

**REPORT FROM THE LEADER AND EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR
RESOURCES, ORGANISATIONAL CHANGE AND CHILDREN'S
SERVICES TO THE MEETING OF FULL COUNCIL
ON WEDNESDAY, 15 JUNE 2016**

The devolution/combined authority saga has become more confused in recent weeks. As a result of the stance taken by Hampshire County Council the proposed 'Solent deal' has stalled and within Hampshire there are now moves to consider local government reorganisation in the county. As things stand there is still no final offer on the table and no clear way forward unless and until the current position taken by Hampshire County Council changes or some form of alternative proposal which gets around the current impasse is found. It is, however, clear that if and when any potential deal comes forward there will be a six week period of public consultation on the establishment of the combined authority before any decisions are made. Further to the decisions made by Full Council, the position of the Isle of Wight in any negotiations will be that any potential deal must ensure the financial sustainability of the Isle of Wight.

It is clear that the government is potentially interested in using a combined authority deal as part of any 'Island Deal' that may be created to address our current financial situation and this would tie in with our stance set out above, however, the current difficulties set out above mean that the ability to do this is currently undermined.

We await news of our anticipated visit from the secretary of state to discuss our current financial situation. We have already had a visit from a group of civil servants from the Department for Communities and Local Government to discuss where we are at the moment. I think it is fair to say that it has been recognised that the council is in difficulty and that this is as a result of the Isle of Wight's unique characteristics not being recognised by the current local government funding formula. It also appears to be accepted that the current administration has done all it can to meet the challenges presented by this situation and that they are not of our making. Accordingly, when we see the secretary of state it is hoped that the discussion will concentrate on means by which our difficulties can be addressed and in particular how we can deal with the next two/three years until a revised funding formula comes into being.

I received a request from the Minister of State for Education, Nick Gibb MP, for the council to appeal the recent decision of the High Court in respect of the issuing of fines for unauthorised school absences. On the basis that the government was prepared to fund the costs of the appeal, join with the council if possible, and make a contribution to the council's sunk costs in the process, I was prepared to support an appeal being made. This was lodged with the courts on Thursday, 9 June.

I am pleased to be supporting the new High Sheriff's proposed Isle of Wight Day which is due to take place on 24 September. I hope that communities and organisations across the Island will participate in creating events and activities to support the day which will hopefully become a regular part of the Isle of Wight calendar and a celebration of all things good about the place we live.

Lastly, I was very pleased to be asked to attend the first Isle of Wight Child of the Year Awards organised by Isle of Wight Radio. The evening celebrated and illustrated the spirit of youth and young people on the Island and was a source of inspiration for all those who attended.

Councillor Jonathan Bacon

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