

**Minutes of the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee Meeting held on
13 September 2022**

Present: Colin Greatorex (Chair)

Attendance

Charlotte Atkins	Bernard Peters
Tina Clements	Bob Spencer
Gill Heath (Vice-Chair (Scrutiny))	Samantha Thompson (Vice-Chair (Overview))
Kath Perry, MBE	Mike Worthington
Jeremy Pert	

Also in attendance: Councillor Alan White

Officers: Kate Loader, Kerry Dove, Chris Ebberley, Katie Marshall and Deb Breedon. Mike Davies, John Francis and Jeremy Oates

Apologies: Mike Davies, John Francis and Jeremy Oates

PART ONE

27. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest on this occasion.

28. Minutes of the meeting held on 2 August 2022

Resolved: – That the minutes of the meeting held on 2 August 2022 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

29. Governance of outside bodies/partnerships review – update

The County Solicitor introduced the report and explained that BDO (an international network of public accounting, tax consulting and business advisory firms) had published a report 'Governance and Control Areas for Consideration when Establishing Local Authority Companies'. The report had been considered by the members of the Councils Corporate Governance Working Group (CGWG), who had made a number of recommendations (listed in the report) one of which was that there was a need for a separate discussion to be held "on the remit for research into SCC current position/knowledge". This Committee had been asked for their views and input into the remit of the piece of work.

Further to the information in the report, the following was provided as an update:

- A trainee Solicitor had been appointed to undertake the work associated with listing and reviewing the LATCOs currently associated with Staffordshire County Council (SCC).
- Audit processes would be followed as a template for the reviews.
- Outside Bodies would be reviewed by Member and Democratic Services.
- The processes followed when setting up a company would be reviewed to ensure future assurance and control.

The Committee agreed that it was a sensible approach to start the review with Local Authority Trading Companies (LATCOs) which were the main area of concern referenced in the BDO report. However, it was felt that the activity of all outside bodies needed to be reviewed to ensure appropriate governance arrangements existed and the partnerships were a worthwhile and productive use of resources.

It was acknowledged that there was a need for robust processes when entering into LATCOS and the need for a centralised register.

Members requested that the next report (proposed for December 2022) should contain a complete list of all LATCOs and contain information on the body/partnership purpose; any proposed partnership end dates; the frequency of meetings and the benefits they add to the Council.

The Committee also requested a current list of all outside bodies which the Council appoints to along with the same information as requested for the LATCOs. It was appreciated that the number and type of partnerships entered into by the Council would change over time dependant of need and circumstance.

Resolved: That the report be noted, and a further report be added to the work programme for December 2022.

30. Boundary Commission Review – update

The Leader introduced the report, and the Assistant Director of Strategy and Transformation provided a brief presentation covering the following areas:

- The stages of the review.
- Background to the review and timescales.
- How the submission had been compiled
- Electorate forecasts
- The draft submission - 62 members and a single member ward review.
- Alternatives considered

- The next steps which included a report to Cabinet on 21 September and Council on 13 October prior to submission to the Boundary Commission by the 11 November 2022.
- Brief summary of stage 2 which would commence early 2023.

Members were informed that all the evidence supported the retention of 62 members and it was proposed that this would be the basis of the Council Size Submission Document. There would also be a request for 'single member' wards as part of the Submission. The Committee was reminded that there were no guarantee that single member divisions would be achievable and this had been requested as part of the last review in 2010, however two double divisions remained.

Stage two of the project would commence with the Boundary Commission publishing their 'in-principle' view on the Councillor numbers, by 10th January 2023.

During the discussion, members asked questions and were provided with the following information:

- All District and Borough Councils had now submitted all of the information requested and require to support the Councils proposals.
- Briefing meetings would be offered to Parish and Town Councils, stakeholders and interested community groups in January 2023. This would include all County Council political groups and independent members.
- Some District/Borough Councils were currently conducting their own boundary reviews and it was felt that this may affect the boundaries for County members. The latest agreed boundaries, and most up to date information would be used.
- The Commissions 'in principle' decision would be received in January 2023. This would be flexible and should information change the Commission would be able to change any decision before the end of the process. There would normally be a + or - 10% on electorate figures.
- The Boundary Commission preferred coterminous boundaries but there wasn't always a perfect match and flexibility was important. An example was give of the Keele Division where the number of students registering to vote from the University changed each year dependant on events such as the pandemic or a general election.

The Committee:

- Agreed with the proposal to retain the current council size of 62 Elected Members and to the proposal to request a single member per division review.

- Felt that the Scrutiny work programmes demonstrated the work load undertaken by members and supported the number of Councillors staying the same.
- Felt that the Health Scrutiny function, which was a statutory requirement, needed to be added to the list of statutory responsibilities.
- Wished to see coterminous boundaries wherever possible but acknowledged that this was not always possible, particularly when District/Borough Councils were reviewing their boundaries at the same time.

Resolved:

- a) That the progress on the County's Electoral Review be noted.
- b) That the comments and suggestions from the Committee as listed above be referred to Cabinet for consideration.

31. Overview and Scrutiny Work Programmes - 2022-23 Update

The Chairman introduced the report and reminded the Committee that as part of its role as overarching overview and scrutiny (O&S) committee, they had responsibility for developing and agreeing the combined work programme for the Council's overview and scrutiny function.

One area of possible duplication in the work programmes was that of '**Air Quality**' and the potential for it to be covered by both Prosperous and Health O&S Committees. It was felt that it was more appropriate for Prosperous Overview and Scrutiny Committee to take the lead on air quality and that they could invite Health O&S members to attend. It was suggested that Districts and Borough Councils could be invited to contribute to any evidence gathering session.

Highways transformation programme was also an area of duplication with both Corporate and Prosperous O&S Committees. It was agreed that the Contract side of the transformation should be considered by Corporate and the Monitoring of performance would remain with Prosperous O&S Committee.

Resolved:

- a) Prosperous Overview and Scrutiny Committee take the lead on air quality and invite Health O&S members to attend.
- b) Highways transformation programme - the Contract side of the transformation should be considered by Corporate O&S and the Monitoring of performance would remain with Prosperous O&S Committee.

32. Work Programme

Members were reminded that the informal workshop to consider Data Sharing had moved from the 1th September to 5th October 2022.

Resolved: That the Work Programme for 2022/23 be noted.

Chairman