

Decision Report - Executive Decision

Forward Plan Reference: FP/22/05/02

Decision Date – 15/06/22



Local Government Reorganisation in Somerset – Programme Implementation Plan and establishment of an Implementation Board

Lead Member(s): Bill Revans - Leader of the Council

Val Keitch - Lead Member for Local Government Reorganisation and Prosperity

Local Member(s) and Division: No direct impact on specific Divisions or Members

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1. Summary / Background

- 1.1.** On 17 March 2022 the Secretary of State made the Somerset (Structural Changes) Order 2022 (the SCO). The SCO sets out the mechanism for the reorganisation of local government and the establishment of a single unitary council in Somerset on 1 April 2023.

In particular, the SCO requires that during the period from 10 May 2022 until 31 March 2023 the Executive of Somerset County Council will be the LGR Programme "Implementation Executive" and be responsible for:

- Ensure delivery of "effective, efficient and timely transfer of the district councils' functions, property, rights and liabilities." In other words, to ensure delivery of a new council.
- Hold and keep under review an Implementation Plan including plans, timetables and budgets that support delivery of the new unitary council's functions on (or after) 1 April 2023.

- 1.2.** In line with the SCO and the new Administration's intentions for the programme, this paper recommends the creation Implementation Board to monitor the programme and provide advice and recommendations on its implementation to the Executive of Somerset County Council. To provide oversight on behalf of the County's Executive in relation to the implementation of a single tier of local government in Somerset and any related matters, namely:

- Ensure delivery of "effective, efficient and timely transfer of the district councils' functions, property, rights and liabilities."
- Hold, oversee delivery and keep under review an Implementation Plan (approved by the SCC Executive Committee) including plans, timetables

and budgets that support delivery of the new unitary council's functions on (or after) 1 April 2023

- Overseeing development of the new council's Constitution and the Schemes of Delegation
- Overseeing plans to align existing change activities across the councils
- Having regards to the business case approved by the Secretary of State: this means there is scope within it for flexibility to reflect changes in emphasis

1.3. In addition, the role of the Implementation Board will be to review the current LGR Implementation Plan, particularly the objectives of the programme, and recommend to the Executive how to ensure they remain appropriate. The Implementation Plan can be found in Appendix A to this report, and it is anticipated that the Implementation Plan be updated quarterly and presented to the SCC Executive for their approval. It is good practice to review and update the Implementation Plan at least quarterly for the SCC Executive to approve.

1.4. Terms of reference for the Implementation Board, including proposals for Membership, can be found in Appendix B to this report

2. Recommendations

2.1. The purpose of this report is for the Executive to:

2.1.1 Note the current Implementation Plan for LGR Programme in Somerset prepared in line with SCO requirements.

2.1.2 Approve creation of an Implementation Board to monitor the LGR programme in Somerset and provide advice and recommendations on its implementation to the Executive as set out in the terms of reference attached in Appendix B.

2.1.3 Agree that SCC's nominations to the Implementation Board be approved by the SCC Executive.

3. Reasons for recommendations

3.1 The purpose of the recommendations is to discharge duties required by the Somerset (Structural Changes) Order 2022 and ensure effective and transparent governance and delivery of the LGR Programme.

4. Other options considered

4.1. The alternative governance option, to not create an Implementation Board, would have reduced the inclusivity of the programme and was rejected on that basis.

4.2. No alternative options were considered regarding production of an Implementation Plan, which is a requirement of the SCO.

5. Links to Council Policy and Budgets

- 5.1.** LGR in Somerset, LGR Programme and recommendations in this report are consistent with the County Vision to improve lives. The financial benefits of delivering the new Council are £18.5m per year after the 2 year payback period.
- 5.2.** Opportunities for significant transformation and improvement in line with Council policy as a result of unitarisation are also anticipated and will deliver additional financial and non-financial benefits

6. Consultations and co-production

- 6.1.** Consultation has been undertaken informally with the new Administration and formally through each of the 5 Councils through the Programme Board, Programme Steering Group and members of the Governance Workstream. This report and recommendations reflect those discussions, as well as feedback from those required to provide sign-off for the final report.

7. Financial and Risk Implications

- 7.1.** No specific financial or risk implications have been identified in relation to the recommendations in this report.
- 7.2.** Establishment of an Implementation Board and publication of an Implementation Plan will however mitigate programme risks including financial ones which are expected to include:
 - Stronger partnerships and working relationships
 - Managing change effectively
 - Ensuring stronger collaboration and coproduction for better outcomes.
 - The importance of transparency, programme oversight and informed decision-making

The Programme Risk Register is appended to the Implementation Plan.

8. Legal and HR Implications

- 8.1.** No specific implications have been identified in relation to the recommendations in this report.

9. Other Implications

9.1. Equalities Implications

No specific implications have been identified in relation to the recommendations in this report: the proposed Implementation Board will not be a decision-making group however due regard will be given to the equalities implications of its work. Any decisions taken to the SCC Executive relating to LGR will be subject to equalities considerations. It should also be noted that the LGR Business Case includes a full Equalities Impact Statement.

9.2. Community Safety Implications

No specific implications have been identified in relation to the recommendations in this report.

9.3. Sustainability Implications

No specific implications have been identified in relation to the recommendations in this report.

9.4. Health and Safety Implications

No specific implications have been identified in relation to the recommendations in this report.

9.5. Health and Wellbeing Implications

No specific implications have been identified in relation to the recommendations in this report.

9.6. Social Value

No specific implications have been identified in relation to the recommendations in this report, however the creation of an LGR Implementation Board will provide oversight and input into planning and decision-making and support social value outcomes generated by the implementation of a single unitary authority for Somerset.

10. Scrutiny comments / recommendations:

10.1. The proposed decision has not been considered by a Scrutiny Committee owing to the timing of this report and establishment of Joint Scrutiny arrangements.

11. Background Papers

11.1. Appendix A: Somerset Council Implementation Plan
Appendix B: Draft Terms of Reference for LGR Implementation Board
Appendix C: [Structural Changes Order](#) - and [Explanatory Note](#)

Report Sign-Off		Date completed
Legal Implications	Tom Woodhams	27/05/22
Governance	Scott Wooldridge	30/05/22
Corporate Finance	Jason Vaughan	30/05/22
Human Resources and ICT	Chris Squire	27/05/22
Property	Paula Hewitt / Oliver Woodhams	06/06/22
Procurement	Claire Griffiths	27/05/22
Senior Manager	Alyn Jones	26/5/22
Commissioning Development	Sunita Mills / Ryszard Rusinek	27/05/22

Executive Lead Member	Cllr Val Keitch	30/05/22
Consulted on report		
Opposition Spokesperson	Cllr Faye Purbrick	06/06/22
Scrutiny Chair	Cllr Gwil Wren	07/06/22