



27 February 2018

# Dorset Association of Parish & Town Councils

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## EXTRAORDINARY CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S CIRCULAR

### LOCAL GOVERNMENT REORGANISATION PLANS - UPDATE

It was announced yesterday that the Secretary of State Sajid Javid has agreed to support the Future Dorset proposal for unitary councils in Dorset, subject to parliamentary approval.

The Minister's announcement is set out in full at the following link

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-statement/Lords/2018-02-26/HLWS473/>

There are two Joint Committees of representatives from Dorset principal authorities to consider future service delivery: [The Bournemouth, Christchurch & Poole Joint Committee](#) and the [Dorset Area Joint Committee](#) for the rest of the county. These Joint Committees will take the key decisions needed locally to create the possible two new councils. At present they are concentrating on the legal procedures required to set up the Future Dorset proposals for unitary councils.

The Joint Committee meetings are open to the public. DAPTC Chairman John Parker and I are attending meetings of both the joint committees to raise the profile of our tier of local government. As an association which represents local councils across the county, including those in the proposed urban unitary area, we are aiming to raise the profile of our members at the highest strategic level.

DAPTC takes the view that parish and town councils must be consulted on any future changes and respected as the most local tier of local government in Dorset. I am promoting this message to principal authorities in all meetings that I attend.

The DAPTC Chairman has formally addressed both joint committees on several occasions on the importance of consulting parish and town councils in future plans. The Dorset Area Joint Committee is now establishing task and finish groups of its members to consider matters such as engagement with community partners. DAPTC is very willing to be involved or assist in any discussions on such matters and has informed the joint committee of this.

The DAPTC Executive Committee has decided In general, DAPTC's available staff resources should be concentrated on the work of the Dorset Area Joint Committee and the Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Joint Committee and the promotion of new parish councils particularly in areas where none exist. Individual existing principal authorities, including district councils, should be encouraged to work with parish councils through existing DAPTC communications networks such as its area meetings. The main message on behalf of DAPTC to its members is:

1. There will be no instant changes in services if unitary authorities are set up in 2019, however take care that your level of precept and reserves allow for possible future change;

2. DAPTC will keep its members informed so please look out for this information and **circulate it to all your council members.**

The minutes of both joint committees can be seen at their respective links on my first page. In addition, the DAPTC Chairman has been keeping DAPTC members updated with reports of those meetings. Both joint committees met last week on 21 February and our notes are as follows:

## NOTES FOR DAPTC MEMBERS ON DORSET AREA JOINT COMMITTEE (DAJC) MEETING 21 FEBRUARY

Meeting attended by DAPTC Chairman and Chief Executive as observers.

Agenda item 5 Programme update: (Presentation by recently appointed programme manager, Keith Cheeseman)

### ***Structure:***

- The DAJC is the decision-making body for the programme
- there is a programme board consisting of programme manager plus the four CEOs of the principal authorities involved
- The timeline for work is in sync with the Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Joint Committee (BCPJC) with high level co-ordination and some joint working especially initially
- There are three phases (see Programme Phasing – next point)
  - Creation of a new council – legal body
  - Delivering on 1 April 2019 the critical services which must be legal, safe and capable of delivery
  - Designing and building new authority

**(Authors comment: note by 2019 the plan is for the new authority to be able to deliver critical services. The design and build of the new authority is phase 3).**

### ***Programme Phasing:***

**There will be considerable overlap between the 3 phases**

- Phase 1 is the necessary requirements to create a new authority. This would include, the Structural Change Order (SCO)

- Phase 2 is about the decision making structure of the new authority to enable it to deliver critical services in the first instance and thereafter as the new authority develops. This would include work on the makeup of the shadow authority, budgets, policies etc.
- Phase 3 is the design and development of the new authority. This would involve community engagement and consultation, organisational design, operational model, etc.

***Workstreams:***

- These will be delivered via task and finish groups (TFG) of both members and staff where the emphasis must be on the ‘finish’ element. The TFGs will be supported and co-ordinated by work stream co-ordinators. There may be a need to consider additional resource for this outside of that available from the principal authorities involved.

***Progress – Key Milestones:***

- Overall programme director (in place)
- Recruitment to fulfil the tasks ahead
- SCO and consequential orders
- Electoral arrangements
- Disaggregation
- Council Tax harmonisation
- Start of Phases 2 and 3

***Agenda item 6 – Shadow Authority Arrangements:***

This item dealt with the legal procedures for putting a shadow authority in place. (Subject of approval by the Secretary of State.)

- Direct elections to new council will not be held until 2 May 2019. From 1 April 2019 until 4 days after 2 May 2019 the councillors of the former Dorset area councils will continue as members of the new Dorset Council only. Until 1 April the shadow council will exist alongside the current Dorset area councils.

- Within 14 days of the (SCO) coming into force a meeting of the shadow Dorset council must be convened. At this meeting it will need to:
  - Elect a chairman
  - Adopt standing orders and rules of procedure (to apply during shadow period).
  - Create a leader and cabinet executive
  - Designate statutory officers on interim basis
  - Adopt an implementation plan
  - Adopt a code of conduct
  - Adopt a scheme for payment of allowances
  
- From its formation until 1 April 2019 the shadow Dorset council will have no service delivery role, its function will be to prepare for the assumption of local government functions when it becomes the Dorset council.
  
- Service delivery will stay with the existing councils but those councils will be required by the SoS to co-operate with the shadow council and the SCO will include powers for the shadow council to direct the existing councils.
  
- Within 21 days of the SCO the shadow executive must meet and appoint an officer implementation team and an officer to lead that team.

***Agenda Item 7 – Work Programme:***

- A projected work plan was presented by Keith Cheeseman - see agenda and papers for 21 February on website – [dorsetareacouncils.wordpress.com](http://dorsetareacouncils.wordpress.com)

***Agenda Item 8 – Process for appointing interim and permanent statutory officers.***

- A paper by the monitoring officers on the process for appointing interim statutory officers and recruiting a Chief Executive for the new Dorset council (see website papers for detail).

**John Parker**  
 Chairman DAPTC  
 24 February 2018

**NOTES FOR DAPTC MEMBERS  
ON BOURNEMOUTH, CHRISTCHURCH AND POOLE JOINT COMMITTEE  
(BCPJC)  
MEETING 21 FEBRUARY**

Meeting attended by DAPTC Chief Executive as an observer. **These are notes and the formal decisions will be available at <https://bcpjointcommittee.wordpress.com/meetings/>**

**Agenda item 5 - Overview and Scrutiny**

Overview and scrutiny committees of the existing three councils make recommendations which are reported to the BCPJC.

**Agenda item 6 – Programme update**

The BCP Programme Director gave an overview of programme activity undertaken on behalf of the Joint Committee. The BCPJC noted the progress made on approved workstreams and their proposed actions.

1. The Structural Change Order Task & Finish Working Group has now completed its work with all required information being provided to MHCLG. This is a significant milestone for the programme.
2. The first meeting of the joint Disaggregation Task & Finish Working Group took place on 6<sup>th</sup> February 2018 to review progress and provide oversight and leadership to the workstream. Disaggregation is on the critical path for the programme and will require significant resource prioritisation and management in order to deliver to time and quality objectives. This was reported in detail under agenda item 8.
3. Officers are undertaking work to clearly define the relationship and timelines between the Community Governance Review currently underway in Christchurch and the scope and timeline for the Civic Functions Task & Finish Workgroup. A report is planned for the Joint Committee at the March meeting.
4. The Electoral Arrangements Task & Finish Working Group has delivered the fall back position, governance rationale and electoral forecast required for the purposes of the Structural Change Order. This has been a significant piece of work within very tight timescales and represents a significant achievement by the Joint Committee and the officers supporting it. The group will now move on to consider the development of new warding proposals in order to support a Boundary Review later in the year should this prove possible within the timeline for the creation of the new unitary authority.
5. A team from the LGA facilitated a workshop on the issues and options for the recruitment of a Chief Executive to lead the Shadow Authority and/or the new council once it is created. More details are reported under agenda item 9.

The BCPJC agreed to start preparation for Phase 2 of the BCP programme which concentrates on delivering senior staffing structures and business functionality for April 2019.

## **Agenda item 7 – Structural Change Order (SCO)**

The Borough of Poole Chief Executive reported that the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) had received the SCO and had indicated that Dorset County Council should be represented on the shadow unitary authority and shadow executive committee. This will increase Christchurch representation and the SCO will be amended.

The delay at the time of the meeting in hearing a response from the Secretary of State on his support to the unitary proposals was raised and it was agreed to make a formal representation on the frustration felt with this situation.

## **Agenda item 8 – Disaggregation**

The objective of the disaggregation workstream is to establish the budget and costs of Dorset County Council service provision in Christchurch and agree the transfer of responsibilities for this service provision to the new Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole unitary authority.

The workstream will also agree the split of funding, reserves and assets relating to DCC service provision in Christchurch.

The review of service costs currently delivered by Christchurch and East Dorset Partnership is scheduled to be analysed later in the process, once the DCC service reviews have completed.

The first, joint, meeting of the two Task & Finish groups was held on 6<sup>th</sup> February. This looked at the scope, plan and progress to date of the disaggregation workstream. The group looked at the level of detail and frequency of information they will need to receive in order to provide an appropriate level of direction and involvement to discharge their responsibilities to ensure this complex and important work is completed correctly, and within the overall timeframe.

The group also looked at the challenge faced by the authorities involved to provide the capacity and resource needed and will monitor progress of this regularly, as this is acknowledged as the main risk to the workstream.

A number of further meetings of the Task & Finish group are now arranged to look at the service review outputs in more detail.

The report was noted. The reporting process of task and finish groups was discussed and it was agreed that the disaggregation group would report to the next meeting of the BCPJC.

## **Agenda item 9 - Appointment of Chief Officer/Head of Paid Service – Process and Support for Committee**

If the Structural Change Order is agreed, the work of the Joint Committee in preparing for local government reorganisation will be taken on by a shadow authority with its own Shadow Executive Committee to be consistent with the SCO. With the current timeline for the LGR, this is expected to be in the summer of 2018.

The shadow authority will have the statutory responsibility to make preparations for the new unitary council to be ready for April 2019 and this will include the appointment of a Chief Executive or equivalent and any other senior appointments it believes are necessary. The Joint Committee can determine the process and approach for recommendation to the shadow authority but it cannot make the final appointments.

The BCPJC agreed to create a task and finish working group to consider the approach to be taken to recruit a Chief Executive, Strategic/Executive Directors and Statutory Officers for a new unitary council. The Statutory Officers are the S.151 Officer (finance), Monitoring Officer, Director of Adult Social Care and Director of Children's Social Care.

### **Agenda item 10 – Forward Plan**

The list of items for future meetings was noted.

**Please note the above is an informal report only. The formal reports and decisions are available at <https://bcjointcommittee.wordpress.com/meetings/>**

Hilary Trevorah  
DAPTC Chief Executive  
27 February 2018