

## Dorset Area Joint Committee

Minutes of the meeting held at South Walks House, South Walks Road,  
Dorchester, Dorset on Monday, 16 October 2017

### Present:

Rebecca Knox (Chairman)

Anthony Alford, Shane Bartlett, Jeff Cant, Graham Carr-Jones, Spencer Flower, Matt Hall, Jill Haynes, Colin Huckle, Sherry Jespersen, Ros Kayes, Bill Pipe, Byron Quayle, Barry Quinn, Gary Suttle and Simon Tong

Officer Attending: Stuart Caundle (Monitoring Officer), Steve Mackenzie (Chief Executive), David McIntosh (Chief Executive East Dorset District and Christchurch Borough Council), Matt Prosser (Chief Executive West Dorset District, Weymouth & Portland Borough and North Dorset District Council), Debbie Ward (Chief Executive - Dorset County Council), Ceri Lewis (Communications and Public Relations Manager - Christchurch and East Dorset Councils) and Lee Gallagher (Democratic Services Manager - Dorset County Council).

### Code of Conduct

12 There were no declarations by members of disclosable pecuniary interests under the Code of Conduct.

### Apologies for Absence

13 No apologies for absence were received.

### Minutes

14 The minutes of the meeting held on 20 September 2017 were received.

### Matters Arising

#### Minute 9 - Proposed Methodology for Collaborative Working Across the Dorset Area Joint Committee

A concern was expressed regarding the resolution of the item to clarify that the proposed structure and methodology was not 'approved' at the meeting. It was clarified that the proposal in the previous report was to 'consider and discuss the proposed programme structure and methodology'. It was subsequently agreed that the wording of the minute would be updated outside of the meeting and the minutes would be resubmitted to the next meeting to be signed as an accurate record.

### Resolved

That the minutes be amended and resubmitted to be signed at the next meeting on 15 November 2017.

### Public Participation

#### 15 Public Speaking

There were no public questions received at the meeting in accordance with Standing Order 21(1).

There were no public statements received at the meeting in accordance with Standing Order 21(2).

### Local Government Reorganisation Update

16 It was noted that the Chief Executive of Dorset Councils Partnership, as the Chief Executive Sponsor of the Future Dorset Programme Board, updated the Committee on the current status of the Future Dorset proposal during an informal workshop held

prior to the meeting of the Joint Committee.

### **Noted**

#### **Programme Resourcing Plan**

17 The Joint Committee considered a report on the resourcing requirements, roles and relationships to support the work of the Joint Committee and potential Local Government Reorganisation (LGR).

A range of views were expressed regarding the staff and resourcing required to deliver the ambitions of the Joint Committee. With a view to addressing the scale of workstreams, and to provide flexibility and direction on future resourcing, the Joint Committee broadly discussed the appointment of an Interim Chief Executive or equivalent, staffing arrangements, budget implications, and timing of decisions.

Views were expressed regarding the need for more detail about the resource to support the Joint Committee, together with more attention to be paid to the structure outlined at appendix two of the report. Throughout the discussion a number of members urged the Joint Committee to defer the consideration of the recommendations in the report until the next meeting when more information could be presented.

A number of views were shared which supported the need to consider the appointment of an Interim Chief Executive or equivalent with overall control of the Joint Committee. The Joint Committee also discussed the staffing structure including the role of Programme Director (which was resourced by DCC and DCP) and reporting of roles within the structure.

With regard to the budget implications of the resourcing plan and staffing, and although costs would be apportioned based on population methodology, requests were made for more detail before commitments could be made. Comments were also received regarding the need to understand associated risks, especially given that no decision had yet been reached by the Secretary of State in relation to LGR.

Further attention was drawn to the level of funding to be used to provide for staffing, and a discussion was held about the merits or otherwise of utilising in house or external staff (from the public and private sectors) to support the Joint Committee to deliver radical transformation. Views were shared about the importance of having staff with the right experience, and alternative opinions supported in-house staff being able and willing to play an active role in shaping the new arrangements. Concern about the cost of staff positions was also discussed, specifically how expensive some roles would be, whereas support was given from some members for the need to pay for the right skills.

The delay in the Secretary of State's decision was sighted as a major factor in driving the need to make progress especially if a new Council was formed from March 2019.

The priority area of consideration at this point was identified as the need to recruit Workstream Coordinators as the staff who would be leading the workstreams, but it was felt that more information was required in respect of what was manageable given that three priority workstreams had already been identified and there would be a number of others. It was questioned whether two would be enough. The need for effective recruitment was seen as key to the delivery of the workstreams, and any further delay would not see appointments made until 2018 at the earliest.

The importance of effective communications, through a Communications and Engagement Manager were highlighted, although some alternative views were also shared.

In addition to considering the recommendations within the report, it was proposed that the appointment of Workstream Coordinators be progressed at a maximum value of £250k, and a further report be presented at the next meeting of the arrangements for an Interim Chief Executive or equivalent. On being put to the vote the amended recommendations were agreed by 9 votes in favour and 7 against.

### **Resolved**

1. That a Programme Manager and a Communication & Engagement Manager be recruited to support the work of the Joint Committee.
2. That the recruitment processes for a larger team in readiness to support any work arising from any LGR decision be commenced, and specifically that the recruitment of Workstream Coordinators, to a maximum value of £250k be agreed.
3. That a further report on the arrangements for the appointment, or otherwise, of an Interim Chief Executive or equivalent be considered at the next meeting of the Joint Committee on 15 November 2017.

### **Communications and Engagement Plan Update**

- 18 The Communications and Public Relations Manager for Christchurch and East Dorset Councils provided an overview of Communications Strategy and Delivery Plan progress since the last meeting on 20 September 2017, which included press releases, core communications by each council to staff in various forms, and the use of twitter to increase public engagement.

The interim approach moving forward would see communications officers attending meetings on a rota basis as a partnership arrangement between all councils. The extensive work undertaken so far and the resource required in the future were acknowledged.

A need for effective and proactive communications and core briefings was welcomed, together with the need for appropriate messages about improved service delivery to be used for different audiences, especially for Town and Parish Councils. Enhancing public engagement and efforts to improve the understanding of the Joint Committee were also supported.

The joint approach of dealing with communications across all partner councils, including those councils that were not in favour of Local Government Reorganisation, was constructively challenged. Confirmation was provided that all communications officers would work in collaboration and all councils would play a full and active role.

The Joint Committee was reminded that there was an individual responsibility of all members to feed into communications and engagement work as a conduit on behalf of each partner council and for the public.

### **Resolved**

1. The Committee thanked officers for their hard work in developing and delivering communications support to date.
2. Progress of the development and implementation of the Communication Plan was noted.

### **Work Programme and Forward Plan**

- 19 The Joint Committee considered the work programme and forward plan for future meetings and the following items were identified:

- Council Tax Harmonisation
- Financial Disaggregation
- Electoral Boundary Review
- The process for the appointment of interim or equivalent Chief Executive and

other Statutory Posts (the arrangements for Interim Chief Executive were identified earlier in the meeting to be reported to 15 November 2017)

- Risk Management Process
- Working with Town and Parish Councils
- Working with Community and Voluntary Sector Partners

It was also reported that workshops would be held in the coming months by Dorset County Council which would be open to all district and borough members to be able to share information about services. The first would relate to the Accountable Care System and the Dorset Care Record, and a second would address Prevention at Scale. All workshops would be held in venues in the East and West of Dorset to enable members of all councils to attend and participate.

**Resolved**

That the work programme and forward plan be updated as outlined in the minute above.

Meeting Duration: 2.15 pm - 3.25 pm