Dorset Area Joint Committee

Minutes of the meeting held at Colliton Park, Dorchester, Dorset, DT1 1XJ on Wednesday, 21 February 2018

Present:
Rebecca Knox (Chairman)
Anthony Alford, Jon Andrews, Shane Bartlett, Steve Butler, Jeff Cant, Graham Carr-Jones, Hilary Cox, Spencer Flower, Matt Hall, Colin Huckle, Sherry Jespersen, Byron Quayle, Barry Quinn, Gary Suttle and Simon Tong

Officer Attending: Stuart Caundle (Monitoring Officer - West Dorset District, Weymouth & Portland Borough and North Dorset District Council), Keith Cheesman (Programme Director - LGR), Steve Mackenzie (Chief Executive - Purbeck District Council), Jonathan Mair (Head of Organisational Development - Monitoring Officer - Dorset County Council), 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) and Lee Gallagher (Democratic Services Manager - Dorset County Council).

Apologies for Absence
11 Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Andy Canning (Dorset County Council), Jill Haynes (Dorset County Council) and Cllr Bill Pipe (Dorset County Council). Cllr Jon Andrews attended for Cllr Canning, Cllr Hilary Cox attended for Cllr Haynes and Cllr Steve Butler attended for Cllr Pipe.

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

Minutes
13 The minutes of the meeting held on 18 January 2018 were confirmed and signed, subject to:

- Cllr Bill Pipe being removed from the list of attendees.
- Minute 9a being amended to read ‘Although the first meeting of the Task and Finish Group on Community Partners Engagement had been arranged for Monday 12 February 2018 at 2.30pm, it was agreed that there was a need to jointly hold a meeting with the Task and Finish Group on Area Based Decision Making as the workstreams were closely aligned. A new date would be found for the membership of both groups to meet and discuss the scope of the groups’.

Public Participation
14 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).

Programme Highlight Report
15 The Joint Committee received a presentation from the Programme Director on the progress of the Dorset Area Local Government Reorganisation Programme. Updates were provided in relation to the governance arrangements and structure of the
programme; how this linked with Leaders and Chief executives, and Programme Board meetings; how the work of the central team would change from April 2019 into phase 1 of the programme focussed on the creation of new council to 31 March 2019; two further phases would focus on the delivery of services, and designing and building the new Council, both from 1 April 2019. Although the programme had been separated into three phases these would run concurrently with key milestones, would have many interdependencies, and there were likely to be at least ten workstreams. Programme progress reporting would be developed for the Joint Committee’s consideration using a recognised ‘RAG’ rating system to identify areas of consideration.

One of the most critical factors for delivery of the new Council was to make sure staff, members and the public could understand what the council would look like and to be aware of its future vision, and in time there would be more information on the operating model and structures. A new set of values would be driven forward and would affect how services would be delivered in the future, so it was important to ensure good communications and engagement.

Workstreams had started to be defined, but it was clarified that they were distinct from the Task and Finish Groups as the bodies of members and officers that would meet to work through issues and define what the workstreams would deliver. All Task and Finish Groups had to be focussed and be clear on what they needed to deliver by when to avoid drifting and taking too long to consider issues. An appropriate structure, terms of reference, document templates and a mechanism for reporting to the Joint Committee would be developed which would need to be flexible.

The production of minutes, and sharing of them was raised so that questions could be asked about the work being undertaken and provide constructive challenge. It was noted that this point would be discussed with the Programme Director outside of the meeting as the recording of meetings would be developed. This was also a possible area of consideration for the Task and Finish Group on Wider Member Engagement. A meeting of all Task and Finish Group lead members would take place with the Programme Director to continue to develop how they should operate.

The Programme Team structure had been updated to include two programme managers and two workstream coordinators, but it was clear that more expertise and resource would be required in addition to external expertise as required. There was also an expectation that there would be a wider staff base across all councils of approximately 200 officers who would contribute to the Programme. The Programme budget was delegated to the Programme Board and a summary of expenditure, and planned spend was provided for information.

It was clarified that the membership of the Task and Finish Group on Budget had already been notified to officers, but the new Group on Governance required nominations to be made by Leaders of all Councils on the Joint Committee. This would be progressed after the meeting.

On discussing the Work Programme of the Joint Committee, it was explained that this would be populated with items as the Programme continued to develop.

Resolved
1. That the update on the programme be supported.
2. That a Task and Finish Group on Governance be established and membership be sought from the Leaders of Dorset Councils.
3. That the presentation would be circulated outside of the meeting.
Shadow Authority Arrangements

Following a decision at the 18 January 2018 meeting to express a preference for a Shadow Authority (with Shadow Executive) to act as the transition body for the new council, the Joint Committee considered the operating model and the preparation required for the first meeting of the Shadow Authority.

The arrangements for the first meeting of the Shadow Authority in June 2018, which had to meet within 14 days of the Structural Change Order coming into force, were discussed in detail including the composition of 206 councillor positions of which 30 would be held by dual members of both county and a district/borough council; the designation of statutory officer roles on an interim basis prior to permanent positions being filled; that an implementation plan would be considered at the first meeting but would continue to be a living document and retain flexibility to develop over time (to be confirmed by Monitoring Officers outside of the meeting following review of the wording of the draft Structural Change Order); and that the implementation plan would be developed in advance of the Structural Change Order being finalised.

Strong support was expressed for the Leaders of Dorset Councils to act as lead members for the Shadow Authority meetings and the arrangements to select the officer implementation team. It was also felt that officers being identified to support the arrangements would be considered and agreed in due course.

Voting by all members at the Shadow Authority was raised for clarification, to which it was confirmed that consideration was being given as to how this could be done in the best way, and that technology was being investigated to enable convenient and timely decision making. Advice for members in respect of voting would be provided well in advance of the first meeting.

In relation to the wider involvement of other members in aspects of the Shadow Authority, it was acknowledged that there could be opportunities for member engagement and involvement in aspects such as the implementation plan, code of conduct, member allowances scheme, and leaders would consider how it would work in addition to consideration by the Task and Finish Group on Wider Member Engagement.

Resolved

1. That the proposed Shadow Council meeting arrangements set out in section 3.1 and 3.2 of the Monitoring Officers’ report be approved.
2. That the Leaders of Dorset Councils be identified as the lead members to act as reference points for officers working on the agenda items listed in paragraph 3.5.
3. That the arrangements set out in paragraphs 4.3 be confirmed.

Work Programme

The Joint Committee considered its Work Programme and added the following items for future meetings throughout the meeting:

- Appointment process of interim statutory officers – 21 March 2018 (Minute 18)
- Appointment process for the Chief Executive – 15 May 2018 (Minute 18)

The work programme would be populated with items for future meetings by the Programme Team.

Resolved

That the Work Programme be updated.
Process to appoint interim and permanent statutory officers to Dorset Council

(Note: With the agreement of the Joint Committee, Chief Executives and Monitoring Officers of Dorset Councils remained in the meeting during consideration of the item.)

The Joint Committee considered a report regarding designations to the statutory roles of Interim Chief Executive, Interim Monitoring Officer and Interim S.151 Officer, together with consideration of the permanent appointment of a Chief Executive for the new Dorset Council.

At the first meeting of the Shadow Authority there was a requirement as part of the Structural Change Order to make interim appointments to the Chief Executive, Monitoring Officer and S.151 Officer. Permanent appointments would take effect from 1 April 2019 or if not the interim appointments would continue until permanent positions had been filled. The interim appointments for Monitoring Officer and S.151 Officer would be sought from existing members of staff, and would be managed through the HR workstream as part of a light selection process. It was agreed that there was no need for external support to complete these appointments, and that further information would be considered by the Joint Committee on 21 March 2018.

In relation to the permanent Chief Executive ‘open market’ appointment process, this would be started by the Shadow Authority at its first meeting in June 2018 and could lead to completion as early as the end of July 2018. The process would be considered by the Joint Committee on 15 May 2018. An LGA presentation was also due to be received following the meeting in relation to the Chief Executive appointment due to their experience of the local government sector, political aspects and the market associated with this level of appointment, which was different to the expertise required from external consultants which would be to actively engage in the market.

The use of external consultant support was discussed as £50k required to fulfil a successful appointment was a significant amount. It was clarified that £50k was an estimated maximum total for support which would provide the market expertise required to make such an appointment as part of a national recruitment campaign, and it also provided a level of independence for the Shadow Authority.

It was recognised that the Joint Committee understood that the appointment process could be sensitive for those currently in the existing roles, especially given the ongoing work required towards the implementation of the new Council.

Resolved

1. That a process for the Shadow Authority to designate officers as Interim Head of Staffing, Interim Monitoring Officer and Interim S.151 Officer be brought to the Joint Committee at its meeting on 21 March 2018.
2. That a process be brought to the Joint Committee’s meeting on 15 May 2018; for the Shadow authority to appoint a Chief Executive (and Head of Paid Service) for the Dorset Council.
3. That the process recommended at 2 above, includes going to the open market, in addition to inviting applications from existing Chief Executives of authorities represented on the Joint Committee.
4. That the process recommended at 2 above includes a recommendation for the remuneration of the post as well as a full description of the role, terms and conditions of employment and person specification.
5. That the process recommended at 2 above allows for the Shadow Authority to make an appointment as soon as possible after its first meeting.
6. That delegated authority be granted to each of the Monitoring Officers for the authorities represented on this Joint Committee, to appoint external recruitment consultants to assist in designing and implementing the process recommended at 2 above, including advice on the impact of the process on the positions of existing Chief Executives.
7. That funds up to a maximum of £50k be released for the exercise recommended at 6 above.
8. That the Leaders Group act as a Task and Finish Group with the terms of reference contained in paragraph 13 of the Monitoring Officers’ report.

Meeting Duration: 2.00 pm - 3.20 pm
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