

## **Strategic Collaboration between Anglesey and Gwynedd**

### **Scoping Study Principles**

All local authorities will face extreme challenges in the coming years because of the severe pressure on public-sector budgets and the implications this will have for service delivery. One of the most potentially fruitful ways of addressing those challenges while protecting front-line services is for authorities to collaborate more fully with each other.

Local authorities already routinely collaborate with each other. Gwynedd and Anglesey have, for instance, operated a shared education support service for many years and have recently committed to establishing a single strategic planning unit. However, while these examples are positive in their own terms, they and others like them will not achieve the level of savings that all authorities will need to secure in the short to medium term. That demands full-scale integration of major services and their management. Several councils in England and Scotland have already recognised and adopted this approach.

Following discussions between the Minister for Social Justice and Local Government and members and senior management of the two councils, it is believed there is merit in exploring in depth the potential and possibility of such service integration. This document sets out the principles and terms on which such a scoping study will take place.

#### **Overall**

1. The aim of this scoping study is to consider how far integration of major services could realise efficiency savings for both councils while protecting and enhancing front-line services for citizens and communities.
2. Both councils are committed to this scoping study, and the Welsh Assembly Government and WLGA are committed to providing support to it. All will consider the findings of the study on their merits. But no party is committed now to accepting or implementing those findings.

#### **Democracy**

3. The study is not concerned with merging or abolishing authorities. Both councils will remain as autonomous democratic entities, and their members will have the same range of representational, scrutiny and executive functions as they have now
4. Nor is this study concerned with the takeover of one authority by another. Both councils have strengths and weaknesses and both face similar financial and delivery challenges. This study rather recognises the potential value in facing those challenges as equal partners.

## **Services**

5. The study will consider the potential for integrating services which both councils provide and delivering them within a single set of operational and managerial arrangements. This includes corporate and 'back-office' services which are often key to realising major savings and to supporting wider integration. In particular, the study will seek to establish:
  - a. The services that might be included with such arrangements
  - b. The scale of efficiency savings that such arrangements might secure, and when those savings might arise;
  - c. The potential benefits that such arrangements might have in terms of protecting and enhancing the breadth and quality of services;
  - d. The effects that such arrangements might have on the ease of recruiting and retaining high-quality specialist staff, especially staff able to work through the medium of Welsh;
  - e. The risks of adopting this approach in particular services and generally, and how those might be managed; and
  - f. The financial and delivery consequences for both authorities of not adopting this approach.

## **Senior management**

6. Fully integrated services point to oversight by an equally integrated senior management team. The study will establish the potential for establishing such a team, and the costs, benefits, risks and timing implications of doing so.
7. The study will also consider the appropriateness of each authority appointing a senior manager to oversee its own internal affairs and governance

## **Participation**

8. The study will be commissioned and funded by the WLGA in partnership with the Welsh Assembly Government. Implementation of its recommendations will be for each authority on an equitable basis to be agreed between them.
9. The study will seek the views of key stakeholders in formulating its findings and recommendations.

## **Timing**

10. The study will commence as soon as possible and will aim to report to both authorities and the Welsh Assembly Government by February 2011.