

Report to Cabinet

Title:	Unitary Programme Update
Date:	Monday 13 May 2019
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Local members affected:	All
Portfolio areas affected:	All

Summary

This report provides an update on the progress made with the programme to establish the new unitary council for Buckinghamshire.

The Chief Executives of the five councils have been meeting regularly since November 2018 to plan how to establish the programme. As a result a number of corporate workstreams were established in December involving staff from the five councils to identify the critical activity required to establish the new council.

Following the establishment of these initial workstreams a fuller programme structure has now been agreed covering all areas of local government functionality.

A programme management office has been established following a recruitment process whereby staff from across the councils were successfully appointed to posts.

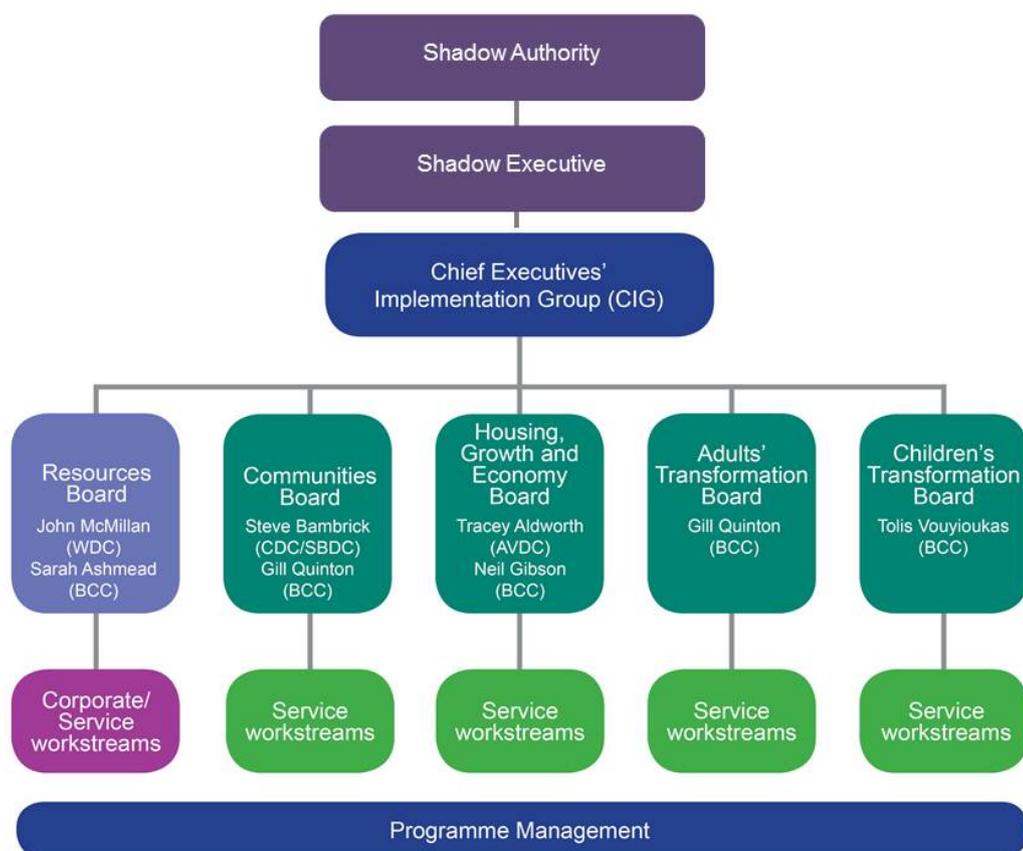
The Structural Changes Order which sets out the detailed arrangements for the transition to the new council, has now been laid before Parliament and is due to be debated by both the House of Commons and Lords within the next few weeks. It is anticipated that the Order will be made by the end of May. The first meeting of the Shadow Authority will be held within 14 days of the date the Order is made.

Recommendation

Cabinet are asked to NOTE the progress being made with the establishment of the new unitary council for Buckinghamshire.

A Programme Structure

1. A model of governance including the structure of the programme has now been implemented. This has involved the creation of a number of Programme Boards managing a range of workstreams (attached as appendix 1). The programme also incorporates existing boards that have been established to manage the change and improvement programmes within the County Council's Children and Adults service areas.
2. The new programme boards cover three areas: Resources, Communities, and Housing, Growth and Economy. The workstreams under the Resources board are those established previously and have a dual role. They will undertake the work required to ensure corporate services are established on day one and support the other workstreams to ensure a smooth transition to the new Council, as well as determining the principles and working arrangements which will apply to customer services.
3. The three new programme boards are co-chaired by a senior officer from the County Council and one of the District Councils. The structure for the programme is detailed below:



4. The following set of principles have been agreed for the programme which are detailed below:
 - A need to work together to successfully deliver a single unitary council for Buckinghamshire from April 2020.

- A desire to build positive and collaborative relationships between individuals across councils in advance of vesting day to help create the right conditions for a strong mutually supportive organisation in 2020.
- An acknowledgement that different perspectives will be heard and considered before final decisions are made.
- A need to ensure distributive leadership across all organisations and a range of services.
- A recognition of the skills, experience and knowledge that all colleagues bring to transition.
- A need to ensure programme management arrangements for transition with the delivery of specific pieces of work are clear and unambiguous.
- A need to clearly identify tasks associated with transition and separately pieces of work / activities for post vesting day for discussion with the CMT of the new council and elected members.
- A need to ensure that we import the best of each council into the new organisation recognising the strengths and capabilities of individual councils, services, staff and managers and considering scaling up of best practice wherever possible.
- A recognition that specific aspects of unitarisation will require detailed discussion and political debate e.g. localism/locality arrangements.

B Structural Changes Order

5. The Structural Changes Order was laid before Parliament on 2 April 2019. It has now been considered by the Joint Committee on Statutory Instruments (JCSI).
6. The next stage is for the Order to be debated within both Houses of Parliament, which is expected within the next few weeks.
7. Following this the Order will potentially be made by the end of May 2019. Once the Order has been made we have 14 days to arrange the first meeting of the Shadow Authority. The Shadow Executive will also be established at this time.
8. A brand for the Shadow Authority has been agreed and is shown below:



9. A new website is being built for the Shadow Authority and will include information on the unitary programme as well information on the meetings of both the Shadow Authority and Shadow Executive.

C Progress on other matters

10. Programme Boards and their supporting workstreams are working towards having full programme plans agreed by the end of May. These will be combined into an overarching plan which will be presented to the Shadow Executive once it has formally been established.
11. The programme management office has been established and is jointly led by Roger Goodes (BCC) and Karen Jones (AVDC). Officers have been appointed to the office from across the county and district councils. Work is underway on the supporting processes for the programme including management of the implementation budget and risk management processes. The budget will be monitored regularly through the Chief

Executives Implementation Group and reported at regular intervals to the Shadow Executive. Some of the initial high level programme risks identified include:

- Recruitment and retention of key staff.
- Capacity across the five councils.
- Staff focus and/or motivation and morale during transition period.
- Uncertainty over Brexit and possibility of a general election and/or European election.
- Engagement and communication with partners and key stakeholder.
- Clarity over what is required to be "safe & legal". Failure to understand full statutory/non-statutory responsibilities of merging authorities.
- Delays in making the Structural Changes Order.

12. The risk management process has been developed with Internal Audit. Risks will also be regularly monitored by the Chief Executives Implementation Group. Regular reviews of the programme will be carried out by both Internal and External Audit.
13. Programme communications have been agreed and coordinated across all five councils and from May a fortnightly update for all staff will be issued by the Programme Office. Work is underway developing a much fuller communications and stakeholder engagement plan for the programme.
14. Several meetings have been held with Employee Representatives and Trade Unions. A proposal for ongoing engagement with these groups has been agreed.
15. It has also been agreed to hold a workshop for the nominated Members of the Shadow Executive across the five councils to discuss the proposed work on Localism and following this to arrange a workshop with Town and Parish Councils on the Localism work. The workshops are planned to be held by the end of June.

C Summary/Conclusions

16. Considerable progress has been made over the last few months to establish the programme and identify the critical work required to establish the new authority. Staff across all five councils are involved in working to deliver a new single unitary council for Buckinghamshire.
17. The focus of the programme is on ensuring a seamless transition for the residents of Buckinghamshire, through a programme of critical activity to create the new council. The majority of the transformation activity will occur within the first three years of the new council.