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RECEIVED
15 OCT 2008

Andrea Hill
Chief Executive
Suffolk County Council
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13th October 2008

Dear

Local Government Review – submission to the Boundary Committee

I was surprised at how much your final submission to the Boundary Committee differed from your report to County Council on 25th September. I am sure that the increase from 34 to 58 pages was fully covered by your recommendation to make changes and amendments that took account of views expressed by the Council and changes in available information. However, there are a number of changes that have a cumulative significance for the overall business cases submitted and their financial assessment on which I would welcome your views.

- A range of new services and companies are proposed including: a local housing company; a young people's housing service; a non profit organisation to improve 400 households apparently at a cost of £1m; an economic development company to replace the Haven Gateway Partnership; and a Great Yarmouth and Lowestoft Development Board. I would welcome clarification on how these would work and how they have been costed in your financial assessment.
- Changes to locality arrangements including: two dedicated cabinet portfolioholders; co-opted representatives from community boards on planning committees; super parish plans; an area assembly for Ipswich; and a town council for Lowestoft. Our assessment of the impact of these town councils estimates additional costs to local council tax payers of £4m a year. Again I would welcome clarification of how these changes would work and how they have been costed in your submission which I believe still remains at £2.6m per year to support locality arrangements.
- Notwithstanding the above, the overall level of savings reported has apparently increased from £85m to £90m and I would welcome clarification of the reason for that increase.

Incidentally, you might be interested in discussing with housing colleagues how the housing company would work and what the cost implications might be. They are generally envisaged to deal with large-scale development or regeneration of local authority owned land rather than as a means of improving existing housing stock. They require complex business plans and a package of financial and legal arrangements with partners and extensive consultation. A single unitary with approximately 20,000 properties spread over a wide geographical area would be the biggest landlord in the Eastern Region and make the challenges of setting up a housing company even more demanding.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely

James Hehir
Chief Executive

Copy to:
Max Caller, Chair, Boundary Committee
Suffolk District Chief Executives