Lincolnshire
COUNTY COUNCIL

The Rt Hon Andy Burnham
The Prime Minister
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Councillor Sean Matthews
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Ref: MM/CR/SM

Dear Prime Minister,

RE: Withdrawal of decision on Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) in Greater Lincolnshire

I wrote to you last month following the announcement to pause LGR in Lincolnshire and elsewhere. I asked for clarity on timescales and next steps and laid out my concerns about the chosen model that as a council, we were fully prepared to legally challenge.

I welcome the decision to withdraw the proposed four-unitary model for Greater Lincolnshire and to reconsider the available options. It is the right decision and provides an opportunity to take another look at what will best serve residents, protect services and deliver sustainable local government.

Having reviewed the previous LGR decision, I hope you have recognised a fundamental reality: the proposed 'Lincoln' and 'Lincolnshire' model was not a viable basis for reorganisation. It would have required extensive service fragmentation, significant boundary changes and substantial additional cost.

In putting forward this model, the City of Lincoln Council made a series of baseless assumptions, including that new councils would agree to provide some 'sovereign' shared statutory services, such as children's services across both areas.

Such arrangements would require clear statutory accountability and robust governance – but most importantly - the agreement of both new authorities. The proposal did not explain how these arrangements would operate in practice, nor did it address the risks associated with disaggregating services, including impacts on service continuity, safeguarding, workforce stability, and financial resilience.

In addition, any savings proposed by the City of Lincoln Council for this model were unevidenced, with implementation costs and future demand pressures massively underestimated.

The financial sustainability of such a small unitary authority for Lincoln would be at best, fragile and at worst, a total disaster.

The proposal put forward by our council - supported by North Lincolnshire and North East Lincolnshire councils - was for a single unitary council for the Lincolnshire county area.

I'd like to thank you for recognising the significant time, money and expertise that has been invested in preparing for LGR - although I don't believe the funding proposed will reflect anywhere near the true financial impact.

This work has inevitably diverted resources from other priorities. Any future decision should minimise further avoidable costs and disruption and make the best use of public money.

To that end, our proposal remains the most cost-effective option, benefiting from economies of scale and the least complex transition of all the options.

Lincolnshire County Council's children's services are rated Outstanding. Adult social care has recently been rated Good again by the Care Quality Commission (CQC). We have maintained financial stability despite unprecedented pressures on local government. Any reorganisation should build on these strengths, not put them at risk.

Be in no doubt that disaggregating services under any other model, will disrupt and reduce the quality of this provision.

I urge you to give full consideration to the 'Your Lincolnshire' proposal. It offers a practical, affordable and sustainable solution that protects high-performing services, supports housing delivery and economic growth, and aligns with the Government's ambitions for devolution.

A single unitary authority would utilise the existing local plans for the various areas of the county, reducing delays in delivering housing targets that would be inevitable in the case of disaggregation. In addition, our proposal included an intention to establish a dedicated construction cluster to boost capacity, drive innovation, and support modern methods of construction.

I welcome your recent commitment to ensuring city status would not be lost for anywhere affected by LGR. Our proposal recognises Lincoln's important heritage and historic ceremonial role, as well as its future potential as a high growth area.

This potential can only be met if Lincoln is not under-bounded- as I expect you recognised when looking at the geography for the previous 'Lincoln' unitary authority. Both of the other proposals for LGR (from North Kesteven and South Kesteven District Councils, and the South & East Lincolnshire Councils Partnership) split Lincoln and the current North Kesteven district into separate authorities.

This would cause logistical and funding issues as a large proportion of North Kesteven's residents work and use council services in Lincoln, and with the current construction of the

North Hykeham Relief Road around the city, land unlocked for growth and housing for the city, predominantly sits in North Kesteven.

As well as specific recognition for the needs of Lincoln, our proposal equally respects Lincolnshire's identity, culture, and heritage as a county, while ensuring local voices remain strong.

The new authority would continue to work closely with the Greater Lincolnshire Combined County Authority (GLCCA) to deliver both new housing and better growth in every area.

A one unitary authority model would also minimise disruption to the GLCCA with more straight-forward changes to constituent and non-constituent membership and a reduced impact on the combined authority's operations and decision-making as a result.

In the long-term, a continuing authority model for Lincolnshire would cut duplication, save money, and improve access to services. It also means that our high-performing services would be able to continue without disruption. Your own consultation exercise found our model to be the most popular with stakeholders.

I will repeat again, my ask of the government:

A once-in-a-generation reform deserves a solution that strengthens services and supports growth, rather than one that creates unnecessary cost, complexity and risk.

Yours sincerely



Councillor Sean Matthews
Leader of the Council

CC Angela Rayner, Secretary of State, Ministry of Housing Communities
Jim McMahon OBE MP, Minister for Local Government, Devolution and Regional Growth
Victoria Atkins, MP for Louth and Horncastle
Sir Nicholas Dakin, MP for Scunthorpe
Gareth Davies, MP for Grantham and Bourne
Sir John Hayes, MP for South Holland and The Deepings
Dr Caroline Johnson, MP for Sleaford and North Hykeham
Alicia Kearns, MP for Rutland and Stamford
Sir Edward Leigh, MP for Gainsborough
Mr Hamish Falconer, MP for Lincoln
Melanie Onn, MP for Great Grimsby and Cleethorpes
Lee Pitcher, MP for Doncaster East and the Isle of Axholme
Richard Tice, MP for Boston and Skegness
Martin Vickers, MP for Brigg and Immingham