

**SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

**Minutes of the Meeting held on 16th August 2016 at 10.30 am**

**Present:**

Councillor P H Murphy .....Chairman  
Councillor R Thwaites .....Vice-Chairman

Councillor I Aldridge  
Councillor B Leaker  
Councillor R Woods

Councillor G S Dowding  
Councillor J Parbrook

**Members in Attendance:**

Councillor M Chilcott  
Councillor A Hadley  
Councillor R Lillis

Councillor H Davies  
Councillor B Heywood  
Councillor A Trollope-Bellew

**Officers in Attendance:**

Assistant Chief Executive and Monitoring Officer – (B Lang)  
Director of Operations and Deputy CEO (S Adam)  
Assistant Director – Corporate Services (R Sealy)  
Corporate Strategy and Performance Manager (P Harding)  
Corporate Transformation Programme Manager (K Batchelor)  
Media and Communications Officer (D Rundle)  
Democratic Services Officer (M Prouse)  
Democratic Services Officer (A Randell)

**SC 21 Apologies for Absence**

Apologies were received from Cllrs R Clifford and B Maitland-Walker.

Councillor B Heywood was substituting for Councillor B Maitland-Walker.

**SC 22 Update on the Transformation Business Case**

The update was introduced by the Director of Operations and Deputy CEO.

The purpose of this report was to provide an update to the committee on the progress of the JMASS Transformation Business Case – including the decision

made by Full Council of Taunton Deane Borough Council(TDBC) on 26<sup>th</sup> July 2016, and of Sedgemoor District Council(SDC) on 3<sup>rd</sup> August 2016:

During discussion, the following points were raised:

- The Chairman welcomed discussion from members but requested that points made previously at the Scrutiny meeting that considered the Transformation Business Case are not repeated, with discussion to take place regarding the update presented.
- Further interpretation was requested on the three options in the report, along with which options provided more serious concerns.
- Paragraph 10.25 was discussed and the implications of pursuing option 3 were considered by members.
- To deliver option 1 both authorities would need to agree this option, but TDBC had made the decision to progress option 2 and revert to option 3 should West Somerset Council(WSC) not agree to option 2.
- It was considered which authority would incur the financial liability in the event that option 3 was progressed and it was explained that the provisions of the Inter Authority Agreement of the two councils would need to be followed under which negotiations would need to take place between the two councils.
- Members voiced concerns that the decision had already been influenced from the WSC perspective, following the Full Council decision at TDBC.
- There were additional costs if the transformation project was undertaken by one council instead of two. TDBC had decided on progressing the transformation whichever option was progressed.
- There were additional costs of £1 Million with TDBC progressing the transformation project without a merger, resulting in the ongoing savings being £300,000 less.
- Work on the business case had been undertaken following a mandate from both authorities in March.
- A merged council would achieve ongoing savings of £3.1 million. This was £500,000 more than if transformation progressed without both authorities merging.
- It had been recognized that it would be difficult for WSC to have the ability to fund transformation under option 3.
- The merger option would not redraw the boundaries for both authorities – by combining the existing areas - and maximise the benefits for both councils and their communities.
- Reference was made to an exchange of letters between TDBC, WSC and SDC. SDC had not taken up the offer to provide figures to implement into the business case to assess what benefits could be attained, but instead had stated the preferred option for them would be to refer the matter to the Local Government Boundary Commission.
- There were financial implications with any delay in progressing any of the options, with time being important in the progressing the transformation project closing the budget gap.
- Flexibility would be built into the business case so that changes could take place if option 2 was pursued, which would allow for greater sharing of services with other authorities. Supplementary discussions relating to services could happen with the implementation of the business case.

- The creation of a new council would be implemented by a process determined by the Secretary of State that would include an electoral review which would determine the numbers of Councillors and the warding pattern of the new Council.
- Under the option of a merger, this would likely to be implemented by mid-2019. Although work relating to the transformation project could commence immediately following the decision.
- The funding plan detailed the resources to be used was set out in the report with both councils having to fund the project separately.
- Members considered the implications of all options. The offer to the community was considerably less with option 3. Members were made aware that future service delivery, sustainability, and protection of services would most probably be adversely effected if option 3 was pursued.
- Improvement or maintaining services could be achieved with option 2 which enabled both councils to maximize efficiencies.
- Reference was made to section 9.3 of the report by the Chairman which detailed conclusions made by the Bill Roots report.

**RESOLVED** that:- The Scrutiny Committee, acting independently, recommends to full Council that option 3 as set out in the Transformation Business Case, is not supported.

The meeting closed at 12.05pm.