and reasonable manner.

As part of the collaborative investigation for the feasibility, all three Strategic Intent-related teams across the services (Economic Development, Planning and Strategic Housing) have been working together to identify cross-service activities including:

- Generating information on commercial applications and decisions
- Continuing to share intelligence internally and across the partnership on business issues to support business growth
- Working together to secure affordable housing for the two areas.

7.5 Proposals from Service areas to help transformation

This area of the Feasibility Study focusses on building one shared officer team whilst maintaining two autonomous councils – this means a shared management team and officer team, shared use of each councils’ buildings and establishing a ‘one team’ approach/culture. In order to help make this happen the following proposals are being developed by the transformation-related service areas for the Feasibility report.

7.5.1 Business Improvement (including Customer Insight)

We want a local government that moves with the times and innovates. In a world where we need to do more with less, a one shared officer team partnership can make us more efficient and strengthen our hand when working with partners.

- Develop joint strategic priorities, ambitions and approach to joint ‘delivery plans’ for the two Councils.

This proposal is about developing a set of shared ambitions/priorities and associated delivery plan to help maximise collaboration at Broadland and South Norfolk. The benefits of this are seen as:
• Providing an opportunity to evidence publicly the extent of our collaboration to other organisations.

• To establish a common focus for both Councils’ services to deliver to, by defining a set of common strategic outcomes (ambitions/priorities).

• Provide clarity of approach and progress by establishing a route map showing the key related activities and when these will be delivered.

This proposal will look at establishing an overarching joint vision, joint ambitions and priorities that can be referenced in each councils’ 4/5-year strategic/corporate plans. Currently our strategic plans are developed during different periods. It is proposed that a one shared officer team delivery plan will also be developed setting out in more detail the activities to achieve the corporate objectives.

• **Review and develop a joint approach to service reviews and approach to support transformation across the two authorities through collaborative working.**

This activity will support a one shared officer team to achieve our joint outcomes rather than defining a methodology/process for reviews and will support the removal of barriers to collaboration, for example, by managing the organisational development of embedding a single culture.

• **Develop a joint approach to Public affairs.**

Public affairs is the strategic approach the two councils take to promoting their reputations and influencing strategy and policy on a regional and national stage. Public affairs combines policy development, government relations, lobbying to key stakeholders, strategic communications and media relations. It enables the councils to define and tailor messages for different audiences including local government peers, residents, businesses and organisations such as the LEP.

The proposal will seek to maximise opportunities for the two councils to work together to promote the Broadland and South Norfolk area, promote ourselves as forward-thinking and influential authorities and influence strategy and policy development at a national and regional level.

Benefits likely to be realised in the medium term include:

• Greater regional and national influence on policy development. Increased ability for our key strategy and policy ‘asks’ to be recognised by national government and leading local government organisations and incorporated in an earlier stage into the development of policy and strategy.

• Greater regional and national recognition of the Broadland and South Norfolk area, its assets and as a place in which to invest.
• Greater regional and national recognition of both authorities – both in terms of sharing best practice and becoming a forward thinking, influential partnership.

• Potential to bring in additional funding/resources from national and regional initiatives to the two districts as a result of enhanced reputation.

• Enhancing Members’ public profiles on national, regional and local issues.

• Greater organisational understanding of the impacts of policy and legislation changes.

• **Developing a shared approach to data and customer insight.**

  ‘Customer Insight’ is an understanding about the customer based on their behaviour, experiences, needs or desires.

  The benefits in this arise from being able to look, for example, at health outcomes from a customer perspective to help support the most vulnerable people, to identify what customers want from particular services and to help focus joint marketing campaigns for success. Through the feasibility work officers will look to identify a proposed shared approach to data and customer insight.

• **Develop a shared approach to customer experience and understanding.**

  This proposal is about establishing shared customer standards to support the one shared office team, i.e. a joint approach to how we approach customer experience, channels and our understanding of the customer journey. It relates to establishing joint customer service standards across services as opposed to standardising the service offering of both councils and will continue to maintain the autonomous identities of the two authorities.

  The benefits from this proposal will be a consistent approach for the customer, efficiency in having one rather than multiple approaches and to establish an agreed common and forward-thinking approach to how we engage with our customers across all channels included but not limited to phone, face to face, email, post and digital.

7.5.2 Communications and Marketing.

**Our joint aim is for two strong councils to work together with the ambition and resources to make our combined area one of the best places to live and work in the country, whilst ensuring those that rely upon us the most are not left behind.**

• **Developing a consistent approach to how we deliver joint internal communications and engagement (including members) across the two organisations.**
In order to support a one shared officer team, clear and consistent communications across the two authorities will be critical. A single internal communications approach would serve to enhance transparency and continuity of message. An example tool to support this would be looking to establish a shared Intranet to provide a platform for delivering consistent timely messaging, as well as delivering potential savings from having just one intranet.

- **Opportunities for developing a shared approach to operational activities eg. market research, printing, advertising etc.**

  The benefits envisaged from a shared approach to operational activities are from cost efficiencies through economies of scale through joint procurement of print, advertising and software. The teams will be developing further analysis of opportunities in this area.

### 7.5.3 HR and Organisational Development

*We are progressing opportunities for a shared culture, shared management and one shared officer team that represent an evolution in the way we work for the benefit of our communities. We want to retain and attract the most talented staff, offering them positive futures and career development opportunities.*

- **Shared HR policies including Terms and Conditions to support one shared officer team**

  This proposal will look at the policies to be aligned to support one shared officer team to work as efficiently and effectively together as possible by identifying quick policy wins and options and road maps/timelines to support moving towards harmonisation across the two councils.

- **Approach to developing a shared set of values and competencies to support a shared culture for one shared officer team.**

  This proposal will cover developing a single Organisational Development programme to support one shared officer team and move towards one staff culture. There are a number of values and competencies which are similar across the two authorities and some areas of difference. This proposal will develop joint staff values and competencies to support moving towards a single culture.

- **Joint approach to managing recruitment and retention, based on a shared set of HR values, to become the local council ‘employer of choice’ in the region.**

  The key benefits of this proposal will be improved recruitment and retention of staff as well as improved opportunities for staff in both authorities through increased variety of work and/or promotion and job opportunities.
7.5.4 Better use of technology

We will increase our ability to take advantage of commercial opportunities to deliver better value for our residents, ensuring we move with the times and innovate.

- **Identify any software rationalisation/integration opportunities.**

This proposal is about identifying which systems would be advantageous to share, together with indicative financial information to achieve this. Officers have identified where IT systems across the two authorities are similar or different and will be developing a route map to identify opportunities for improving customer service with potential costs and areas for savings.

**Using technology to work more efficiently** - We will explore how technology can support us to work more efficiently and effectively as a partnership by improving the way in which we can communicate remotely with each other, and reduce the need for excessive travel and mileage. With a common objective of being a low-cost operator/high performing councils, we can work to meet and exceed residents and businesses expectations in a modern connected world through multiple channels including online, mobile, landline phone and automation. Furthermore, we will explore how our councils can use technology for example, to allow virtual meetings so a single workforce can support two councils without having to be physically co-located.

- **Sharing of low level infrastructure and hardware.**

This proposal is about investigating the development of existing site-to-site connectivity for one shared officer team, joint procurement of data circuits for both Councils and potential shared use of Disaster Recovery and Business Continuity facilities. Investigation into shared telephony has already been undertaken. Broadland have an existing on-premise telephony system in place which is fit for purpose, South Norfolk are in the final stages of procuring a new cloud hosted telephony system. However, there is an opportunity to review this as an option when Broadland next require a telephony upgrade.

- **Develop how we can jointly deliver IT support across the two organisations.**

Taking analysis from the above two proposals, this work will look at identifying common ground where technical expertise could be shared in support of the systems and infrastructure. IT Service desk operating models and approaches to procurement will also be investigated.
8. Focus areas between April and June

Following consideration of this progress report by Members in March/April, between April and June, officers will continue to refine the proposals for the existing focus service areas as well as developing proposals for a number of other areas. These are outlined below:

- Strategic intent – driving growth and prosperity services – focus will be on developing more detailed route maps for the feasibility proposals including options and financial information as well as opportunities for joint bidding for funding.
- Transformation service areas – focus here will be on maximising the opportunities and efficiencies of being organisations serving more than 250,000 residents.
- Shared commercial opportunities – an assessment will be made on potential shared commercial opportunities to explore through enhanced collaborative working
- Governance – proposals will be developed on options for governance to support one shared officer team to work as efficiently and effectively as possible across two autonomous councils.
- Finance – although members have identified that cost savings are not the main driver for closer collaborative working, analysis will be presented on the potential cross-organisational savings and costs from a shared service delivery and one shared officer team.
- Contracts and procurement opportunities – analysis will be presented on potential shared contract opportunities over the short, medium and long term that could lead to further collaborative opportunities and potential efficiency savings.
- Working more effectively with partners together – analysis will be presented on areas where by working more closely together as two authorities we could strengthen our relationship and influence with key public organisations.
- One shared officer team - A key element of delivering the ambition of a ‘preferred partner model' will be one shared officer team supporting two autonomous bodies. The feasibility study in June/July will set out the first steps towards a shared management structure with a proposed timeline for implementation if members choose to progress with collaborative working across the two councils. It will also outline how better use of technology could help staff and members work more effectively and efficiently together across the councils.

The two authorities were both strong advocates for the Norfolk/Suffolk Devolution Deal which was arguably a missed opportunity in terms of the additional powers, funding and influence that the deal could have brought to the region. Members have requested that the feasibility work evidences how by working closer together the two councils could realise some of these lost benefits, as well as support the two authorities to take a more proactive approach to public sector reform. Grant Thornton are currently working with the District Councils’ Network (DCN) and its members to produce a toolkit on local government transformation and collaboration and we await the toolkit being developed in order to evidence the strategic potential
that closer working between the two councils might bring, by the assessment of other areas that have undertaken similar approaches.

**9 Early Opportunities**

Broadland District Council and South Norfolk Council have a strong history of collaboration; the Greater Norwich Growth Board has played a key role in driving economic and housing growth in our areas through, for example, attracting additional funding from central government. The creation of CNC Building Control over 10 years ago has used our collective resource more efficiently and effectively to ensure regulated development in our region. Our shared Energy Efficiency and Care and Repair services have meant that we have been able to support our residents stay warm and well, including successful joint bids to provide grant funding for our residents.

As part of the focus areas proposed by the Joint Lead Members Group and Cabinet it was suggested that if further opportunities presented themselves for shared service working whilst the feasibility study was being developed, for example due to staff changes or external opportunities, these would be shared with members as proposed ‘early opportunities’. It was outlined that progressing early opportunities would both be beneficial in terms of supporting organisational resilience and will also help act as trail blazers for more extensive collaborative working in the future. So far, there have been a number of early opportunities which have been pursued and investigated which include:

**9.1 Planning**

Planning is an area where we have worked jointly for over 10 years, for example through the Greater Norwich Growth Board. Following a vacancy that arose at South Norfolk Council, this area was identified as a potential early opportunity. In January 2018, the Informal Joint Members Groups and individual Council Cabinets and Scrutiny Committees agreed to move forward with interim proposals for a shared planning management team. Arrangements included establishing shared roles of Head of Planning, Development Manager and Spatial Planning Policy Manager. This shared management team have since split their working time between the two councils and have gained valuable insight and understanding of the respective planning services. This has enabled them alongside the respective teams, to develop some initial ideas (shown in Section 7.4.3 above) for collaborative working based upon experience.

Below outlines the activities and achievements of the joint planning team to date (first 2 months of operation) which include:

- A successful joint bid to the Government’s Planning Delivery Fund for £220k to create a joint ‘Rural Community Enabling Team’ to help communities engage in the planning process, understand the benefits and opportunities of development, and help identify sites that are appropriate for development and can be taken forward.
• Jointly negotiating and securing enhanced planning support (including slight cost saving) provided by Norfolk County Council.
• A Business Breakfast has been held to engage with representatives of the development industry to help understand how the joint planning service can be shaped to serve our customers even better.
• Jointly drafting the Annual Monitoring Report for Greater Norwich including an update on 5-year housing land supply and which sets out alternative options to enable the two planning authorities to assert a 5 year land supply. A joint Member briefing has been organised on this.

Some initial insights from the joint planning arrangements also include:

• Confirmation that there are genuine opportunities for closer and effective collaboration across the two planning services.
• In the short term, the collaborative working arrangements may be more resource intensive because ideas and initiatives require securing the buy-in and agreement of two senior leadership teams and two sets of Members and/or Leaders.
• There are a number of technical considerations to resolve moving forward such as the need to operate two email systems when dealing with aspects specific to each respective authority. The planning team is therefore working closely with the ICT teams to develop solutions.

The next steps with the shared arrangements are to progress the collaboration proposals for the June/July Feasibility report to Members, look into both councils’ development management processes and alignment opportunities, provide clarity on the Greater Norwich partnership governance groups to the team, continue to build a one-team culture, maximise opportunities for working closely with statutory bodies and also undertaking further exploration of sharing specialist roles.

9.2 GDPR

The new data protection legislation provides organisations with greater obligations and data subjects with increased rights, and is due to come into force in May 2018. The two authorities have been working jointly and sharing the knowledge and expertise of staff members to ensure we both are ready for the changes, and actions are now being implemented across the two councils. Joint working to date has included; reviewing our policies and statements to ensure we are compliant, meeting with teams across both councils to review procedures and practices and liaising with both Senior Leadership teams on strategic issues.

9.3 Food and Licensing

For two weeks in February 2017, officers from Broadland’s Food Team (part of its Food, Safety & Licensing Team) provided temporary food safety regulatory activities within the South Norfolk Council area during a period of staff shortage due to career development opportunities. As the short-term staffing issue had been foreseen, adequate time was available for appropriate plans to be put in place to enable the
Broadland officers to be correctly authorised to perform regulatory activities in the South Norfolk area. The arrangements worked well during the two weeks and 22 inspections were made of food premises. As well as inspecting premises, the operators were provided with national guidance on the control of E.Coli, Listeria and allergens and were also advised on implementing the Food Standards Agency’s “Safer Food Better Business” pack.

Feedback to South Norfolk colleagues was provided by the Broadland team following the two weeks. A presentation on the learning from this exercise and the potential for further developing collaborative working in Food Safety and other related environmental services is currently being developed. In the meantime, the two teams continue to work collaboratively offering mentoring, facilities for training and guidance when needed.

9.4 Waste

At the early stages of the feasibility study, we were exploring the potential of a shared operational waste service. This opportunity arose as Broadland District Council’s contract with their external waste and recycling provider was due for renewal. The two teams across both authorities explored this opportunity and the key benefits it could bring. However, due to the tight time constraints of the existing contract, it was agreed not to pursue this further at that point in time. It may be a service area where the two authorities could explore collaborative opportunities in the longer term.

9.5 Day-to-day collaborative working across the two councils

As part of our councils’ day-to-day work, we have found we are already collaborating more with each other, whilst we undertake the feasibility study, including:

*Joint Consultations Response Development*

An important part of our collaborative working is ensuring where possible, that we can create a single voice to promote and lobby our key policy points to central government and other bodies. Teams across the two authorities have been working together to identify opportunities where we can submit joint responses to consultations – supporting the outcome of having greater influence on a regional and national level.

Over the past few months, we have submitted a number of joint Broadland and South Norfolk responses to consultations including; Funding for supported housing, Provisional local government finance settlement 2018/19, the Homelessness code of guidance for local authorities and Fair Funding.

*Sharing of best practice between teams*

To support the development of a joint staff and working culture, teams across the authorities have been meeting informally to get to know each other’s services, share best practice and begin to identify early opportunities for more collaborative working. The housing team for example, have both attended a shared training event on
homelessness. SNC’s leisure team and BDC’s economic development team have also been meeting informally to discuss the potential opportunities around developing joint initiatives on leisure and community support.

10. Cost/savings apportionment methodology

In order to support the development of a financial analysis of potential savings and costs as a result of a shared approach to service delivery and one shared officer team, consideration has been given by both S151 officers to identify a preferred methodology for Broadland and South Norfolk to use as part of the collaborative working arrangements. The methodology has been developed by undertaking analysis of other district councils operating similar shared service arrangements. The proposed methodology will be applied to develop the financial analysis for the feasibility study to be reviewed by members in June/July and it will be in this report and at this stage that Members will be asked to make a decision on whether this joint approach to cost/savings split is reasonable. If agreed, this methodology will be applied after the completion of the feasibility study or if early opportunities for shared arrangements are confirmed as permanent changes.

It should be noted that until detailed calculations of the costs and potential savings of the proposals are progressed there cannot be certainty around the totality of costs and savings for each council.

Feedback from other local authorities and bodies such as Shared Service Architects has advised that it is best to keep methodologies as simple as possible. An approach that incorporates an external assessment is also seen as favourable. A range of options have been looked at and some alternatives are set out below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SNC Share</th>
<th>BDC Share</th>
<th>Basis</th>
<th>Rationale</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 59%       | 41%       | Core Spending Power for 2016/17 as determined by DCLG Final Settlement Figures | • On the basis of this being an external assessment of the core spending power made by government, this would be a good proxy for the savings apportionment.  
• This reflects the relative income generating capacity of each council (e.g. Council Tax, New Homes Bonus, Business Rates)  
• This would give us the ability to predict the savings in advance and ability to respond to changing income patterns. |
| 58%       | 42%       | Core Spending Power for 2017/18 as determined by DCLG Final Settlement Figures | |
| 53%       | 47%       | Gross Income per audited accounts 2016/17 | • This would be an easier proxy to compare like for like across SNC and BDC. |
It is proposed that the following methodology be applied to the development of the feasibility financials for the June/July feasibility study report.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Basis</th>
<th>Rationale</th>
<th>SNC Share</th>
<th>BDC Share</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Average of:</td>
<td></td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Core Spending Power for 2016/17 as determined by DCLG Final Settlement Figures</td>
<td>This combines a number of proxies to form an overarching basis for savings/cost apportionment. As mentioned above, core spending power of an external assessment, which also reflects income generating capacity.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Core Spending Power for 2017/18 as determined by DCLG Final Settlement Figures</td>
<td>These proxies would be simple to compare and gather.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Gross Income per audited accounts 2016/17</td>
<td>Expenditure as a proxy for cost splits has been used by other authorities as a basis.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Gross Expenditure per audited accounts 2016/17</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The rationale for this proposal is that after analysis of a number of options, not all of which are detailed above, a range of possible splits were calculated between 41/59 to 51/49. The recommendation of 45/55, as the midpoint, was deemed a fair split representing an appropriate reflection of the two councils’ different costs and income. The proposed methodology combines a number of proxies to form an overarching basis for savings/cost apportionment, including core spending power as an external assessment. By utilising this approach proxies would be simple to collect and compare and the methodology reflects that of other authorities which have established similar arrangements.

Nonetheless, it should be noted that the ambition is to move towards a 50/50 split over an agreed period if Members agree to move forward with collaborative working.

In the June/July report Members will make a decision as to whether this proposed cost/saving split be applied to the collaborative working arrangements.
11. One Shared Officer Team

The senior leadership teams of both councils, as part of the Joint Strategic Group and Joint Leadership Team, have been working closely together during the development of the feasibility study to guide and support the process.

A key element of delivering the ambition of a ‘preferred partner model’ will be a one shared officer team supporting two autonomous bodies. The feasibility study in June/July will set out the first steps towards a shared management structure with a proposed timeline for implementation if members choose to progress with collaborative working across the two councils.

The Feasibility Study will also articulate how we will promote culture change across the two organisations, moving towards a new joint culture ‘one team’ approach.

12. Quality Assurance statement – Emma Hodds

At the start of the QA process the governance arrangements that were developed by the programme team, were reviewed by both Councils’ Head of Internal Audit. These arrangements are critical to ensure that Members and key officers are involved in the feasibility study, as they are an integral part to its success.

The QA process to date has been light touch, the early days of this feasibility study is about building key relationships, which will enable this work to successfully progress. The feasibility proposals have been developed and a “critical friend” approach has been taken whilst these are being explored.

The next stages of the QA process will focus on the outcomes that are being proposed and monitoring at key points will be undertaken so as to maximise quality assurance whilst the programme is ongoing rather than at the end when checking on completed activities.

Key aspects to check will be:

- Stakeholder engagement – with unions, staff forum, staff side, and key partners.
- Scope and objectives of the proposals – are these specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and timely.
- Tracking of activities and implementation plans – are key tasks assigned, managed and monitored, are timetables in place to ensure these can be delivered as expected, are risks and issues included, are there regular touch points to ensure that these remain on track, is there ownership at the right level and is there buy in to what is being proposed.
- Benefits realisation – in terms of improvements in service, improvements in performance, resilience, customer focus and quality – have these been achieved as expected through the implementation plans that the teams have been working on and are the benefits as a result of the changes clear.
- Lessons learnt – how can we learn from initial developments and improve.
In the report that was reviewed by Full Councils in September it was set out that Local Partnerships (an organisation supporting shared service working) would provide external Quality Assurance support for the two councils. As the feasibility work has progressed and scope developed, and following discussion with the Local Government Association, it is proposed that an LGA Peer Review Chief Executive undertake an independent external assessment of the process followed to develop the Feasibility Study.

13. Spend to Date

The below table sets out the spend to date for the Feasibility Study, including external consultancy support and events:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Spend to date</th>
<th>Activities covered</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Shared Service Architects and Local Partnerships</td>
<td>£14,400</td>
<td>This has covered a number of workshops for both staff and members, development tools and expert coaching support for the development of the feasibility.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Members informal networking event</td>
<td>£450</td>
<td>Two informal networking events have been held for members to support collaborative working and share progress of the feasibility work.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

14. Next steps

14.1 Outcomes

Following the progress report being reviewed by the informal member groups and the two Full Councils, officers will continue to develop the Feasibility Study which will be presented to Members in June/July.

The Feasibility Study will seek to demonstrate the benefits to be delivered from a strategic collaboration and one shared officer team supporting two autonomous councils. These will include the following outcomes:

- **Achieving greater influence**- We will establish our combined area as one of the best places to live and work in the country. By showing strong leadership of place, we will increase our ability to take advantage of national and regional opportunities to deliver investment for our combined areas, driving prosperity and maximising quality of life for everyone.

- **A joint collaborative working of service delivery**- Through one shared officer team and shared culture we will transform the way we work for the benefit of our communities, building our capacity and resilience.
- **Creating a platform for innovation** – We will be forward thinking, continuously improving and innovating to ensure we deliver those services that our residents and businesses value the most.

- **Delivering financial resilience and sustainability** – We will enable the Councils to adapt to an evolving local government financial landscape, doing more with less and enhancing our productivity and efficiency.

The Feasibility Study will address these opportunities by developing proposals to support the focus areas set out in section 8 of this report.

14.2 Timeline

The timeline for review of the feasibility report by Members in June/July will be as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week commencing</th>
<th>Member group</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>W/c 4 June</td>
<td>Deadline for report to be circulated to informal Member meetings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W/c 11 June</td>
<td>Joint informal Member meetings:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• [Joint Lead Members Group](Date TBA)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• [Joint Scrutiny Group](Date TBA)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• [Joint Informal Cabinet](Date TBA)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W/c 25 June</td>
<td>Scrutinies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Tue 26 June – BDC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Wed 27 June - SNC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W/c 2 July</td>
<td>Cabinets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Mon 2 July – BDC and SNC (this will be a co-located meeting)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W/c 9 July</td>
<td>Full Councils</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Mon 9 July – SNC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Thur 12 July - BDC</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

15. **Recommendations**

**Members are asked to:**

1. Note the progress of the feasibility study to date and endorse the approach for the June/July feasibility as outlined in section 14.