

Public Document Pack

Officer Decisions

Friday, 11th March, 2022

AGENDA

1. **Coroners Service - Cost Sharing Agreement**
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Date Published: 11th March 2022
Denise Park, Chief Executive

Agenda Item 1

RECORD OF DECISION TAKEN UNDER DELEGATED AUTHORITY FROM EXECUTIVE/COUNCIL/COMMITTEE



DELEGATED OFFICER	Strategic Director of Resources (SIRO)
DECISION TAKEN BY:	
DELEGATED BY:	Executive Board 12 August 2021
IN CONSULTATION WITH:	Leader
PORTFOLIO AREA:	ALL

SUBJECT: RoD Coroner's Service - Cost Sharing Agreement

1. DECISION

To extend the Costing Sharing Agreement with Lancashire County Council (LCC) for a further term of 7 years, from 6th March 2020.

2. REASON FOR DECISION

The 'Initial Term' of the Cost Sharing Agreement with LCC dated 5th March 2018 has expired and the Council wishes to continue with arrangements under the agreement. The Executive Board at its meeting on 9th September 2021 delegated authority to the Strategic Director of Resources in consultation with the Leader to agree the terms for extending the Cost Sharing Agreement with LCC.

3. BACKGROUND

Since 2018 the merged coronial service (comprising the former Coronial Districts of Blackburn with Darwen, Hyndburn & Ribble Valley, Preston & West Lancashire and East Lancashire) has been managed by Lancashire County Council (LCC) under a revised administrative arrangement. LCC is the 'relevant authority' under the Coroners and Justice Act 2009 for the Blackburn with Darwen jurisdiction.

LCC and BwD entered into a Cost Sharing Agreement, which sets out the provision of the service, accountability, responsibilities, monitoring arrangements and financial arrangements. The 'initial term' of the agreement has now expired and LCC and BwD are seeking to extend the term of the agreement.

The Executive Board at its meeting on 9 September 2021 (Item 9) delegated authority to the Strategic Director of Resources in consultation with the Leader to agree the terms for extending the Cost Sharing Agreement with LCC. Following discussions, LCC have proposed to the extend the term of the cost sharing agreement for a further term of 7 years, from 6th March 2020. All other provisions for the Cost Sharing Agreement remain the same.

4. OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED

Following the merger of the coronial service, LCC are the 'relevant authority' for the Blackburn with Darwen jurisdiction. This means that the coroners appointed and the related services provided (and the costs associated with it) covers the whole merged area. It would therefore be difficult for the Council to operate

and manage the service separately and independently. A cost sharing arrangement is the most efficient and practical way of delivering the service.

Further information is available via the following link [[Coroners Service Update Report and Cost Sharing Agreement.Final with DP DL comments.pdf \(blackburn.gov.uk\)](#)] or from the report author

5. POLICY IMPLICATIONS

Under the Cost Sharing Agreement, the Council will continue to monitor the Coroner's Service to ensure it continues to provide an efficient and cost-effective service in the Blackburn with Darwen area.

In addition, the Council needs to ensure that Coroner's Service remain supportive of the local, cultural, community and religious needs and expectations of the residents in the BwD area.

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Under the Cost Sharing Agreement Lancashire County Council (LCC) provide Coroner's Services in Blackburn with Darwen for which BwD is recharged a proportion of the overall costs of the Coroner's Service. These costs include:

- 50% of the costs associated with coroner's officers, training expenses, IT costs, pathologist fees, histology fees, mortuary staff fees, toxicology fees, witness expenses, coroner's juror fees, undertaker fees, hire of venues for inquest hearings for BwD cases
- 23% of the costs associated with staffing including the Senior Coroner, 1 Area Coroner, 1 Senior Democratic Services Officer and administrative support based at Faraday Court.
- Other such costs agreed from time to time.

The extension of the Cost Sharing Agreement will oblige the Council during the term to reimburse LCC of the costs incurred that relate to the Blackburn with Darwen jurisdiction, on the basis outlined above.

7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

Lancashire County Council are the 'relevant authority' for the delivery of coronial services for Blackburn with Darwen, and they operate the service under the terms of a Cost Sharing Agreement with Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council, referred to in this report. Under the agreement BwD has responsibility to reimburse a proportion of the costs incurred and that attributable to the Coronial Jurisdiction of Blackburn with Darwen. The 'Initial Term' of two years has expired and the Cost Sharing Agreement provides for an extension period (or periods) of up to 7 years.

The extension of the Cost Sharing Agreement will oblige the Council during the term to reimburse LCC of the costs incurred that relate to the Blackburn with Darwen jurisdiction, on the basis outlined above.

8. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

Resources for the delivery of the Coronial Service are provided under the Cost Sharing agreement by Lancashire County Council. The Strategic Head of Service - Legal & Governance and a finance officer monitor service and costs in accordance with the agreed protocols between the Councils.

9. EQUALITY AND HEALTH IMPLICATIONS

Please select one of the options below. Where appropriate please include the hyperlink to the EIA.

Option 1 Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) not required – the EIA checklist has been completed.

Option 2 In determining this matter the Executive Member needs to consider the EIA associated with this item in advance of making the decision. *(insert EIA link here)*

Option 3 In determining this matter the Executive Board Members need to consider the EIA associated with this item in advance of making the decision. *(insert EIA attachment)*

10. CONSULTATIONS

Consultations were conducted in advance of the merger in 2017, and the Leader has been consulted.

11. DECLARATION OF INTEREST

All Declarations of Interest of the officer with delegation and the any Member who has been consulted, and note of any dispensation granted should be recorded below:

None

VERSION: 1

CONTACT OFFICER:	Ailsa Smith; Asad Laher Strategic Head of Service – Legal and Governance
DATE:	22 February 2022
BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS:	

DIRECTORS - has legal and finance advice been considered ?

YES