

County Council

Dorset County Council



Date of Meeting	26 January 2017
Officer	Debbie Ward, Chief Executive
Subject of Report	Exploring Options for the Future of Local Government in Poole, Bournemouth and Dorset
Executive Summary	<p>At its special meeting on 10 March 2016 the County Council discussed the future of Local Government across Bournemouth, Dorset and Poole. The meeting enabled Councillors to debate the key considerations to determine if the County Council should consider options for Local Government Reorganisation across Dorset.</p> <p>The debate confirmed that councillors were willing to consider reorganisation and since then the County Council has considered further reports to lead this process at its meetings on 21 April 2016, 21 July 2016 and 10 November 2016. This work has included the establishment of the Shaping Dorset's Future group, with cross party membership and consideration of the impact on the next County Council elections in May 2017.</p> <p>Through these meetings the County Council has debated the options for Local Government reorganisation, established the principles to guide the development of options, agreed the timetable to progress the options, and enabled engagement with District and Borough Councils and Town and Parish Councils.</p> <p>The overriding ambition has been established as supporting sustainable Local government for Dorset putting services ahead of organisations.</p> <p>To pursue this ambition the County Council together with the 8 other principal councils in Dorset commissioned the following three key pieces of work to consider whether there is a case for changing the current structure of local government in Dorset;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">i. Case for Changeii. Financial Analysisiii. Public Consultation <p>As these pieces of work have progressed the County Council has received regular updates on the pan-Dorset Local Government Reorganisation Programme and the Shaping Dorset's Future Programme. There have also been monthly Member Seminars dedicated to this work.</p>

	<p>The Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) has encouraged Dorset’s councils to work together to find consensus in any proposals for change and this partnership has strengthened and worked effectively to reach a position where the outcomes of the 3 pieces of work are all in the public domain and subject to consideration by each Council to inform its decision.</p> <p>The Local Partnerships report was circulated and made public before the decision was made to complete the Case for Change and complete the Public Consultation. These reports were published for all Councillors and made public on 5 December 2016. All three reports were the subject of two all Councillor briefings on 8 December 2016, one located in the East of the County and one in the West. County Council is now asked to consider the information in these reports and consider the future structure of Local Government in the County.</p> <p>Attached at Appendix A is a full council report “Exploring Options for the Future of Local Government in Poole, Bournemouth and Dorset” which details the work completed and presents the evidence for the options and decision to be considered. The report has been jointly authored by Dorset’s six Chief Executives, and will be presented individually to all sovereign authorities for decision.</p> <p>This report does not duplicate the information in the report attached at Appendix A but is intended to highlight the specific issues to be considered relating to the County Council. The desired outcomes of this report are to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Inform the debate when considering the recommendations in the report attached at Appendix A ii. Confirm the local arrangements to be exercised in relation to recommendations: 4 and 5. <p>The People and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee will consider this report on 11th January 2017. Any comments will be captured in the minutes and circulated as a supplementary paper.</p>
<p>Impact Assessment:</p> <p><i>Please refer to the protocol for writing reports.</i></p>	<p>Equalities Impact Assessment: This pan-Dorset document has been completed and can be found at Appendix 2 of Appendix A.</p> <p>Use of Evidence: This report has been written in light of consultation with DCLG officials, discussions with neighbouring councils and subject experts (Local Partnerships, PricewaterhouseCoopers and Opinion Research Services).</p> <p>Budget: The pan-Dorset public consultation and development of the business case were funded from a Transformation Challenge Award grant received by the nine principal councils from the government.</p>

	<p>Section six of the report attached at Appendix A details financial arrangements agreed by Dorset's Chief Finance Officers for the next phase of work should a decision be reached.</p> <p>Under options 2A and 2B of the options consulted upon County Council services would transfer to two new organisations and require the disaggregation of the current budgets and structure. These matters are acknowledged and referenced in both the Financial Analysis and Case for Change documents and are recognised in the Risk Assessment included in this report.</p> <p>Risk Assessment: Having considered the risks associated with this decision using the County Council's approved risk management methodology, which has been adopted by the pan-Dorset Programme, the level of risk has been identified as:</p> <p>Current Risk: HIGH</p> <p>Residual Risk: HIGH</p> <p>More information can be found in section eight of the report attached at Appendix A.</p> <p>Other Implications: Exploring options for the future of local government in Dorset has far-reaching implications. These have been explored within the case for change, and will form the basis of a detailed programme should a submission be made to government.</p>
Recommendation	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. That the County Council consider the recommendations outlined in the report attached at Appendix A. 2. That, subject to the agreement of Recommendations 4 and 5 in the report attached at Appendix A, the Chief Executive and the Leader consult with the Shaping Dorset's Future Board: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i) when working with other Dorset Councils to agree the wording of the submission to the Secretary of State. ii) when working with the other Dorset Councils to develop and implement plans and allocate resource to progress any agreed change.
Reason for Recommendation	To ensure local government services are sustainable and residents, businesses and communities are supported by the most effective local government arrangements.
Appendices	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> A. Full Council Report. January 2017. Exploring Options for the Future of Local Government in Poole, Bournemouth and Dorset. B. Public Consultation, Responses by Local Authority Area for Dorset County Council, populated by Opinion Research Services

Background Papers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local Partnerships Financial Analysis Full Report • Public Consultation Report, Opinion Research Services, Full Report • The Case for Change Report, PricewaterhouseCoopers, Full Report <p>Please note the above referenced reports were published on 5 December 2016 and all Councillors received electronic and hard copies.</p> <p>These documents can be viewed at: www.reshapingyourcouncils.uk</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exploring Options for the Future of Local Government in Bournemouth, Dorset and Poole – 10 November (Item 8) • Exploring Options for the Future of Local Government in Bournemouth, Dorset and Poole – 21 July 2016 (Item 8) • Exploring Options for the Future of Local Government in Bournemouth, Dorset and Poole – 21 April 2016 (Item 10) • Exploring Options for the Future of Local Government in Bournemouth, Dorset and Poole – 10 March 2016 (Item 3)
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1. Shaping Dorset's Future Board

1.1 Following the publication and presentation of the three pieces of research commissioned, the Shaping Dorset's Future Board met on 14th December 2016 to discuss the Report content, consider the options and complete the requirement for the Chief Executive and Leader to consult Board members to take advice on what options and views should be taken forward in discussion with the other Dorset Local Authorities.

1.2 Board members had a full and wide ranging discussion which covered a range of views. Overall the view of the Board was that there was a clear case to change the existing local government arrangements across Dorset and that the County Council had a key role in this. This was not unanimous and some consideration was given to the retention of the existing structure.

1.3 Accepting the weight of view to support a change the Board then considered the options for the geography and discussed options 2A, 2B and 2C. There was no support for option 2A, but there was support for 2B and 2C, with the majority favouring 2B. There was reference made of the need to have respect for the views of the other Authorities which shared geography with the County Council. In particular an acknowledgement that the views of Christchurch Borough Council, following the outcome of their Special Council meeting on 13th December 2016 (the agenda and decisions from this meeting can be viewed at:

<http://moderngovcbc.christchurchandeastdorset.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=127&MId=996&Ver=4>)

1.4 In summary the views were that change was a positive opportunity to support public services in Dorset in the future, offered transformational opportunity and that option 2B was favoured, with 2C recognised as a viable option.

2. Public Consultation – Responses by Local Authority area

2.1 The details of the Public Consultation have been presented in the full Report circulated on 5 December 2016 and presented at the Councillor meetings on 8th December 2016. This evidence has also now been collated for the Dorset County Council area and is shown at Appendix B of this report. The collated information is presented for the responses to the open questionnaire and household survey.

2.2 This summary presentation format was not available at the time of publishing the full reports but now provides a useful reference aid when considering the public view in relation to the geography covered by the County Council. The summary should be read in conjunction with the full Public Consultation report.

3. Summary

3.1 The County Council has debated the issue of Local Government Reorganisation for Dorset on 4 previous occasions at County Council and formed the Shaping Dorset's Futures working group, with cross party membership, to consider the options, implications and opportunities Local Government restructure would provide.

3.2 The Shaping Dorset's Future Group has supported the development of the joint working with other authorities placing service considerations above organisational sovereignty and worked with the Chief Executive and Leader to support and guide discussions in developing the evidence to support change or otherwise.

3.3 The three strands of evidence have been commissioned and reported and there is support for Change with options 2B and 2C being considered as suitable options for progress. Option 2B was confirmed as being the most popular.

3.4 The full details and evidence are presented in the report at Appendix A.

Debbie Ward
Chief Executive
December 2016