

TANDRIDGE DISTRICT COUNCIL

COUNTY DEAL WORKING GROUP

Minutes of the meeting of the Working Group held in the Lyndsay Narcisi Room, Council Offices, Station Road East, Oxted, on the 1st November 2022 at 11.30 a.m.

PRESENT: Councillors Sayer (Chair), Bloore, Botten, Cooper, C.Farr, Gray, Langton and Pursehouse.

1. MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE GROUP HELD ON THE 9TH AUGUST 2022

These were approved as a correct record.

2. COUNTY DEAL SUBMISSION / UPDATE FROM COUNCILLOR SAYER FOLLOWING LIAISON WITH OTHER DISTRICTS AND BOROUGHES

At its previous meeting on 9th August, the Group had discussed what they thought TDC should be seeking from a 'Level 2* County Deal for Surrey', both in terms of additional powers and the retention of control and influence over other things. The process for co-ordinating input from the eleven Districts and Boroughs (D&Bs) had since been delayed due to the cancellation of meetings in light of the Queen's passing. SCC had therefore extended the deadline for considering input from D&Bs before finalising its submission to Government.

Councillor Sayer updated the Group following a 'District and Borough workshop' held on the 21st October at Epsom. She highlighted the significant concerns expressed by representatives of all D&Bs in attendance about recent examples of SCC seeking greater centralisation, as opposed to enabling D&B's to deliver additional services at more local levels, e.g.

- the emerging '*Surrey strategy for accommodation, housing and homes*' with the potential to diminish D&Bs' housing and planning powers; and
- termination of agency agreements for on-street parking enforcement and grass verge cutting (while the latter did not affect Tandridge, the current on-street parking agency agreement with Sevenoaks District Council would end in March 2023, whereupon direct service provision would revert to SCC).

Other D&Bs supported TDC's proposals for inclusion within a County Deal submission to Government (the minutes of the Group's 9th August meeting refer). A joint response from the D&Bs to SCC, incorporating these proposals, was being prepared.

D&B representatives favoured amalgams of three cluster authorities throughout Surrey as the basis for future joint services, or unitary authorities in the event of the current two-tier local government structure being challenged. This would mirror the 'three cluster' model identified by KPMG in 2020 (as an alternative to the single Surrey unitary initiative being promoted by SCC at the time) which included a potential East Surrey unitary covering Tandridge, Reigate & Banstead, Mole Valley and Epsom & Ewell.

Other outcomes from the workshop included a recommendation for a '*way we work charter*' to be agreed with SCC for underpinning future joint working arrangements. This would emphasise the need for SCC to consult D&Bs regarding proposed service changes that affect residents and other key issues.

The workshop on 21st October had been facilitated by Rob Moran, the transformation consultant to Epsom & Ewell and former Elmbridge Chief Executive. The possibility of D&Bs contributing to the cost of his on-going services to support them with the County Deal and other related matters was being considered. Councillor Sayer was seeking clarification about the terms of his likely engagement before committing funding from TDC.

A further meeting of D&B representatives was scheduled for 11th November in advance of the SCC consultation events regarding the above mentioned '*Surrey strategy for accommodation, housing and homes*'. The event for the East Surrey area would be hosted by Tandridge on 16th November.

It was acknowledged that some functions undertaken by D&Bs might be discharged more effectively at a cluster level, or on a regional basis in some cases. Furthermore, the Group reflected that D&Bs should seek to work constructively with SCC (recognising the pressures it was under from Central Government) in pursuit of the most effective means of serving local residents.

In summary, it was agreed that the possibility of developing a service delivery model for the East Surrey cluster should be explored with the other relevant authorities, including the possibility of utilising the consultancy support from Rob Moran. In any event, such an approach would be in keeping with the aims of the Future Tandridge Programme, aside from any issues arising from the County Deal discussions.

The meeting closed at 12:38 p.m.

** in line with the 'Level 2' powers defined within the Levelling Up White Paper Devolution Framework, which would rely on effective partnership working between existing local authorities, with no change to the structure of local government throughout Surrey*