



**MINUTES of
COUNCIL
7 AUGUST 2025**

PRESENT

Chairperson	Councillor K M H Lagan
Councillors	M G Bassenger, V J Bell, J R Burrell-Cook, S J Burwood, S Dodsley, J Driver, A Fittock, A S Fluker, L J Haywood, J C Hughes, A M Lay, S J N Morgan, C P Morley, M G Neall, R H Siddall, U C G Siddall-Norman, N D Spenceley, P L Spenceley, W Stamp, CC, E L Stephens, J C Stilts, N J Swindle and M E Thompson

1. CHAIRPERSON'S NOTICES

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting and went through some general housekeeping arrangements for the meeting.

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors D O Bown, M F L Durham CC, K Jennings, W J Laybourne, R G Pratt and S White.

3. MINUTES - 10 JULY 2025

RESOLVED

- (i) that the Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 10 July 2025 be received.

Business by Reason of Special Circumstances Considered by the Chairperson to be Urgent

Councillor A S Fluker commented that during the last meeting it had been questioned why the matter relating to Devolution and Local Government Reorganisation was being brought forward as an urgent item of business as the Council had agreed at a previous meeting that this would be on the agenda for all meetings. Councillor Fluker advised that the Chairperson had taken this on board at the meeting and therefore requested that this be noted.

Councillor Fluker referred to a comment made at the last meeting regarding the High Sherriff attending an event within the District and how she had sent her good wishes to the Council. The Chairperson had responded in that meeting advising why there hadn't been anyone from the Council at that event and Councillor Fluker requested that the good wishes be noted. In response, the Chairperson advised that he had noted the comments and was meeting with the High Sheriff in September.

RESOLVED

- (ii) that subject to the above comments the Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 10 July 2025 be confirmed.

4. DECLARATION OF INTEREST

There were none.

5. COUNCIL STRUCTURE REVIEW

The Council considered the report of the Chief Executive (Head of Paid Service) setting out the findings of the organisational review undertaken by the Chief Executive and supported by the Local Government Association (LGA). The report detailed proposals for a new structure which aligned with the LGA Decision Making Approach (DMA) industry good practice.

Members were reminded that further outcomes of the review were set out in a report due to be considered by the Council at this meeting in private session.

The Chief Executive took Members through his report which provided detailed information regarding the Council's current staffing structure from 2018 to date and how in response to concerns raised by Members he had sought, along with support from the LGA, to undertake a comprehensive review of the Council's officer structure. He explained the importance of having the right structure and resources to ensure that the Council was achieving its ambitions, supporting Members and delivering on its corporate priorities. The Chief Executive outlined the key aims of the review which included addressing structural issues, reducing management layers, ensuring the Council was fit for purpose going forwards, improving efficiency, improved decision-making and accountability and getting the organisation well placed for any future Local Government Reorganisation (LGR).

Members noted that the LGA's DMA approach had successfully been applied in over 400 organisations and focused on optimising factors such as spans of control and layers or tiers of management. Staff across all levels had contributed to the review with over half the workforce providing feedback.

The Chief Executive highlighted how the new structure outlined in the report aimed to remove any legacy complexity, address siloed workers and align with best practice standards. He then introduced Peta Newlin, Senior Advisor at the LGA.

Ms Newlin took Members through a presentation which set out the DMA, its methodology and approach which supported effective organisational design. She explained how the DMA was a robust, proven, framework used to help diagnose and design healthy management hierarchies. The DMA argued that only one layer of management was required for each level and the number of organisational levels were based on decision-making accountability. The presentation highlighted the context of the review, discussions that had taken place with Council staff and a summary of the DMA findings.

The Chairperson then moved the recommendation set out the report and this was duly seconded. He reminded Members that this report was to be received and requested that any detailed questions be raised under Agenda Item 8 – Management of Resources.

In response to a question regarding reference to hybrid working within the presentation, Members were advised that this related to the Council's Working from Home Policy and ensuring consistency of application.

Responding to a query, Ms Newlin advised that the LGA was not suggesting any Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) as their report detailed recommendations to the Council. The Chief Executive clarified that there would be a monitoring process undertaken against the findings and he explained how the annual staff survey would also be used as a measure of the success.

Councillor W Stamp spoke regarding the previous transformations that had taken place and asked that her concern that the Council was going through another transformation be recorded. She also highlighted the cost of this Council, particularly the position it would be in 2027 / 28 and the need to ensure the views of staff were being considered.

At this point Councillor A S Fluker raised a Point of Order relating to the recommendations contained in the confidential report being in the public report. In response the Chairperson advised that he was satisfied that the Monitoring Officer had given assurance that the structure of the agenda was sound.

The Chairperson then moved the recommendation as set out in the report. Upon a vote being taken this was duly agreed. Councillors A S Fluker, U G C Siddall-Norman and W Stamp requested that their dissent be recorded.

RESOLVED that Members receive the engagement and findings of the Chief Executive and Local Government Association's Decision-Making Approach organisational review.

6. BUSINESS BY REASON OF SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES CONSIDERED BY THE CHAIRPERSON TO BE URGENT

There was none.

7. EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC AND PRESS

RESOLVED that under Section 100A (4) of the Local Government Act 1972 the public be excluded from the meeting for the following item of business on the grounds that it involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraphs 1, 2 and 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Act, and that this satisfies the public interest test.

8. MANAGEMENT OF RESOURCES

The Council considered the report of the Chief Executive providing details of the findings of the organisational review undertaken by the Chief Executive and Local Government Association (LGA). The report set out the proposed structure for the Council which as well as being simpler to understand would provide greater clarity of role and strategic direction, help to create the right capacity and enable quicker and more effective decision-making.

Appendix 1 to the report set out the Council's current Corporate Leadership Team+ (CLT+) structure including the Extended Leadership Team and the proposed structure was set out at Appendix 2. The report provided details of the financial implications and Appendix 3 set out further financial details in respect of the proposed structure.

The Chief Executive presented his report, setting out a comprehensive proposal for a new Council structure which aimed to improve operational efficiency, align with industry best practice and position the Council to succeed amid future Local Government Reorganisation (LGR). He took Members through his report, outlining the key changes, next steps, an indicative timeline for the proposed phased changes, the financial implications and expected benefits. It was noted that the project would be entitled 'Transforming Together' to emphasise collaborative delivery. The Target Operating Model would be based on the findings of the review by the LGA and outlined how the Council worked in terms of:

- Organisational structure
- People and skills
- Technology and systems
- Process and workflows
- Governance and performance management

The transformation would be implemented in two phases and the Chief Executive outlined the indicative implementation timeline for phases 1 and 2.

Members were advised that the proposed structure would set out the foundation for a modern, responsive and efficient Council. It would improve governance clarity, unlocked savings, and reinvest in frontline services whilst strengthening resilience for future sector changes whilst providing a structure to deliver on the Council's corporate plan priorities.

The Chairperson put the recommendations set out the report and these were duly seconded.

In response to a question regarding the related costs, the Chief Finance Officer drew Members' attention to section 7 of the report which set out the financial implications and provided further detailed information in respect of this.

Councillor W Stamp commented on the report, requesting more detail on the definite costs and in accordance with Procedure Rule No. 13 (3) requested a recorded vote. This was duly seconded. At this point, Councillor Stamp also requested that each recommendation be taken separately as she had some amendments she wished to raise.

During the lengthy debate that ensued, Members commented on a number of aspects including the Council's previous structure changes, related financial implications and ensuring that the Council was ready for LGR which included protecting the District and staff. Several Members echoed the sentiment in the report that the current structure had outlived its usefulness and required change, noting that this was what the Chief Executive had been asked to address, and therefore welcomed the proposals. Whilst there was not universal agreement, there was strong support for the proposals set out by the Chief Executive.

The Chairperson advised that he would be moving the recommendations individually.

Councillor Stamp proposed an amendment to recommendation (i) referencing the retention of a particular current post, the Deputy Chief Executive. This proposal was duly seconded. She then proposed an amendment to recommendation (iv), that any Constitution changes are not delegated to the Chief Executive but reported through the Performance, Governance and Audit Committee (PGA). This was duly seconded.

In response to the proposed amendment to recommendation (iv), the Lead Legal Specialist and Monitoring Officer advised that this recommendation related to making changes that would take place should Members be mindful to agree the new proposed structure. No changes outside of this process were proposed and therefore there would be nothing for the PGA to agree. Councillor Stamp advised that she was therefore happy to remove her earlier amendment to recommendation (iv) as long as a notification was made once the change had taken place.

At this point, the Chairperson outlined the process he would be taking in respect of voting on the recommendations, and it was noted that the request for a recorded vote was withdrawn.

The Chairperson then moved the proposed amendment to recommendation (i) in the name of Councillor Stamp. Upon a vote being taken he declared that the amendment was not agreed.

The Chairperson then moved each of the recommendations (i) to (iv) as set out in the report. Upon a separate vote on each being taken they were duly agreed. It was requested that the following dissent be noted:

- Recommendation (i) Councillors A S Fluker, M G Neall, U G C Siddall-Norman, W Stamp and J C Stilts
- Recommendation (ii) Councillor W Stamp
- Recommendation (iii)..... Councillors A S Fluker, U G C Siddall-Norman and W Stamp

RESOLVED

- (i) That the proposed structure as set out in the report be supported;
- (ii) That Members approve that the Chief Executive as the Head of Paid Service implement changes to the Council's structure in line with the Council's Organisational Change and Redundancy Policy and Procedure, ensuring where possible minimal impact on staff and that support is provided during its implementation to staff through the process;
- (iii) That Members approve to fund an estimated amount (as detailed in the report) for Phase 1 and Phase 2 for appropriate and independent specialist support and advice from the transformation reserve;
- (iv) That Members delegate authority to the Chief Executive, to amend and update the Council's Constitution and all relevant documents to reflect the new structure, roles and responsibilities.

There being no other items of business the Chairperson closed the meeting at 8.45 pm.

K M H LAGAN
CHAIRPERSON