

**BOURNEMOUTH, CHRISTCHURCH AND POOLE JOINT COMMITTEE**  
**20 March 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 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 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  
Debbie Ward, Chief Executive, Dorset County Council  
Julian Osgathorpe, Joint Executive Director, Corporate Services  
Tanya Coulter, Joint Service Director, Legal and Democratic & Monitoring Officer  
Adam Richens, Joint Service Director, Strategic Finance & Section 151 Officer

The meeting commenced at 2.00 pm

**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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**29. APOLOGIES**

The Joint Committee was advised that Councillor Anne Filer had replaced Councillor Beverley Dunlop as a permanent member of the Joint Committee for Bournemouth Borough Council.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Anne Filer - Bournemouth Borough Council. Named Substitute Member, Councillor David Smith - Bournemouth Borough Council was in attendance.

**30. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

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

**31. CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES**

A Councillor sought clarification on Clause 27 Appointment of Chief Officer/Head of Paid Service - process and support - indicating that at the meeting on 21 February 2018 it had been generally accepted that the role of the Task and Finish Group which had been established would include the visioning for the new Council although this had not been reflected in the decision.

The Chairman confirmed that the visioning for the new Council was included in the role of the Task and Finish Group.

**DECISION MADE:**

That the minutes of the meeting on 21 February 2018, be confirmed subject to the decision at Clause 27 being amended to include visioning for the new Council in the role of the Task and Finish Group.

**32. PUBLIC ISSUES - DEPUTATIONS/QUESTIONS/PETITIONS**

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

- a. Councillor Peter Hall
- b. Peter Fenning
- c. Councillor Claire Bath
- d. Honorary Freeman Councillor Colin Bungey
- e. John Sprackling

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

<https://bcjointcommittee.files.wordpress.com/2018/04/public-questions-20-march-2018.pdf>

Note: The Joint Committee was advised that 15 minutes were available for public questions, normal practice was for everyone to ask their first question, then if time permits second and third question could be asked.

**33. RECOMMENDATIONS FROM OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANELS/COMMITTEES**

- a. Christchurch Borough Council - Scrutiny and Policy Overview Committee - 21 February and 15 March 2018

The Chair welcomed Councillor David Jones, Vice-Chairman of the Christchurch Borough Council Scrutiny and Policy Overview Committee to present the minutes of the meeting on 21 February 2018 and 15 March 2018.

Councillor Jones reported that Members of the Scrutiny and Policy Overview Committee had raised concerns over the Joint Committee's excessive use of task and finish groups which was detrimental to openness and transparency.

Members were advised that the Scrutiny and Policy Overview Committee had recommended that Task and finish group meetings be open for Councillors of all three authorities to attend and observe.

Councillor Jones advised Members that the Scrutiny and Policy Overview Committee had recommended that an additional potential Council Tax Harmonisation Strategy model be made illustrating harmonization from Day 1.

**DECISION MADE:**

That the above recommendations be referred to the relevant Task and Finish Groups.

- b. Borough of Poole - Business Improvement Overview and Scrutiny Sub-Committee - 16 March 2018.

The Chair welcomed Councillor Ron Parker to the meeting to present the following recommendations/comments of the Borough of Poole Business Improvement Overview and Scrutiny Sub-Committee to the Joint Committee.

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- (i) It considers what arrangements could be put in place to facilitate local decision making and what they may look like.

Comments:

A Member raised a query that sought to establish why neither Bournemouth nor Poole were pursuing the options available to them in regard to how localised decisions could be made in the new Authority's structure. He added that It was well known that Christchurch Borough Council was pursuing the option of creating a new town council to ensure that it could still make local decisions through the vehicle of a Community Governance Review, although he acknowledged that other options should also be considered.

- (ii) It notes the concern of the Sub-Committee in relation to increasing savings yet to be made by other Local Authorities involved in this process.

Comments:

Despite a level of concern that Poole residents needed to be treated fairly, Members of this Sub-Committee have been reassured by Officers that the data included in Figure 1 of the Consolidated MTFP Report are a current snapshot of each Council's finances and does not take into account future savings programmes. It was also highlighted that this data would change as the workstream progressed. The Disaggregation workstream was separate from this.

**DECISION MADE:**

That the above recommendations be noted and referred to the relevant Task and Finish Groups.

**34. PROGRAMME UPDATE**

The Joint Committee considered a report of the Programme Director circulated at '6'. The report detailed an overview of programme activity undertaken on behalf of the Joint Committee.

Members were advised that the Joint Committee in April would receive an update in terms of the mobilisation of Phases 1 and 2 of the programme.

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**DECISION MADE:**

That the Joint Committee:

1. Notes the progress made since the last Joint Committee on approved workstreams.
2. Notes the proposed activity to progress approved workstreams in the lead up to the next Joint Committee.

**35. PARLIAMENTARY ORDERS**

The Joint Committee considered a report by the Chief Executive, Borough of Poole, circulated at '7'. The report provided information on the progress being made with the Structural Change Order and on the plans and a timeline for the consequential orders due to be considered by Parliament.

The Joint Committee was advised that the Government would present the Structural Change Order on 29 March 2018. Members were informed that two consequential Orders would follow namely the finance and miscellaneous orders.

Andrew Flockhart, Chief Executive Borough of Poole highlighted paragraph 6 of the report which set out the current timetable as indicated by the MHCLG. Members were informed that the timeline provided deadlines for the work being undertaken by a number of different task and finish groups.

The report also highlighted proposals for the development of a Constitution for the Shadow Authority. The Joint Committee was asked to establish a Task and Finish group to work with officers on this prior to a further report being considered by the Joint Committee. The Monitoring Officer reported on the development of the Constitution for the Shadow Authority which would be agreed at the first meeting of the Shadow Authority in June/July. She explained that a Constitution from another authority had been used as a basis and the Task and Finish Group would review to ensure that it was appropriate and ready for the Shadow Authority. The Joint Committee was advised that a new Constitution and governance arrangements would be prepared for the new authority. A Councillor asked how the wider group of elected members would be advised of and engaged in the work associated with the development of the Constitution and governance arrangements for the Shadow Authority and new Authority to achieve openness. The Monitoring Officer reported on the scrutiny function and the joint work that would be undertaken to look at the Constitution and the same joint working that would be put in place for standards and other aspects for the shadow authority and new authority.

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DECISION MADE:**

That the Joint Committee:

1. Notes the information about the Parliamentary Orders and takes account of this when considering its Forward Plan.
2. Agrees to establish a Task and Finish Group to work with Officers on a Constitution for the Shadow Authority for consideration by the Committee including the development of the Constitution and governance arrangements for the new unitary authority.

**36. CONSOLIDATED MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL PLANS (MTFPs)**

The Joint Committee considered a report by the Chief Financial Officers circulated at 8 on the Consolidated Medium Term Financial Plans.

Councillor John Beesley, Vice-Chairman reported that the MTFP would be the cornerstone of the new authority. He explained that the MTFP would be informed by the disaggregation workstream and national issues.

Adam Richens, Chief Financial Officer report that the Joint Committee at its meeting on 15 December 2017 had received a high-level overview of the aggregated MTFPs. Members were reminded that the 2018/19 budgets for the relevant Councils had been approved in February 2018. The Chief Financial Officer referred to figure 1 set out in the report which provided an update position on the MTFP for Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole as disclosed in their February 2018 budget reports for 2018/19. The Joint Committee was informed of the current and future Council Tax assumptions detailed at figure 2 in the report. The Chief Financial Officer explained that before consideration was given to the impact of the Christchurch element of the Dorset County Council MTFP it was recommended that the consolidated position as shown in figure 1 was recast so that it was based on a consistent 2.99% Council tax assumption for 2019/20. Members were referred to figure 3 set out in the report which provided the updated position based on the planning assumption that the core Council Tax referendum threshold for 2019/20 would be 2.99%.

Members were advised that the funding gap was £7m in 2019/20 and a further £10m in 2020/21. The Chief Financial Officer commented on the identified and targeted savings for Dorset County Council. The Joint Committee was advised that the disaggregation should enable the forecast MTFP funding gap for Dorset County Council to be more accurately broken down between the two new Unitary Authorities with a mean average of Council tax taxbase and population with 11.84% being used for planning purposes.

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The Joint Committee was asked to consider the establishment of a task and finish group which as part of a financial strategy, would ensure the savings required to deliver a balanced budget for 2019/20 were developed.

The Chief Financial Officer reported on the earmarked reserves detailed at figure 6 and at Appendix A to the report which provided further analysis of each Councils reserves including those that have been earmarked some of which will have been set aside to support the delivery of the 2019/2020 MTFP/Local Government Reorganisation or Capital resourcing.

Members were informed of the detail at figure 7 set out in the report which set out the capital financing requirements which included both Housing Revenue Account (HRA) and General Fund Debt. Attached at Appendix B to the report was the budget 2017/18 based on the Government Return (RA form).

A Member referred to figure 7 and asked if loans would be shown in these figures. The Chief Financial Officer reported that the information was a snap shot of the publicly available information and further updates would be provided in August.

A Dorset County Council Councillor referred to disaggregation and asked if it was known how much Dorset County Council spends in Christchurch. The Chief Financial Officer reported on the work undertaken by Local Partnerships as part of the business case. The Chief Executive Dorset County Council reported that work was in progress on service provision and what was spent against assets.

A Borough of Poole Councillor referred to paragraph 29 of the report and asked where the one-off transitional costs of up to £11.8m required to deliver a Unitary Authority would be funded. The Joint Executive Director, Corporate Services reported that the Joint Committee at its next meeting would receive a programme costs update. The Chief Financial Officer reported on transition costs funded through earmarked reserves and capital receipts in addition he reported on the request for grant funding from the Government but at this stage there was no indication of such funding being available. The Poole Councillor referred to recommendation 3 of the report and asked when all Members would be advised of the arrangements and make representations to the Task and Finish Group to ensure Members of all authorities were aware and engaged. A Bournemouth Council representative provided clarification on the £5.7m savings assumed and the potential for further savings which would make balancing the budget easier.

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The Vice-Chair, Councillor Beesley reported on the role of the task and finish group in reporting back to the Joint Committee rather than inviting all members of the relevant Councils. He also referred to an amendment to figure 1 in the total column which should read '£19,364'. The Joint Committee was also asked to consider an amendment to recommendation 3 as set out in the report requesting the existing Council Tax Harmonisation Task and Finish Group, as part of the financial strategy, to ensure that development of the savings required to deliver a balance budget. The Joint Committee then considered the recommendations including the above amendment.

**DECISION MADE:**

That the Joint Committee:

1. Having considered the updated MTFP position as shown in figure 5 notes the caveats as set out in paragraph 12 of the report.
2. Requests the Council Tax Harmonisation Task and Group consider the information set out in this report.
3. Requests that the existing Council Tax Harmonisation Task and Finish Group, as part of the financial strategy, ensure the development of the savings required to deliver a balanced budget for 2019/20.
4. Acknowledges that the framework and decisions set out in this report will have a significant impact on the financial sustainability of the new Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Unitary Authority.

Note - Councillor David Brown wished to be recording as dissenting from the above decisions.

**37. COUNCIL TAX HARMONISATION**

The Joint Committee considered a report by the Chief Financial Officers circulated at 9 which provided an update on the Council Tax Harmonisation modelling following the setting of the Council Tax in the Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole areas for 2018/19.

The Chairman of the Task and Finish Group referred to the figures included in the appendices which reflect the Council Tax for next year. He reported that Council tax would not exceed the Government Referendum limits and commented on the possibility of freezing or reducing Council Tax in Christchurch. The Joint Committee was informed that the MHCLG had clarified that the principles of the harmonisation strategy would need to be included within the generic finance order.

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Members were informed that that the Task and Finish Group would now need to consider the information contained within the report, the MTFP update report to the March Joint Committee, and the progress on the disaggregation workstream, with a view to making a recommendation on the principles to be contained in the finance order to the Joint Committee in April whilst acknowledging that no specific strategy was required at this stage.

The Joint Committee was reminded of the impact of the modelling as a result of the setting of the Council Tax for 2018/19. Members were referred to the proposals which look at day one harmonisation. Councillor Flagg, Vice-Chairman reported that Christchurch Borough Council had not changed its stance on day one harmonisation. He referred to a letter he had received dated 26 February 2018 from the Secretary of State commenting on having regard to local preferences and financial implications and confirmed that he would be happy to provide a copy of the letter to Members after the meeting. The Chairman of the Committee confirmed that she had received a similar letter.

A Poole Councillor asked if the work of the Council Tax Harmonisation Group would have an impact on the funding gap. The Chair of the Task and Finish Group reported that the impact on the funding gap would depend on which model was adopted. He confirmed that the Group was focussed on the guidance from the Secretary of State and abiding with approved principles.

**DECISION MADE:**

That the Joint Committee:

1. Notes the content of the report.
2. Requests that the Council Tax Task and Finish Group consider the Consolidated Medium Term Financial Plan report which is presented as a separate item on this agenda.
3. Requests that the Council Tax and Finish Group make a recommendation to this Committee in April in regards to the information required for the Finance Order.

**38. DISAGGREGATION**

The Joint Committee considered a report by the Programme Manager circulated at 10 which provided an update on the disaggregation workstream and the work of the Task and Finish Group.

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Councillor Philip Broadhead in presenting the report outlined the work of the Task and Finish Group. He referred to concern that had previously been expressed about the volume of work, the timeframe, resource implications and the guiding principles that the process does not disadvantage anyone. Councillor Broadhead reported that he was impressed with the work that had been undertaken. He commented on the second meeting of the Task and Finish Group and referred to the people based services, the satisfaction in receiving the calculations, the exploration of service areas and the depth of information. Councillor Broadhead in commenting on the disaggregation referred to the East Dorset and Christchurch Partnership and the TUPE of staff. The Joint Committee was advised of the focus on capital programmes and the amount of work still to do. Councillor Broadhead briefly referred to the process relating to the role of the Task and Finish Group and Oversight Group prior to referring back to the Joint Committee.

Councillor May Haines reported that when the Task and Finish Group originally met there was concern about the pace but significant efforts have been made and progress was back on track. She also referred to concerns about the methodology being used on the split between Dorset County Council and Christchurch Borough Council and in particular how the percentage split was arrived at. She reported that assurance was provided that this work was being done in a considered manner. Members were advised of the joint scrutiny working group being established on disaggregation and outlined the support being provided by the Centre for Public Scrutiny (CfPS) in working with the three Councils to develop the scrutiny function for the shadow authority and new authority. The Monitoring Officer reported that Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole have their own Overview and Scrutiny bodies looking at Local Government Reorganisation. In addition, a Joint Working Group has been established to look at disaggregation.

A Dorset County Councillor reported that the Christchurch Borough Council Scrutiny and Policy Overview Committee would continue to scrutinise all aspects of the work of the Joint Committee. He asked if the papers on the methodology referred to above would be published. Debbie Ward, Chief Executive Dorset County Council reported that there was a lot of detail on the methodology and individuals could be recognised therefore summary sheets could be made available and shared if requested. The Chair of the Joint Committee confirmed that Bournemouth and Poole would continue to undertake their appropriate scrutiny through their respective bodies.

A Dorset County Councillor highlighted the impact of the disaggregation work on people and their daily lives and the need to ensure that the outcomes were fit for purpose. She also highlighted the impact on members of staff and the need to consider their welfare.

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A Bournemouth Borough Councillor thanked officers for the pace and quality of the work being undertaken and referred to the high costs low incidents which tested assumptions and provided a good baseline to understand the process. She reported that the Group was now looking at people services.

**DECISION MADE:**

That the Joint Committee notes the progress of the disaggregation workstream.

**39. CIVIC FUNCTIONS TASK AND FINISH GROUP - PROGRESS REPORT**

The Joint Committee considered a report from the Civic Functions Task and Finish Group circulated at 11 which provided a summary of the work undertaken to date on behalf of the Joint Committee in relation to the preservation of the Civic and Ceremonial Rights of the existing Councils.

Councillor Jamieson presented the report explaining that it was a learning process of the available option eg Chartered Trustee status or Parish/Town Councils. She commented on appropriate consultation and the approach of the Group to work together as each existing Council wishes to keep its Mayor.

A Poole Councillor referred to paragraphs 7-12 in the report and asked for clarification of the proposal on the Boundary Review. The Monitoring Officer reported that clarification would be sought but if a ward was on boundary then the relevant Councillors would be trustees of both charters.

**DECISION MADE:**

That the Joint Committee support the position of the Civic Functions Task and Finish Group to support the preservation of the Civic and Ceremonial Rights of the respective Boroughs through the establishment of a Charter Trustee for each of the existing boroughs of Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole.

**40. FORWARD PLAN FOR THE JOINT COMMITTEE**

A Poole Councillor referred to local decision making and appropriate community engagement suggesting that this should be included on the Forward Plan.

The Monitoring Officer reported that this issue would be discussed at the Governance Task and Finish Group.

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DECISION MADE:**

That the Forward Plan be noted.

The meeting closed at 3.45 pm.

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