

Somerset Council
Constitution and Governance Committee
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New informal “corporate” governance arrangements for Somerset Council

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Executive Lead Member: Councillor Bill Revans – Leader of the Council and Lead Member for Governance and Communications

Division / Local Member: All Councillors

1. Summary and background

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to describe new informal corporate governance arrangements and assure the Committee of their purpose and intention.
- 1.2 As the new Corporate Leadership Team (comprising Chief Executive, Executive Directors and Service Directors, also known as CLT) was appointed, and in the run up to Vesting Day of Somerset Council on 1 April 2023, the Chief Executive considered how to ensure that CLT and others would be enabled to operate as an effective leadership team. This included new or changes to meetings, what was required of them, and how they would relate to the formal democratic governance of the council.
- 1.3 Alongside this, in order to facilitate good officer leadership of transition and transformation activity of the new council, business as usual delivery and improvement, and relationships with Elected Members, new delivery Boards were also devised.
- 1.4 The new arrangements deal with two aspects of officer and officer/Executive engagement and joint working:
 - Leadership Team meeting sets
 - Corporate-level delivery Boards

These are discussed in the report below and were created in accordance with the following principles.

- Leadership development and team development
- Being visible as leaders
- Providing the support and guidance Executive expect
- Developing a strong voice for Somerset
- Using CLT expertise to understand opportunities and challenges and address them as a team, ensuring Members and Executive are involved
- CLT will be corporate leaders across the council (ie working together across the council and with partners and Member). Corporate in this case means “everyone” not “the centre”
- Accountability and empowerment are the goals, not creation of unnecessary reporting lines
- Space is needed to discuss and shape culture, have good governance, engage well with Members and partners.
- Being proactive instead of reactive
- Communication, engagement and dialogue are critical in the new council

1.5 These arrangements have taken learning from the Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) programme - for example the role of the Programme Board - as well as the vision to develop leaders who are empowered and accountable. Furthermore, lessons from other LGR programmes shows that “signalling a change” is an important element in creating a strong leadership culture.

1.6 Each forum and Board has Lead officer(s) responsible for driving the work plan and items of business with the Chair, and coordinate others to ensure participants are fully prepared and informed so discussions are focussed and can deliver intended outcomes.

2. Scope of the new arrangements

2.1 This report describes informal governance arrangements at a corporate level to replace the senior/ corporate leadership team arrangements of the 5 predecessor authorities. How services feed into the new corporate arrangements is described in this report and shown as a diagram in figure 1 at the end of this report. This report does not cover service-specific governance.

2.2 It is important that the Committee are assured that the new arrangements do not replace or reduce the role of formal Constitutional decision-making and democratic governance. The relationships between informal and formal governance are outlined in this report to assure Members that their critical role in governance and leadership of Somerset Council is not undermined.

3. Issues for consideration / recommendations

3.1 The Committee are requested to provide feedback and views on the arrangements in order to ensure they remain appropriate and fit for purpose, and consistent with established democratic / constitutional governance.

4. The new arrangements

4.1 These forums are intended as collaborative, coordinating, problem-solving, and leadership development forums: decision-making powers relating to any topic discussed, lie with the decision maker as defined in the Constitution / Scheme of Delegation.

Leadership Team meetings

4.2 There will be three new Leadership Team forums, all with a different purpose and replacing previous meetings:

- Executive Leadership Team (Chief Executive and Executive Directors)
- Corporate Leadership Team (Chief Executive, Executive Directors and Service Directors)
- Service Director Leadership Team (Service Directors)

There are no reporting lines between these forums.

4.3 The objective of these meetings is to create a situation where Executive and Service Directors can easily work together and with others to:

- Understand and tackle strategic challenges and opportunities.
- Ensure the right discussions are being had in the right places (e.g. with the Executive, scrutiny) and to drive collaboration and joint-working during and away from meetings.

4.4 These meeting will not be used to seek approval for reports. We have formal decision-making processes for that, including specific officers with decision-making responsibilities.

Table 1: Leadership Team meetings

Executive Leadership Team (ELT)	Corporate Leadership Team (CLT)	Service Director Leadership Team (SDLT)
<p>Membership</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chief Executive & Executive Directors • Meeting weekly for 1 hour. <p>Purpose</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategic direction and culture-building for the organisation and wider public sector system. • Stakeholder relations and working as a team across the system. • High-level horizon scanning locally, regionally, nationally 	<p>Membership</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chief Executive, Executive Directors and Service Directors • Meeting monthly for up to 3 hours. <p>Purpose</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where directors work out how plans will be made to happen: directs activity and delivers the Corporate Plan, adds value and breaks down siloes. • An ideal place for workshopping and problem-solving. 	<p>Membership</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Service Directors, • Meeting monthly for up to 3 hours. <p>Purpose</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Service Directors are free to define their own purpose and objectives, which includes service development, practical delivery and tackling specific risks and issues or identifying new opportunities <p>There are no formal terms of reference for the Service Director Leadership Team</p>

Corporate-level delivery Boards

- 4.5 Three new officer and officer/Member Boards have or are being set up.
- Transition, Transformation and Change Board (set up and meeting fortnightly)
 - Medium-Term Financial Plan Board (set up and meeting every four weeks)
 - Performance, Risk and Budget Board (first meeting expected end-August)
- 4.6 These Boards have specific responsibilities to drive transitional, transformational, business-as-usual activity and financial planning, both with and on behalf of Members and the Executive. They do not replace or ignore formal democratic governance and decision-making: they are intended to ensure that the work of officers is effective, to assure Members of progress,

challenges, opportunities and what is being done as a result. This focus is particularly important as the new council forms and aligns services, and in light of the financial challenges facing residents, businesses, local authorities and the wider public sector. Work going through these Boards will remain subject to usual requirements for scrutiny, decision-making, and other formal forums.

Table 2: new Boards

Transition, Transformation and Change Board	Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP) Board	Performance, Risk and Budget Board
<p>Membership</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chief Executive, all Executive Directors, Programme Leads, Benefits Lead, Risk Lead • Meeting fortnightly for 2 hours <p>Purpose</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coordinates and drives planning, prioritisation, mobilisation, management, resourcing and delivery of the Transition and Transformation Programmes. 	<p>Membership</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chief Executive, Executive Directors and Service Directors • Meeting monthly for up to 3 hours <p>Purpose</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To coordinate development of the 2023/24 Budget & MTFP, including consideration of carbon accounting. <p>The Board’s terms of reference are currently being developed.</p>	<p>Membership</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chief Executive, Leader and Deputy Leader, Executive Director for Finance, Executive Director for Strategy, Workforce and Localities, Service Directors to be confirmed, Corporate Performance Lead, Benefits Lead, Risk Lead. • Meeting monthly <p>Purpose</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop, maintain and proactively manage and improve corporate performance, risk and budget management, providing assurance, escalation and transparency. • Quarterly meeting for combined reporting of performance, risk and budget. Monthly meetings in-between for deep dives

		<p>focussing on specific issues.</p> <p>Performance, Risk and Budget Board terms of reference are in development ahead of its first meeting.</p>
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5. Conclusion

4.7 Now we are Somerset Council, we are putting arrangements in place so directors, senior managers and teams can come together to work with each other, our partners, and all elected-Members to develop the new council and deliver its plans and ambitions.

4.8 The purpose of these ways of working, alongside and supporting good governance throughout the council, is to:

- Develop the culture of the new organisation, through our values and behaviours, so we can grow, improve and succeed together.
- Build a new organisation that works across our teams and with Members so we join up services, systems and partnerships to get better outcomes – we don't want to work in silos.
- Allow decisions to be made in confidence, with transparent democratic governance so Members are able to see, understand and challenge what the plans and work of the council.

Background papers

- Executive Leadership Team Meetings Terms of Reference
- Corporate Leadership Team Terms of Reference
- Transition, Transformation and Change Board Terms of Reference

Figure 1: New informal arrangements including in context of formal democratic governance and decision-making.

