

Minutes of the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee Meeting held on 21 June 2022

Present: Colin Greatorex (Chairman)

Attendance

Charlotte Atkins	Bernard Peters
Mike Davies	Bob Spencer
John Francis	Samantha Thompson (Vice-Chairman (Overview))
Gill Heath (Vice-Chairman (Scrutiny))	Mike Worthington

Also in attendance: Officers: John Tradewell, Chris Ebberley and Deb Breedon. Tina Clements, Jeremy Oates, Kath Perry, MBE and Jeremy Pert

Apologies: Tina Clements, Jeremy Oates, Kath Perry, MBE and Jeremy Pert

PART ONE

16. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest on this occasion.

17. Minutes of the meeting held on 10 May 2022

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the meeting held on 10 May 2022 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

18. Boundary Commission Review - Update

The Chairman informed the Committee that the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee had been requested to oversee the process prior to the final submission being Considered by Council.

The Committee was reminded that all Members of the Council had received a presentation from the Boundary Commission explaining the detail of the process and timescales involved in the review. The three stages of the review would be:

Stage 1. Introduction, including an explanation of the requirements and timescales.

Stage 2. Review of the total number of Councillors for Staffordshire County compared with benchmark and comparable authorities.

Stage 3. Submitting proposals to the Boundary Commission supported by evidence and consultation results.

During the discussion members expressed their opinions and concerns and were provided with the following information:

- There was concern that there would be an effect on District and Borough configuration and Boundary Reviews were an attempt to reduce the number of members. It was explained that the Boundary Commission had specific criteria which they were working to and that it was for SCC to submit a proposal for the number of members it believes is required to effectively make decisions and represent the electorate.
- Local identity was important and was one of the areas the County Council could help to highlight.
- The number of seats and divisions would be looked at in stage two and these proposals would be submitted to Council on 13 October prior to formal submission to the Boundary Commission by 11 November 2022.
- The next part of the process would be to look at division boundaries across the county.
- It was felt that there was a degree of confusion around local government tiers amongst the public and boundaries that were not coterminous made things more confusing.
- Engagement with local communities was difficult particularly when the majority of consultations were carried out online. It was felt this was particularly prevalent in areas of multi nationalities.
- Consultation plans and the methods of consultation were important if a response from the public was wished for. Particular areas of concern were: ageing populations who preferred traditional methods of consultation; rural populations or areas with large numbers of people whose first language was not English.
- The first consultation phase (boundaries) would start on 10 January 2023 and run until the 20 March.
- The Committee felt that Parish Councils should be asked to help publicise the consultation.

RESOLVED:

- a) That the verbal update be noted.
- b) That the Committee continue to receive updates at its future meetings.
- c) That the Committee view the Consultation plan at the earliest opportunity, specifically the ways of engaging with older people; those not happy with completing forms on line; BME communities; the rural communities; and how Parish councils could help to publicise the consultation.
- d) The Boundary Commission provide assurance that any consultation will take on board the concerns outlined above

19. Work Programme 2022-2023

The Chairman presented the draft 2022/23 work programme. It was explained that standing items such as the quarterly Integrated Performance reports had been added. Pending items from the 2021/22 work programme had been developed and incorporated where possible, and a number of items which had come out of the Chair/Leader and officer triangulation meetings had been added.

RESOLVED:

That the draft Work Programme for 2022/23 be agreed.

20. Appointment of Members to the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) Working Group

The Chairman explained that the Committee needed to appoint members to the MTFS working group for 2022/23. The group would meet between August and December and report back to this Committee in January 2023.

RESOLVED:

That the following members be appointed to the MTFS working group 2022/23:

Councillors C Greatorex (Chairman), B Peters, C Atkins, J Pert, G Heath, S Thompson and J Oates.

21. Climate Change Working Group - update report

Deborah Breedon introduced the report of the Climate Change Working Group. The Committee was updated on the progress of the working group and its planned future activity.

Due to the change in Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee membership at Annual Council in May, the then Vice Chairman of the Committee and Chairman of the working group was no longer a member of this Committee. Meetings of the working group had therefore been postponed to enable the appointment of a new Chairman.

The next meeting of the group would receive evidence from the Local Government Association (LGA) and other Local Authorities to consider LGA climate change support for Councils and best practice case studies relating to 'reducing the County Councils Carbon footprint.' A report would then be prepared for this Committee in September 2022.

RESOLVED:

- a) That the progress of the Climate Change Working Group be noted.
- b) That the membership comprise: Councillors C Atkins, T Clements, J Pert, B Peters, D Smith and S Thompson. C Wileman to be invited to remain as a member.
- c) That the Chairman for the Climate Change Working Group be Councillor S Thompson.

Chairman