

COUNCIL – 27 OCTOBER 2011

ITEM 6 - QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL

Question from Councillor Papworth to the Leader of the Council – Councillor P. Dowd

“Would the Leader of the Council please give us an idea of what the Cabinet of the Liverpool City Region is doing in our name; and how much will this cost us? Why are their decisions never reported to the public? Can he explain why the Scrutiny Team for the City Region, which was established a couple of years ago, has not yet been called into action? Does he agree with me that the public are entitled to know what the Region’s Cabinet are doing?”

Response from the Leader of the Council

I would like to thank Cllr. Papworth for his question.

Would the Leader of the Council please give us an idea of what the Cabinet of the Liverpool City Region is doing in our name; and how much will this cost us?

The Liverpool City Region (LCR) Cabinet is a non statutory body which, working collaboratively with partners, aims to promote and develop the sustainable economic, social and environmental wellbeing and regeneration of the city region. The ‘sovereign bodies’ remain the six Liverpool City Region local authorities. Therefore any statutory responsibilities, executive functions and services delivered by or on behalf of individual local authorities will remain their responsibility; The City Region Cabinet cannot make decisions which are binding on individual councils.

The key priorities for the City Region are

- **Jobs:** To transform the City Region’s economic prospects by: creating and growing businesses; raising productivity and therefore creating more and better jobs.
- **Worklessness & Skills:** Improving employment and skills outcomes for 14-24 year olds; becoming a leading City Region outside the South East in terms of the proportion of graduates and Level 4 qualifications in its workforce.
- **Healthier Safer Communities:** To develop a collaboration to reduce health inequalities create safer and stronger communities.
- **Efficiency:** To develop a sustainable structure of collaboration and shared services across the City Region.

There are no direct costs to the Council associated with the LCR Cabinet. The secretariat is provided by Liverpool City Council. The indirect costs are staff time for the attendance of meetings. The Merseyside Policy Unit was previously supported financially by the Council but this was disbanded in 2011 as a budget savings

Why are their decisions never reported to the public?

As stated, above the LCR Cabinet is not a decision making body. Any proposals which impacts on Sefton will require a decision of this Council which will be taken through the Council's decision making processes and reported in the appropriate way.

Can he explain why the Scrutiny team for the City Region, which was established a couple of years ago, has not yet been called into action?

In September 2009 the previous Government's policy was the development of Multi Area Agreements. As part of the development of this policy, the Government via the Communities and Local Government Department asked the City Region Cabinet to develop a proposal for the scrutiny of the Multi Area Agreement. A Study was commissioned supported by North West Employers during which leaders and scrutiny members were interviewed.

A report was produced and considered by each of the local authority leaders and the proposals were sent to Government. In order to make this work the City Region Cabinet would need to be given delegated powers by each Council to take decisions. Given the impending elections this work was not taken forward at that stage.

Events overtook us following the General Election in May 2010 when the MAA process was abandoned and the new government's policy shifted to Local Enterprise Partnerships and potential new governance arrangements for city regions. Further clarity is required on any governance implication of Government policy in this area.

Does he agree with me that the public are entitled to know what the Region's Cabinet are doing?

I fully agree with Councillor Papworth that the more transparent and open the operation of the City Region Cabinet, the better. It may be that the Cabinet may wish to consider the mechanism that may be put in place to keep members informed of the City Region Cabinet's processes.