

WAVERLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE GUILDFORD & WAVERLEY JOINT GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE -
1 NOVEMBER 2023

(To be read in conjunction with the Agenda for the Meeting)

Present

Cllr Paul Follows (Joint Chair)	Cllr Victoria Kiehl
Cllr Julia McShane (Joint Chair)	Cllr Peter Martin
Cllr Joss Bigmore	Cllr Danielle Newson
Cllr Brooker	Cllr John Robini
Cllr Peter Clark	Cllr John Ward
Cllr Fenwick	

Apologies

Cllr Rehorst-Smith

Also Present

Councillor Julian Spence

20 WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS (Agenda item)

Councillor Follows advised that this was the adjourned meeting from 9 October 2023. He advised that the meeting was taking place at Waverley, as there was a planning inquiry taking place at Guildford, therefore Guildford were unable to host the meeting. Councillor Follows was nominated as the chairman for the meeting and no objections were noted.

Cllr Follows welcomed Members and Officers to the meeting and invited those present to introduce themselves.

21 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND NOTIFICATION OF SUBSTITUTES (Agenda item 1)

Apologies were received from Councillor Rehorst-Smith.

22 DISCLOSURES OF INTERESTS (Agenda item 2)

There were no disclosures of interests made.

23 ADOPTION OF MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING (Agenda item 3)

The minutes of the meeting held on 17 March 2023 were approved.

Councillor Martin raised a query relating to the Staff Survey. He advised the committee that the minutes of the meeting of the 17 March note that the 2022 Staff Survey results would be brought to the current meeting.

Officers apologised for the oversight and advised the Committee that it would be brought to the next meeting. Officer also noted that the upcoming Staff survey would include the new arrangements and would also be brought to the next meeting for the committee to review.

24 COLLABORATION RISK REGISTER REVIEW (Agenda item 4)

Councillor Follows informed the Committee that it would discuss the structure of the Collaboration Risk Register (CRR) first. He advised that he felt the CRR had too many columns which made it quite confusing to review. Councillor Follows felt that the target columns were unnecessary and should be removed. Councillor Follows commented on the Risk Strategy and felt that 28 risks were too many. He also advised that it would be helpful to add dates where risks were identified.

Councillor Follows invited Councillor Spence, the Chair of the Audit and Risk Committee to address the Committee. Councillor Spence agreed with Councillor Follows, advising that there are over 20 risks, and some of the risks could be merged. Councillor Peter Martin addressed the Committee, he also agreed with the comments, noting that the targets and further planned action columns were confusing, he agreed that one or two of the risks could be merged.

Councillor Bigmore addressed the Committee, and he commented on the difference between action priorities and risk appetite. He also queried the ratings column and how a risk would move from high to medium. Councillor Spencer informed the Committee that he had previously been a Chief Risk Officer. He advised that the appetite was important but was happy with where the inherent residual risks were now. Councillor Spencer queried the control measures which he felt were key to control. He expressed that currently, it seemed to be more like a narrative than a risk register.

Councillor Follows suggested a task and finish group be formed for a short period to support officers with the structure and the deliverables for the CRR. He suggested that the task group be formed of Councillors from both Guildford and Waverley and nominated himself, Councillors Kiehl, Bigmore, and Booker. He also thought that it was important that Councillor Spence as the chair of the Waverley Audit and Risk Committee and Councillor Bellamy as chair of the Corporate Governance and Standards Committee should be co-opted into the task and finish group meetings.

Ian Doyle, Joint Strategic Director of Transformation and Governance addressed the Committee. He advised that he agreed with the comments and would welcome support from a task and finish group. Councillor Kiehl addressed the Committee and queried whether it was a living document, who reviewed the register, and who else viewed the register. Ian Doyle confirmed that it was the Joint Governance Committee that would view and be responsible for reviewing the CRR.

Moving to the CRR deliverables, Councillor Bigmore queried risk no.1 on the Register: the partnership lacks clear objectives. He suggested that they had completed the initial work and that they were now out of mandate and queried what the next steps were. Responding to Councillor Bigmore's comments, Robin Taylor, Joint Executive Head of Organisational Development addressed the Committee.

He advised that his team was now working on the vision statement, project plan, and funding options. Robin Taylor informed the Committee that several recommendations would be brought forward, including recommendations on how the two Councils will work together and plans for joint governance arrangements.

Councillor Follows advised the committee that there would be an All-Councillor briefing and formal discussion in late November. Councillor Brooker addressed the Committee, and he informed the Committee that he was not a fan of the collaboration and had particular concerns with risks no. 5, 8, 11, 13, and 25. He commented on the officer split and sought reassurance on the practicalities of this. Councillor Follows highlighted the risk of undoing the collaboration and noted that the task and finish group would evaluate all the risks as part of its objectives.

Councillor Robini addressed the Committee, he highlighted a communication risk with the public. He felt that more communication was required to ensure public support for the collaboration. Councillor Follows noted that external communication would improve when the internal communication and understanding of councillors and staff were improved. He noted that it was important to articulate the financial savings and that there would be internal and external comms messages emanating in the next few weeks.

Councillor Peter Clark addressed the Committee, and he commented on the risk of people misunderstanding the comms messages both internally and externally. Councillor Martin informed the Committee that the Conservative Party did not support the collaboration, but he would do what he could to support this work. He advised that the Committee should be cautious about combining difficult risks. Councillor Ward agreed that there were too many columns on the CRR and agreed that merging some of the risks was sensible. He also agreed that the comms message to the public should be clear so that they are well-informed about the collaboration.

Councillor Bigmore was concerned that risk no.10 should be a higher risk. Councillor Follows agreed and noted that a number of the capacity and resources risks had already had an impact and should be reevaluated and mitigated. Councillor Robini felt that I.T. should be a higher risk, noting that there was no shared platform. Councillor Follows advised that it was a high priority and would be tackled one service area at a time. Councillor Follows noted that it was a very large task and there was a fundamental update required to the Members' interfacing basics.

Councillor Martin noted the risks concerning governance, and he commented on simultaneous Executive meetings. He also commented on the joint management resources, over-stretched capacity, and one council's priorities over the others. About the proposed governance arrangements, Councillor Follows advised that this was something that the Joint Executive Head of Legal and Democratic Services, Susan Sale, was working on and would be communicated in a language everyone could understand.

Tom Horwood, Joint Chief Executive, addressed the Committee and confirmed to the Committee that the Joint Management Team (JMT) was not paid for by GBC,

however, the weighted balance of tasks was not equally balanced either, e.g., that the Environmental Services work at GBC was larger than that of WBC. He noted that modifications had been made under the relevant areas by the section 151 Officer during the budget setting to reduce the disparities.

Tom Horwood informed the Committee that all the members of the JMT were fulfilling their contractual obligations. He noted that the JMT had been in place for just over one year and this had allowed them the time to understand what changes needed to be made.

Councillor Martin asked how the JMT ensured that any one council was not monopolising the time of officers. Robin Taylor explained that the JMT worked in a pattern of ebb and flow and responded to tasks as needed. Robin Taylor also advised that the JMT had significant experience in responding to issues i.e., the Guildford Financial event. Robin Taylor advised the Committee that in reality, the JMT would deal with situations as they arose i.e., ebb and flow which would continue to change and impact risk and would continue to exist. Ian Doyle advised the committee that Robin Taylor had described a real risk and that the CRR was a live document.

Councillor Victoria Kheli addressed the Committee, she advised that she was surprised that there were only two red risk indicators relating to capacity resources considering the quantity of work and the proposed timeline. She also suggested that the financial situation and commentary be circulated to Members of the Committee. Councillor John Robini commented on the number of Committees that Senior officers needed to attend and suggested that officers attend via Zoom where possible.

The Committee resolved to the following:

1. The Joint Governance Committee reviewed and noted the report and proposed a Task and Finish Group to review further changes and provide a steer pending a review from Finance.
2. The Committee appoints a Task and Finish Group to support Officers in undertaking a comprehensive review of the Collaboration Risk Register including risks; mitigations and scoring, with a view to making it more succinct and focused on the key threats to the success of the Collaboration.
3. That a new Task and Finish Group be appointed and shall be formed from Members of the Joint Governance Committee.

25 UPDATE: ON THE INTER AUTHORITY AGREEMENTS (IAA'S) (Agenda item 5)

Susan Sale, Executive Head of Legal and Democratic Services introduced the item, she informed the Committee Members that the Inter Authority Agreement (IAA) had been extended to now include arrangements for temporary sharing of staff. She advised that the two documents, in respect of the JMT and the Temporary Shared Staffing, would be amalgamated and the Terms of Reference for the Committee are being amended to reflect its expanded remit and responsibilities.

Councillor Peter Martin addressed the Committee and he noted that he had not had sight of the full IAA and that he had searched the Council website and had not been able to locate a copy.

Susan Sale explained that the IAA was drafted before she started at the Council and once amended would ensure that members had access. She noted that the IAA is the legal document that sets out the parameters for the JMT, it was not currently a part of the constitution of either council.

The Committee resolved to the following:

1. To note the report and the update on both the IAA agreements with Guildford Borough Council.

26 REFRESHED REPORT: AMENDMENTS TO THE GUILDFORD AND WAVERLEY JOINT GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE'S TERMS OF REFERENCE (TOR) (Agenda item 6)

Susan Sale Executive Head of Legal and Democratic Services addressed the Committee and introduced the item. She informed the committee that as per her comments on the previous items, the Committee's Terms of Reference required updating to reflect the JGC's new responsibilities to review the Temporary Shared Staffing IAA.

Susan Sale noted that there were also a number of other minor amendments which included periodic review periods, frequency of meetings, quorum, procedures for electing a Chairperson in the absence of both Co-Chairs and voting.

The Leader suggested a further amendment to the use of substitutes under clause 8, he felt that it would be beneficial for the Group Leaders to nominate a main substitute. Officers noted that formal substitutes could limit the Committee's flexibility. The Committee members discussed the suggestion and felt that it would be beneficial to have formally appointed substitute members and the TOR should be amended to reflect this.

Members discussed the proposed reduction of the member's quorum. Members queried reducing the number from 7 to 4 and wonder if this was too low. Officers advised the members that the quorum level across both councils was a quarter and that 4 was consistent with the other committees across both councils.

The Committee resolved to the following:

1. Note the report and the proposed amendments.
2. Provide feedback and comments to the Joint Constitutional Review Group, including their comments regarding Clause 8, The appointment of formal substitutes.
3. Amend Clause 8 to appoint formal substitutes.

4. That the Executive Head of Legal and Democratic Services be delegated authority to amend both the Guildford Borough Council and Waverley Borough Council Constitutions accordingly.

27 DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING (Agenda item 7)

The date of the next meeting was confirmed as the 24 January 2024.

The meeting commenced at Time Not Specified and concluded at Time Not Specified

Chairman