

WYRE FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL

CABINET MEETING
THURSDAY 16 FEBRUARY 2006

LYONS INQUIRY – CONSULTATION PAPER & INTERIM REPORT

OPEN	
COMMUNITY STRATEGY THEME	
CORPORATE PLAN THEME:	Providing Community Leadership
KEY PRIORITY:	Local Democracy
CABINET MEMBER:	Councillor S. Clee
RESPONSIBLE OFFICER:	Chief Executive
CONTACT OFFICER:	Corporate Performance Advisor (ext 2723)
APPENDIX A	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Lyons Inquiry – Executive Summary• Lyons Inquiry – Full Summary
APPENDIX B	

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To inform Members of a consultation document issued by the Lyons Inquiry into the role, functions and funding of local government.

2. RECOMMENDATION

The Cabinet is asked to DECIDE that:

- 2.1 The contents of the Lyons consultation paper and interim report be noted;**

- 2.2 Future developments with the Inquiry be reported to Members; and to**

RECOMMEND To council that

- 2.3 A response agreed by Group Leaders be submitted to the ODPM by 13 March 2006.**

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 In December 2005, Sir Michael Lyons published his consultation paper and interim report on the future roles, functions and funding of local government.¹ This is a major strategic review commissioned by HM Government involving all public, private and voluntary sector stakeholders. (For clarification, this review, although linked, is independent of work being carried out by Local Government Minister David Miliband on the future structure of local government.)

1 *The Lyons Inquiry into Local Government: an independent inquiry jointly commissioned by the Deputy Prime Minister and Chancellor of the Exchequer*

- 3.2 This report provides an opportunity for all stakeholders in local government to take stock of the developments and significant changes which have taken place in recent years, and to use the experience gained to consider how communities may be best served by local government in the future. Members may have views, for example on:
- the balance between national standards and local autonomy
 - the growth in the role of authorities as facilitators rather than direct service-providers
 - the increase in partnership working and area-based initiatives, for example Local Area Agreements and shared services
 - changes in performance management and audit / inspection, and
 - issues surrounding capacity and related topics, such as unitary local authorities.

4. KEY ISSUES

- 4.1 The Lyons report runs to 142 pages in length, though summaries are provided as follows:
- **Appendix A** contains an Executive Summary (2 pages)
 - **Appendix B** provides a more detailed overview (19 pages) and includes a list of questions which lie at the core of the Inquiry, to which consultees are invited to respond.
- 4.2 The seven 'headline' questions in Part 1 of the report are set out below and are supplemented by a series of sub-questions, full details of which are contained in Appendix B:
- i) What is the strategic role of local government? Is the description used by Lyons (paragraph S.19 of Appendix B) sufficient or are there more elements?
 - ii) What tools do councils need to perform the strategic role more effectively?
 - iii) How important is the fact that local government is elected in relation to its ability and legitimacy to perform this role?
 - iv) Which services (or parts of services) should meet national standards in all areas of the country? Which should meet minimum standards? Which should be entirely down to local choice?
 - v) How has the Government's approach to devolution and decentralisation affected your area and your local services?
 - vi) How can pressures on local services be managed more effectively?
 - vii) How could responsibility for local services be made clearer between local government, central government and other agencies?

In addition, although there is no set question on the funding of local government, in Part 2 of the report Lyons also invites views on this subject, based upon his findings to date.

- 4.3 Any responses are required by 13 March 2006. In order to give Members the opportunity to discuss the report in more detail, therefore, it will be emailed to Groups together with a template for completion as deemed appropriate. This will then be reported to Council on 1 March 2006 for approval and submission.

5. FINANCIAL AND OTHER IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 There are no immediate financial, legal or risk-management implications arising from this report.

6. CONSULTEES

- 6.1 Leader of the Council & Corporate Management Team

7. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 7.1 Lyons Inquiry into Local Government (December 2005)