

MINUTES OF THE GUILDFORD & WAVERLEY JOINT GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE -
17 MARCH 2023

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

Present

Cllr Paul Follows (WBC), Chair
Cllr Julia McShane (GBC), Co-Chair
Cllr Peter Clark (WBC)
Cllr Michael Goodridge (WBC)
Cllr Peter Marriott (WBC)
Cllr Stephen Mulliner (WBC)
Cllr Ramsey Nagaty (GBC)
Cllr John Redpath (GBC)
Cllr John Rigg (GBC)
Cllr John Robini (WBC)
Cllr Keith Witham (GBC)

Apologies

Cllr Joss Bigmore (GBC), Cllr Graham Eyre (GBC) and Cllr George Potter (GBC)

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

Apologies for absence had been received from Cllrs Joss Bigmore, Graham Eyre and George Potter (all GBC).

Cllr John Rigg and Cllr Keith Witham attended as substitutes.

8 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING (Agenda item 2)

The minutes of the meeting held on 9 December 2022 were agreed.

9 DISCLOSURES OF INTERESTS (Agenda item 3)

There were no disclosures of interests in relation to items on the agenda.

10 MATTERS ARISING FROM THE FORMAL REVIEW OF THE INTER-AUTHORITY AGREEMENT AND THE COLLABORATION RISK REGISTER (DECEMBER 2022) (Agenda item 4)

The Committee noted that the report responded to the review of the Inter-Authority Agreement at the meeting on 9 December 2022, and

RESOLVED to recommend to Guildford and Waverley Councils that clause 21.1 of the Inter-Authority Agreement be amended to read:

“21 TERMINATION FOR CLAUSE

21.1 Without affecting any other right or remedy available to it, any Party may terminate this Agreement ~~with immediate effect~~ by giving ~~written notice to a minimum of three months' notice in writing~~ to the other Party."

11 COLLABORATION RISK REGISTER REVIEW (Agenda item 5)

The Joint Executive Head of Organisational Development, Robin Taylor, introduced the report and collaboration risk register, which had been updated to reflect the discussion at the 9 December 2022 meeting, updated assessment of scores and updates to mitigations, and proposed target risk scores as at January 2027.

The Committee asked that in future a separate table is provided to show which risks have been changed since the previous report, including by how much and the reason(s) for the change.

The Committee also asked that a timeframe be provided for further planned actions, and a commentary on how planned actions are expected to reduce the risk score to residual score.

The Committee noted that the Head of Finance considered that the financial thresholds for risk impact were appropriate in terms of budgets and reserves of the councils.

During their consideration of the Risk Register, the Committee requested a number of presentational changes to the Risk Register, including:

- Column headings to be repeated on each page.
- More care on use of colour to ensure that the risk register is accessible for all.
- A column to be added to show related risks.

Capacity/Resources & Culture

The Committee discussed the risks relating to the capacity of JMT to manage across both councils (#8), and the impact of low staff morale on turnover with potential loss of knowledge and expertise (#10).

Noted that the Head of Service team was bigger than had previously been in place at Guildford and Waverley, so Heads of Service now had a smaller area of responsibility remit but across two councils. Some of what Heads of Service worked on was common to both councils, whilst some activity would be specific to one or the other council. It would take time to get used to working across two councils and finding a sustainable way of working, but a collaborative environment was not necessarily more stressful than an individual council, depending on the circumstances.

The restructure of the Business Support Team, comprising the Executive and Personal Assistants, to the JMT was almost finalised. The costs of this review had been included in the JMT savings already reported.

Joint working across the councils at the next managerial level down, or at the operational level, would be considered on a case-by-case basis after the elections, once the direction of travel of the collaboration had been confirmed. It was not

intended that joint working would automatically cascade down, and there were considerable challenges to this approach as the councils had different ways of working.

Staff turnover varied by profession, and was impacted by other factors besides the collaboration. The collaboration presented a range of threats and opportunities for staff at all levels and these were recognised and being actively managed.

A joint staff survey had been commissioned via the Health & Safety Executive and the outcomes of that were awaited. Joint Governance Committee at September 2023 meeting to consider outcomes of the HSE Staff Survey.

Agreed that the Residual likelihood and impact of **#22 (risk that employees will become increasingly anxious)** should both increase by 1 ie Likelihood goes from 2 (Very Low) to 3 (Low) and Impact goes from 2 (Small) to 3 (Critical).

Financial

Agreed that the Residual likelihood and impact of **#13 (risk that expected savings, beyond that of the JMT, cannot be realised at one or both councils)** should both increase by 1 ie Likelihood goes from 3 (Low) to 4 (Medium) and Impact goes from 3 (Critical) to 4 (Devastating).

In response to a question from Cllr Witham regarding the costs incurred in implementing the JMT, the Committee agreed that it was important to be transparent about the gross and net savings.

Agreed that the Residual likelihood of **#14 (risk of costs of collaboration are prohibitively high)** should increase from 2 (Very Low) to 3 (Low).

Governance

A number of the risks had the mitigation "Achieve political direction across both councils on single officer structure." The Committee felt there needed to be a common understanding of what this meant for the councils as individual councillors had interpreted it in different ways.

Noted that without a single officer structure the progress of the partnership would be limited.

It would be important to brief the new councils following the election so that all councillors were clear about the nature of the collaboration. There would need to be a re-set of the partnership and its direction of travel after the elections in light of the aspirations of the new administrations, including consideration of the need for further joint committees or sub-committees

September 2023 meeting to consider how new arrangements are being scrutinised and whether additional joint committees might be needed.

Systems

The Committee discussed risks related to IT systems and the cost and complexity of aligning systems to enable closer collaboration. Both councils had very complex IT architectures that had grown organically, and were costly to maintain. There was

an opportunity to have a better structure in the future that would be less costly, but the journey would be extremely complex. An ICT Strategy Board was being set up to address these issues, and proposals would come forward as discrete business cases as these were identified.

The Committee considered that both #17 and #27 should have a Residual Risk of High, and that false optimism about IT risks should be avoided.

Noted that a Service Review and Budget Challenge was underway at Guildford and the same process would follow at Waverley and these would consider each service in the context of budget, HR and IT systems needed to support service delivery.

The Committee concluded its discussions, and agreed that officers make the further revisions to the Collaboration Risk Register identified during the meeting for the next review in September 2023.

12 DATE OF NEXT MEETING (Agenda item 6)

Noted that the next scheduled meeting would take place on Friday 22 September 2023 at 10.00am, at Guildford Borough Council Offices, Millmead.

The meeting commenced at 10.00 am and concluded at 11.15 am

Chairman