

WEST DORSET DISTRICT COUNCIL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON MONDAY 16 JANUARY 2017

Present: Cllrs A Alford (Chairman), P Barrowcliff, I Gardner, M Penfold MBE, J Russell, A Thacker (Vice-Chairman) and T Yarker

Apologies: There were no apologies for absence.

Also present: Cllr D Turner

Officers present (for all or part of the meeting):

Stuart Caundle (Assistant Chief Executive), Matt Prosser (Chief Executive) and Jason Vaughan (Strategic Director)

66. Code of Conduct

There were no declarations of interest.

67. Exploring Options for the Future of Local Government in Poole, Bournemouth and Dorset

The Chief Executive introduced the report that invited members to agree and make a submission to the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government requesting the restructuring of local government in Dorset.

The recommendation from the Executive Committee would be considered by Full Council on 26 January 2017, the recommendations were standard across the 9 councils across Dorset. The review process had commenced in September 2015 and a great deal of discussion on the options had taken place, including numerous briefing events for all councillors on local government reorganisation and the budget situation, which were inextricably linked. Due to the need to make savings some tough choices had to be made in order to protect the future delivery of services. In addition to the appendices to the report, members had also received reports from Local Partnerships, Opinion Research Services and PwC (PricewaterhouseCoopers). Out of the options available for reducing the current nine councils to two, option 2b was shown as the preferred option for local government reorganisation.

In response to a query on efficiency that had been raised by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, the Leader advised the committee that this issue had been covered in the report by Local Partnerships, which showed the benefits achieved from reduced duplication. The PwC report also showed that there was further scope for efficiencies through the transformation agenda. With regard to delegations to town and parish councils it was noted that the district council would continue to work with, and have dialogue with town and parishes on this issue over the next 2 years. It was recognised that it would be very important to maintain connections to local people. The Leader also confirmed that the aim was to set up the two new unitary councils in April 2019. The DCLG had indicated that the implementation executives would be

set up in April 2018, later than anticipated, therefore joint committees maybe required to progress the work required.

Members supported the proposals and highlighted that the councils were ambitious and would like to achieve greater savings than those identified in the Local Partnerships report, through the transformation agenda and rationalisation of property. In response to a question on council tax convergence the Section 151 Officer reported that the Local Partnerships report had produced a model for council tax convergence over a 20 year period, however this was just a model and the number of years to reach convergence would be a political decision for the new authority. In terms of job losses there was likely to be the loss of 450 managerial posts lost from across the current council structures in Dorset with a stretched target of up to 1,500 job losses.

Arising from the consultation results, Cllr Russell highlighted that residents wanted quality and economy of services and that councils needed to consider the needs of residents first rather than focus on structures. In response the Leader agreed that the PwC report set out that customers and residents must take priority above other considerations and that this would be an ongoing focus throughout the process. Cllr Penfold also commented that the proposal for two new unitary authority would provide clarity for local residents on which authority provided a service.

It was proposed by Cllr Thacker seconded by Cllr Yarker

Recommendation to Council

That this Council agrees:

- a. That there has been a powerful public response acknowledging a compelling case to change local government structures in Dorset;
- b. That a submission should be made to the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government requesting that the existing nine county, district and unitary councils should be replaced by two new unitary councils;
- c. That based upon the weight of public opinion and the financial and other analytical evidence the two new unitary councils should be based upon the following local authority boundaries:

Unitary A: Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole, plus the services currently provided by Dorset County Council in this area.

Unitary B: East Dorset, North Dorset, Purbeck, West Dorset, Weymouth and Portland, plus the services currently provided by Dorset County Council in this area.

- d. That the Chief Executive be authorised, after consultation with the Leader, to agree the wording of the submission to the Secretary of State demonstrating our ambition for public sector transformation and drawing on the evidence that has been presented to councils, to be made along with any other council that has agreed to support the same option for reorganisation.

e. That the Chief Executive be authorised, after consultation with the Leader, to work with other councils that support the same option for reorganisation to develop and implement appropriate plans and allocate appropriate resources to progress local government change in Dorset and that a report on next steps be presented in due course.

Duration of meeting: 2.15 - 3.00 pm

Chairman

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