



Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Area

Joint Committee

Date: 30 October 2017 at 10 am

Venue: Committee Suite, Poole Civic Centre, Poole

Membership:

Councillor John Beesley	Bournemouth Borough Council
Councillor Philip Broadhead	Bournemouth Borough Council
Councillor David Brown	Borough of Poole
Councillor John Challinor	Borough of Poole
Councillor Deborah Croney	Dorset County Council
Councillor Beverley Dunlop	Bournemouth Borough Council
Councillor Anne Filer	Bournemouth Borough Council
Councillor David Flagg	Christchurch Borough Council
Councillor Mike Greene	Bournemouth Borough Council
Councillor Nicola Greene	Bournemouth Borough Council
Councillor May Haines	Borough of Poole
Councillor Trisha Jamieson	Christchurch Borough Council
Councillor David Jones	Dorset County Council
Councillor Jane Kelly	Bournemouth Borough Council
Councillor Robert Lawton	Bournemouth Borough Council
Councillor Drew Mellor	Borough of Poole
Councillor Karen Rampton	Borough of Poole
Councillor Janet Walton	Borough of Poole

Contact: Karen Tompkins: Tel: 01202 451255 – Email – karen.tompkins@bournemouth.gov.uk

The agenda and reports are available at <https://bcjointcommittee.wordpress.com/meetings/>

AGENDA

1. Apologies

To receive any apologies for absence and notification of any substitute Members.

2. Election of Chairman

To elect the Chairman of the Joint Committee.

3. Election of Vice-Chairman

To elect the Vice-Chairman of the Committee.

4. Declarations of Interests

Councillors are required to comply with the requirements of the Localism Act 2011 regarding disclosable pecuniary interests.

5. Public Issues – deputation/questions/petitions

A request to speak as a deputation, ask a question or present a petition must be sent in writing or email to Karen Tompkins at the address above by no later than 10.00 am on Friday 27 October 2017

6. Confirmation of Terms of Reference of the Committee

To confirm the terms of reference – circulated at **6**.

7. Local Government Reorganisation Submission Update

To receive a verbal update from the Chief Executives on the current position.

8. Local Government Reorganisation Programme Governance Structure

To consider a report from the Chief Executives - see report circulated at **8**.

9. Local Government Reorganisation Programme Overview

To consider a report from the Joint Director of Corporate Services Bournemouth and Poole - see report circulated at **9**.

10. Council Tax Harmonisation - Principles

To consider a report from the Chief Finance Officers – see report circulated at **10**

11. Communications Approach

See report circulated at **11**.

12. Forward Plan for the Joint Committee

To consider work planning in light of the above reports.

13. Future meeting dates

To note the following dates and locations for future meetings of the Joint Committee.

21 November 2017 at 10 am in Bournemouth Town Hall

15 December 2017 at 10 am in Christchurch Civic Offices

Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Area Joint CommitteePurpose

1. To identify and promote collaborative and joint working between Councils
2. To take steps to prepare for the transfer of the functions, property, rights and liabilities of Bournemouth Borough Council, Christchurch Borough Council and the Borough of Poole councils and the relevant functions, property, rights and liabilities of Dorset County Council to a new council including the preparation of an implementation plan
3. To act as the forum within which existing councils consult and co-operate with each other in order to secure the economic, effective, efficient and timely transfer of functions, property, rights and liabilities
4. To identify and establish early design principles that assist shape the development of the new Council and relevant staffing models
5. To ensure that councillors are kept fully briefed and engaged in establishing a new Council
6. To oversee the development and delivery of a comprehensive communications and engagement strategy that address the requirements of councillors, staff, local partners and wider stakeholders
7. To agree and monitor relevant finance associated to issues of transition and transformation
8. To monitor risks associated to the establishment of a new Council
9. To monitor the development of early enabling strategies including, but not limited to, organisational design process and principles, ICT, digital transformation, medium term finance, organisational development and assets
10. To identify and approve a policy framework and thereafter monitor the introduction of draft policy statements (including supporting procedures) relevant to the required statutory compliance of the new Council
11. To liaise with relevant internal and external auditors and ensure their focus supports the development of the new Council
12. To agree a process for the appointment of a Chief Executive and make a recommendation on the appointment of a new Chief Executive to the new Council
13. To agree a model and process for disaggregation
14. To agree a model and process for council tax harmonisation
15. To request a boundary review
16. To agree an electoral scheme
17. To respond to consultation on the content of Orders, for example the new authority name
18. To take a decision on any required consents

19. To carry out any other tasks where Member engagement is necessary

Membership

- 8 Members from Bournemouth Borough Council
- 6 Members from Poole Borough Council
- 2 Members from Christchurch Borough Council (should a decision be taken by Christchurch Borough Council to re-engage with the Future Dorset proposal)
- 2 County Councillors (to address the question of disaggregation only)

In the event that Christchurch Borough Council does not re-engage with the Future Dorset proposal then Dorset County Council will represent Christchurch residents on the Joint Committee with a membership of 2, who would also address the issue of disaggregation, negating the need for 2 additional Dorset County Council members.

Each member will nominate a named substitute who will have the same rights as the member whose place they are substituting. The named substitute should not affect political proportionality.

For South East Dorset, democratic services would carry out a calculation to ensure that Membership was representative as will be expected within the Order.

Quorum

- The Joint Committee shall be quorate if 50% +1 of the members are present.

Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Joint Committee

Report Subject	Local Government Reorganisation Programme Governance Structure
Meeting date	30 October 2017
Report Authors	David McIntosh Andrew Flockhart Jane Portman Debbie Ward
Contributors	David McIntosh Andrew Flockhart Jane Portman Debbie Ward
Status	Public
Classification	For approval
Recommendations	That the Joint Committee: 1. Agrees the programme governance structure as shown at Appendix A; and 2. Receives a further report defining the resource requirements of the programme.
Reasons for recommendations	1. To ensure the Joint Committee is properly supported in discharging its functions. 2. To provide clarity about respective roles in what will be a fast moving and challenging change process. 3. To ensure work can be progressed with urgency should the Secretary of State make an announcement which is in support of Local Government Reorganisation.

1. Background information

- 1.1 The Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Joint Committee (BCPJC) is made up of representatives of four Dorset councils: Bournemouth Borough Council; Christchurch Borough Council; Borough of Poole; and Dorset County Council.
- 1.2 The Terms of Reference have been previously agreed by all member authorities of the Committee. These Terms of Reference also appear earlier on this Agenda for information purposes.
- 1.3 The Committee has been convened to respond to the possible decision of the Secretary of State to support the reorganisation of local government in Dorset. In the event that this decision is made, the Joint Committee will be responsible for convening and directing a complex programme to implement significant change within an extremely compressed time line. Once the Parliamentary Structural Change

Order is made (which is expected to be in May 2018), the Joint Committee will be replaced by a Shadow Authority, which will then pick up the work.

- 1.4 Having established the Joint Committee it is important to ensure that the rest of the governance structure is agreed and can be quickly put in place pending the Secretary of States announcement.

2. Programme Governance Structure

- 2.1 At the time of writing, it is anticipated that the Secretary of State will make an announcement within the next few weeks on the proposal made by the Future Dorset Councils. If he is in support of that proposal, that Joint Committee has the responsibility to put in place the structure and resources to ensure that the new council for the Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole area is established successfully.
- 2.2 Given the diminishing time available, it is essential that the programme structure is clear and properly resourced. More detail on resourcing and a recommendation for a further report on that subject is included elsewhere on the agenda.
- 2.3 There are a number of approaches to establishing a sound basis for coordinating complex pieces of work which involve multiple projects, commonly referred to as programme management. However each of them include a core set of principles. Given the short timescale, the volume and sensitivity of the work that needs to be done and the importance of identifying and managing risks, the governance structure needs to be robust but also reflect local circumstances.
- 2.4 The establishment of the Joint Committee lays the foundation. It should act as the Sponsoring Group, the main driving force for the programme, which provides investment decision and top-level endorsement of the rationale and objectives of the programme. Given the short timescale available to deliver a new council, the Joint Committee may wish to create Task and Finish groups to expedite pieces of work.
- 2.5 Beneath this there should be an executive function that manages the resources and oversees the work programme in support of the Joint Committee. Therefore the four Chief Executives of the Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole area should form a Programme Board which will ensure that the programme goals are achieved and all of them have a leadership role in this. It is recommended that the Board be chaired by one of those Chief Executives who acts as the Senior Responsible Owner. The Senior Responsible Owner (SRO) is the visible owner of the overall change, accountable to the Joint Committee for successful delivery, and is recognised as the key leadership figure in driving the change forward. It is estimated that this role would require a commitment of 2 -3 days per week. There is an ongoing discussion with all of the Dorset Chief Executives about the arrangements for each of them sponsoring pieces of work, either in their respective geographical area in support of the relevant Joint Committee or where appropriate, a cross cutting issue which needs to be coordinated between the two new councils.
- 2.6 It is understood that the Joint Committee will wish to consider when and how it appoints a Chief Executive to the new council. The programme structure set out in this report is intended to be in place until such time as a Chief Executive is appointed and the programme structure is then reviewed.
- 2.7 The Joint Committee and the Programme Board will rely on a team to ensure effective delivery of the multitude of workstreams. This should be led by a full time Programme Director who is charged with the executive ownership of the programme and overall responsibility for ensuring that the programme meets its objectives. The Programme Director post should be full time, dedicated to the successful delivery of the programme and accountable to the Programme Board. The roles and responsibilities of the Programme Director are set out in more detail in Appendix B.

2.8 The further report that is suggested would set out the resource requirement of the Programme team including the more detailed specification of the Programme Director role and team roles that will be required.

3. Relationship with the Dorset Area Joint Committee

3.1 There are a number of the work streams which need to be progressed with the Dorset Area Joint Committee. The successful delivery of the new Councils will only be achieved if the work of the two joint committees is aligned. Therefore there needs to be a link between the two. At present the mechanism for this is the long established Dorset Leaders and Chief Executives meeting which although it has no executive authority can provide the forum for cross Dorset debate.

3.2 A chart illustrating the recommended programme structure is shown at Appendix A which includes the potential linkages to the Dorset Area Joint Committee.

4. Summary of Finance and Resourcing Implications

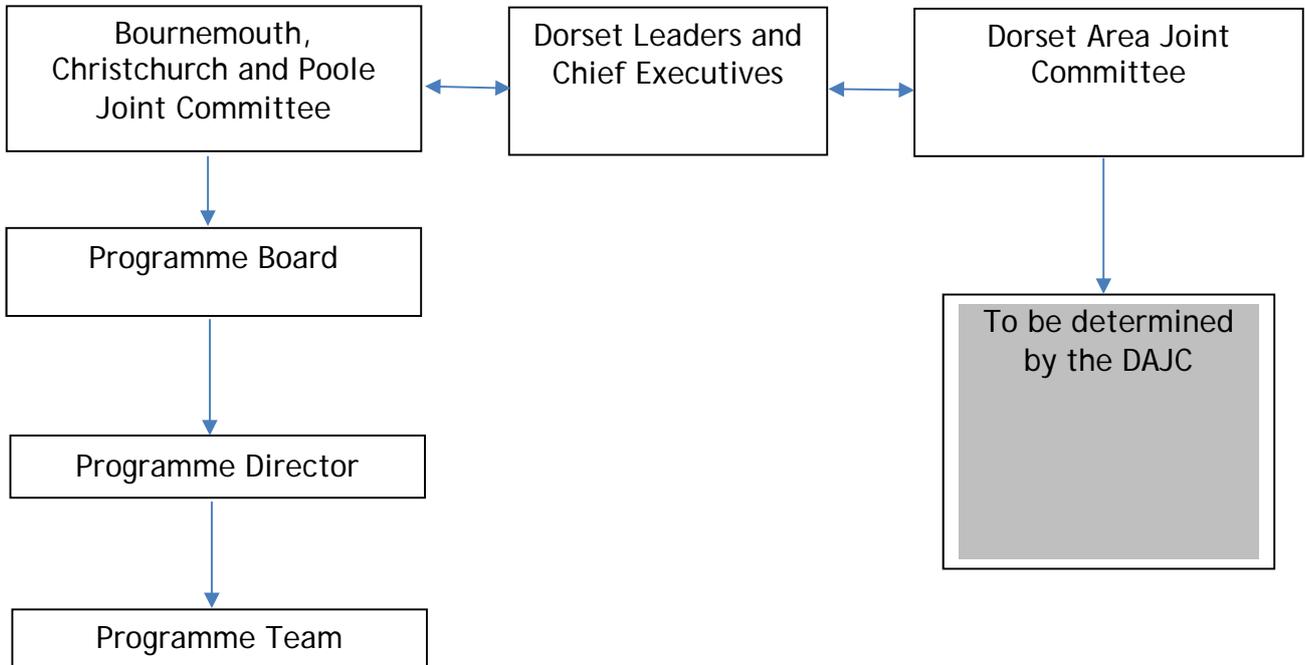
- Support to service the Joint Committee is provided from within existing resources.
- The Programme Board would be made up of the current Chief Executives.
- The Programme Director would be a full time post and would command a salary commensurate with the demands of a complex and high profile role.
- Any further programme team resources would be subject to a further report.

Appendices

- A. Programme Governance Structure Chart
- B. Programme Director Roles and Responsibilities

Appendix A

Programme Governance



Appendix B

Programme Director: Roles and Responsibilities

The programme director is responsible for:

- planning and designing the programme and proactively monitoring its progress, resolving issues and initiating appropriate corrective action
- defining the programme's governance arrangements
- ensuring effective quality assurance and the overall integrity of the programme - focusing inwardly on the internal consistency of the programme, and outwardly on its coherence with infrastructure planning, interfaces with other programmes and corporate, technical and specialist standards
- managing the programme's budget on behalf of the SRO, monitoring expenditure and costs against delivered and realised benefits as the programme progresses
- facilitating the appointment of individuals to project teams
- ensuring the delivery of new products or services from projects is to the appropriate level of quality, on time and within budget, in accordance with the programme plan and programme governance arrangements
- ensuring there is allocation of common resources and skills within the programme's individual projects
- managing third party contributions to the programme
- managing communications with all stakeholders
- managing both the dependencies and the interfaces between projects
- managing risks to the programme's successful outcome
- working with the business change manager or equivalent on the transition to the new business as usual position
- initiating extra activities and other management interventions wherever gaps in the programme are identified or issues arise
- reporting the progress of the programme at regular intervals to the SRO

Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Joint Committee

9

Report Subject	Local Government Reorganisation Programme Overview
Meeting date	30 October 2017
Report Author	Julian Osgathorpe, Joint Strategic/Executive Director Corporate Services, Bournemouth and Poole Councils
Contributors	Jane Portman, Managing Director, Bournemouth Council David McIntosh, Chief Executive, Christchurch Borough Council Andrew Flockhart, Chief Executive, Borough of Poole Debbie Ward, Chief Executive, Dorset County Council
Status	Public
Classification	For Noting
Recommendations	<p>The Joint Committee is asked to note and agree:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The Programme Overview and the three phases of activity proposed. 2. The specific workstreams that are likely to be the focus of the Joint Committee and Programme team in the next three months. 3. As the work develops on these workstreams, further detailed papers will be presented to the Joint Committee for consideration and decision. 4. That the prioritisation of internal resources across the preceding authorities will be a key success factor for the successful delivery of the programme. 5. That supporting the successful delivery of the programme will inevitably involve one off costs, but that these will be developed and be the subject of a Report at the next meeting of the Committee.
Reasons for recommendations	<p>Subject to a minded to decision by the Secretary of State</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To provide the Joint Committee with an overview of the programme of change required to successfully deliver local government reorganisation in Dorset

Background detail

1. The Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Joint Committee (BCPJC) is made up of representatives of four Dorset councils; Bournemouth Borough Council, Christchurch Borough Council, Borough of Poole and Dorset County Council.
2. The Terms of Reference have been previously agreed by all member authorities of the committee. These Terms of Reference also appear earlier on this Agenda for information purposes.
3. The Committee has been convened to respond to the possible decision of the Secretary of State to support the reorganisation of local government in Dorset. In the event that this decision is made, the committee will be responsible for convening and directing a complex programme to implement significant change within an extremely compressed time line through to the anticipated Vesting Day of the new local authority on 1st April 2019.
4. The Committee has, earlier on this agenda, considered a paper recommending a robust governance framework for the programme as well as likely roles and responsibilities within that framework. This will be actioned in the event that the Secretary of State's decision is to support LGR and therefore the programme becoming active.
5. The purpose of this paper is to provide an overview of the outline and component parts within this programme, along with key considerations, risks, issues and key decisions that will be required. Given the pace of change required and the complexity involved, flexibility will be required and further reports to the Joint Committee will be necessary.

Programme Overview

6. The programme of work required to build an effective and sustainable new local authority will involve the development, leadership, planning, resourcing and delivery of three core sub-programmes. These can be described as follows:
 - a. Creation of the new council
 - b. Delivering senior staffing structures and functionality for April 2019
 - c. Designing and building the new local authority
7. The immediate priority will be to commission and deliver work required by the Committee to support decision making in a) above.
8. It will then be necessary to quickly identify and begin work to deliver the outcomes required for b). Some of these will be required in advance of the Vesting Day of the new council, and examples of these will be provided below.
9. Finally, and given the service sustainability and economic drivers for local government reorganisation, it will be critical that we take the opportunity to re-examine the way that all preceding organisations have worked.

Creation of the New Council

10. The work of the Joint Committee for the next several months will be strongly focussed on the key decisions and associated workstreams required to deliver a legally compliant new council. The key workstreams within this area are summarised as:
 - a. The disaggregation of services from Dorset County Council currently delivered to the residents of the Borough of Christchurch. This will be a complex

workstream that will have to be delivered in agreement with the Dorset Area Joint Committee. The successful completion of this workstream is essential in the new unitary authorities setting their budgets for 2019/2020.

- b. The disaggregation of staff currently in the Christchurch Borough Council and East Dorset District Council Partnership. This is also a complex sensitive workstream that will have to be delivered in agreement with the Dorset Area Joint Committee. The successful completion of this workstream is essential in the new unitary authorities setting their budgets for 2019/2020.
- c. The strategy for harmonisation of council tax across the new local authority areas. This will involve developing a solution that balances the impact on revenue and the service needs of the community. A report which sets out the principles of Council Tax harmonisation is also on this agenda.
- d. The input to of the Structural Change Order required to give effect to the dissolution of the preceding authorities and the formation of the two new authorities. The Change Order is the enabling legislation that will be made by Parliament. It is important to understand that there is the opportunity to work with the Department of Communities and Local Government to ensure the Orders cover the key elements of change that are require to ensure a successful start for the new councils. If we fail to provide these views or DCLG consider them contrary to the interests of the future authorities they may come to their own conclusions. The final draft of the Structural Change Order will need to be finalised by January 2018, leaving the Joint Committees very little time to make key and potentially challenging decisions. DCLG have been asked to set out a definitive list of issues the Joint Committees will have to take a view on.
- e. The completion of a review by the Boundary Commission across the new local authority area. The review will focus on the key criteria of the Boundary Commission which can be summarised as being equality, community interest, and effective local government. During the review the Commission will review existing wards and divisions as well as reviewing these against examples of other recent local government reorganisation examples. They will also develop a five year electorate forecast and use this to assist in their analysis and recommendations.

Delivering Senior Staffing Structures and Functionality for April 2019

- 11. Once the Structural Change Order has been made the new local authority will be created on 1st April 2019. The Joint Committee will have to quickly move to establish senior staffing roles and critical business functionality.
- 12. While it is not intended as a definitive or exhaustive list, the key workstreams within this area will include :
 - a. The establishment of senior/statutory officer structures and roles.
 - b. The selection and appointment of senior/statutory officers.
 - c. The setting of a budget for the new unitary authority.
 - d. The identification of all service access changes, business functionality, systems and data requirements for "Day Zero" service delivery and resilience, e.g.
 - i. Production of Council Tax bills for 2019-20.

- ii. Financial management including such things as banking and insurance arrangements.
 - iii. Service contact arrangements, hardware, software and data migration for services affected by the changes.
 - iv. Employee systems and data migration for all staff.
13. Members will see these items emerge through the Forward Plan for the Committee and will be provided with more detailed information as we move through the programme phases and workstreams.

Designing and Building the New Local Authority

14. The real service improvements and economic benefits arising from local government reorganisation in Dorset arise from systematically re-examining the way in which the preceding local authorities used their resources to deliver services. In support of this, significant organisational redesign and change will be required to successfully integrate four groups of staff and develop them into a single team focussed on delivering effective and valued services.
15. It will be necessary for the programme to develop a vision for the new unitary authority will work. This vision will need to consider:
- a. People - Values and Culture; Structures; Pay and Grading; Ways of Working; terms and conditions; learning and development.
 - b. Infrastructure – Technology; Data and Information; Property.
 - c. Service Methodology - Direct Provision; Shared Service; Commissioning; Contracted.
16. The outcome of this phase will be extremely important for the sustainability of the organisation, its service resilience and the budget beyond 2019-20.

Summary of finance and resourcing implications

17. Support to this stage has been provided from within the existing resources and by informal prioritisation of LGR programme activity against business as usual activities. It is not realistic to expect this to be feasible beyond the point where a decision has been made by the Secretary of State and the programme becomes active.
18. Notwithstanding this, it is accepted that given the financial position of the constituent councils and the absence of any financial support from central government for the delivery of the programmes associated with local government reorganisation in Dorset, that the majority of the resources to deliver the programmes will need to be internal.
19. A key responsibility of the members of the Joint Committee will be to proactively and robustly manage the competing priorities of each of the existing councils in the following areas:
- a. Business as usual activity
 - b. Internal change and/or project activity
 - c. Local Government Reorganisation delivery, both in workstreams shared with the Dorset Area Joint Committee or workstreams specific to this Joint Committee.

20. Difficult decision about prioritisation, will be required in all areas of the existing council's activities. It is likely this will apply most acutely in corporate services and therefore the balance between a, b and c above will need to be carefully managed and effectively communicated within all organisations. This will apply at both member and officer levels.
21. Subject to the Joint Committee agreeing the recommended programme governance which is covered in a separate report on this agenda and also to this programme overview, a further report is required setting out in more detail the initial programme resource requirements and it is suggested this be considered at the next Joint Committee meeting.

Summary and Recommendations

22. In the event that the Secretary of State is minded to support the reorganisation of local government in Dorset, the Joint Committee will be responsible for a significant and complex programme of change. It is also highly probable that there will be very little time in which to make significant decisions affecting the future of the residents of the area, their political representatives and the staff who support them and deliver the services that are highly valued.
23. Should the announcement be made in the foreseeable future, the pressure to commission the programme, identify and allocate resources will be a matter of urgency.
24. Preparing for this, the Committee is asked to Note and agree:
 - a. The Programme Overview and the three phases of activity that are proposed
 - b. The specific workstreams that will be the focus of the Committee and Programme team in the next three months should a positive minded to decision be received.
 - c. As the work develops on these workstreams, further detailed papers will be developed and provided to the Joint Committee for consideration and decision.
 - d. That the prioritisation of internal resources across the preceding authorities will be a key success factor for the successful delivery of the programme.
 - e. That supporting the successful delivery of the programme will inevitably involve one off costs, but that this will be developed and agreed with the Joint Committee in a separate report at the next meeting.

Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Joint Committee

10

Report Subject	Council Tax Harmonisation - Principles
Meeting date	30 th October 2017
Report author	Ian Milner ☎01202 7951756 ✉ imilner@christchurchandeastdorset.gov.uk
Contributors	David McIntosh, Jane Portman, Andrew Flockhart, Adam Richens, Steve McKenzie, Jason Vaughan,
Status	Public
Classification	For information
Executive summary	The amount of Council Tax raised by a new unitary council will be fundamental to its success in delivering services and meeting its statutory obligations. The initial levels set will need to take into account a number of factors and it is crucial that the starting position lays the foundation for an acceptable level of Council Tax that places the new unitary council in the most financially viable position. This report highlights the issues that members will need to consider in arriving at that position.
Recommendations	1. Members note the content of the report and; 2. Members consider establishing a task and finish group to begin developing a harmonisation strategy that takes into account the issues raised within this report
Reasons for recommendations	To enable financial modelling of the Council Tax harmonisation options to take place within agreed principles.

Background detail

1. All nine councils across Dorset have different levels of Council Tax. This is the product of history with councils having had different starting points when Council Tax was introduced and subsequently different increases being applied annually from that time.
2. The current 2017/18 Band D Council Tax levels for Poole, Christchurch and Bournemouth council areas are as follows;

Council	2017/18 Band D £
Poole	1320.57
Christchurch and DorsetCC	1521.86
Bournemouth	1357.65

3. A fundamental principle in the creation of a new unitary council is that at a point in time the residents liable for Council Tax within the boundary of that council will pay the same amount of Council Tax for the Council Tax band their property is within. The process of achieving this is called harmonisation or equalisation of Council Tax.
4. Subject to the Secretary of State's decision, the Joint Committee will need to have agreed a strategy for harmonisation by January 2018.
5. As a result of a recent meeting with Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG) there is greater clarity regarding what approaches can be considered in harmonising Council Tax than there had been. The level of flexibility that would now be acceptable has increased significantly than was previously indicated. DCLG are keen to ensure that should a decision be made to progress to the creation of two unitary councils in Dorset that those councils have the best starting position as possible.
6. There are a number of issues and consequences of applying the principles that need to be considered when determining what strategy should be followed in achieving a harmonised position. These are set out below.
7. **A Politically Acceptable Solution** – in 2017/18 the amount of Council Tax raised for local government purposes in the combined Poole, Christchurch and Bournemouth area is nearly £190m. Council Tax, of all the current local government funding streams, is probably the most predictable and least volatile. It therefore plays a fundamental role in the current and future financial viability of councils. To implement a harmonisation strategy that **significantly** reduces the level of Council Tax raised would need to ensure that there were potential savings of an equal amount produced in order to

fill the gap left by the Council Tax lost. Otherwise the starting financial position of the new unitary council could be undermined and create a greater financial pressure than actually currently exists. That said, decisions relating to Council Tax are political decisions and there is a recognition that there needs to be a balance in ensuring the strategy will support ongoing service delivery but also reflect the impact Council Tax changes have on residents. The first consideration for members should therefore be that the harmonisation strategy should aim for a balance that ensures the level of Council Tax foregone is minimised without unduly impacting on Council Tax payers.

8. **The Period Over Which Harmonisation Occurs** – The Future Dorset submission to the Secretary of State recognised the need to minimise the level of Council Tax foregone and modelled a harmonisation period of 20 years to achieve this. Since this modelling was undertaken much debate about this period has been undertaken and in consultation with DCLG this timescale is now considered to be too long. DCLG has indicated that a maximum period should be 10 years, however, a period shorter than this would be a more equitable approach, if this can be balanced with minimising Council Tax foregone. In this context Members should therefore consider what is the maximum period over which they would wish to see Council Tax harmonised.
9. **The Level of Council Tax Increase for 2019/20 for Bournemouth and Poole Residents** - A harmonisation strategy that seeks to both minimise the level of Council Tax foregone and to achieve harmonisation over a relatively shorter period will as a consequence begin to determine the level of increase in a band D Council Tax that would be required to achieve this.

In normal circumstances the level of increase that a council can apply to its band D Council Tax needs to take into account the level of increase above which a referendum is required. This is expected to be 2% in 2019/20. However, with the creation of a new unitary council, DCLG has advised that in order to enable harmonisation to take place an Alternative Notional Amount will be required for each preceding council. This will notionally reset the band D Council Tax for 2018/19 and it is against this that the 2019/20 increases will be measured for referendum purposes. Therefore, whilst the increase when measured against the Alternative Notional Amount would be below the referendum limit the Alternative Notional Amount could in fact be higher than the actual 2018/19 Council Tax. This would mean that the actual increase between 2018/19 and 2019/20 could be greater than the referendum limit but not actually trigger a requirement to hold a referendum. This approach will have greatest significance for Poole and Bournemouth as their Council Tax is significantly lower than that in the Christchurch area.

In the last two years Poole and Bournemouth have increased their band D Council Tax by 4.99% including the Adult Social Care Precept, as did Dorset County Council. The Adult Social Care Precept will not be applied in 2019/20. Members should therefore begin to consider what range of real terms increases to Council Tax should be considered, for modelling purposes only, at this point in time. Whilst it is accepted that this decision would normally be directly linked to a council budget setting process and ultimately will not be approved until February 2019 an indication from members of their position on this would enable modelling to take place.

10. **The Possibility of Reducing or Freezing the Council Tax in Christchurch in 2019/20** – An option that can be considered as part of the modelling to enable a quicker harmonisation is to reduce or freeze the current level of Council Tax paid by residents liable for Council Tax in Christchurch. Whilst Bournemouth and Poole residents would potentially see an increase in 2019/20, Christchurch residents would still be paying more until harmonisation was complete. Any reduction would see a loss in Council Tax yield for the new unitary and the implications of this need to be modelled. An indication of whether this approach should be considered would assist in the process.
11. **The Level of Council Tax Increase for 2020/21 and beyond** – DCLG has also advised that in order to facilitate harmonisation in the quickest, most equitable and acceptable way the financial order could include flexibility regarding the level of increase applied in year two of the new unitary. This could include different increases for the preceding council areas. Members should consider this point with that of the preceding paragraphs in determining what they would consider to be an acceptable approach to smooth the levels of increases in the early years of the new unitary council.
12. **Town Council in Christchurch** – Christchurch Borough Council resolved on 8th August 2017 to undertake a community governance review if the Secretary of State is minded to support local government reorganisation, with the intention of creating a town council. The area the town council would cover and its scope of responsibility have yet to be determined.

DCLG has advised that the creation of a new town council within the unitary council boundary should not lead to a resident that is liable for Council Tax paying more than they would have if there had been no change. As a result a proportion of the Council Tax that would have gone to the new unitary will become the new town council's precept. Depending on the services the town council undertakes this will have implications on the precepted level of Council Tax for the new unitary. To put this in context a Christchurch Town Council precept set at £25 per annum for a band D would create Council Tax income to the town council of almost £0.5m, but reduce the Council Tax income of the new unitary by an equal amount.

Members may wish to consider the financial implication of accommodating a new town council precept within the current Council Tax limits and consider what their view is on the range of precepts that should be considered as part of the harmonisation modelling. In addition, members should acknowledge that residents within the new and existing town and parish council areas will be paying more Council Tax in total than residents in Bournemouth and Poole will be once the harmonisation of the unitary Council Tax is achieved.

13. **Summary** – The factors that can be varied to give different outcomes are the level of the Alternative Notional Amount, the period over which harmonisation occurs, the level of increases or decreases applied in year one and beyond and the precept for a Christchurch town council. In applying these variables in different models a politically acceptable solution will have to be determined which will also establish the amount of Council Tax raised or foregone and therefore the financial impact of the strategy on future service delivery.

Consultation

All Dorset Chief Executives and Dorset S151 officers have had the opportunity to contribute to the report.

Options

The paper requests members give consideration to the key issues raised to enable informed modelling to take place. The outcome of this and the options this modelling produces will be presented to members in due course

Summary of finance and resourcing implications

None specifically related to this report

Summary of legal implications

None specifically related to this report

Summary of human resources implications

None specifically related to this report

Summary of environmental impact

None specifically related to this report

Summary of equalities and diversity impact

None specifically related to this report

Summary of risk assessment

A harmonisation strategy must be agreed by the Joint Committee by January 2018 in order to fit in with the parliamentary order timescales. Clarity regarding members views on the issues raised in this report is therefore a key aspect to achieving this.

Background papers

None

Appendices

None

Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Joint Committee

Report Subject	Communications approach
Meeting date	30 October 2017
Report Author	Georgia Turner, Shared Service Head, Communications & Marketing, Bournemouth Borough Council and Borough of Poole
Contributors	Ceri Lewis, Communications and PR Manager, Christchurch and East Dorset Councils Ian Turner, Communications Manager, Borough of Poole
Status	Public
Classification	For approval
Recommendations	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. That the Joint Committee endorses the Communications Plan and Protocol attached. 2. That the Joint Committee agrees that the Communications Lead role will be aligned to the elected Chair of the Committee, working with colleagues from all constituent councils in accordance with the proposed Protocol.
Reasons for recommendations	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To ensure the Joint Committee's role in achieving agreed aspirations for the area and transformation agenda are appropriately communicated 2. To facilitate transparency around the business of the Joint Committee 3. To demonstrate the Joint Committee's effectiveness and decision-making, showing how the Joint Committee is helping to create a better place for the future 4. To positively reflect the inclusive, partnership nature of the Joint Committee's work

Background detail

The Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Joint Committee (BCPJC) is made up of representatives of four Dorset councils including Bournemouth Borough Council, Christchurch Borough Council, Borough of Poole and Dorset County Council.

It will work collaboratively to find solutions to current challenges which will strengthen all four councils' abilities to deal with the ongoing issue of less finance and increased demand on our services. Central to work will be a drive to improve outcomes for residents and communities. The Joint Committee will work in partnership to improve collective decision making.

Summary of finance and resourcing implications

Support at this stage is proposed to be provided from within existing resources.

Appendices

See attached proposed Communications Plan and Protocol

Communications Plan

1. Context

The Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Joint Committee has been set up to facilitate the partner authorities working together to plan transformation and joint-working opportunities across the Joint Committee area footprint.

2. Communications Aims and Objectives

- a. To explain the Joint Committee's role in achieving the agreed aspirations for the area and transformation agenda
- b. To facilitate transparency around the business of the Joint Committee
- c. To demonstrate the Joint Committee's effectiveness and decision-making, showing how the Joint Committee is helping to create a better place for the future
- d. To positively reflect the inclusive, partnership nature of the Joint Committee's work

3. Principles governing our work

Communications leads from each constituent Council will:

- a. adopt an approach of open, honest and relevant communication at all times.
- b. work together to support the communications aims & objectives for the Joint Committee
- c. follow the [Protocol](#) set out and appended to this Communications Plan

4. Core narrative

The headline out-take for the Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Joint Committee is:

Councillors from Bournemouth, Christchurch, Poole and Dorset councils are working together through the Joint Committee to foster excellent partnership working and take decisions that improve the area, enhance residents' quality of life, and support sustainable public services for the future in Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole.

5. Communicating the narrative

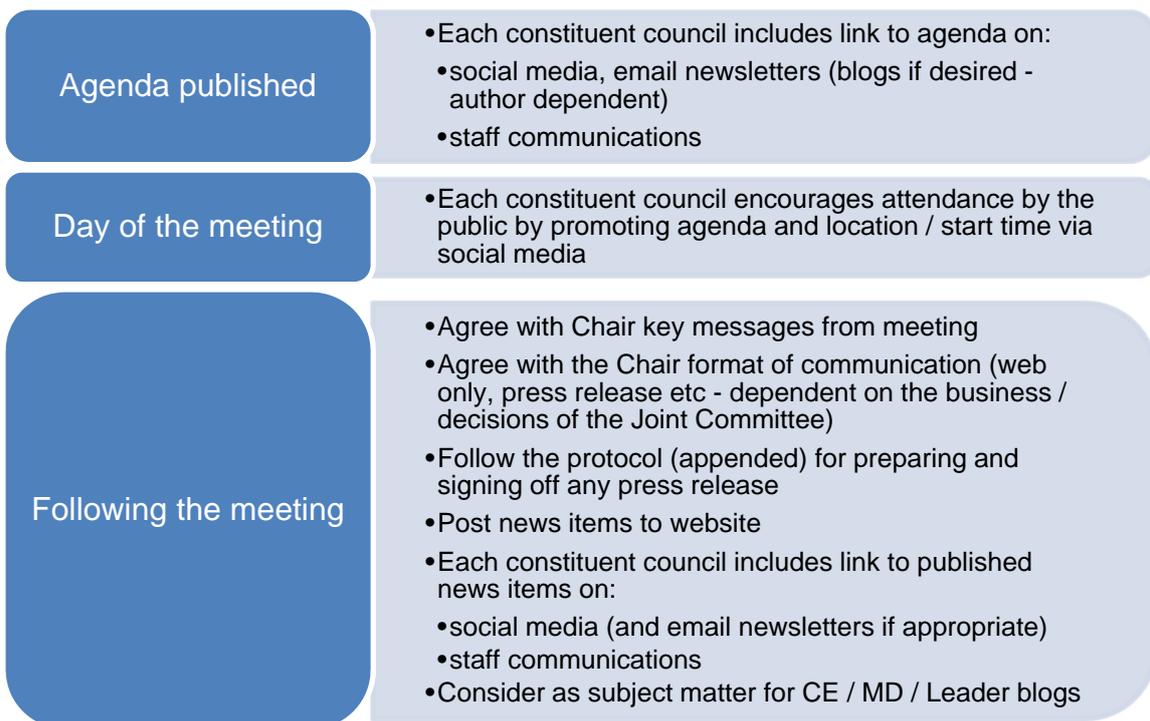
A website has been developed, providing a neutral digital space to publish the agendas and minutes of the Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Joint Committee, as well as news about decisions made by the Committee.

This can be found at <https://bcpjointcommittee.wordpress.com>

The recommended approach is to focus on activity linked to meaningful decisions of the Committee, in consultation with the Chair. As clarity emerges about proposal for local government reorganisation, it is likely a more detailed communications work programme will be necessary, linked to the decisions of the Committee, to be reported at a future date to be agreed with the Chair.

6. Communications activity workflow

Each Joint Committee Meeting will be supported as follows:



7. Stakeholders and audiences

In general, communications activity is aimed at:



In consultation with the Chair of the Joint Committee, and until a formal communications work programme is required, additional targeted communications activity will be undertaken on an ad-hoc basis.

Date	16/10/17
Version	0.2
Author	Georgia Turner, Shared Service Head: Communications & Marketing, Bournemouth and Poole Councils
Contributors / consultees	Ceri Lewis, Communications and PR Manager, Christchurch and East Dorset Councils Ian Turner, Communications Manager, Borough of Poole

Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Joint Committee:

Media Protocol

This protocol provides guidelines for managing communications with the media relating to queries directed to the Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Joint Committee.

It covers communications relating specifically to the remit of the Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Joint Committee. It does not govern media management for Future Dorset work, which individual councils have their own positions and key messages on.

Leaders and Chief Executives of the constituent councils and all Committee members are required to follow the agreed process in relation to media releases and media enquiries relating to the Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Joint Committee. This is primarily to co-ordinate the public dissemination of information, present consistent messages to Elected Members, partners, the public and other audiences, to avoid confusion among the media and others and to ensure that we have the best chance to effectively establish the Joint Committee.

Proactive media relations

The communications lead (representing Bournemouth, Poole, Christchurch and Dorset councils' communications professionals) will be responsible for the coordination of news releases prepared on behalf of the Joint Committee. The communications lead's primary point of contact for the sign-off of releases will be the Chair of the Joint Committee, or Deputy Chair in their absence.

All proactive news releases will include a quote from the Chair. Releases will be circulated to Leaders and Chief Executives ahead of publication, for comment, with a stated timescale for responses. Where a Leader or Chief Executive does not come back within the specified timeframe it will count as a nil response and the Chair will be asked to sign off the statement/response on their behalf.

News releases will be posted onto the Joint website, as the primary repository for news. Communications Leads within each constituent council will use their communications channels to distribute information.

Reactive media enquiries

All press/media enquiries regarding the Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Joint Committee should be directed to the communications lead, who will co-ordinate a response with the Chair.

The Chair will clear the response with Leaders and Chief Executives, or may ask the communications lead to co-ordinate this. Given the need to meet tight media deadlines, a timeframe of one morning/afternoon is recommended for Leaders and Chief Executives to come back with comments on draft statements/responses. Where a Leader or Chief Executive does not come back within the specified timeframe it will count as a nil response and the Chair will be asked to sign off the statement/response on their behalf.

Where we need to respond quickly to a high-profile issue, and by missing a media deadline we would risk significantly damaging the reputation of the Joint Committee, it is recommended that the Chair be asked to sign off any responses/statements on the Leaders' and Chief Executives' behalf.

Negative publicity

It is important that any potential negative stories which may have an impact on the reputation of the Joint Committee are flagged up at the earliest opportunity by Leaders and Chief Executives and their respective organisations so we can put plans in place to manage any negative publicity.

Requests for radio/TV interviews

Requests for broadcast interviews will be discussed with the Chair who will decide the most appropriate person to conduct the interview.

Areas of dissent

It is acknowledged that there will not always be agreement between all constituent councils of the Joint Committee on all matters. In these instances, it is accepted that constituent councils will respond to media enquiries as sovereign councils, setting out their positions, whilst, in the spirit of partnership and collaboration, sharing any media comment with other constituent councils for information.