

BOURNEMOUTH, CHRISTCHURCH AND POOLE JOINT COMMITTEE
15 January 2018

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 Blair Crawford	Bournemouth Borough Council
Councillor Deborah Croney	Dorset County 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 Robert Lawton	Bournemouth Borough Council
Councillor Drew Mellor	Borough of Poole
Councillor Pat Oakley	Bournemouth Borough Council
Councillor Karen Rampton	Borough of Poole
Councillor David Smith	Bournemouth Borough Council

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 10.07 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/>

Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Joint Committee, 15 January 2018

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Beverley Dunlop and Jane Kelly - Bournemouth Borough Council and from Councillor David Jones - Dorset County Council. Named Substitute Members, Councillors Pat Oakley and David Smith - Bournemouth Borough Council were in attendance.

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.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

3. CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

DECISION MADE:

That the minutes of the meeting on 15 December 2017, be confirmed.

4. DEPUTATION - COUNCILLOR JOHN PARKER - DORSET ASSOCIATION OF PARISH AND TOWN COUNCILS

The Joint Committee were informed of the following deputation:-

Deputation from Councillor John Parker on behalf of the Dorset Association of Parish and Town Councils.

DECISION MADE:

That the deputation from Councillor John Parker, be received and the relevant Officers be asked to prepare a report in response to the issues raised in the deputation, for consideration by the Joint Committee in due course.

A copy of the deputation statement can be viewed at the following link:-

<https://www.bournemouth.gov.uk/councildemocratic/CouncilMeetings/Previousquestionsdocs/daptc-statement-to-bcpjc-150118.pdf>

5. PUBLIC QUESTION - COUNCILLOR LESLEY DEDMAN

Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Joint Committee, 15 January 2018

The Joint Committee received a public question from Councillor Lesley Dedman on Council Tax Harmonisation figures, Town Councils and the Mayoralty in Christchurch.

A copy of the question and answer can be viewed at the following link:-

<https://www.bournemouth.gov.uk/councildemocratic/CouncilMeetings/Previousquestionsdocs/public-question-from-councillor-lesley-dedman-and-response.pdf>

6. RECOMMENDATIONS FROM OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANELS/COMMITTEES

The Chair welcomed Councillor Andrew Morgan to the meeting to present the following recommendations of the Bournemouth Local Government Reorganisation and Shared Services Overview and Scrutiny Panel:-

1. The O&S Panel recommends that the Joint Committee does not agree the recommendation of the Task and Finish Group on the Structural Change Order relating to the election of the Leader of the Shadow Executive, and that the Joint Committee instead agrees that the Leader of the Shadow Executive be elected by all Members of the Shadow Authority.
2. The O&S Panel also informs the Joint Committee that it intends to give consideration to the arrangements for Overview and Scrutiny in the Shadow Authority.

DECISION MADE:

That the recommendations of the Bournemouth Local Government Reorganisation and Shared Services Overview and Scrutiny Panel be taken into account at the relevant item, at clause 8 of these minutes.

7. PROGRAMME UPDATE

The Joint Committee considered a report by the Programme Director, circulated at '6'. The report provided an overview of programme activity undertaken on behalf of the Joint Committee. The Programme Director introduced the report and informed Members that despite the complexity of the programme, it was performing as expected at this stage. Attention was drawn to paragraphs 5 and 8 of the report in relation to electoral arrangements and the impact of the Structural Change report to be considered by the Joint Committee at clause 8 of these minutes.

Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Joint Committee, 15 January 2018

One Member was encouraged that no risks had required escalation to the Joint Committee to date. Despite that, the Joint Committee emphasised paragraph 25 and that there was no room for complacency given the scale and complexity of the programme. In connection with this, one Member reiterated their concern for the scale, complexity and timescales involved. The Programme Director shared these concerns.

In response to questions relating to future Overview and Scrutiny arrangements, the Service Director, Legal and Democratic and Monitoring Officer confirmed that this was included in the Legal and Democratic Workstream and work would be undertaken with Members in due course to set out options for scrutiny arrangements, for approval by the Shadow Authority. Consequently, there would be no gap in scrutiny arrangements.

DECISION MADE:

- a. That the progress made since the last Joint Committee on approved workstreams, be noted.
- b. That the proposed activity to progress approved workstreams in the lead up to the next Joint Committee, be noted.

8. THE STRUCTURAL CHANGE ORDER - REPORT OF THE TASK AND FINISH GROUP

The Joint Committee considered a report by the Service Director, Legal and Democratic & Monitoring Officer, circulated at '7'. The report detailed the Task and Finish Group's responses and recommendations regarding outstanding issues relating to the Structural Change Order. The Chairman of the Task and Finish Group introduced the report and had regard to the recommendations of the Bournemouth Overview and Scrutiny Panel. The Chairman of the Task and Finish Group highlighted that it was not for the Executive to impose Overview and Scrutiny arrangements, and welcomed further work by Overview and Scrutiny Panels and Committees across Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole to consider future options. It was noted that the recommendations of the Task and Finish Group were agreed by a majority decision.

In clarifying the role of the 'Leader of the Executive', the Task and Finish Group Chairman highlighted that whilst a crucial role, the terminology 'Chair of the Executive' better reflected the requirements and role description. Consequently, the Task and Finish Group Chairman moved the adoption of a revised set of recommendations to reflect this terminology. With regard to recommendation 3, the Chair asked the Joint Committee to agree that the additional Joint Committee meeting be held at 9.30 am on 30 January 2018 at the Town Hall, Bourne Avenue, Bournemouth.

Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Joint Committee, 15 January 2018

One Member reported on the work of the Poole Business Improvement Sub-Committee, tasked to consider issues relating to Local Government Reorganisation. No specific recommendations were reported on this particular report and the Sub-Committee were comfortable with the recommendations as presented.

In response to one Member's questions relating to a casting vote of the Chair of the Executive, the Service Director, Legal and Democratic confirmed that this would be a matter for the Shadow Authority as part of agreeing its Standing Orders. No decisions had been made at this stage and issues such as this would be developed through the Legal and Democratic Workstream in due course. Further to this, the Member reiterated that he would be unable to support the recommendations in view of a long standing view that political balance should be reflected on the Shadow Executive. Similarly, one Member was grateful for clarity in relation to the Chair of the Executive position but would not be supporting the recommendation in relation to the process for establishing this position for all party engagement across Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole.

The Joint Committee briefly discussed the Electoral Workstream, of which a Task and Finish Group would be convened shortly before reporting back to the Joint Committee. Members were reminded that this Task and Finish Group would be making recommendations to the Joint Committee. In relation to cross party representation, the Overview and Scrutiny item on each agenda of the Joint Committee provided a platform ...

DECISION MADE:

That the Joint Committee:-

- a. Agrees the recommendations made by the Task and Finish Group as set out in the report in respect of the process for establishing the Chair and the Executive of the Shadow Authority and that these decisions are communicated to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG).
- b. Requests the Electoral Arrangements Task and Finish Group to consider the issues about the Electoral Order which are not yet resolved and to report back to the Committee.
- c. Agrees to meet at 9.30 am on Tuesday 30 January 2018 at the Town Hall, Bourne Avenue, Bournemouth to consider the report in respect of electoral arrangements referred to in recommendation b.
- d. That the title, 'Chair of the Executive' be used, replacing 'Leader of the Executive' in the report.

Notes:

Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Joint Committee, 15 January 2018

Councillors David Flagg - Vice-Chairman, and Trish Jamieson requested that their dissent from decision a. be recorded.

Councillor David Brown requested that his dissent from decisions a. - d. be recorded.

9. DISAGGREGATION UPDATE

The Joint Committee considered a report by the LGR Programme Manager, circulated at '8'. The report provided an update on the progress made with the Disaggregation Workstream, as detailed planning and preparation for the service analysis had completed, and the series of service reviews were underway. The Chief Financial Officer, Dorset County Council, introduced the report and for the benefit of members of the public, explained what disaggregation meant in practice. In the event of a new unitary authority being created for Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole, the cost of services, staffing resources and assets relating to the Dorset County Council services provided in Christchurch would need to transfer to this new authority. Funding associated with these issues would also transfer. With regard to the funding, the Chief Financial Officer, Dorset County Council, explained the process for analysing the cost of services and for splitting the funding such as Council Tax and stated that the percentage of Dorset County Council services in Christchurch would not necessarily reflect the percentage of associated funds.

One Member highlighted previous disaggregation exercises in 1997 on the creation of Bournemouth Borough Council and the Borough of Poole Council, and emphasised that adequate funding for long term commitments was vital for the success of any new unitary authority for Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole. In connection with this, the Joint Committee discussed the resource available for disaggregation and was informed that a core team of three Officers had been seconded within Dorset County Council. Back-filling arrangements would apply to the substantive roles. Work would be required from existing staff to bring together the information relating to service reviews.

In response to questions in relation to the financial framework, Officers reported that all Section 151 Officers were Members of the Oversight Group, feeding into the work of the relevant Task and Finish Groups. One Member highlighted the size and importance of the task of disaggregation and reiterated comments that there was no room for complacency despite the positive progress made. In connection with this, Members acknowledged the work between both Joint Committees across Dorset on the model of library service disaggregation, which focused on a number of key areas such as staff protection and ensuring a fair and accurate disaggregation in the interest of residents across the whole of Dorset.

Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Joint Committee, 15 January 2018

The Chair summarised by highlighting the experience drawn from previous disaggregation exercises and that the expertise of some individuals was crucially still available to draw on.

DECISION MADE:

That the progress of the disaggregation plan, be noted.

10. COUNCIL TAX HARMONISATION

The Joint Committee considered a report by the Service Director, Strategic Finance - Bournemouth and Poole and the Strategic Director, Christchurch Borough Council, circulated at '9'. The report provided an update to the Joint Committee with regard to the implications of the recent provisional Local Government Settlement 2018/19 announcement and the impact on the work of the Task and Finish Group on Council Tax Harmonisation.

The Chairman of the Task and Finish Group introduced the report and informed the Joint Committee that the Task and Finish Group had met three times, with the business very much focused around the direction of the Joint Committee to prioritise options that included freezes and reductions to the absolute level of Council Tax paid by Christchurch residents, alongside the priority of no Borough Council Tax level rising at a rate that exceeded the Government's referendum limits. Attention was drawn to the appendix which featured 18 models, although the Joint Committee noted that these had been superseded due to the change in core referendum limits by the Government. The Chairman of the Task and Finish Group highlighted that due to this change, the workstream could not proceed until each authority had set its budget and associated medium term financial plans.

The Task and Finish Group would therefore have further work to undertake and would report back to the Joint Committee by March at the earliest, which required the removal of the item from the Forward Plan for February. One Member emphasised the view that Council Tax Harmonisation should apply from day one of the new unitary authority and therefore reiterated the position of the Christchurch Borough Council representatives on the Joint Committee on this issue.

One Member welcomed the information contained within appendix a, but highlighted that a freedom of information request had been made with regard to this information. The Member encouraged openness and transparency with regard to the work of Task and Finish Groups feeding into the Joint Committee.

DECISION MADE:

- a. That the content of the report, be noted.

Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Joint Committee, 15 January 2018

- b. That a further update be provided once Council Tax setting decisions made by Bournemouth, Christchurch, Poole and Dorset County Councils are known.

11. FORWARD PLAN FOR THE JOINT COMMITTEE

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

The Programme Director introduced the Forward Plan and highlighted a number of changes that required an update to the Forward Plan arising from decisions made by the Joint Committee.

Council Tax Harmonisation would be removed from the February 2018 agenda, whilst the agreed special meeting of the Joint Committee to consider electoral arrangements would be added to the Forward Plan for 30 January 2018. In respect of the Task and Finish Group on Civic Arrangements, a meaningful update would not be completed for February 2018 and further work was planned in relation to the outcome of the Community Governance Review in Christchurch.

DECISION MADE:

That the Forward Plan be received and updated in light of decisions taken by the Joint Committee.

The meeting closed at 11.11 am.

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