

**BOURNEMOUTH, CHRISTCHURCH AND POOLE JOINT COMMITTEE
21 November 2017**

PRESENT:

Councillor Janet Walton	Borough of Poole - Chair
Councillor John Beesley	Bournemouth Borough Council - Vice-Chair
Councillor David Flagg	Christchurch Borough Council - Vice-Chair
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 Mike Greene	Bournemouth Borough Council
Councillor Nicola Greene	Bournemouth Borough Council
Councillor May Haines	Borough of Poole
Councillor Trish 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 Pat Oakley	Bournemouth Borough Council
Councillor Karen Rampton	Borough of Poole

OFFICERS:

Andrew Flockhart, Chief Executive, Borough of Poole
 David McIntosh, Chief Executive, Christchurch and East Dorset Councils
 Jane Portman, Managing Director, Bournemouth Borough Council
 Richard Bates, Chief Financial Officer, Dorset County Council
 Ian Milner, Strategic Director, Christchurch Borough Council
 Julian Osgathorpe, Joint Executive Director, Corporate Services
 Adam Richens, Service Director, Strategic Finance
 Tanya Coulter, Service Director, Legal and Democratic & Monitoring Officer
 Sarah Longdon, LGR Programme Manager
 Georgia Turner, Head of Communications and Marketing

The meeting commenced at 10.03 am

Note: To see a copy of the public reports that were considered by the Committee at this meeting please visit:

<https://bcpjointcommittee.wordpress.com/meetings/>

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14. APOLOGIES

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Blair Crawford, Bournemouth Borough Council. Councillor Pat Oakley would act as his substitute for this meeting.

An apology for absence was also received from Debbie Ward - Chief Executive, Dorset County Council. Richard Bates - Chief Financial Officer, Dorset County Council was in attendance.

15. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of any disclosable pecuniary interests by Joint Committee Members.

It was noted that the four Chief Officers would leave the room for item 9 on the agenda, at clause 22 below.

16. CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

One Member requested a minor amendment to page 11 of the minutes to clarify that the appropriate representation from Dorset County Council was two Cabinet Members, one of which was a named substitute for the Joint Committee.

DECISION MADE:

That, subject to the agreed amendment above, the minutes of the meeting on 30 October 2017, be confirmed.

17. PUBLIC ISSUES

The Joint Committee were informed that the following public questions had been received:-

- a. David Higgins
- b. Susan Chapman

A copy of the questions and answers can be viewed at the following link:-

<https://www.bournemouth.gov.uk/councildemocratic/CouncilMeetings/Previousquestionsdocs/Public-Questions-21-November-2017.pdf>

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18. PROGRAMME OVERVIEW - HIGH LEVEL PLAN AND INITIAL RESOURCE ESTIMATE FOR PHASE 1

The Service Director, Legal and Democratic & Monitoring Officer clarified that all reports considered by the Joint Committee now included additional information in the classification section, to aid with clarification on which Members could speak and vote on each item. 'All Members' of the Joint Committee denoted all 18 Members, including the Dorset County Council Members. 'Full Members' of the Joint Committee denoted the 16 full Members from Bournemouth Borough Council, Christchurch Borough Council and the Borough of Poole Council.

The Joint Committee considered a report by the Joint Executive Director, circulated at '5'. The report provided the Joint Committee with an overview of the high level programme plan for the delivery of Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) and the initial resource estimates required to start key workstreams within the programme, including those on the identified critical path for the programme. The Joint Executive Director introduced the report and highlighted the following three core phases, alongside the methodology around cost, resources and risk categories:-

- Creating the new unitary authority.
- Delivering senior staffing structures and business functionality for April 2019.
- Designing and building the new local authority.

In response to One Member's question relating to scrutiny resource and expenditure, Officers confirmed that a regular feature of the Programme Overview would be accounts and allocation of resources. Once this suite of information was in place, each partner authority had their own arrangements for the scrutiny of LGR progress. Following this theme, the Chairman highlighted that the Joint Committee needed to consider how to facilitate the engagement of Overview and Scrutiny and this discussion would be held at item 10 on the agenda.

DECISION MADE:

That the Joint Committee:-

- a. Note the high level programme plan and the workstreams outlined.
- b. approve the principles for the apportionment of programme costs across all appropriate preceding authorities.
- c. Note the initial resource estimates for the commencement of key workstreams contained within the high level programme plan.
- d. Delegate authority to the Programme Board to:-
 - i. Identify appropriate resources from within each authority.

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- ii. Reprioritise or estimate the required backfill those resources in order to allow their secondment to the programme team(s) as required.
- iii. In consultation with their colleagues on the Programme Board, agree the backfill arrangements required to release resources to the programme.
- iv. Commission and oversee the progression of the workstreams outlined on the high level programme plan.
- v. Report back to the Joint Committee on the performance of the programme plan, budget and team as required or agreed.

19. STRUCTURAL CHANGE ORDER

The Joint Committee considered a report by the Service Director, Legal and Democratic & Monitoring Officer, circulated at '6'. The report set out some of the key areas covered by a Structural Change Order (SCO), including the name of the new Council; the establishment of a Shadow Authority; the effective date on which existing councils are dissolved; and the new authority created in law. The Joint Committee was asked to consider whether to establish a Task and Finish Group to engage in the preparation of the Order in view of the tight timescales. It was likely that the Order would need to be laid before Parliament towards the end of January 2018, for approval by April 2018.

The Chairman took the opportunity on behalf of the Joint Committee to formally acknowledge that, since the last meeting of the Joint Committee, the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government had confirmed the 'minded to' decision to approve LGR in Dorset.

A Dorset County Council (DCC) Member welcomed the opportunity to be involved in any Task and Finish Group in a non-voting capacity, to keep a watching brief for DCC in relation to political oversight and staffing process.

In response to One Member's question in relation to the Constitution of the Shadow Authority, standing orders and the associated civic functions within the current three local authorities, the Service Director, Legal and Democratic & Monitoring Officer confirmed that the civic functions of the three local authorities would continue until vesting day in April 2019. However, the Order could contain provisions relating to the ongoing civic functions and identities of the three towns beyond April 2019. In addition, a separate Order could be set up to address these functions. Following this clarification, the Member suggested in considering the recommendations, the Joint Committee considered a separate Task and Finish Group to consider these specific issues in relation to the civic functions.

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A number of Members endorsed the proposal for a separate Task and Finish Group to look at the civic functions within each of the three local authorities beyond 2019. Furthermore, a number of comments were made in support of the continued existence of these respective functions and mayoralty to ensure the identities of the three towns were retained.

The Joint Committee considered public and stakeholder engagement in the development of the SCO. The Chairman highlighted the opportunity for public engagement in the work of the Joint Committee, and again thanked the individuals involved in asking public questions at the meeting as an example of engagement. Furthermore, each authority's scrutiny function for LGR enabled the public to engage and feed into the work of the Joint Committee.

One Member spoke briefly on the work undertaken on an informal basis by the Joint Committee with Medway Council. Concerns had been raised that by not bringing forward proposals at an early stage through the SCO in relation to civic functions, the opportunity could be lost as the SCO was agreed in April 2018. Therefore, a separate Task and Finish Group to address these issues was again endorsed.

DECISION MADE:

That the Joint Committee:-

- a. Note the contents of the report and implications.
- b. Establish a Task and Finish Group to work with the Monitoring Officers to inform the Councils' input into the Order and report back to the Joint Committee at its December meeting.
- c. Extend an invitation to a Dorset County Council representative to be involved in the work of this Task and Finish Group in a non-voting capacity.
- c. Establish a separate Task and Finish Group to work with the Monitoring Officers to inform the Councils' input into the Order on the specific matter of civic arrangements beyond April 2019.

20. COUNCIL TAX HARMONISATION - PRINCIPLES

The Joint Committee received a verbal update from the Chairman of the Council Tax Harmonisation Task and Finish Group on the work of the Group to date. The first meeting of the Group took place on 6 November 2017 and a further meeting was planned after this Joint Committee meeting. The Chairman thanked the Strategic Director - Christchurch Borough Council and the Service Director, Strategic Finance for their significant work and contribution to a fast paced workstream.

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In identifying the principles of the Group, the Chairman highlighted that LGR required that the level of Council Tax in a new authority did not place residents in a worse position than 'no change.' In referencing the Government referendum cap, the Group were working on options that made the reasonable assumption that this cap would remain in place. With regard to the options, 18 different models that had been analysed over a period of 10 years were currently under consideration. Feedback from the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) had resulted in a shift from 20 year modelling, to the current 10 years. As the Group worked through the options, recommendations would need to be brought back to the Joint Committee in the interest of all Council Tax payers. It was noted that it was eminently possible for Council Tax in Christchurch to be frozen or decreased through the models under consideration. Representations would need to be made to DCLG following the work of the Task and Finish Group and formal consideration by the Joint Committee.

One Member welcomed the update from the Task and Finish Group Chairman and highlighted recent comments in the press and by some Elected Members not on the Joint Committee, on Council Tax implications that were far removed from the options being considered. In light of this, making the intentions of the Joint Committee very clear was considered crucial. In achieving this, the Member sought the Joint Committee's approval of a motion that directed the Task and Finish Group to prioritise options that would ensure no Borough's Council Tax would rise above the Government Referendum Levels, and that freezes and reductions would apply in Christchurch.

In explaining the rationale for making this move, the Member emphasised the importance of being transparent with all residents as they participate in any consultations. It was the Member's view that Christchurch residents would be far better off through LGR than the status quo.

In response to one Member's comments that it was role of the Task and Finish Group to look at all of the options, the Member who made the move agreed with this, however, some options should not be acceptable to the Joint Committee in view of the current levels of Council Tax across all three local authorities.

A number of Members spoke in support of the move, before the Chairman summarised in highlighting that it was imperative to give an accurate reflection and idea to residents of the implications of LGR.

DECISION MADE:

That while recognising that the Task and Finish Group on Council Tax Harmonisation needs to look at all available options, this Joint Committee urges the Task and Finish Group to prioritise options which:-

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- a. ensure that no Borough's Council Tax levels will rise at a rate exceeding the Government's referendum limits; and
- b. include freezes and/or reductions to the absolute level of Council Tax paid by Christchurch residents.

21. PRINCIPLES FOR DISAGGREGATION IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT REORGANISATION IN DORSET

The Joint Committee considered a report by the LGR Programme Manager, circulated at '7'. The report outlined a set of principles for the scope and approach to carrying out the disaggregation and an equitable split, through ground rules, appropriate data collection and efficient analysis. The report sought the Joint Committee's agreement to create a Task and Finish Group to oversee this work.

One Member spoke briefly on pilot work ongoing with the Dorset Finance Officers Group and highlighted the timing of the Task and Finish Group in being a priority workstream. The Chairman supported this workstream as a priority.

Several Members commended the paper and in doing so, drew particular attention to the principle that the transfer of services from one authority to another would not disadvantage individual people receiving services and care. As the overriding principle, this would be a key determinant on how disaggregation would be applied. One Member outlined their concerns around budgetary pressures and the future impact on the feasibility of services to protect the most vulnerable. In response, some Members highlighted that the budget process was entirely separate to the disaggregation of services.

In response to one Member's questions on the role of staff Trade Unions in this process, the Chief Executive, Christchurch and East Dorset Councils, reported that following the SCO, there would be a Staffing Order that would determine a number of staffing principles. There would be a key opportunity to protect staff terms and conditions through the development of this Order.

The Chairman summarised by highlighting the ambition to make the transfer of services to a new unitary authority as seamless as possible for residents of Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole.

DECISION MADE:

That the Joint Committee:-

- a. Agree the disaggregation principles detailed in the report.

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- b. Agree the creation of a Task and Finish Group of Joint Committee Members to oversee the disaggregation.
- c. Agree that a further report be brought to the Joint Committee when the budgetary implications of the disaggregation process have been estimated.

22. APPOINTMENT OF CHIEF OFFICER/HEAD OF PAID SERVICE - PROCESS AND SUPPORT FOR COMMITTEE

The Chief Officers of each of the four local authorities left the room for this item of business.

The Joint Committee considered a report by the Service Director, Legal and Democratic & Monitoring Officer, circulated at '9'. The report dealt with the process for the appointment of a Head of Paid Service for a new Unitary Council. Once a Shadow Authority was established, it would be necessary to appoint a Head of Paid Service to lead the creation of the new organisation from an Officer perspective. Therefore, the Joint Committee was encouraged through the report to begin this process by working with the Local Government Association at an early stage, in view of the timescales involved. A number of strategic and HR related questions would need to be considered in identifying the agreed process for an appointment.

In response to one Member's question, the Service Director, Legal and Democratic & Monitoring Officer confirmed that it was the Shadow Authority's responsibility to make the formal appointment of a Head of Paid Service.

DECISION MADE:

That the report be noted and the Joint Committee agree to receive a presentation from a team from the Local Government Association on the approach to be taken to recruit a Chief Executive for a new Unitary Council.

23. FORWARD PLAN FOR THE JOINT COMMITTEE

The Joint Committee considered the Forward Plan, circulated at '10'.

The Chairman invited Members to consider how Overview and Scrutiny could engage in the work of the Joint Committee. The Managing Director, Bournemouth Borough Council, suggested the opportunity to add a standing item to each Joint Committee agenda to receive any recommendations from Overview and Scrutiny meetings across the four local authorities.

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One Member suggested the early population of the Forward Plan to allow for Overview and Scrutiny to accurately understand the upcoming work of the Joint Committee and to allow for proper planning, particularly in identifying Task and Finish Group Members.

The Managing Director, Bournemouth Borough Council, requested that Task and Finish Group membership be confirmed to Democratic Services as soon as possible.

DECISION MADE:

- a. That the Forward Plan be received and updated in light of decisions taken by the Joint Committee.
- b. That a standing item be added to future Joint Committee agendas to address Overview and Scrutiny recommendations.

24. FUTURE MEETING DATES

In planning for future meetings of the Joint Committee, the Chairman encouraged all Members to be as flexible with their availability as possible to aid with efficient date setting.

DECISION MADE:

That the following dates and locations for future meetings of the Joint Committee be noted:

15 December 2017 at 10:00 am in Christchurch Civic Offices

15 January 2017 at 10:00 am in Poole Civic Offices

The meeting closed at 11.33 am.

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