

**REPORT FROM THE LEADER AND EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR
RESOURCES, ORGANISATIONAL CHANGE AND CHILDREN'S
SERVICES TO THE MEETING OF FULL COUNCIL
ON WEDNESDAY, 16 MARCH 2016**

At the time of writing this report it is only two weeks since the last Full Council meeting. As a result this report must inevitably reflect the short gap between Full Council meetings. The brevity this invites will be compounded by the fact that, as members are doubtless aware, there have been significant developments in devolution and that this is the subject of another report before the meeting. It therefore seems inappropriate to duplicate what is presented there. The history is ongoing and is set out up to the point of publication in that report. As at the time of writing things are still developing on an almost hourly basis so rather than try to set out any authoritative account of developments herein it is probably better that members are given an oral update at the meeting itself.

It is perhaps key to point out that the absolute core of this council's involvement in the devolution negotiations is as a potential route to securing the additional funding this council needs in order to maintain the key services it provides. These are services which the financial settlement published in early February place at risk. We also now know that the government is adamant that any deal that might be done will involve a mayor for whatever combined authority comes into being. However, it is also clear that the mayor will only possess powers in relation to the devolved powers handed down by government to the combined authority and that the existing powers, structures and sovereignty of member authorities will not be affected.

The situation the financial settlement has placed us in has led to the launch of the Fight for the Wight Campaign in partnership with the Isle of Wight County Press. I am sure members will be familiar with the campaign and its aims. The campaign is explicit in that it seeks to secure a substantive recognition of the unique features that the Isle of Wight has, the unique costs these give rise to and to recognise these by a significant financial boost to the council. We obviously wait to see what happens while the campaign develops. It is possible that transitional financial assistance may be offered to the Island, whether as part of the devolution process or otherwise, but even if this comes forward the campaign is still of great importance as it is focused on the ongoing financial future of the Isle of Wight. With this in mind, Fight for the Wight will in any event be a valuable campaign for the long term future of the Island, the part that the council plays in that future and the role it will hopefully be able to develop if the campaign succeeds.

On Wednesday, 9 March I attended and spoke at the Green on Wight Conference at Cowes Yacht Haven. The aim of the event was to reinvigorate the Eco Island idea and strategy and to generate ideas to this end. The council is of course committed to a sustainable economic future for the Island. I was not able to stay until the end of the conference and await details of its outcomes but, from what I did witness, ideas and suggestions were flowing and I am sure we will all be interested in seeing what proposals come forward from the event that we might be able to support.

Lastly I would like to mention the member briefing on children's social services on 9 March entitled 'The Journey of the Child'. This was an informative and valuable session, particularly when it is noted that all elected members are 'corporate parents' who, as such, need to have a good understanding of how children may enter and progress through the care system. It is unfortunate that it was only attended by 12 members. The session is being repeated in May and I hope that all those who did not attend this month will be able to attend that session.

Councillor Jonathan Bacon

Leader and Executive Member for Resources, Organisational Change and Children's Services