

Somerset County Council
LGR Implementation Board
– 29 July 2022

LGR Advisory Forum

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Executive Lead: Cllr Val Keitch

1. Summary

- 1.1.** Following establishment of the LGR Implementation Board and LGR Joint Scrutiny Committee, this report proposes a revised approach to give partner groups greater influence within the LGR governance structure and a more compelling platform for engaging Somerset residents in matters which interest them most.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1.** An LGR Advisory Forum, comprised of representative partner organisations and Chaired by the Executive Lead Member for LGR, should be formed to fulfil the terms of reference previously agreed for the LGR Advisory Board. Revised terms of reference and proposed membership are attached at Annexes A and B respectively.
- 2.2.** Partner and public representation should be facilitated through separate events, supported by the LGR Advisory Forum. As follows:
- **LGR Advisory Forum meetings** held every six weeks and preceding LGR Implementation Board meetings by one week. Meetings will be attended by Forum members only. The Forum will approve a Memorandum following each meeting to be submitted to both the LGR Programme Board and LGR Implementation Board for consideration.
 - **Public events** will be held as part of a broader public engagement plan. Five events prior to vesting day will focus on the challenges identified in the 2019 Future of Local Government in Somerset Report, and build on the ambitions of the agreed unitary business case. The LGR Advisory Group will be asked to support these events by engaging their own constituents in the discussion.

3. Background

- 3.1.** Prior to the election, LGR Advisory Board meetings were the primary vehicle for both public and stakeholder engagement. The Board included eight elected members, and representatives from public services, the voluntary sector and City, Town and Parish Councils.
- 3.2.** Advisory Board meetings were normally held in town and village halls, although

some were held online during the pandemic. Events were often well attended and discussion constructive. A summary of comments was reported to the LGR Joint Committee and has been important in shaping the approach on Local Community Networks (LCNs) – now before Implementation Board.

- 3.3.** As the LGR Programme enters a period of more rapid change, in the approach to vesting day, a more focused forum for key partners to offer clear and direct advice is needed to make sure these relationships work on day 1.

4. Implications

- 4.1.** The active participation of key partners in developing products such as an effective Target Operating Model, service standards, and the wide range of strategies and policies that are required to be in place on Vesting Day and beyond, is of crucial importance to the success of the LGR Programme. A dedicated forum is required to consider these detailed matters.
- 4.2.** The terms of reference agreed for the LGR Advisory Board will remain broadly the same, as members of the Forum will still be invited to support public and community engagement. However, the scope is revised to reflect the current priorities of the LGR Programme (Annex A).
- 4.3.** Advice from the LGR Advisory Forum will be formalised through a Memorandum which the forum will be asked to approve following each meeting. This will be presented to the following LGR Implementation Board for consideration and a response, by the Advisory Forum Chair.
- 4.4.** The Memorandum will also be discussed at the subsequent LGR Programme Board meeting and published publicly on the New Somerset Council website.
- 4.5.** Meetings will be held online and within office hours to accommodate partner organisation representatives.
- 4.6.** The Advisory Board previously included eight elected representatives. Members are able to engage with and influence the LGR Programme through a number of channels. It is therefore, recommended that the revised membership for the LGR Advisory Forum include external stakeholders whose cooperation will be crucial for realising the benefits of the new council, alongside the Executive Lead Member for LGR and the LGR Programme Director.
- 4.7.** Previous members included representatives from local councils, the voluntary and community sector and some public services. These members will be invited to join the LGR Advisory Forum.
- 4.8.** To reflect this administration's vision for a fairer, greener and flourishing Somerset, it is recommended that representatives from the business sector, environmental and education sectors are also invited to join. (Annex B)

- 4.9.** A full public engagement plan will be prepared for review by the Implementation Executive to ensure that wider views of people and communities continue to shape development of the new council. That will include five events prior to vesting day, which will be developed with support of the LGR Advisory Forum. These will focus on the big strategic challenges that concern everyone in Somerset and provide a space for thought leadership, ideas and learning.

5. Background papers

5.1. Annex A – LGR Advisory Forum – Terms of Reference

Purpose

The purpose of the Forum is to ensure that LGR in Somerset is delivered effectively and with appropriate stakeholder engagement and involvement. The Forum will:

- Engage with residents, partners, stakeholders, and others to promote engagement with and understanding of the new authority as it develops.
- Advise on the design and delivery of the cash and non-cash benefits expected from the new authority.

The Board will have an advisory role only and no decision-making or scrutiny role.

Scope

The Advisory Forum will consider key LGR products including the Target Operating Model, service standards and strategic policies. Participants will address issues of concern to the constituents which they represent and may ask to include items for discussion to the meeting agendas.

The Advisory Forum will also be asked to support a series of public engagement events outlined in a separate plan. Support may include raising awareness of events, inviting wider participation and presenting their own priorities to a public audience.

LGR Advisory Board Place in LGR Governance

Proposals, ideas and recommendations from the Forum will be fed into the Implementation Board and LGR Programme Board, in the form of a Memorandum agreed after each meeting.

5.2. Annex B – Proposed Membership

Organisation	Representative
SCC	Cllr Val Keitch, Chair
SCC	Alyn Jones – LGR Programme Director
SALC	Cllr David Mitten - Chairman
	Justin Robinson - CEO
SLCC	Rob Smith, Chief Executive
	David Mears – Town Clerk Bridgwater
	Paul Wynne – Town Clerk
NHS	Ed Ford, Chairman Somerset CCG
Police	Richard Turner, Police Superintendent
Spark Somerset (Voluntary Sector)	Katherine Nolan, Chief Executive
Arts Council	Paul Goddard
Historic England	Rebecca Harfield
Federation of Small Businesses and Chamber of Commerce	
Environment (consider Environment Agency)	
Education	