

**Minutes of a Meeting of the Local Government Reorganisation
Implementation Board held 2.00 pm, Tuesday 14th November 2022**

Luttrell Room, County Hall, Taunton

PRESENT:

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

Cllr Mike Stanton (Substitute)– Somerset County Council

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

Cllr Heather Shearer (Substitute)- Somerset County Council

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

Cllr Sarah Wakefield (substitute) – Somerset West and Taunton

Cllr David Fothergill – Somerset County Council

Cllr Faye Purbrick – Somerset County Council

Other Members Present in person:

Cllr Lucy Trimnell- Somerset County Council

Cllr Tessa Munt- Somerset County Council

Cllr John Hunt- Somerset County Council and Somerset West and Taunton

Cllr Mike Rigby- Somerset County Council

Other Members present – virtual

Cllr Bill Revans – Leader, Somerset County Council and Sedgemoor District
Council

Cllr Andy Dingwall – Somerset County Council

Cllr Andy Kendall – Somerset County Council

Cllr Bob Filmer- Somerset County Council and Sedgemoor District Council

Cllr Dixie Darch- Somerset County Council and Somerset West and Taunton

Cllr Federica Smith- Roberts- Leader, Somerset West and Taunton and
Somerset County Council

Cllr Tony Lock – Somerset County Council

Cllr Martin Lovell – Somerset County Council

Cllr Norman Cavill- Somerset County Council and Somerset West & Taunton

Cllr Hilary Bruce- Somerset County Council and Sedgemoor District Council

Cllr Peter Clayton- Somerset County Council and Sedgemoor District Council

Cllr Marcus Kravis- Somerset County Council

Cllr Diogo Rodrigues- Somerset County Council and Sedgemoor District
Council

Cllr Tim Kerley- Somerset County Council

Cllr Mike Murphy- Somerset County Council and Sedgemoor District Council

Cllr Brian Smedley- Somerset County Council and Sedgemoor District Council

Cllr Dawn Denton- Somerset County Council

Cllr Alan Bradford- Somerset County Council and Sedgemoor District Council

1 Apologies

Cllr Duncan McGinty (Leader, Sedgemoor District Council), Cllr John Clarke (Mendip District Council) and Cllr Federica Smith- Roberts (Somerset County Council & Somerset West & Taunton Council)

2 Declarations of Interest – Agenda item 2

Declarations of interest – none.

3 Minutes from the last meeting – Agenda item 3

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 27th September 2022 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

4 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.

5 Programme Update- Agenda item 5

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

The LGR Programme Director, with the aid of a PowerPoint presentation, proceeded to present the report, highlighting; overall programme status of Amber Product delivery and the resourcing remains to be completed on schedule. The top structure for consultation and timeline for appointments to tiers 2 and 3 has now been agreed, the Single Platform cut-over for SSDC. The Chief Executive Appointment will bring more stability for staff and greater clarity on strategic direction for key areas of the programme that can now progress.

The following matters were covered:

- The Reporting Scorecard
- PwC Assurance Report
- PwC Monthly

Director of PwC Public Practice Erica Ballmann and Ben Pykett proceeded to highlight the following.

The day 1 readiness framework and checklists will provide additional focus on, and intent for outcome focused delivery and assurance with the change readiness workstream being a critical component. The Key products the medium-term financial plan, the LDA workstreams with the development of the operating model with a clear view for the future. The resources and capacity in the scorecard was still an issue with the pressures in all areas and across other workstreams. The Communication capacity between the workforce and externally with the public with information about the transformation.

The LGR Implementation Board proceeded to debate the report and invited comments from members and other members present, points raised included;

- The work on finance and Human Resource can PWC insured the Board and have adequate evidence with the residual scorecard and coming together that is coherent for the people of Somerset so they have a much better understanding of what works in what order and how it combines with the clear communication that will start with employees.
- The combining of the LCN's Communication along with County Council and District communication.
- The issues around the historical reporting, the frequency of the meetings being changed and information reports to members and officers.
- The concerns about moving towards vesting day, the concern for the staff working at all five Councils and the matrix shows this as amber.
- Have the staff been informed that their positions are safe and how the role will look moving forward and presumably if people outside of the organisation for tiers two and three they would be brought in before vesting day. The worrying time for employees, but just linking that with the change in RAG rating on the People's Workstream now at amber and the risk that are raised relating to that fixed term contracts and the contractors.

The Director of PwC informed the Board that the reporting goes through the programme Board and information given out. PwC role to work closely with the core PMO team and sets out all the detail discussions with the core PMA team and others to understand exactly how things are progressing and whether PwC feel that they're getting the right information at the right time. There are a number of work streams that have accountabilities that they are developing and designing the products and outcomes and delivered in terms of time frames that are set collectively and overseen by the programme Board.

Members were informed that on the communications the PwC views are that there is a significant amount of information to be shared with the public. Clear strategy in place right now post-Christmas, to be ready with a deliberate and structured campaign to let people know what they need to know.

The LGR Programme Manager informed the Board that there was a strong communication strand to the program. Clearly, if Members were concerned that they were not feeling that kind of visibility of what the plan is, then information could be provided that the programme is being delivered. Some of the risks still showing the residual score that was high as the inherent score. The LGR Programme Board would continue to work on that to ensure the delivery timings. The Board were informed that a lot of communications had gone out to employees that included fixed term contracts, interims and contractors for the day 1 readiness.

The LGR Programme Director informed the Board the status of the quality assurance process reporting was not currently aligned to the formal Board meetings. Members noted that the Programme Board were monitoring the reporting and were notified of those areas that were on track, those that had been delivered and those requiring more resources. The Board welcomed that approach and a live report would be made available at future meetings to represent a more timely picture of the process.

The people reference refers to the people workstream and it's focusing on lots of different activities such as terms and conditions, the establishment of the Tiers two and three recruitment processes. Staff surveys had been circulated to all employees and the results of this would be reported to a future meeting. The clear communication with staff was that a majority would transfer into the new organisation. The original business plan had identified around 330 posts would be deleted as part of the process. Members highlighted the importance of supporting staff through any recruitment process in moving towards the new Somerset Council.

The Board noted that all five councils had procedures in place for the welfare of their staff and the move to a unitary authority will affect all five councils' staff.

The Chief Executive (SCC) informed the Board that the Council had surveyed everyone and following the results it was not always visible to see the different type of contract and have to categories these. A number of employees across the five councils who are at risk of redundancy and the support package available was important along with ensuring support for all staff during this process.

The Chair of the LGR Implementation Board, Cllr Val Keitch, in response to points raised, acknowledged and shared the concerns and would like a forward plan from the programme team in the future.

that the LGR implementation Board RESOLVED:

To review and note the scorecard.

5 Risk Update - Agenda item 6

The Chair of the LGR Implementation Board, invited the LGR Programme Director to present the presentation.

The LGR Programme Director, with the aid of a PowerPoint presentation, proceeded to present the report, highlighting; The 19 Risks on the Programme Register, the most recent added to the risk register were the Agreement not reached with Trade Unions on pay scales/terms and condition for new Council staff and overspend on the £16.5 million on the LGR implementation budget. Following requests from both SCC Audit Committee and LGR Implementation Board, the risk matrix has been reviewed to a straightforward 5x5 matrix, as set out in the presentation.

The LGR Implementation Board proceeded to debate the report and invited comments from other members present, points raised included:

- The Board thanked the LGR Risk Manager for the update of the risk matrix and commented on the need for arrows for the direction of travel.
- The risk of the 5 councils overspending on the 22/23 budget and having to use reserves and clarification on the timing of the risk register update.

The LGR Programme Director responded to the points raised informing the Board that the Section 24 notice was in place to be able to provide some formal measures to support financial decisions at each Council. The LGR

Finance Workstream was also reviewing budgetary risks. Members noted that further work through the medium term financial planning process was continuing. Finance workstream were being reviewed as well as part of this process. Members were advised that the Chief Executives from the five Councils were collectively reviewing all financial commitments to ensure there was an understanding of the implications of those commitments.

The Section 151 Officer informed the Board that the Section 24 statement and process recognised the longer-term risks and that a process was in place to review all financial commitments across all five councils on a weekly basis which would manage risks and put necessary mitigations in place where appropriate.

RESOLVED:

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

- 1. Note the 19 risks now on the programme level register**
- 2. Note the updates from the last meeting and to the register**
- 3. Note the feedback from LGR Joint Scrutiny from 27th October**
- 4. To identify anything further the committee wish to consider as a risk for the programme.**

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

The Chair of the LGR Implementation Board, invited LGR Workstream Lead for Customers and Partnerships, to present the presentation.

Members noted the following:

- Consultation period closed on the 17th of October 2022
- A total of 549 responses had been received with Detailed feedback on Role and Responsibilities, Boundary proposals, Barriers to Participation and the Name of LCNs.
- The learning to date from the three LCN Pilots in Somerset and learning from locality arrangements in other Unitary areas: Cornwall, Wiltshire and Buckinghamshire.

- Analysis of the comments would be presented in a report to the Executive on 16 November 2022, highlighting the feedback from the Town & Parish Conference, City, Town and Parish Councils and stakeholders during the consultation period.
- Insufficient support in terms of regulatory functions being part of the LCN's. Instead, LCN's being able to have a role as part of the planning and regulatory framework.
- From day one not to include Planning and Licensing in LCN's.

The Chair of the LGR Implementation Board in response to points raised, acknowledged about engaging and including everyone and being inclusive with delivering the LCN's

RESOLVED

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

- 1. Note the findings described in the Executive Decision report - Local Community Network (LCN) Consultation Review.**
- 2. To provide comments and views on the findings of the Executive Decision report and the proposed recommendations.**

8 Asset and Service Devolution Strategy

The Mendip District Council Monitoring Officer, gave a presentation on the emerging approach- devolution of services and or assets highlighting the following.

- The objective to develop a framework and prospectus for the devolution of services and / or assets to city, town and parish councils or voluntary sector/community groups. To allow greater control at a local level and better place shaping.
- The key principles highlighted in the report and the options.
- Phase 1 the focus is on developing the framework, MTFP Review, engaging with city, town, and parish councils and learning from the Bridgwater Town Council pilot
- Phase 2 the focus will be on developing further pilots, thematically and/or geographically based, where there is greatest potential for community benefit and to understand any challenges / difficulties from city, town, and parish councils. The approach to the second round of

pilots will be influenced by financial realities, political priorities and available capacity.

- Phase 3 is to provide a wider roll out services and assets to city, town, or parish councils, where applicable, through LCN's and the dedicated resource.
- Pre-vesting day support, officers and lead approach, highlighting the dependencies, key risks along with highlighting the recommendations.

The LGR Implementation Board proceeded to debate the report and invited comments from other members present, points raised included:

- The importance of learning from existing and new pilots and the ongoing development of this work.
- Further asset disposal request, property requirements and assets to dispose of and recognising the capacity of the teams to all pull together to deliver the Taunton Town Council.

RESOLVED

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

- 1. To agree a phased devolution, offer as set out in the 'Phased Approach' section of this report including the key principle.**
- 2. To agree to develop the proposed alignment between MTFP and service / asset devolution while acknowledging the need to balance financial and political priorities.**
- 3. To agree the project team and governance pre-vesting day.**
- 4. Undertake a gateway review for the Bridgwater pilot to understand the lessons learnt to date, refocus, and re-energise the pilot to enable further learning and inform the framework, prospectus, and toolkit.**
- 5. Continue to engage with other Councils and organisations to understand any lessons learnt.**
- 6. Agree that the approach to Taunton Town Council devolution sits outside the framework.**
- 7. Consider the feedback provided by LGR Joint Scrutiny and make any additional observations.**

8 Updating Implementation Plan and Strategic Objectives

The Chair of the LGR Implementation Board, invited LGR Programme Manager, to present the presentation highlighting.

- Strategic objectives updated in line with Implementation Board recommendation. Additional context proposed showing the environment in which LGR is being delivered has changed.
- Updated governance diagram to reflect stand-down of Programme Steering Group and move from LGR Advisory Board for Advisory Forum and updated glossary
- The new Sections added covering Council Plan, Day 1 Readiness and Change Readiness and references added regarding Ecological Emergency Declaration
- The minor changes including the references to Joint Scrutiny Committee section, for clarity and additions to communications section on the website. The budget information and programme delivery plan.

The LGR Implementation Board proceeded to debate the report and invited comments from other members present, points raised included:

- Clarification around the creation of the new unitary Council for Somerset in line with the approved programme delivery plan for 1 April 2023, and with due regard to the Business Case.
- The LCN's Planning and concerns of the roles.
- The Business Case to add the Cost of Emergency agreed at Full Council in July to this programme.

The LGR Programme Manager advised the Board the word 'due regards' was requested from Somerset County Councils legal team. The Programme manager and the Chair will liaise together and to add the cost-of-living emergency following the agreement at Full Council in July.

RESOLVED

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

Note that the Executive are asked to approve the amended Implementation Plan as provided in appendix A, in order to discharge its responsibilities as laid out in the Somerset (Structural Changes) Order 2022.

11 AOB – agenda item 12

(The meeting ended at 4.51pm)

Chair