

**Minutes of a Meeting of the Local Government Reorganisation
Implementation Board held 2.00 pm, Friday 29 July 2022**

John Meikle Room, The Deane House, Taunton

PRESENT

Cllr V Keitch – Lead Member for LGR and Prosperity, Somerset County Council (in the Chair)

Cllr J Clark – South Somerset District Council

Cllr M Healey (substitute) – Somerset County Council

Cllr L Leyshon – Deputy Leader, Lead Member for Finance and Human Resources – Somerset County Council

Cllr D McGinty – Leader, Sedgemoor District Council

Cllr F Nicholson (substitute) – Somerset County Council

Cllr B Revans – Leader, Somerset County Council

Cllr R Wyke – Lead Member for Development and Assets, Somerset County Council

Cllr S Wakefield (substitute) – Somerset West and Taunton

Apologies

Cllr D Fothergill – Somerset County Council

Cllr F Purbrick – Somerset County Council

Cllr F Smith-Roberts – Lead Member for Communities, Somerset County Council

Other Members present – virtual

Cllr S Ashton – Somerset County Council, Crewkerne Town Council, Hinton St George Parish Council

Cllr N Clark – Somerset County Council

Cllr A Dingwall – Somerset County Council

Cllr A Kendall – Somerset County Council, Yeovil Town Council

Cllr T Lock – Somerset County Council, Yeovil Town Council

Cllr M Lovell – Somerset County Council, Shepton Mallet Town Council

Cllr D Mansell – Somerset County Council

Cllr T Munt – Somerset County Council

Cllr S Osborne – Somerset County Council, Ilminster Town Council

Cllr D Perry – Somerset County Council

Cllr M Rigby – Somerset County Council, Bishop's Lydeard and Cothelstone Parish Council

Cllr J Roundell Greene – Somerset County Council

Cllr P Seib – Somerset County Council, Brympton Parish Council, Chilthorne Domer Parish Council

Cllr H Shearer – Somerset County Council, Street Parish Council

Cllr M Stanton – Somerset County Council

Cllr L Trimnell – Somerset County Council
Cllr M Wale – Somerset County Council
Cllr D Woan – Somerset County Council, Yeovil Town Council
Cllr R Woods – Somerset County Council, Westbury-sub-Mendip Parish Council
Cllr D Woan – Somerset County Council

1 Appointment of the Local Government Reorganisation Implementation Board Vice-Chair – Agenda Item 1

The Chair invited nominations from proposers and seconders for the election of Vice- Chair of the LGR Implementation Board. Proposed by the Leader of the Council, Cllr Bill Revans and seconded by Cllr Frances Nicholson, the LGR Implementation Board agreed to appoint Cllr Duncan McGinty as the Vice-Chair of the Local Government Reorganisation Board.

2 Declarations of Interest – Agenda item 3

Declarations of interest – none.

3 Public Question Time (PQT) – Agenda item 4

The Chair informed the LGR Implementation Board that no public representations had been received by the submission deadline.

4 Summary Terms of Reference - Agenda item 5

The Chair of the LGR Implementation Board, Cllr Val Keitch, invited the LGR Programme Director, Alyn Jones, to present the report.

The LGR Programme Director, with the aid of a PowerPoint presentation, proceeded to present the report, highlighting; the proposed change of frequency of meetings from a 4-week cycle to a 6-week cycle, that would enable scrutiny recommendations to be received by LGR Implementation Board.

The LGR Implementation Board proceeded to debate the report and invited comments from other members present, points raised included; whether the 6-weekly meeting cycle would meet demands of the work to be achieved in a short time frame; the mechanism for calling extra meetings; the balance between preparing, reporting and doing; the PwC report, scorecard and QA (Quality Assurance) feedback requested to be made available monthly for assurance on progress.

The LGR Programme Director acknowledged the body of work prior and post vesting day, and advised of the ability to call informal meetings between the 6-

weekly LGR Implementation Board meetings as required, confirming that the PwC report, scorecard and QA feedback to be circulated monthly.

Somerset County Council Democratic Service Manager, Andrew Melhuish, further added to the above points that the procedure for calling a meeting could be found detailed in section 13 of the Terms of Reference:

The Implementation Board will meet at least monthly and otherwise as may be determined by the Chairperson. Where either a majority of members or at least three district council members submit a signed request for an extraordinary meeting in writing to the Chairperson (or the Vice-Chairperson in the absence or incapacity of the Chairperson), the Chairperson (or Vice Chairperson as the case may be) must make arrangements to call an extraordinary meeting within 10 calendar days of receiving the request.

The Leader of the Council, Cllr Bill Revans proposed, and Cllr Duncan McGinty seconded, the proposed amendment of recommending to the County Council Executive that the LGR Implementation Board meet every 6 weeks, or as determined by the Chair of the LGR Implementation Board, this amendment was agreed.

RESOLVED:

That following consideration of the officer report, appendices, PowerPoint presentation and discussion the LGR Implementation Board noted the Terms of Reference for the LGR Implementation Board, and agreed to recommend to the County Council Executive that the LGR Implementation Board meet every 6 weeks or as determined by the Chair of the LGR Implementation Board.

5 Progress Report - Agenda item 6

The Chair of the LGR Implementation Board, Cllr Val Keitch, welcomed Director of PwC, Ben Pykett and invited the LGR Programme Director, Alyn Jones, the Programme Manager – Local Government Reorganisation for Somerset, Alastair Higton and the Equality and Risk LGR Programme Manager, Angela Farmer to introduce and summarise the report.

The LGR Programme Director introduced the report, highlighting; the benefits of the transparency of scorecard reporting and that the current amber status of the Programme was due to a number of resourcing pressures both in the Programme and business as usual services; that the Programme is part of the overall approach to MTFP (Medium Term Financial Plan) and the positive opportunities across the five Local Authorities to collaborate and work together to mitigate the gaps; that resourcing remains a challenge, particularly in the Service Alignment workstream; that work is under way to understand where these pressures are greatest and agree a solution.

The Equality and Risk LGR Programme Manager, with the aid of a PowerPoint presentation, proceeded to present the report, highlighting; the overview and general update on risks and the development of the programme; the current programme level risks and the high level dashboard residual and workstream risks, and summarised the seventeen risks identified; the potential three risks identified post vesting day: loss of staff, unforeseen emergency and budget gap; that the Programme level risks are monitored and reviewed through the Programme Management Office, Programme Steering Board and the work with PwC to align issues through their assurance work with Programme level risks.

Ben Pykett, PwC Director, with the aid of a PowerPoint presentation, proceeded to present the PwC report, highlighting; the MTFP challenges and resource pressures, the scope and complexity of the Programme and the need to influence and control the expectation; that a number of issues remain that need to be addressed to (1) establish a safe and legal functioning authority on 1st April 2023, (2) deliver on the benefits of LGR based on the commitments made in the business case and to set a firm foundation for future transformation and financial sustainability for the council.

The LGR Implementation Board proceeded to debate the report and invited comments from other members present, points raised included: the checks and balances of the Programme and the welcome rigour brought to the risk register; the importance of scrutiny as a critical friend; the risks of destabilising the workforce due to uncertainty of roles for the new Council and loss of staff; the unique situation and challenges, and the importance of taking opportunities to work cleverly and collaboratively across the five Councils to plan ahead.

The Chair of the LGR Implementation Board, Cllr Val Keitch, in response to points raised, acknowledged and shared the concerns around job uncertainty, the loss of staff, the current difficulty in recruitment and the expense of the interim market.

The LGR Programme Director responded to points raised, noting that the Programme operation transparency, with the totality of information to continue to be brought before the LGR Implementation Board. Further added that there is a Programme board, Programme steering group, and workstreams, with leaders responsible to take appropriate actions to address issues and the integration with risk and QA work with PwC; provided reassurance that actions were underway to review the people resource to understand and progress the target operating model and integrate priorities of the organisation, with a number of vacancies across all Councils.

The Programme Board 151 Officer, Jason Vaughan, further added to the above points that the management of human resources was key in the implementation of the business case, the posts identified, and the vacancies currently advertised.

The Leader of the Council, Cllr Bill Revans proposed, and Cllr Duncan McGinty seconded, the proposed amendment, asking that the LGR Joint Scrutiny Committee review the Risk Register, this amendment was agreed.

RESOLVED:

That following consideration of the officer report, appendices, PowerPoint presentation and discussion, the LGR Implementation Board noted:

- **The 17 current risks on the register.**
- **Identification of further risks that the board wish the programme to consider.**
- **Identification of the frequency of future reports to the Board, and asked that the LGR Joint Scrutiny Committee review the Risk Register.**

6 Review of Programme Strategic Objectives – Agenda item 7

The Chair of the LGR Implementation Board, Cllr Val Keitch, invited the LGR Programme Director, Alyn Jones, to introduce the report and for the Programme Manager – Local Government Reorganisation for Somerset Alastair Higton to present the report.

The Programme Manager – Local Government Reorganisation for Somerset proceeded to present the report, highlighting; the maintenance of the implementation plan and the review of the strategic objectives to keep the programme fit for purpose.

The LGR Implementation Board proceeded to debate the report and invited comments from other members present, points raised included: LCN pilots, the general relationship and the importance of getting the correct message to Parish and Town Councils to provide clarity and alleviate confusion; the delivery of LCNs and the review of the objectives to be realistic, manage expectations and represent what can be delivered for vesting day.

The LGR Programme Manager, Alyn Jones thanked the LGR Implementation Board for the clear steer and suggestions to shape and develop the objectives.

Cllr John Clark proposed, and Cllr Liz Leyshon seconded, the proposed amendment to review the wording of the strategic objectives to be fit for purpose, clear and high level, this amendment was agreed.

RESOLVED

That following consideration of the officer report, appendices, PowerPoint presentation and discussion, the LGR Implementation Board endorsed that the Chair of the Board, in consultation with The LGR Implementation Board and Programme team:

- **Review the wording of the Strategic Objectives to be fit for purpose, clear and high level.**

- **Support the deliverables and Business Plan objectives, and note objective 3, “Decarbonisation” requires firming up to reflect climate and ecological emergency declarations.**
- **Support the proposal to Executive to amend the Implementation Plan**

The LGR Implementation Board noted that the amendments of the strategic objectives were subject to review by the LGR Implementation Board.

7 Local Community Networks: update and items for Board review - Agenda item 8

The Chair of the LGR Implementation Board, Cllr Val Keitch, invited LGR Workstream Lead for Customers and Partnerships, Jan Stafford, to present the report.

LGR Workstream Lead for Customers and Partnerships, with the aid of a PowerPoint presentation, proceeded to present the report, highlighting; the LCN journey to date; the timetable, milestones and phasing of LCN development, implementation and delivery; the approach to engagement & consultation and the consideration of establishing a small Member/Officer LCN Task & Finish Group to shape their new council to suit their local needs; summarised possible roles, additional considerations, principles and values; the three LCN Pilots that are underway and currently developing evaluation framework, the LCN geographies options analysis developed and in draft, the draft Terms of Reference prepared and the initial financial modelling of number of LCNs and staff resourcing; summarised the LCN development approach by April 2023, the approach from 2024 onwards and the asset and service devolution approach, articulated the indicative timescales and emphasised engagement and consultation and the mechanisms to be used for engagement and consultation.

The LGR Implementation Board proceeded to debate the report and invited comments from other members present, points raised included: the importance of giving the Town and Parish Councils a voice, the practice of being an LCN and participation, membership and priorities, consideration of options, including shadow LCNs, the consideration of MTFP challenges in planning LCNs; LCN community engagement, decision making and reflection of the local situation; the useful input of scrutiny through development of LCNs; clarification of Committees of Council or Executive, whereby a Committee of the Council will include council functions; the targeted stakeholder engagement and communication; shared concerns and the importance of consultation to add value to the process; framework, political balance and membership of the working group.

The Leader of the Council, Cllr Bill Revans drew attention to the importance of discussion with partners to development policy, the size, powers and scope of LCNs and provide input to the LGR Joint Scrutiny Committee, additionally that

the LCN Working group membership should not exclude any council and continue to engage District Councils.

In response to the points raised, the Programme Board Monitoring Officer, advised that a decision for LCNs to be Committees of the Council or Executive would be dependent on the functions that the Executive choose to delegate and decided before vesting day; that the decision would form part of the constitution.

The Chair of the Implementation Board, Cllr Val Keitch proposed and Cllr Duncan McGinty seconded, the proposed amendment for the Working Group to report its findings to the LGR Joint Scrutiny Committee and the Board, this amendment was agreed.

RESOLVED

That following consideration of the officer report, appendices, PowerPoint presentation and discussion, the LGR Implementation Board:

- **Endorsed the emerging Phases to creation of LCNs.**
- **Endorsed the proposed approach to engagement & consultation.**
- **Approved for the setting up an LCN Working Group and for the Working Group to report its findings to the LGR Joint Scrutiny Committee and the Board.**

8 LGR Advisory Forum – agenda item 9

The Chair of the LGR Implementation Board, Cllr Val Keitch, invited the LGR Communications Lead, Steve Coomber, to present the report.

The LGR Communications Lead proceeded to present the report, highlighting; that the report proposed a revised approach to give partner groups greater influence within the LGR governance structure; provision of a more compelling platform for engaging Somerset residents in matters which interest them most; look to facilitate Partner and public representation through separate events, supported by the LGR Advisory Forum.

The LGR Implementation Board proceeded to debate the report and invited comments from other members present, points raised included: the proposed membership and the need for inclusion and representation of Parish Councils; review the partner representation contacts.

The LGR Communications Lead noted to review the membership and look to include Parish Councils.

RESOLVED

That following consideration of the officer report, appendices, PowerPoint presentation and discussion, the LGR Implementation Board agreed:

2.1 That an LGR Advisory Forum, comprised of representative partner organisations and Chaired by the Executive Lead Member for LGR, be formed to fulfil the terms of reference previously agreed for the LGR Advisory Board, And that;

2.2. The 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.**

9 Consequential Parliamentary Order – Agenda item 10

The Chair of the LGR Implementation Board, Cllr Val Keitch, invited the LGR Programme Board Monitoring Officer, Scott Wooldridge, to present the report.

The LGR Programme Board Monitoring Officer, proceeded to present the report, with the aid of a PowerPoint presentation, highlighting; that this report follows on from the Government's approval to the Somerset Structural Changes Order (SCO) in March 2022; summarised the certain rights, functions and legislative amendments (known as Consequential Parliamentary Order(s)) which need to be addressed as a consequence of the creation of Somerset Council on 1 April 2023; that the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) is responsible for preparing any Consequential Parliamentary Order and are engaging with Somerset councils regarding the potential content of any Consequential Parliamentary Orders with the aim of finalising these by Autumn 2022, for consideration by both Houses of Parliament in early 2023 to ensure they are approved ahead of vesting day on 1 April 2023.

RESOLVED

That following consideration of the officer report, appendices, PowerPoint presentation and discussion, the LGR Implementation Board supported and recommended to the County Council's Executive:

- i) **That the matters set out in Appendix 1 of the report, be submitted to DLUHC for inclusion in a Consequential Parliamentary Order (also known as a Supplementary Provision and Miscellaneous Amendments Order) as a consequence of the Somerset (Structural Changes) Order 2022.**
- ii) **That the Monitoring Officer of Somerset County Council is granted delegated authority, in consultation with the Leader of Somerset County Council, to submit the matters set out in Appendix 1 of the report to DLUHC and to submit any further matters to DLUHC that may arise along with taking all actions necessary to progress the drafting of the Order.**

10 LGR Implementation Board – Meeting Dates and Membership – Agenda item 11

The Chair of the LGR Implementation Board, Cllr Val Keitch, invited Somerset Council Democratic Services Manager, Andrew Melhuish, to present the report.

Somerset County Council Democratic Service Manager, Andrew Melhuish, proceeded to present the report, highlighting; the amendment of meeting schedule dates to follow and noted the membership of the LGR Implementation Board.

The Leader of the Council, Cllr Bill Revans further added to the above points, that post Election Membership had moved to being politically proportionate.

Following consideration of the officer report, the officer PowerPoint presentation and discussion the LGR Implementation Board

1. Noted the membership of the LGR Implementation Board.

2. Agreed that the LGR Implementation Board meeting dates, in consultation with the Chair of the LGR Implementation Board, Programme Director and Monitoring Officer, be revised

11 AOB – agenda item 12

The Chair of the LGR Implementation Board thanked the Somerset County Council outgoing Chief Executive, Patrick Flaherty, for his invaluable work towards Local Government Reorganisation.

(The meeting ended at 4.51pm)

Chair