

CHRISTCHURCH BOROUGH COUNCIL
SCRUTINY AND POLICY OVERVIEW COMMITTEE

Minutes of the Meeting held on 12 April 2018 at 6.00 pm

Present:-

Cllr C P Jamieson – Chairman
Cllr D C Jones – Vice-Chairman

Present: Cllr W Grace, Cllr P Hilliard, Cllr Mrs D Jones and Cllr T R Watts

Apologies: Cllr F F T Neale and Cllr Mrs L Smith

336. Declarations of Interests

There were no declarations received on this occasion.

337. Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Joint Committee

Members reviewed the minutes of the last meeting held on 20 March 2018 and the Agenda for the meeting being held on 16 April 2018..

Confirmation of Minutes

- Members expressed concern that recommendations from the Committee were not discussed and sent straight to the relevant task and finish group.
- A Member who recently attended a joint meeting stated that Members of Bournemouth and Poole Scrutiny Committees also have raised the issue of transparency.
- Following questions from Members regarding the flow of information from the Joint Committee, the Scrutiny Officer informed Members that the Leader and Deputy Leader should report back to the Committee on the progress of the Joint Committee and the Task and Finish Groups that they sit on.
- The notes from this meeting will be sent to officers at BBC, which will be considered at the meeting to be held on 16 April. The notes will also be sent to the Leader and Deputy Leader.
- The Scrutiny Officer also informed Members that all Council Members were welcome to attend Scrutiny Task and Finish Groups.

Public Issues:

- No comments were made on this occasion.

Recommendations from overview and Scrutiny Panels/ Committees:

- Members raised the issue that the recommendations made by the Committee had a different format to those of the Poole Scrutiny Committee. This should be raised by the Leader and Deputy Leader at the next meeting.

Programme Update:

- No comments were made on this occasion.

Programme Mobilisation and Resourcing:

- No comments were made on this occasion.

Parliamentary Orders:

- It was suggested that Members read the orders. A copy will be sent through the Democratic Services office.

Consolidated Medium Financial Plans (MTFPs)

- No comments were made on this occasion.

Council Tax Harmonisation:

- No comments were made on this occasion

Disaggregation:

- Members asked if there would be any disaggregation from EDDC, the officer answered the majority would be from DCC however there may be some disaggregation of smaller assets such as IT equipment or vans.
- Following questions, the officer explained to Members that staff would go through TUPE process and then employed by either of the new authorities.

Civic Functions Task and Finish Group- Progress Report

- No comments were made on this occasion

Forward Plan

- No comments were made on this occasion.

Agenda Items

Programme Update

- Members who attended the Bournemouth Scrutiny Committee informed other Members that this report highlighted the three main tasks being focussed on, giving importance to services continuing on day one.
- Members expressed concern about the volume of work required to create the new council and the expectation for services to continue to the standard they were currently. Members were reassured that current services are being identified as part of the programme. Members questioned how the aspirations for the different authorities are being captured.
- Members wished to know how local communities will be represented.

Recommendation for consideration: How will the aspirations for the different authorities be captured? How will improved efficiencies be achieved?

What provisions will be made so local democracy continues?

Programme Mobilisation and Resourcing

- Following questions, the officer informed Members that the £1.16 million had been earmarked for phase one and two, and therefore it would be likely more funding would be needed further in the process as the full transition cost is expected to be around £11 million.
- Members expressed concern over the pressure put on staff throughout this process. The officer informed Members that the report does acknowledge this and that any capacity issues will be dealt with by either by back-filling or bringing in additional staff.
- Members questioned if this had resulted in any adverse effects to services, the officer answered they had not seen any impact to services at the moment.
- The officer also informed Members that some front-line staff were not involved in the organisation of the new unitary authority. Currently it was mainly management and support staff involved.
- Members pointed out the unique position of CBC as staff had been through this process before, therefore having experience to guide Members of all three authorities appropriately.
- Members wished to see identified risks to be included as part of the programme update at every meeting of the Joint Committee.

Recommendation: the risk matrix be a standing item on future Joint Committee meeting agendas.

Parliamentary Orders

- The Partnership Legal & Democratic Services Manager gave Members a brief overview of what will be happening in relation to the Parliamentary process. The Structural Change order has been laid before Parliamentary. At the end of the process there will be a set date, at which point it will become law and the councils will be obliged to act accordingly. There will be further aspects coming out of this, such as land and asset transfers. It is expected that they will go through the parliamentary process during the summer.
- Following the Order being made, within 14 days after that date, the first Shadow Authority meeting must be held. Then further issues will be raised.
- Members raised concerns over the extent of public participation in committee meetings, which would be detailed in the constitution for the new authority. They were very keen that there should be as much public participation and openness of meetings as possible.

Members were advised that a new constitution will be developed for the new authority and will not be based on any existing version.

Recommendation: that the constitution for the new authority allow for as much public participation and openness of meetings as possible.

Council Tax Harmonisation

- The Government's referendum limits for council tax increases will not be removed.
- Members asked if the CBC council tax amount could be lowered from day one, to reflect the same levels as Bournemouth and Poole's current levels. It was acknowledged that it would be a financial risk.
- Option B is harmonisation on day one.
- It was asked, has there been a model to show BBC and BPC going above the referendum limit? The officer advised that the modelling that was attached showed a variety of scenarios. A Member supported a model where CBC reduced the council tax level and BBC and BPC levels rose, but not above the referendum limit. There would be a shortfall but this would be spread across the lifetime of the authority. Would always advocate, reducing CBC and raising BPC and BBC levels until harmonisation was achieved.
- Members agreed that they were trying to ensure that financial arrangements were fair for the people of Christchurch. It was a policy of this Council, that the new authority should harmonise council tax on day one.
- Precepts – Christchurch forming a possible town council: precepts have not been discussed or costed. This needs to be considered, so we can identify the true costs to the residents. It was explained that the Community Governance Review was being conducted and will include this information. It will be the business of this Council to determine the setting up of Parish Councils. Precepts had been factored into the modelling. A Member suggested that whilst CBC was pursuing the democratic option of having a Town Council, BBC and PBC were looking at Charter Trustee Status, which would incur a precept for the whole authority. It was explained that funding of Charter Trustees could be charged to the whole area, however, this may be just the area covered by the Charter Trustees only, and not the area covered by a town council, clarification was being sought.

Recommendation: The policy of CBC remains harmonisation on day one.

Disaggregation

- A Member advised that concern that people would be re-assessed for the care needs, but acknowledged that assurance had been received that this will not need to be done.

Forward Plan for the Joint Committee

- The next Joint Committee will be held on 23 May. Then there in June 2018 the first Shadow Authority Meeting will be held.
- It was asked where shadow authority meetings would be held. It was advised that the University was being considered, along with further considerations.

338. Joint Overview and Scrutiny Working Group - Overview and Scrutiny Arrangements

Members agreed the draft terms of reference of the Working Group.

The Scrutiny Officer informed Member that Councillor Mrs Smith and Councillor Watts had already expressed an interest in sitting on the Working Group, however, three more nominations were needed plus deputies when others could not attend.

Councillor Jamieson, Councillor David Jones and Councillor Hilliard were nominated to the Working Party. Councillor Abbot and Councillor Grace were nominated as deputies.

The officer informed Members the first meeting would be held 3 May in Christchurch.

Resolved that the Members agreed the draft terms of reference and nominated 5 Members and deputies to the Working Group.

Voting: Nem. Con

The meeting ended at 8.05 pm

CHAIRMAN

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