

**PUBLIC QUESTIONS TO COUNCIL (EXTRA-ORDINARY MEETING) – 2
NOVEMBER 2022**

a) Question from David Ingham to Councillor B Lewis, Leader of the Council (attending)

“The Draft Proposal (as stated within the EIA – Appendix 4) appears to have the potential to provide huge benefits to all communities, but specifically for people from the protected characteristic groups and deprived communities. As such, it is absolutely imperative therefore that these individuals are reached out to as part of the initial consultation.

I have an avid interest in the application and effectiveness of EIA’s – indeed I have previously attended a meeting of the Improvement and Scrutiny Committee – Resources in December 2021 on a related matter.

Under section 6 of the Consultation Approach document (Appendix 3) it is not apparent how exactly Derbyshire County Council will be contacting hard to reach individuals (including those with protected characteristics).

Precisely what steps and measures will be taking place to contact these key individuals and encourage initial consultation participation from the offset?”

Cllr Lewis’s response:

“Thank you very much indeed, Mr Ingham, for your question. I am glad you can see that this proposal has that potential as well across the region but as it is a consultation it will take place across all of the sort of regions of Derbyshire, Derby, Nottinghamshire and Nottingham and of course work is currently being undertaken by officers from across the four upper tier Councils of Derbyshire, Derby, Nottinghamshire and Nottingham to finalise the detail of the wider stakeholder engagement plan including with seldom heard and hard-to-reach groups.

As set out in Appendix 3, which provides details of the consultation approach to which the questioner refers, a detailed communications plan has been developed. This will provide an outline of methods to be used to target residents, including those seldom heard or hard-to-reach across the whole of Derbyshire, Derby, Nottinghamshire and Nottingham. Each of the four upper tier Councils will look at the most appropriate way to target the consultation through their own networks to ensure that the seldom heard or hard-to-reach groups across all of the four local authority areas are heard.

In relation to hard-to-reach and seldom heard groups across Derbyshire specifically we will be considering which existing forums and contacts from

across the county we will work with to achieve maximum engagement from seldom heard or hard-to-reach groups. These may include, but are not limited to, the Council's BME Forum which has for the past 16 years enabled the Council to actively engage BME community groups on a wide variety of policy and service developments. The Derbyshire Over-50s Forum network of local groups across Derbyshire which has more than 3,400 members; the Derbyshire Youth Network database which will be utilised to encourage young people to engage in the consultation. Our four employee networks will be encouraged to respond to the consultation and to share details more widely within their communities. The Derbyshire LGBTQ+ a voluntary and community organisation providing services to and support to LGBTQ+ people across Derbyshire and Derby. Disability partnerships and the North Derbyshire Deaf Forum, a range of voluntary and community sector organisations who work with local individuals and communities from a range of different backgrounds. Existing thriving community networks where officers will hold informal conversations about consultation to wider participation from residents living in the areas where there are higher levels of disadvantage and deprivation. We also intend to engage with the networks and forums outlined as part of the consultation to identify any additional steps that we can take to target engagement taking account of the specific needs of their members and, where appropriate, the survey will be made available in alternative formats, for example in easy-to-read paper and large print interpretation services including Braille and British Sign Language will also be made. In addition the Council holds a comprehensive mailing list of residents who have expressed an interest on being consulted on various topics which will be utilised to encourage participation from across all areas of Derbyshire.

As the plans are finalised, further detailed information will be made available on both the County Council and East Midlands' devolution consultation websites as well.

Supplementary question

"Thank you for the answer that has been given there. Obviously I will follow it with interest as I do, Chair. The supplementary question relates to the Equality Impact which I would just like to return back to. I will abbreviate it to EIA as I work through.

So the EIA identifies some delivery uncertainty. Words such as "anticipate", "potentially", "could", "should". The proposal concerns £1.14bn and yet the definitive word "will" is seldom mentioned. As the EIA is to be read in conjunction with the proposal the document really is critical. Even with safeguarding actions, stated on page 13, risks will only be mitigated, not removed.

The wording does concern me somewhat as it is familiar in style to the EIA I raised at the Scrutiny Resources Committee in December last year. That EIA, approved by Cabinet, stated that it did not anticipate adverse impact on protected groups. However, anticipations and realities are two very different things as an adverse impact did occur.

Given the similar wording within this EIA what steps will be taken to obtain greater reassurance and commitment from all those involved in the devolution deal proposal to ensure that those uncertainties are properly addressed to actually ensure the delivery of positive outcomes for all?"

Cllr Lewis's response:

"Thank you very much indeed for the supplementary, Mr Ingham.

Yes, I think it is the nature of the beast in a lot of circumstances that the language is often expressed in some ways. All I can say to reassure you is that we will work with those organisations as we have described within the document and in my response to you as well and make sure we reach out to ensure that we can get maximum reach across all those organisations and individuals, the parts of those organisations and wider still. Consultation is often an imperfect thing to do but we try to do it as best we can and we use, as we have in the past, every means at our disposal, whether that be through social media, through print formats, through all our buildings etc to reach as many people as possible to get the best responses we can and in working in this way with all our partners we will try to do our best to ensure that we reach as many people as we can in the affected groupings that we are talking about in here.