

Shadow Dorset Council

SHADOW OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON WEDNESDAY 12 SEPTEMBER 2018

Present: Cllrs S Bartlett, K Brookes, Ray Bryan, B Goringe, N Lacey-Clarke, J Sewell, J Somper and J Tanner

Apologies: Cllrs T Jones, C Brooks, M Byatt, C Finch, S Gibson and M Wiggins

Also present: Cllr Rebecca Knox, Cllr D Harris, Cllr P Shorland, Cllr Jackie Stayt and Cllr John Stayt

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

Keith Cheesman (LGR Programme Director), Nicola Houwayek (HR Strategic Lead), Debbie Ward (Chief Executive - Dorset County Council), Lee Ellis (Scrutiny Officer), Mark Taylor (Group Manager - Governance and Assurance) and Lindsey Watson (Senior Democratic Services Officer)

28. Election of Chairman for the meeting

In the absence of the Chairman and Vice-chairman of the committee, the committee were required to elect a Chairman for this one meeting. In accordance with the Shadow Dorset Council Constitution, the Chairman of the Committee was required to be a member of the largest minority political group on the Shadow Council.

It was proposed by N Lacey-Clarke seconded by J Somper

Decision

That J Tanner be elected as Chairman for this one meeting of the committee.

It was proposed by R Bryan seconded by N Lacey-Clarke

Decision

That J Somper be elected as Vice-chairman for this one meeting of the committee.

29. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

30. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 22 August 2018 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

Councillor Bryan abstained from agreeing the minutes as a correct record as he had not been present at the meeting.

31. Public participation

There were no representations from members of the public.

Councillor David Harris raised the issue of the investigation of local area groups as part of the new Constitution for the Dorset Council, whether the committee were aware of moves in this direction and whether this was subject to scrutiny?

The Chairman noted that a response would be provided to Councillor Harris.

32. South West Audit Partnership (SWAP) Programme Governance Reports - discussion with Dorset County Council

Following a request by the committee at the last meeting, the Chief Executive and Leader of Dorset County Council had been invited to the meeting to address issues raised with regard to Dorset County Council in the Programme Governance Reports produced by South West Audit Partnership (SWAP). A representative of SWAP, Dave Hill, had also been invited to the meeting to provide an overview of the relevant issues.

Mr Hill provided an overview of the issues raised and noted that the flagged red status had been in respect of one item, with the overall direction of travel being seen as positive. It was noted that the review had been based on stakeholder consultation. It was accepted that there were gaps in the consultation held with Dorset County Council and that this was to be reviewed and a further evidence based piece of work was to be undertaken. It was also noted that SWAP would be producing monthly reports in future.

The Leader of Dorset County Council, Councillor Rebecca Knox, welcomed the committee's monthly review of the SWAP report and noted that the county council was also considering additional independent review and would welcome further input and recommendations.

The Chief Executive of Dorset County Council, Debbie Ward, thanked the committee for the invitation to the meeting. She did not believe that the actions of the county council were in any way inhibiting the progress of local government reorganisation. The county council's budget would form a huge part of the new organisation and the county council was responsible for the safe transfer of budget, services and staff to the two new organisations in Dorset. A lot of work was currently underway and it was the responsibility of the Chief Executive to maintain good quality management information across the organisations. Information would be shared where it was appropriate. Meetings had been held with SWAP and the Shaping Dorset Council Programme Director and it was felt that good progress was being made. It was also noted that there was always appropriate officer cover in the absence of the Chief Executive and it would be made sure that this was well known.

Members considered the issues arising and during discussion the following points were raised:

- In response to a question, Dave Hill noted that the statement made by SWAP had been based on the stakeholder consultation exercise and had been based on the conclusion made at that point in time. It was felt that since then, the situation had moved on. The further evidence based piece of work to be undertaken would assist with this
- R Bryan declared an interest as a Dorset County Council representative on the SWAP Board
- A point was made that Dorset County Council were undertaking the Shaping Dorset Council programme work in addition to ongoing service provision and that the county council should be seen as being very open with their information
- A point was raised that it was disappointing that it had not been made clear in the report that the comments had not been evidence based as this had led to some concern that was not warranted. Appropriate caveats should have been included in the report
- Debbie Ward assured the committee that the county council continued to work with the Shaping Dorset Council Team but also had the responsibility to ensure the maintenance of essential management information to be transferred to the two new organisations. She reiterated the point that she did not believe that the actions of the county council were in any way inhibiting the progress of local government reorganisation
- Councillor Rebecca Knox noted that in addition to the programme work, the county council had to continue to manage its services and move to a place where the two programmes could begin to come together. She confirmed that the county council continued to seek independent verification of its work within the programme
- Dave Hill accepted that moving forward, SWAP needed to ensure clarity in reports in terms of what information was based on. However he noted that it was important that in this case, the confidence in the information provided by stakeholders was not overlooked
- In response to a question it was noted that the stakeholders involved in the review were key individual stakeholders in the delivery of the Shaping Dorset Council programme. These stakeholders were to be reviewed as it had been felt that there had been a disproportionate amount from the county council
- Information from town and parish councils had not been gathered at this stage
- Councillor Rebecca Knox noted that the direction of travel was positive and welcomed continued audit and guidance for the future
- In conclusion, Dave Hill noted that he would take the positive aspects of the discussion from the meeting and the challenge from members. Members would continue to receive reports on a monthly basis

The Chairman thanked the invited attendees for their contribution to the discussion.

33. Process for the appointment of Senior Officers (Tier 2) for the Dorset Council

At the request of the committee, the HR Strategic Lead, Shaping Dorset Council attended the meeting to provide a presentation with regard to the process for the appointment of Tier 2 officers for the Dorset Council. The process would also be looking at the role of the Monitoring Officer. The presentation covered the timeframe for filling the roles, the communications and engagement plan and detail of the membership of the Senior Appointments Committee. It was noted that there was an expectation that there would be wider member involvement in the selection process. The proposals were to be considered by the Shadow Executive Committee at the meeting on 17 September 2018.

Members considered the issues arising from the presentation and during discussion the following points were raised:

- In response to a question, the HR Strategic Lead noted that once the proposals had been agreed by the Shadow Executive Committee, comments would be invited from members
- A discussion was held in respect of the composition of the Senior Appointments Committee. The Chairman stated that he was sure that the process would be fair and transparent but noted that members could bring an issues to this meeting if felt necessary
- The HR Strategic Lead reiterated that there would be wider member involvement in the selection process including an opportunity to feed into the final decision
- In response to a question, the HR Strategic Lead noted that the Interim Head of Paid Service was currently involved in the process but that would be reviewed in light of the decision to be taken on the appointment of a Chief Executive for the Dorset Council

34. Programme Highlight Report

The committee considered the latest Programme Highlight Report which was to be considered by the Shadow Executive Committee on 17 September 2018. The report provided information on the progress that had been made across phase 2. The Programme Director highlighted key points from the report including:

- There were now around 30 people working in the programme team and focused entirely on phase 2. In addition around 200 people across the councils were involved in work to move forward implementation plans
- The Programme Board now included all current tier 2 directors or equivalent
- A current area under review was plans for phase 3 due to the loss of a programme manager in this area

- The format of the Programme Milestone Plan had been updated at the request of the committee
- The work stream reports described the key activities in each area

In response to a question the Programme Director noted that it was a challenge for the Shadow Executive Committee to consider the level of engagement with members with regard to transformation, within the timeframe available. Work around setting a legal budget would need to take precedence.

A discussion was held with regard to the resources available to the Programme Team and in response the Programme Director reiterated the point that he had made at the previous meeting, that he trusted that the team had the resources available in order to deliver the programme. Additional resource may be required as work progressed but he felt confident that this would be addressed as required. He thanked members for their support but indicated that he did not require any action from the committee at this stage.

Members discussed the issues arising from the report and in particular comments were raised with regard to the way risks were recorded in the report, the transfer of social services data between councils and information that would be made available to the committee with regard to the gateway process to be undertaken. The Programme Director confirmed that comprehensive information would continue to be supplied to the committee.

35. Shadow Overview and Scrutiny Committee Work Programme

Members considered a draft work programme for the committee for 2018/19. Members discussed the contents of the work programme and the addition of some further items for future meetings. Following discussion, further items were agreed as follows:

8 October 2018

- Future operation of leisure facilities in Dorset
- Shadow Executive Operating Principles
- Discussion with Lead Member for wider member engagement workstream

7 November 2018

- TUPE process
- Readiness of Critical Services
- IT systems and services – discussion and question and answer session
- Financial overview

2019

- Communications

The Scrutiny Officer reported that she was in discussion with the Interim Chief Finance Officer with regard to the timing for reports associated with the

Budget. Once this has been agreed, relevant reports would be added to the committee's work programme.

Members discussed the status of the task and finish groups that were set up to look at different areas and felt that there needed to be clearer understanding of which groups were active and which were not. The Group Manager, Governance and Assurance stated that the highlight report set out detail of the current groups that were functioning and noted that the committee needed to reflect on the work being undertaken and whether there were any gaps. If it was felt that there was not sufficient member engagement then that should be a challenge coming forward.

In response to a question, it was noted that the committee was reviewing the same information as the Shadow Executive Committee.

36. **Urgent items**

There were no urgent items.

Duration of meeting: 6.30 - 8.04 pm

Chairman

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