

Notice of Stour Valley and Poole Partnership Joint Committee

Date: Monday, 8 February 2021 at 2.00 pm

Venue: Online Teams Meeting



Membership:

Chairman: TBC

Vice Chairman: TBC

Cllr D Brown
Cllr L Dedman
Cllr M Haines

Cllr T O'Neill
Cllr A Brenton
Cllr A Kerby

Cllr M Parkes
Cllr A Starr

All Members of the Stour Valley and Poole Partnership Joint Committee are summoned to attend this meeting to consider the items of business set out on the agenda below.

The press and public are welcome to view the live stream of this meeting at the following link:

<https://democracy.bcpCouncil.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?MId=4953>

If you would like any further information on the items to be considered at the meeting please contact: Nicky Hooley or email 01202 128737

Press enquiries should be directed to the Press Office: Tel: 01202 454668 or email press.office@bcpCouncil.gov.uk

This notice and all the papers mentioned within it are available at democracy.bcpCouncil.gov.uk

GRAHAM FARRANT
CHIEF EXECUTIVE

29 January 2021



Available online and
on the Mod.gov app



Maintaining and promoting high standards of conduct

Declaring interests at meetings

Familiarise yourself with the Councillor Code of Conduct which can be found in Part 6 of the Council's Constitution.

Before the meeting, read the agenda and reports to see if the matters to be discussed at the meeting concern your interests

Do any matters being discussed at the meeting relate to your registered interests?

Disclosable Pecuniary Interest

Yes

Declare the nature of the interest

Do NOT participate in the item at the meeting. Do NOT speak or vote on the item EXCEPT where you hold a dispensation

You are advised to leave the room during the debate

Local Interest

Yes

Declare the nature of the interest

Applying the bias and pre-determination tests means you may need to refrain from speaking and voting

You may also need to leave the meeting. Please seek advice from the Monitoring Officer

No

Do you have a personal interest in the matter?

Yes

Consider the bias and pre-determination tests

You may need to refrain from speaking & voting

You may also need to leave the meeting. Please seek advice

No

You can take part in the meeting speak and vote

What are the principles of bias and pre-determination and how do they affect my participation in the meeting?

Bias and predetermination are common law concepts. If they affect you, your participation in the meeting may call into question the decision arrived at on the item.

Bias Test

In all the circumstances, would it lead a fair minded and informed observer to conclude that there was a real possibility or a real danger that the decision maker was biased?

Predetermination Test

At the time of making the decision, did the decision maker have a closed mind?

If a councillor appears to be biased or to have predetermined their decision, they must NOT participate in the meeting.

For more information or advice please contact the Monitoring Officer
(susan.zeiss@bcpcouncil.gov.uk)

Selflessness

Councillors should act solely in terms of the public interest

Integrity

Councillors must avoid placing themselves under any obligation to people or organisations that might try inappropriately to influence them in their work. They should not act or take decisions in order to gain financial or other material benefits for themselves, their family, or their friends. They must declare and resolve any interests and relationships

Objectivity

Councillors must act and take decisions impartially, fairly and on merit, using the best evidence and without discrimination or bias

Accountability

Councillors are accountable to the public for their decisions and actions and must submit themselves to the scrutiny necessary to ensure this

Openness

Councillors should act and take decisions in an open and transparent manner. Information should not be withheld from the public unless there are clear and lawful reasons for so doing

Honesty & Integrity

Councillors should act with honesty and integrity and should not place themselves in situations where their honesty and integrity may be questioned

Leadership

Councillors should exhibit these principles in their own behaviour. They should actively promote and robustly support the principles and be willing to challenge poor behaviour wherever it occurs

AGENDA

Items to be considered while the meeting is open to the public

1. Election of Chairman

To elect a Chairman of the Stour Valley and Poole Partnership Joint Committee, until the first meeting of the 2021/22 municipal year, from the BCP Council membership.

2. Election of Vice Chairman

To elect a Vice Chairman of the Stour Valley and Poole Partnership Joint Committee, until the first meeting of the 2021/22 municipal year, from the Dorset Council membership

3. Apologies

To receive any apologies for absence from Councillors.

4. Declarations of Interests

Councillors are requested to declare any interests on items included in this agenda. Please refer to the workflow on the preceding page for guidance. Declarations received will be reported at the meeting.

5. Confirmation of Minutes

To confirm and sign the minutes of the meeting held on 16 March 2020 as a correct record.

1 - 4

6. Budget and Performance Monitoring 2020/21

To review the budget, processing and collection performance of the Stour Valley and Poole Partnership (SVPP)

5 - 18

7. The future delivery of Revenues and Benefits Services in Dorset

To acknowledge that Dorset Council will be presenting an options report to their Cabinet on the future direction of Revenues and Benefit Services.

19 - 40

8. Proposed Budget 2021/2022

To agree the Stour Valley and Poole Partnership (SVPP) operational budget for the 2021/2022 financial year

41 - 48

9. Partnership Business Plan, Collaboration Agreement and Delegated Functions 2021/22

To detail the Business Plan of the Partnership for 2021/22 Financial Year and to give delegations to officers to administer accounts in accordance with the Collaboration Agreement between BCP Council and Dorset Council.

49 - 62

10. Date and time of next meeting

Verbal
Report

To consider the date and time of the next meeting.

No other items of business can be considered unless the Chairman decides the matter is urgent for reasons that must be specified and recorded in the Minutes.

STOUR VALLEY AND POOLE PARTNERSHIP JOINT COMMITTEE

MONDAY, 16TH MARCH, 2020

Present: Councillor Andrew Kerby in the Chair
Councillors Cllr D Brown (Vice-Chairman)
Cllr Lacey-Clarke, Cllr T O'Neill and Cllr A Starr

1 Apologies

Apologies had been received from Councillors M Haines and M Parkes and Wilson.

2 Declarations of Interests

There were no declarations received on this occasion.

3 Confirmation of Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 23 December were agreed and as a true record, providing Councillor Parkes' apologies were included as an amendment.

Voting: unanimous

4 Joint Working in Revenues and Benefits - Pan-Dorset Business Case

The Partnership Manager gave a verbal update. He confirmed that Dorset Council wanted to consider the Pan-Dorset Business Case but not until later in the next financial year, possibly March.

The CEO of BCP Council was supportive of the Dorset Council decision but wanted BCP services delivered in one space from 1 April 2020. The matter would be debated in the latter part of year at the two Councils' Cabinet meetings.

The work of the SVPP would continue and a further business report would not be presented until asked to do so.

Following a discussion, Councillors agreed that an email be sent to the S151 Officers at both Councils, seeking confirmation of a timeline for the business case, as they were time dependant.

RESOLVED that the S151 Corporate Director and Director of Finance be written to, from both Councils, seeking to confirm a timeline for a further business case.

Voting: nem com.

5 Budget and Performance Monitoring 2019/20

The Collection Services Manager presented a report, a copy of which had been circulated to each Member and a copy of which appears as Appendix 'A' to these Minutes in the Minute Book.

Councillors were asked to review the budget, processing and collection performance of the Stour Valley and Poole Partnership (SVPP).

Councillors were happy with the performance data.

RESOLVED that:

- (a) The Joint Committee acknowledged the performance of the Stour Valley and Poole Partnership to end of Quarter 3 of 2019/20;**
- (b) noted the budget of the Stour Valley and Poole Partnership to 31 January 2020; and**
- (c) reviewed the SVEA variance report.**

Voting: Nem. Con.

6 Partnership Business Plan, Forward Plan, Collaboration Agreement and Delegated Functions 2020/21

The Collection Services Manager presented a report, a copy of which had been circulated to each Member and a copy of which appears as Appendix 'B' to these Minutes in the Minute Book.

Councillors were asked to consider the Business Plan of the Partnership for 2020/21 Financial Year and to give delegations to officers to administer accounts in accordance with the Collaboration Agreement between BCP Council and Dorset Council.

Councillors confirmed that they were happy that the Chairman of the Joint Committee signed the collaboration agreement as detailed in the report.

RESOLVED that:

- (a) the Partnership work to the objectives detailed within item 8 of this report for the 2020/21 and 21/22 Financial Years and that a full timetable / Action Plan be presented to the next meeting of Scrutiny Panel for review;**
- (b) it was acknowledged that from 1 April 2020 the SVPP will be responsible for the administration of all Revenues and Benefits functions for BCP Council and the Dorset Council 'East and North database billing areas';**
- (c) the Collaboration Agreement/Delegated Functions Proforma for 2020/21 be passed to each Council Partner for adoption;**
- (d) the updated Scheme of Delegation for 2020/21 be adopted for the Partnership and reviewed in line with each Council's Constitution and Scheme of Delegation;**
- (e) section 151 officers review budgets and cost share at their next meeting in accordance with the financial implications detailed in this report; and**
- (f) section 151 officers of each Council can instruct the SVPP to undertake "delegated roles" as necessary for the delivery of legislative changes.**

Voting: Unanimous

7 BCP/SVPP Revenues and Benefits Services - Service Resilience Plan Coronavirus

The Chairman agreed to accept an urgent item update, which was circulated at the meeting. The Partnership Manager presented an update and confirmed that they would circulate the paperwork received this morning, along with their own analysis, to the Committee.

The Head of Customer Services gave a verbal update, advising that the Customer Access Team were reviewing continuity plans. Consideration was being given to telephony and investigating options for homeworking. Face to face services, would continue whilst the option was still viable. The Team would be producing an advice poster during this time. Email and digital services provided the service resilience. Councillors would be kept informed of any actions.

Consideration would need to be given to how court summons' and debt recovery were managed as Coronavirus advice progressed. Options may need to be forwarded to Councils for decisions.

8 **Review of SVPP Reserves**

The Partnership Manager circulated a paper 'Reserve Funding 19/20 at the meeting.

A Councillor raised concern that reserves were low and suggested that the Scrutiny Board should review this.

Councillors were assured that this item would be presented to the first meeting of the Joint Committee, of new financial year.

In response to a Councillor's concern regarding the low reserves, it was explained that SVPP was not committed to return the sum of £160k to each Council at the end of each financial year, just £100K had been committed. The final figure would be at the Committee's discretion.

It was RESOLVED that the Committee were not committing anymore than £100K at this time and would review the final contribution, along with the burdens funding at the next meeting.

Voting: Nem. Con

Duration of the meeting: 2.00 - 3.10 pm

Chairman at the meeting on
Monday, 16 March 2020

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STOUR VALLEY AND POOLE PARTNERSHIP SVPP JOINT COMMITTEE

Report subject	Budget and Performance Monitoring 2020/21
Meeting date	8 February 2021
Status	Public
Executive summary	To review the budget, processing and collection performance of the Stour Valley and Poole Partnership (SVPP)
Recommendations	<p>It is RECOMMENDED that members:</p> <p>(a) acknowledge the performance of the Stour Valley and Poole Partnership to end of Quarter 3 of 2020/21 as detailed in Appendix 1</p> <p>(b) note the budget position of the Stour Valley and Poole Partnership to 30 November 2020</p> <p>(c) request Scrutiny Panel produce a Risk Assessment for review alongside Business Plan objective in Quarter 1 on 2021/22</p>
Reason for recommendations	Members to review the performance and budget of the SVPP for 2020/21
Portfolio Holder(s):	Not applicable - SVPP
Corporate Director	Not applicable - SVPP
Contributors	Diane Milne. Collection Services Manager
Wards	All
Classification	Note and Comment

BACKGROUND

1. Members of Joint Committee request to review Performance at each of their meetings.
2. Performance and Budget monitoring is a role of the Scrutiny Panel on behalf of Joint Committee.
3. Attached to this report is the first monitoring report produced for 2020/21 presented to Scrutiny Panel on 27 January 2021.

REVIEW BY SCRUTINY PANEL

4. At the time of producing this report Members of Scrutiny Panel had not yet met to review performance and budget. The details of their review will be presented at the meeting of Joint Committee.

Summary of financial implications

5. The SVPP at the Financial monitoring period to 30 November 2020 is forecasting an underspend of £179,000. However, this is likely to result in a 'break-even' position due to £183,000 of budget reduction to reflect the software costs for Capita for both Councils
6. Further work is being undertaken on the budget impact of Covid19 on the Stour Valley Enforcement Service (SVEA) and allocation of New Burdens Funding. Finance officers are aware and monitoring accordingly for each Council

Summary of legal implications

7. Not applicable to this report.

Summary of human resources implications

8. Not applicable to this report

Summary of environmental impact

9. Not applicable to this report.

Summary of public health implications

10. Not applicable to this report

Summary of equality implications

11. Not applicable to this report

Summary of risk assessment

12. The risks to service delivery presented as a result of Covid19 and staff vacancies will be reviewed by Scrutiny Panel in Quarter 1 of 2021/22.

CONCLUSION

13. The review of performance and budget for SVPP in 2020/21 details that the service is likely to meet budget expectations, but the service has been impacted by Covid19 measures.

Appendices

1. Report to SVPP Scrutiny Panel 27 January 2021
 - 1.A Customer Service Update
 - 1.B Budget Report Month 8 November 2020

STOUR VALLEY AND POOLE PARTNERSHIP SCRUTINY PANEL

**2020/21
Performance and
Budget Review**

Date of Meeting: 27 January 2021

Lead Member: Not Applicable – SVPP Scrutiny Panel

Lead Officer: Diane Milne. Collection Services Manager SVPP

Executive Summary:

To review the budget, processing and collection performance of the Stour Valley and Poole Partnership (SVPP)

Equalities Impact Assessment:

Not Applicable to this report

Budget:

Operating Budget for SVPP for 2020/21 £5,093,000

Risk Assessment:

Not Applicable to this report

Other Implications:

Not Applicable to this report

Recommendation:

That members:

- (a) note the impact Covid19 has had on the performance of the SVPP
- (b) note the budget position of the SVPP to 30 November 2020
- (c) acknowledge the shortfall in income for SVEA should be accounted for by BCP and Dorset Council in line with Covid19 income reductions
- (d) request a full review of performance for 2020/21 and Business Plan review be presented to Scrutiny in first quarter of 2021/22.

Reason for Recommendation:

To review, and note for SVPP Joint Committee, performance of the Partnership to its budget and performance targets.

Appendices:

- A. Customer Services Update
- B. SVPP Budget Monitoring November 2020

Background Papers:

Officer Contact:

Name: Diane Milne – Email: diane.milne@bcpcouncil.gov.uk

1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1. Performance and Budget monitoring is a role of the Scrutiny Panel on behalf of Joint Committee.
- 1.2. This is the first monitoring report presented to Scrutiny Panel for 2020/21.
- 1.3. This report provides a summary of:
 - the 30 November 2020 position on SVPP Budget
 - the 30 December 2020 (Quarter 3) position on collection of Council Tax and Business Rates
 - the 30 November position on processing of new claims and changes for benefits
- 1.4. Covid19 has had a major impact upon service delivery in 2020 with the Partnership seeing a large increase in benefit claims and significant drops in collection of taxes and business rates as a result of Court Hearings being cancelled and the withholding of debt recovery.
- 1.5. The Partnership has allocated resources as required to support business grants, discretionary grants, hardship payments and Test & Trace support payments.
- 1.6. Staff have been allocated across departments to meet service demand.
- 1.7. The aim of this report is to provide an update to members with a full review of each service area to be presented in the first quarter of 2021/22 in line with Business Plan objectives.

2. PERFORMANCE MONITORING

- 2.1. Data on the processing of new claims and changes in circumstances for Housing Benefit and Council Tax Support are extracted monthly.
- 2.2. Data on percentage of collected Council Tax and Business Rates is a local indicator which has been retained by the Partnership and is used by each Council & Precepting Authority for budget setting purposes. The indicator is in respect of “in-year collection”.
- 2.3. Performance targets are agreed each year by the Scrutiny Panel and Joint Committee and published to the public and staff in the annual Business Plan and Customer Charter.
- 2.4. SVPP are responsible for the Christchurch and Poole areas of BCP Council and the East and North areas of Dorset Council. Performance of the SVPP is now reported alongside the targets set by BCP Council and Dorset Council.

3. BENEFIT PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

- 3.1. The Benefits service has continued with the trend of working closely to target.
 3.2. Benefit processing performance for the period to 31 December 2020 (Q3) was:

Average time taken (calendar days) to process a new claim

New Claims	2019/20 Q3 1 April to 31 Dec	2020/21 Q3 (part) 1 April to 30 Nov	Target
SVPP BCP	14 days	16 days	19 days
SVPP DC	16 days	17 days	
BCP Council	17 days*	19 days (Q1)*	16 days
Dorset Council	15 days*	20 days (Q1)*	19 days

Average time taken to process a change in circumstances

Changes	2019/20 Q3 1 April to 31 Dec	2020/21 Q3 (part) 1 April to 30 Nov	Target
SVPP BCP	5 days	5 days	10 days
SVPP DC	5 days	5 days	
BCP Council	5 days*	4 days (Q1)*	6 days
Dorset Council	5 days*	4 days (Q1)*	7 days

*DWP Data on speed of processing for each Council on housing benefit processing

- 3.3. The Benefit Service has through 2020 processed claims and supported Grant Payments and Test and Trace payment for BCP Council.
- 3.4. Whilst new burdens funding has been made available by Government to support these processes the Benefit Service through reductions in staff have relied on external support from Capita to process claims.
- 3.5. At the time of writing this report the service is under extreme pressure meeting the demands of Covid19 support measures and increases in workload / customer demand.
- 3.6. The likelihood as we go through Quarter 4 is that backlog management measures are implemented, and appropriate notices given to customer to advise of the situation. The Service is not able to recruit experienced staff currently or devote resources to training new staff. External support has been exhausted and cannot be increased further.

4. COUNCIL TAX AND BUSINESS RATES COLLECTION

- 4.1. The 'in-year' collection rate target for SVPP is 98% of all Council Tax and Business Rates to be collected within the financial year. Prior to 2020/21 'overall collection' is estimated to be between 99% and 99.5%, but the service monitors in-year collection closely to ensure funds are collected in a timely manner for each Council.
- 4.2. In March 2020 recovery and court action was suspended in line with the National Lockdown. Since this date the Magistrates Courts in Dorset have not enabled Covid safe Liability Order hearings, so we have been unable to issue 'summonses' for non-payment of Council Tax or Business Rates.
- 4.3. The extensive levels of Grants and awards to businesses has consumed all areas of service delivery within Revenues and Collections. The SVEA have been fully supporting National and Discretionary Grants throughout the pandemic.

- 4.4. The quarter 3 position Council Tax collection is down approximately 2% with overall expectation based on present position to be down by 3-3.5% on in-year target. This extrapolates to a collection rate of 94-95% by year-end.
- 4.5. Based upon an in-year Collection Rate of 95% for both Councils there could potentially be arrears carried forward (for 2020/21) of £13m on CTAX accounts for BCP Council and £16M for Dorset Council.

Council Tax collected in Year

CTAX Collection	2018/19 Q3	2019/20 Q3	2020/21 Q3	Target for year
SVPP BCP	84.4%	84.1%	82.6%	98%
SVPP DC	84.7%	84.4%	82.0%*	
BCP Council	Not applicable	82.1%	80.1%	97.5%
Dorset Council	Not applicable	85.7%	83.3%*	98%

* The Dorset Council data at this point in year can appear slightly higher due to pre-payments which is adjusted in March 2021. For SVPP Dorset area this would change the 82.0% to 82.5% for CTAX

- 4.5. For BCP Council from July 2020 to November 2020 monthly reminder notices were issued to Taxpayers in arrears. For Dorset Council no reminder notices have been issued during 2020/21 as requested by Dorset Council.

Business Rates

- 4.6. For Business Rates the database was significantly changed by the awarding of Retail, Hospitality and Leisure relief for the 2020/21 financial year. This relief is awarded for one year and has exempted many businesses from rate payments and reduced the collectable debit by around 50%.
- 4.7. The percentage of business rates to collect is therefore based upon the 'collectable debit' after reliefs.
- 4.8. The quarter 3 position Business Rates collection is down approximately 7% with overall expectation based on present position to be down by 8% on in year target by year end. This extrapolates to a collection rate of 90% by year-end.
- 4.9. Based upon an in-year Collection Rate of 90% for both Councils, there could potentially be arrears carried forward (for 2020/21) of £7m on Rate accounts for BCP Council and £5.5m for Dorset Council.

Percentage of Business Rates collected in year

Rate Collection	2018/19 Q3	2019/20 Q3	2020/21 Q3	Target for year
SVPP BCP	83.2%	83.5%	76.5%	98%
SVPP Dorset	84.5%	95.3%	75.6%	
BCP Council	n/a	82.6%	76.2%	98%
Dorset Council	n/a	84.9%	76.6%	98%

- 4.10. Councils are receiving direct financial support from Government on 'bad debts' but the reduction in collection is likely to impact service delivery for at least two years with collection returning to expected 'in-year' levels potentially during 2023/24 should there be no further delays in Court availability or further lockdowns in 2021/22.

5. ENFORCEMENT SERVICE

- 5.5. The operational budget for the service in 2020/21 was set at £441,000 with an overall income target of £175,000 above expenditure, being £616,000.

- 5.6. The SVEA have been unable to fully operate throughout 2020/21 due to restrictions on making Face-to-face contact and entering people's homes where not considered necessary. Although official restrictions were lifted during the summer the decision was taken that SVEA and our external enforcement agents continued not to visit customers to enforce and focus on compliance only. For health and safety reasons the staff were allocated to office-based tasks such as debt monitoring and supporting the processing of business grants for both BCP Council and Dorset Council.

New Burdens funding was received to help mitigate the costs of business grants processing and this funding is held within the SVPP budget.

- 5.7. The SVEA operational costs for the 2020/21 year are projected as £429,000 and income forecast as at 30 November 2020 of £85,000. If fee income continues at the same ratio the overall income received will be circa £125,000, making the service expenditure to income shortfall of circa £304,000 and overall income reduced from budget expectation of £616,000 to £125,000.
- 5.8. Each Council are fully aware of the projected income shortfall as a result of service not operating visits or having 2020/21 Liability Orders to process the income expected for 2020/21. This shortfall for each partner Council was detailed as 'loss of income' for all government notifications and Council budget monitoring.
- 5.9. There may be transfers of budget from the main SVPP budget to SVEA for work undertaken on grant payments (via New Burdens) to mitigate budget shortfall.

6. CUSTOMER ACCESS

- 6.1. There SVPP Customer Access Team in 2020 were as part of BCP Customer Services department, brought together as one service in BCP Council. The SVPP Customer Access Manager was appointed as Head of Customer Service and all staff restructured in teams within the department.
- 6.2. This change means SVPP no longer have dedicated team of Customer Access staff but are now supported by all BCP Customer Services.
- 6.3. As from January 2021 the post of Head of Customer Services for BCP Council has become vacant with the postholder taking up the position of Head of Customer Services for Dorset Council.
- 6.4. The report attached as Appendix A details the processes put in place during 2020 to deal with the impact of Covid19 within the department and meet customer demand.

7. BUDGET POSITION

- 7.1. The SVPP 2020/21 'Year 6' Budget set for the Partnership by Joint Committee was £5,093,000. This represented a year-on-year reduction in the cost of the service since its creation in 2014.
- 7.2. The budget position as at end January 2020 is attached as Appendix B. This details that at the present time the Partnership is forecasting a potential underspend of £179,000. However, this is likely to result in a 'break-even' position due to £183,000 of budget reduction to reflect the software costs for Capita for both Councils being removed from budget within the year.

8. FINANCIAL AND RISK

- 8.1. The Management Board continues to allocate New Burdens Funding Grant for each Council to support the costs of temporary staff which has allowed Indexing to be carried out on the day. At this point there is expected to be an underspend of New Burdens for consideration of Joint Committee at year-end. This underspend could mitigate any un-foreseen overspends in Quarter 4 or be returned to councils. Details will be presented at next meeting of Scrutiny for consideration.
- 8.2. A risk assessment will be presented to the next meeting of Scrutiny Panel for review detailing impacts of covid19 and potential dissolving of the SVPP as from 1 April 2022.

9. CONCLUSION

- 9.1. Overall, to date in 2020/21 the SVPP is meeting its budget targets. There has been considerable pressure placed upon the service to support Covid19 measures through the period from April 2020 to December 2020 and these are likely to increase through Quart 4.
- 9.2. Measures will need to be put in place to deal with high levels of account arrears that will be taken into the 2021/22 financial year and onwards.

Appendices

A: Customer Service Update

B: Budget Report Month 8 November 2020

Diane Milne. Collection Services Manager

APPENDIX 1A – SVPP Customer Services Update

1. CUSTOMER ACCESS

This report will provide an up-to-date position for customer access delivery and future developments and improvements planned.

1.1 Covid-19 response: Customer Services: Telephone Access for BCP and Dorset Councils

Our customer services team have been working efficiently from home since April 2020 responding to customer enquiries and operating our usual core opening times.

To ensure that we were able to continue to provide good access to customer services, and respond to the government guidance, our managers worked closely with ICT colleagues to implement solutions enabling us to work from home.

Whilst this was an essential action to take, the functionality available to us, via the alternative telephone solutions, reduced our ability to interrogate our queue management and call data.

Therefore, we have limited performance data other than the core number of calls received since the start of the pandemic. However, this does tell us that customer demand has been very high at an increase of 48% compared to last year.

The increase will have included customers requesting information and access to the various grants and schemes, applying for support or benefit and also customers needing to reprofile or amend their payment profiles.

1.2 Covid-19 response: Customer Services: Face to Face Access for BCP Council

During the first lockdown period customer centres were closed to 'walk in' visitors whilst we maintained the 'stay home' messaging. All sites had daily management and we provided a limited, emergency service for any residents that required an urgent response. For example: someone facing or experiencing homelessness.

During these months our managers worked with our property services and health and safety colleagues to assess risk using the 'working safely during coronavirus guidance'. We adapted all our customer centres to the specification provided including protective screening, social distancing guidance, hand cleansing stations and signage.

Our customer centres re-opened to appointment services from August 2020. We have recently reduced access again in response to the Tier 4 and further lockdown.

1.3 Covid-19 response: Customer Services: Face to Face Access for Dorset Council

Dorset Council instructed us that council buildings were not reopening however telephone access has been provided in local locations via Libraries. This has ensured that customers can access our service via telephone or online access.

1.4 Telephone Data

As reported our data is limited this year whilst operating without a contact centre, telephone solution. The data we have provides the number of calls received and is only available for the customer services teams.

We do not have the telephone call data for SVPP managed services such as business rates, collections, enforcement and income.

SVPP CAT Telephone and Email Demand	Q1 20/21	Q2 20/21	Q3 20/21	Total Q1-3 20/21	Total Q1-3 19/20	Target
Call Demand received via Customer Services	38677	43837	53075	135,589	91,322	To reduce calls

1.5 Face-to-face Data

Appointment services worked effectively throughout the pandemic situation. We are now collecting information for customers coming to see us whilst our queue management solution was not operational for many months.

We can, with confidence, confirm that very few customers needed a face-to-face interaction and estimate less than 50 appointments have taken place this year so far.

Our payment kiosks have been operational since August until further restrictions prevent us opening them under Tier 4 and lockdown.

2. Future Telephone and Face to Face Services

BCP Council are implementing a number of projects to align systems and solutions under its corporate transformation programme.

2.1 Contact Centre Telephone Solutions

BCP Council has procured a new contact centre telephone solution that is being implemented in December 2020 and January 2021. This will allow us greater flexibility and functionality in how we deliver telephone responses to our residents across BCP and Dorset Councils for revenues and benefits calls. The new solution will include more sophisticated real time reporting, queue management, call recording (when required) and ability to integrate future functions such as 'chat bot'.

2.2 Customer Access with Libraries – BCP Council only

BCP Council is relocating its customer centres to libraries. Customer service managers have worked with specialists to re-imagine the customer service offer and ensure that this is fully integrated with our library information services. All BCP council customers will be welcomed into the new customer centre environment during 2021. Further updates will be presented to committee when plans are fully developed.

Appointment services for revenues and benefits will continue within the new environment with access to digital, self-service, scanning and payment kiosks extended to ensure easy access to our online and payment services.

3. Post, Email and Digital Services

We continue to promote our digital services first as the most efficient way for the customer to access the service and for the service to process applications, changes and payments.

During the Covid response we have experienced a significant increase in email demand. This, in the first quarter, would have been impacted by the business grant schemes set up.

Overall digital uptake has been steady, compared to last year, and the customer team will continue to promote digital first when speaking with customers.

For some transactions, due to the extraordinary circumstances of this year, customers have preferred to speak with us personally.

Digital Services for SVPP through Customer and Business Support	Q1 20/21	Q2 20/21	Q3 20/21	Total Q1-3 20/21	Total Q1-3 19/20	Total Q1-3 18/19	Target
Total digital transactions	41,955	26,124	16,265	84,344	57,110	43,571	To increase digital transactions and automation
Emails resolved	34,786*	18,189	7,271	60,246	31,605	26,702	
Victoria Forms (Benefits)	2,380	1,938	1,996	6,314	7,052	4,455	
Digital Change of Address	2,231	3,576	4,275	10,082	11,147	5,618	
Digital Direct Debit	2,056	1,979	2,196	6,231	6,080	6,011	
EBilling Sign Up	502	442	527	1,471	1,226	785	

Lisa Cotton. Head of Customer Services BCP Council.

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STOUR VALLEY AND POOLE PARTNERSHIP

YEAR 6 : 2020/21 - BUDGET (Core Functions) - Month 8 - Nov

	Budget £000's	Forecast Outturn £000's	BCP £000's	Dorset £000's	Total Allocation £000's
Employee Related	4,595	4,457			
ICT Services	370	147			
Printing and Postage	276	224			
Other Running Costs	104	174			
Central Support Charges	674	674			
Accommodation	161	161			
Specific Recharges					
- Enforcement Team business case recharges	(31)	(31)			
- Shared Head of Service & Enforcement Recharge	(59)	(59)			
- Shared Service Saving	(165)	0			
- Poole - Debtors/SSFA/Cashiers/Corp Fraud	(740)	(713)			
Local Discounts/14% Local CTax Support Scheme					
- Christchurch Borough Council	(17)	(17)			
- East Dorset District Council	(17)	(17)			
- NDDC - Front of House Service	(42)	(42)			
- EDDC Bid Districts - Set Up and ongoing	(10)	(10)			
- Poole Bid District - Set Up and ongoing	(7)	(7)			
Other income	(1)	(29)			
Reserve Funding	0	0			
	5,093	4,914	3,210	1,704	4,914
Cost Share Agreement - Year 2 Onwards			65.32%	34.68%	100%
2019/2020 Approved Budget			3,327	1,766	5,093
Variance from approved Budget			(117)	(62)	(179)

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STOUR VALLEY AND POOLE PARTNERSHIP JOINT COMMITTEE

Report subject	The future delivery of Revenues and Benefits Services in Dorset
Meeting date	8 February 2021
Status	Public
Executive summary	To acknowledge that Dorset Council will be presenting an options report to their Cabinet on the future direction of Revenues and Benefit Services.
Recommendations	<p>It is RECOMMENDED that members:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) acknowledge that Dorset Council is intending to decide upon the future direction of Revenues and Benefit services at a meeting of Cabinet in March 2021. (b) note that BCP Council and Dorset Council chief executives have agreed (as detailed in items 28 to 32 of this report) that work be undertaken on the option of an amicable separation from SVPP as from 1 April 2022. (c) request the Section 151 officer for BCP Council (as Responsible Council) to allocate resources to provide corporate support to evaluate the impacts of ending SVPP (d) note the SVPP Pan-Dorset Review (as detailed items 56 to 61 of this report) and be mindful of its proposals for efficiencies (e) request a full risk assessment be carried out by Partnership Manager for consideration at next meeting
Reason for recommendations	To ensure BCP Council and Dorset Council can fully evaluate the future provision of Revenues and Benefit Services as from 1 April 2022 and any MTFP saving / impacts of ending the SVPP on service delivery and budget are fully recognised for each Council by the Joint Committee.

Portfolio Holder(s):	Not applicable - SVPP
Corporate Director	Not applicable - SVPP
Contributors	Paul Hudson. SVPP Partnership Manager
Wards	All
Classification	Note and Comment

BACKGROUND

1. The Stour Valley and Poole Partnership (SVPP) was established in 2014 and is responsible through the Joint Committee and Scrutiny Panel for the provision of Revenues and Benefits Services for BCP Council (Christchurch and Poole areas) and Dorset Council (East and North areas). Since 2017 the SVPP has worked in Partnership with Bournemouth Revenues and Benefits Service to deliver efficiencies and share roles.
2. In December 2017, SVPP Scrutiny Panel and Joint Committee supported a Business Case for a shared service provision for Revenues and Benefits Services across Dorset that was expected to deliver £1,325,000 in operational savings.
3. In January 2018 Bournemouth Borough Council Cabinet endorsed to further share managerial and operational resources with SVPP and agreed to consider the formation of a Revenues and Benefits Partnership across all Dorset services after the final decision of the Secretary of State regarding Local Government Re-organisation.
4. On the 19 March 2018, SVPP Joint Committee on review of the Business Case recommended that with or without LGR the Business Case for Joint Working in Dorset for Revenues and Benefits Services be endorsed with a commencement date of 1 April 2019
5. On the 26 April 2018 Dorset Chief Executives reviewed the Business Case and considered the following three options for service delivery going forward:

OPTION	DETAILS		AREA COVERED / DATABASES
A	Dorset Wide Service		All of Dorset
B1	BCP Unitary	Stour Valley and Poole Partnership	Bournemouth, Christchurch, East Dorset, North Dorset & Poole
	Dorset Unitary	South Dorset Partnership	Purbeck, West Dorset & Weymouth and Portland
B2	BCP Unitary		Bournemouth, Christchurch & Poole
	Dorset Unitary		East Dorset, North Dorset, Purbeck West Dorset & Weymouth and Portland

6. The Chief Executives upon review of the three options concluded that Option B1 was considered the best way forward in the short term with a view to Option A (single service) in the future.
7. It was acknowledged on 1 October 2018 by Joint Committee that the Business Case could not progress as the South Dorset Revenues and Benefits Partnership and Dorset Chief Executives had agreed to “defer the Business Case”.
8. On the 29 March 2019, the Interim Section 151 Officer for Dorset Council advised that “running the service in a fragmented way with SVPP providing services to residents of East and North Dorset and the rest being provided by Southwalks House is untenable from April 2020”. It was agreed that this notification did not constitute “giving notice” to SVPP and that both new Councils would be committed to producing an up to date Business Case to cover Pan-Dorset Service and standalone options.
9. On the 16 March 2020 Scrutiny Panel considered a report which detailed the Options Appraisal for the future delivery of services.
10. During November 2020 Chief Executives met to discuss the future of SVPP. This was followed in December 2020 with Leaders and Portfolio holders meeting and requesting officers to propose a resolution.
11. On 18 December 2020 the Strategic Director for Dorset Council advised that “Dorset Council’s preferred direction of travel is for a separation, but clearly a lot of work needs to be completed before a decision can be taken. Ideally Dorset Cabinet will take a decision prior to 31 March 2021 and depending on that decision notice to be served if required.
12. Officers of both Councils and the SVPP have been requested to produce documentation to support the proposal discussed by Chief Executives that ‘Work to be undertaken on the option of an amical separation from 1 April 2022. BCP Council commitment to such an option would be dependent on the identified financial implications and the extent to which DC are prepared to positively support / help mitigate’.

OPTIONS APPRAISAL 2019

13. It was agreed at the Board meeting of SVPP on 5 August 2019 that the following options would be considered within an Options Appraisal:

The Options Appraisal produced on 27 August 2019 is attached as Appendix 1, detailing:

- Option 1: No change from existing service provision
- Option 2: A Pan-Dorset Revenues and Benefits Partnership
- Option 3: End SVPP and each Council to provide its own services

Option 1 – No change to existing services

14. For Dorset Council this Option represented it having its Revenues and Benefits Service provided by two different services, with different phone / postal / on-line access points, which would create confusion and in-efficiency for the service and customer.
15. For BCP Council this presented an opportunity to formally bring together its Bournemouth area service and staff with those of the SVPP and deliver alignment of ICT systems, phones, postal, on-line services for customers and to deliver accommodation savings through agile working.

Option 2 – Pan-Dorset Revenues and Benefits Partnership – Business Case

16. This option was based upon the original Business Case of 2019 jointly produced by the Head of Revenues and Benefits for Dorset Council and Partnership Manager for SVPP.
17. Throughout its journey the primary aim of the Business Case was to bring together the already existing services in Dorset without any initial major change. The proposal looked to align management areas, whilst still operating on the primary service delivery and staffing bases.
18. The proposal looked to align each Council's databases and to seek reduced costs from external suppliers, to create economies of scale and pool experienced resources. Training and development of staff being a key feature with excellent Customer Access.
19. The main efficiencies were based upon reducing the number of managers and reducing staff to match reduced caseload as a result of Universal Credit migration.
20. The savings proposed within this Option amounted to £1,300,000 which would have delivered £700,000 for BCP Council and £600,000 to Dorset Council.

However, this Option it was noted had at the time not been balanced fully in comparison to "set up costs" and compared to Option 3, does not take account of other savings which could be delivered through investment, such as 'robotics' and a discount based Council Tax Reduction Scheme.

Option 3: End SVPP and each Council to create their own Services

21. This Option detailed how each Council, upon ending the SVPP mutually could deliver their services as from April 2021.
22. The primary impact of ending the SVPP on each of the Services in this Option is financial and staffing, as SVPP is fully supported by BCP Council corporate function and all staff employed by BCP Council.
23. External advice through ACS Consultancy was obtained at that time on staffing number expectations for each Service.

It is emphasised that this is external advice and each service may progress with a staffing structure that is fully reflective of either BCP or Dorset Council structures, pay and resource allocation.

24. Human Resources for BCP Council advised that for this Option staff employed by SVPP (through BCP Council) in almost all circumstances would not be subject to TUPE as their roles are assessed as being primarily carrying out work for BCP Council.

Under this scenario, based upon consultant advice, BCP Council would need to reduce its workforce (as at 2019) by an estimated 37 posts through redundancy or redeployment and Dorset Council would potentially need to recruit up to 55 posts.

Based upon previous redundancy exercises at SVPP, a sum in the region of £1,000,000 in costs to meet for redundancy was identified.

25. Dorset Council in this Option identified £846,000 of savings that could be achieved.
26. For BCP Council, the ending of SVPP would place an initial burden of £450,000 after the reduction of workforce, which would look to be mitigated by reduction on stranded costs and further reduction in staff in line with investment in 'robotics'.

SECTION 151 OFFICER REVIEW – SEPTEMBER 2019

27. On the 10 September 2019 the Section 151 officers reviewed the documents and based upon the details presented considered the following Options were most appropriate

BCP Council: Option 2 Pan-Dorset Partnership, if not Option 1 No Change

Dorset Council: Option 3 End SVPP and each to provide own services

The Section 151 Officers were clear that this was only an "initial view" and agreed that further financial information was required to make a formal decision on the Options presented and a further meeting would be necessary.

CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER REVIEW

28. The Chief Executive officers and Section 151 officers of BCP Council and Dorset Council met in November 2020 to discuss the future of Revenues and Benefit Service in Dorset.
29. The Chief Executives were presented by the BCP Section 151 officer with an updated version (BCP data updated only) of the Options Appraisal (Appendix 2) produced in July 2020 which was used as a working document to support discussion.
30. The updated Options Appraisal detailed the financial impact to BCP Council of ending the SVPP and the indicative expectation of financial support that would need to be given by Dorset Council if BCP were to agree an amicable separation and take steps to mitigate stranded costs and staffing costs.
31. The decision reached was that 'work should be undertaken on the option of separation from 1 April 2022. BCP Council commitment to such an option would

be dependent on the identified financial implications and the extent to which Dorset Council are prepared to positively support / help mitigate.

32. The alternative to an amicable separation would be for one of the Councils to give notice to end the Partnership in accordance with the Collaboration Agreement. This requires a financial year's notice. To end the SVPP for 31 March 2022, would require notice to be given by 31 March 2021. Based on the "golden handcuff" arrangement in the Collaboration Agreement under Clause 19.13 states the 'Participating Council that served notice, shall be responsible absolutely for any costs howsoever arising to the remaining Participating Councils' other than those which would otherwise have been shared in accordance with Delegate Functions and Cost Share Agreement.

SERVICE DELIVERY MODEL CASELOADS 2019/20

33. Presently there are two service delivery models delivering the Revenues and Benefit Services throughout the County as agreed by Dorset Chief Executives prior to Local Government Re-Organisation (Item 5&6 of this report).

OPTION	DETAILS		AREA COVERED / DATABASES
B1	BCP Unitary	Stour Valley and Poole Partnership Bournemouth	Bournemouth, Christchurch, East Dorset, North Dorset & Poole
	Dorset Unitary	South Dorset Partnership	Purbeck, West Dorset & Weymouth and Portland

34. Revenues and Benefits Caseloads as detailed in the Business Case of August 2019 were:

Caseload Data 2018/19						
Actual billing data extracts (different from National Data cells)	Properties		Claimants		Total	Percentage
	Council Tax (CTAX)	Business Rates (NDR)	Housing Benefit (HB)	Council Tax Support (LCTS)		
BCP Council	185,195	15,159	21,972	26,682	249,008	51.27%
Dorset Council	177,963	16,804	18,713	23,177	236,657	48.73%
DORSET Wide	363,158	31,963	40,685	49,859	485,665	100.00%
<i>Bmth & SVPP</i>	257,645	20,628	28,055	34,743	341,071	70.23%
<i>SDP(Dorset)</i>	105,513	11,335	12,630	15,116	144,594	29.77%

35. Based on the above data, for Dorset Council ending the SVPP and providing its own Revenues and Benefits Service would see an increase in caseload of approximately 63%.
36. For BCP Council ending SVPP and retaining all SVPP functions would have no impact on its service delivery but effectively a reduction in caseload of 27%.

- 37.If the SVPP were to be used as the future delivery model for a Pan-Dorset Revenues and Benefit Service, would represent a 42% increase in caseload.

ACS CONSULTANCY REVIEW 2019

- 38.ACS Consultancy Ltd (ACS), are a specialist company providing consultancy and training support for Revenues and Benefits Services. They were used by WestWey, SDP, SVP and SVPP to create their partnerships and were requested in 2019 to provide independent evaluation of the potential staffing needs for a Pan-Dorset Partnership and for each Council to provide their own services.

ACS continue to be used by BCP Council and Dorset Council to support service delivery, CTAX support schemes and the current business rate grants.

- 39.ACS produced two documents to support the Business Case and Options Appraisals on staffing numbers, potential structures and delivery methods.
40. Whilst each Council or any new Partnership will decide on their future delivery and staffing model the evaluation by ACS detailed the following potential staffing needs for each option:

ACS 2019 Business Case data – Staffing Numbers				
Staffing Details (Employer)	Current Staffing Levels FTE	ACS Proposed Staffing Levels FTE	Total Change FTE	Percentage Change
BCP Council (Inc SVPP)	185	148	-37	-20%
Dorset Council	77	132	55	71%
Pan-Dorset	262	259	-3	-1%

41. These details were for Revenues and Benefit Services and Sundry Income. For both Councils Sundry Income is not provided in the staffing numbers detailed although could equate to approximately 15-20 FTE.
42. It is acknowledged that these details were produced prior to the impact of Covid19 on service demand and the extensive changes to service delivery that have been made by both Councils.
43. It will be for each Council to review these details in line with their own transformation agendas / smarter structures proposals for service delivery from the cessation of the Partnership.

OPTIONS REVIEW 2020/21

44. Senior officers from both Councils have agreed that due to current pressures within Revenues and Benefits there is not time to produce another Business Case by March 2021.

BCP Council Review

45. Currently BCP Council are undertaking a review of all services in accordance with 'Smarter Structures'.
46. This review will include all BCP Revenue and Benefit services being provided by SVPP. Presently data is being brought together by officers with a report due for consideration by the Council in line with the 2021/22 budget proposals.
47. The delivery of Smarter Structures is anticipating reducing the BCP workforce by around 400-600 FTE posts through the establishment of 25 Job Family structures.
48. This proposal may potentially for BCP Council prove to be a better delivery model for the future than SVPP. However, at the time of writing this report the view of BCP is that they are satisfied with services being delivered in SVPP and do not wish individually to give notice to exit the Partnership.
49. The Partnership Manager has assessed the future staffing structure if the SVPP was to also provide all of the BCP Revenues and Benefits Services. This reduction on service provision with the return of the Customer Access function from BCP Customer Services it is considered could deliver £1.2M in savings. This saving would be achieved by restructuring of management in 2021/22 to deliver £400,000 in savings and the remaining £800,000 through staff redundancy / vacancy review / TUPE to Dorset as from 1 April 2022.
50. There would upon the ending of SVPP and implementing the restructure be a remaining Budget Pressure for BCP Council of £475,000 (excluding any one-off redundancy costs)

Dorset Council Review

51. Dorset Council in December advised BCP Council that their preferred option is to end the arrangement and seek the opportunity to integrate the Revenues and Benefits Service with other parts of the Council to gain insight and efficiency.
52. In making this approach it was recognised that other options should be considered, and the Council will allocate officers to conduct this review with the view to a decision ideally being taken by Dorset Council Cabinet in March 2021.
53. It was recognised that both councils have a strong track record in such work and that support will need to be given by BCP Council to establish and agree the costs of separation.
54. If an agreement is not reached by Dorset Council with BCP Council to end the SVPP mutually then 'one financial year' notice would need to be given in accordance with the Collaboration Agreement and Deed of Variation.
55. It is recognised that this is solely a decision of Dorset Council and the role of the SVPP Joint Committee and Scrutiny Panel would then be to ensure separation of the Partnership is administered effectively and services provided until the cessation date.

SVPP Review – Pan Dorset Partnership

56. The Partnership Manager has undertaken a review of the original Business Case and considers that a new partnership should be able to rationalise senior roles and staffing upon its formation and continue with extensive use of staff working agilely alongside extensive on-line services for customers.
57. The way in which both BCP Council and Dorset Council and their software / hardware suppliers have quickly adapted to the challenges of Covid19 have changed the way we transact and manage.
58. There are now opportunities for both Councils to come together to be ambitious to deliver a range of financial and transactional services that compliment the skillset of their Revenues and Benefits Staff. SVPP already provide Adult Social Care Financial Assessments, Sundry Income collection for BCP Council and its own Enforcement Service (SVEA) for both BCP & Dorset Council. These services could be extended to cover all of BCP Council and Dorset Council and cover all 'Welfare Related' support, debt recovery and other assessment based functions.
59. A future Partnership could deliver extensive transactional services for both Councils in a way which would deliver efficiencies and excellent 'seamless services' for all residents living in Dorset. *For example, in the future when gathering data on a Council Tax change of address, the service could capture Electoral Registration details and other service details such as library registration, garden refuse and car park season passes. This would create efficiencies for departments and one process for our residents to undertake.*
60. Delivering the structure for a Pan-Dorset Partnership as detailed in the ACS Report and as detailed in the Options Appraisal (Appendix 2) would deliver £1,775,000 in staffing over two years.
61. As a result of the dramatic changes to service delivery in 2020 with the shift to 'agile working' and greater use of technology it is considered further staffing and accommodation savings could be achieved of £300,000 based upon the original budget details used in the Business Case if the Partnership were to deliver 'specialist services' for both Councils as detailed in item 58.

This proposal would deliver what is expected to be over £2 million in savings over 2 years, being (subject to cost share agreement) around £1 million to each Council.

Summary of financial implications

62. It is recognised that there is not enough time from January to a decision for Dorset Council in March to review the original Pan-Dorset Business Case.
63. For BCP Council the impact of ending the SVPP would result in a net loss in income from Dorset Council of £1,674,000. After restructuring and redundancy to deliver £1,225,000 in savings the Council would face a budget pressure of £475,000.

64. BCP Council Section 151 officer has requested that Dorset Council would make agreed contributions to offset the impact of ending the SVPP and meet redundancy costs
65. Dorset Council is to produce a report for consideration by its Cabinet on its future service delivery options. In the original Option Appraisal of 2019 (appendix 1) Dorset Council detailed that £846,000 in savings could be achieved by delivering its own Revenues and Benefits Service.
66. The Business Case for a Pan-Dorset Partnership and Options Appraisal of 2019 identified £1,300,000 in savings that could be delivered.
67. The Partnership Manager considers that a Pan-Dorset Partnership based upon the service delivery model of SVPP could deliver £1,775,000 of efficiencies rising to £2,075,000 with the inclusion of 'specialist services' for both Councils. This being in the region of £1,000,000 to each Council.
68. Any agreement on financial implications / cost share agreements would need to be fully agreed by Section 151 officers and detailed accordingly in any Collaboration Agreement.

Summary of legal implications

69. The SVPP Collaboration Agreement will need to be reviewed by BCP Council and Dorset Council to ascertain the impact of ending the Partnership to each party.
70. If an amicable resolution cannot be agreed by Section 151 officers, then Dorset Council will need to issue notice to 'terminate the partnership' in accordance with the Collaboration Agreement and Deed of Variation.
71. A full timetable would need to be established and agreed to monitor the ending of the SVPP with appropriate working groups reporting to the SVPP Board, Scrutiny Panel and Joint committee to ensure Collaboration Agreement conditions met.

Summary of human resources implications

72. There would be extensive support required by both Councils Human Resources department during 2021 in order to deliver any of the proposals.
73. Each Council may need to obtain individual advice regarding TUPE / redundancy implications.
74. Human Resources and Unions were aware of the original Options Appraisal but have not yet been consulted in relation to the work now being undertaken regarding the future of SVPP.
75. If notice is given by Dorset Council, then SVPP could mitigate impact upon staff by restructuring the service in 2021 and carrying out vacancy control / offer voluntary redundancy.

Summary of environmental impact

76. All options for future service delivery are being assessed for environmental impact. These will be presented with a future paper to Joint Committee.

Summary of public health implications

77. Not applicable to this report

Summary of equality implications

78. Not applicable to this report. Will be presented with a future paper to Joint Committee.

Summary of risk assessment

79. The Risk Register for 2020/21 is being reviewed to acknowledge the proposal by Dorset Council and the BCP Council proposal for Smarter Structures. This will be fully presented at the next meeting for consideration and review by Scrutiny.

80. For each Option being considered a full Risk Assessment will be completed. If ending SVPP is the chosen option, then a full exit and risk strategy will need to be presented and endorsed by Joint Committee.

Appendices

- 1 Options Analysis 27 August 2019
- 2 Options Analysis (BCP Council) July 2020

Background documents

- ACS Consultancy – Dorset Revenues and Benefits Partnership 2019
- ACS Consultancy – BCP & Dorset Councils maintaining separate R&B Services

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OPTIONS ANALYSIS
 PROVIDING REVENUES AND BENEFITS SERVICES FOR BCP COUNCIL AND DORSET COUNCIL

Request by BCP Council and Dorset Council to consider three options for service delivery for Revenues and Benefits (R&B) functions.

Date: 27 August 2019
 Produced by: BCP/SVPP & Dorset Councils. (Jointly agreed areas Black Text (Additional Comments BCP (SVPP) blue text / Dorset Council green text)

Option	Option 1				Option 2		Option 3			
	No change to existing service delivery models		Partnership between BCP & Dorset Council for R&B		End SVPP and each Council to create their own R & B Service					
	Dorset Council Previously South Dorset Partnership (SDP)		Stour Valley and Poole Partnership (SVPP) and BCP Council		Pan-Dorset Revenues and Benefits Partnership		BCP Council Revenues and Benefits Service		Dorset Council Revenues and Benefit Service	
Description and Scale of Services (2018/19 Data)	Dorset Council Revenues and Benefit Service processing accounts for Purbeck, West Dorset and Weymouth & Portland areas of Dorset.		The SVPP (responsible for BCP areas for Christchurch & Poole and Dorset areas of East & North) and BCP Council (Bournemouth area) working in Partnership		Bring together the Revenues and Benefit Services of BCP Council (Bournemouth area), Dorset Council (Purbeck, West & Weymouth area) and SVPP (BCP Christchurch & Poole & Dorset Council – East & North) as one new 'Pan-Dorset Partnership' as from 1 April 2020		By Mutual agreement between BCP Council and Dorset Council end the SVPP on 31 March 2021 Each Council to have in place their own Revenues and Benefits Service for 1 April 2021			
CTAX Properties	105,513		257,645		363,158		185,195		177,963	
NNDR Properties	11,335		20,628		31,963		15,159		16,804	
HB Claimants	12,630		28,055		40,685		21,972		18,713	
LCTR Claimants	15,116		34,743		49,859		26,682		23,177	
Total Caseload	144,594	30%	341,071	70%	485,665	100%	249,008	51%	236,657	49%
Value of Service	£305,449,000		£785,005,000		£1,090,454,000		£568,067,000		£522,387,000	
Revenues and Benefits Staff - FTE	77		185 (213 in total with specialist roles)		262 (290 with specialist roles)		Estimated 148 (176 with specialist roles)		Estimated 132	
Service Budget 20/20 Excludes grants	£3,960,750		£8,475,527 (BCP £6,696,954 / Dorset £1,778,573)		£12,436,277 (BCP £6,696,954 / Dorset £5,739,323)		£6,696,954		£5,739,323 (SDP £3,960,750 + SVPP £1,778,573)	
Current Cost Per CTAX Property	£37.53		£32.90 (BCP £36.16 / Dorset £24.55)		£34.24 (BCP £36.16 / Dorset £32.25)		£36.16		£32.25 (Dorset £37.53 / SVPP £24.55)	
Proposed Saving 20/21 to 22/23	Not known		£1,050,000 (BCP £828 / Dorset £222,000)		£1,300,000 (BCP £700,000 / Dorset £600,000)		£283,000		£846,000	
Service Size Nationally based upon CTAX Props	70		6		2		11		12	

Approach	Dorset Council through its Financial Services department providing its own R&B service for the Purbeck, West and Weymouth areas of Dorset.	<p>The SVPP Joint Committee being responsible for the R&B provisions for BCP Council areas of Christchurch and Poole and Dorset Council areas of East and North.</p> <p>The Partnership Manager acting as Head of R&B for BCP Council for Bournemouth area only as part of Financial Services</p> <p>Under the Partnership Manager BCP (Bournemouth) and SVPP working together since 2017 to deliver efficiencies.</p> <p>A shared Enforcement Service (SVEA) operating across all of BCP Council and East and North areas of Dorset Council.</p> <p>Provision of Social Services Financial Assessments for BCP (Poole area)</p> <p>Provision of Sundry Debtor accounts for BCP Council and East area of Dorset Council</p> <p>Provision by BCP CAT of call centre for SVPP and F2F services for BCP Council and East and North areas of Dorset Council</p>	<p>To create a Pan-Dorset Partnership through a Collaboration Agreement as from 1 April 2020.</p> <p>The Partnership to bring together all existing services for Revenues and Benefits and be governed by a Joint Committee, Scrutiny Panel and Management Board equally represented by each Council.</p> <p>Aim of the Partnership to deliver efficiencies, whilst being resilient and fully meeting the needs of service users.</p> <p>Embracing digital technology and automation (robotics), whilst retaining dedicated support to the most vulnerable.</p> <p>BCP Council and Dorset Council with Partnership in lead role must decide upon one software supplier for future service delivery hosted by one of the Councils / software suppliers.</p> <p>HR working party to decide best method for employment of staff.</p> <p>ICT software tender recommended by BCP Procurement.</p> <p>A shared Enforcement Service operating across all of BCP Council and Dorset Council.</p> <p>Provision of existing and new specialist services as considered appropriate by each Council.</p> <p>Linking to each Council's Customer Access Strategy at all times and supporting their chosen Customer Delivery models.</p> <p>Choose which Council will be 'employing authority'.</p>	<p>By mutual agreement with Dorset Council to end the SVPP and share equally all costs associated with "ending the Partnership".</p> <p>Based upon consultant advice service will need 148 staff before allowing for transformation</p> <p>HR advice is that upon ending of SVPP that based upon workload share no TUPE to Dorset will apply. Process noted by Unions and will work with HR to support process for staff.</p> <p>Need to reduce workforce by 37 FTE to avoid budget pressure.</p> <p>The SVEA Enforcement Service to cease work for Dorset Council and the service to be solely used for BCP Council functions.</p> <p>To remain on existing databases with full ICT software tender in 2020 for future single database for April 2022.</p> <p>Staff may need to vacate East Dorset offices.</p> <p>Customer Access Team to establish impact of loss of Dorset work and establish one contact number for BCP in time for annual billing run 2021/22</p> <p>Carry out BCP 2021/22 billing run</p>	<p>By mutual agreement with BCP Council to end the SVPP and share equally all costs associated with "ending the Partnership".</p> <p>Based upon consultant advice service will need 132 before allowing for transformation.</p> <p>BCP as employer of SVPP unable to TUPE staff to cover East and North databases</p> <p>Need to potentially recruit 55 staff to cover 60% increase in workload upon ending of SVPP.</p> <p>There could be opportunities by restructuring and absorbing recharges / support charges when service returns.</p> <p>Accommodation and ICT desktop needs will need to be reviewed.</p> <p>Consider software needs / tender for future service provisions.</p> <p>Disaggregation of Customer account data held by (SVPP) BCP Council and agreed safe transfer</p> <p>The specialist service and software of Debtors function for East Area of Dorset to be transferred.</p> <p>Transfer of BIDS and software for Wimborne and Ferndown.</p> <p>Transfer of responsibility for face to face and telephony services from BCP Council CAT</p> <p>Carry out Dorset 2021/22 billing run.</p>
Financial Considerations	<p>Operational Budget relies upon New Burdens Funding</p> <p>Dorset MTFP 2020/21 £ no target as yet</p> <p>MTFP 2021/22 £ no target as yet</p>	<p>With SVPP and BCP (Bournemouth) working together costs and savings are split 60% SVPP & 40% BCP (Bournemouth)</p> <p>SVPP Cost share is 65.32% BCP & 34.68% Dorset. Equating to overall costs split being 79.19% BCP & 20.81% Dorset.</p> <p>With the delay of the Business Case for Dorset, SVPP with Bournemouth have delivered the 2018/19 and</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assumed that the Partnership will deliver £1.3M in savings between 2020/21 to 2022/23 as documented in Business Case. Equating to £700K to BCP and £600K to Dorset. Partnership Investment costs in region of £550K – will full mitigation from SVPP / BCP / Dorset reserves if set aside If Tender ICT set up costs in region of £575K = LGR costs to be met by each Council proportionately Not factored but expectation 'robotics will delivery year on year efficiencies once software systems aligned for 2022/23. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Loss of income of £1.8M from Dorset Council. (35% of SVPP) Actual cost impact to BCP Resources of £1.5M as some expenses will reduce. Based upon ACS consultant report need to reduce workforce by 37 FTE (£1.1M) Impact to support services / Accommodation needs <p>Potential Actions: 2020/21</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> End contributions to BCP of £1.8M (35% of SVPP) Actual reduction £1.5M with retained costs Based upon ACS consultant report need to increase workforce by 55 FTE (£1.6M) <p>Potential Actions: 2020/21</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> SVPP saving £57K <p>2021/22</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Loss of SVEA income £50K
<p>A fully agreed and timetabled exit plan to be presented to Joint Committee and each Council for approval inclusive of one-off costs for redundancies and other shared partner costs.</p> <p>Each Council to take full responsibility exiting the Partnership and for costs of software disaggregation from SVPP and creation of their own databases, customer engagement models and ensuring all customer data protected.</p> <p>Each Council must have services / access in place for 2021/22 billing run</p>					

		<p>2019/20 predicted Dorset Wide savings by themselves of £425K in 2018/19 and £250K in 2019/20</p> <p>Potential Actions: 2020/21</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Align teams as one service = £275K saving Tender for ICT system Invest in 'robotics' from reserves £300K set aside BCP CAT for all telephone services Potential Income from SVEA if undertaking BCP Parking (TBA) <p>2021/22</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Realise savings through vacancy control by UC / Initial Robotics – Revenues & CAT / shared structures of £250K Postage / printing savings £25K Release accommodation through agile working £100K <p>2022/23</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Through software tender (LGR cost) annual software savings of £150K expected Realise savings through vacancy control by UC / Robotics – Benefits & CAT / fully combined structure of £250K <p>Partnership 2020/21 £ 275K saving 2021/22 £ 375K saving 2022/23 £ 400K saving £1050K (£1.05M)</p> <p>BCP MTFP 2020/21 £ 218K (Set) MTFP 2021/22 £ 295K saving MTFP 2022/23 £ 315K saving £ 828K</p> <p>Dorset (East & North area) MTFP 2020/21 £ 57K saving MTFP 2021/22 £ 80K saving MTFP 2022/23 £ 85K saving £ 222K</p> <p>Total £1.05M</p>	<p>Partnership 2020/21 £ 450K saving 2021/22 £ 350K saving 2022/23 £ 500K saving £1,300K (£1.3M)</p> <p>BCP MTFP 2020/21 £242K saving (24K additional) MTFP 2021/22 £189K saving MTFP 2022/23 £269K saving £700K</p> <p>Dorset MTFP 2020/21 £208K saving MTFP 2021/22 £161K saving MTFP 2022/23 £231K saving £600K</p> <p>Total £1.3M (with full contribution to both Council's existing support services)</p> <p>Likely that "underspends /reserves for SVPP" can be set aside to cover Partnership Set Up costs / support LRG database costs.</p> <p>One council will need to be chosen as the "employing / responsible Council" in the proposed model. This Council will provide all Central support services.</p> <p>Charges per FTE for Central support services, excluding accommodation were as follows (based upon full 17/18 charges)</p> <p>BCP/SVPP £ 4,500 per FTE Dorset £ 9,300 per FTE</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No change to budget as part of SVPP = 218K set saving 2021/22 (impact of SVPP end) £1.5M budget pressure For April 1st new structure to reduce workforce to 148 FTE, = £900K (potential compulsory) Increase SVEA income to BCP £50K Release accommodation through Agile Working £100K Through software tender (LGR cost) annual software savings of £100K expected Realise savings through vacancy control by UC / Robotics of £250K (year later than SVPP) BCP Corporate Services recharge areas stranded costs removed of £165K (35%) with ending SVPP <p>MTFP 2020/21 £218K saving (set) MTFP 2021/22 £450K pressure MTFP 2022/23 £515K saving £283K</p> <p>(To set aside monies for redundancy costs of up to 37 staff = £1M / Shared = £500K)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dorset <p>MTFP 2020/21 £108K MTFP 2021/22 £428K MTFP 2022/23 £310K £846K</p> <p>Total £846K (See opportunities)</p> <p>(To set aside monies to support BCP redundancy costs of SVPP – estimate £500K) To set aside funds for additional support costs for potential 60% increase new staff and HR / ICT equipment and licences etc.</p>
				<p>Each Council to equally fund ending SVPP and redundancy costs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Redundancy costs to be shared equally. SVPP average redundancy cost from Phase 1 (2018/19) was £30K per FTE = Estimate £1M – May have mitigation by jointly published structures Potential contractor processing costs to mitigate vacancy control. Each Council to fund ICT software costs through LGR <p>Each Council may invest in technology to reduce service costs / staffing costs</p>	
Strengths	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Has achieved annual financial savings of £1.25m since 2009/10 (38% of original budget) without impact on performance or customer service Proven model Potential to provide further savings in the future Good track record for delivering transformation Has won a number of quality awards in the past. Currently 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> SVPP has reduced actual budget by 20% £1M in last 5 years without impact on performance or customer service BCP (Bmth) and SVPP have delivered together £425K savings in 2018/19 and £250K savings in 2019/20 through staff reduction / VR Joint Committee manage the SVPP and give clear direction on service delivery standards and budget ensuring reflects 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This proposal is extremely likely to deliver the efficiencies as stated in Business Case as it would be based upon the proven track record of the services Would create a large resilient service employed by one organisation, that can forward plan and be able to deal with Government Welfare reforms and change competently based upon its experienced staff Large processing and customer access teams able to allocate resources to planned task – E.G telephony responses at 95% answered throughout year. Councillors would be directly involved in 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> BCP/SVPP already administers all of the BCP area so there will be minimal service change at initial cessation of partnership. There is extensive experience of handling Unitary Council R & B Services (ending SVPP will represent a 28% reduction in service size) The face-to-face and telephone enquires for the service can be delivered by BCP CAT from day 1 of change Established Service with track 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Potentially able to absorb current SVPP (BCP) recharge contribution by other service area savings – though may impact other savings accounted for Minimum change to current structure at Dorset if able to expand to cover the 60% increase in its workload Review need to change software provider If no need to tender for software can create one database

	<p>holds Customer Service Excellence award (formally known as Chartermark) and Investors in People award (Silver level)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good track record for staff development 	<p>the service they expect for customers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partnership works to Forward Plan and Business Plan • The size of the service (70% of Dorset) makes it resilient to change • All of BCP R&B managed in one area • All polices for BCP Council aligned for April 2019 • Its own Enforcement Service (SVEA) recognised by support agencies as assisting customers to manage debt • Successful apprenticeship and staff training scheme (10% of staff undertaking 'levy funded' in training) • Experience of working across LA boundaries and applying different polices and procedures • Operating services on a shared desktop and workflow system for SVPP • Award winning for "Excellence in Partnership Working" in 2017 as SVPP and 2013 as SVP • Sustainable in the long term for BCP Council as a delivery Model • Proven model • Has least disruption for staff 	<p>monitoring the services and setting performance targets and budget</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to the services for customers and agencies would be consistent across the whole of Dorset • Ability to negotiate contracts with suppliers that are cost effective based upon size • Rationalisation of duplicated roles. • To offer a range of development opportunities for staff in a large organisation • LA Partnership working in R & B has always delivered savings and has been successful for over 10 years in Dorset. • Greater opportunity to share skill sets and reduce competing for scarce resources 	record for delivering improvement	<p>potentially in 2020 for the service</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Core service has track record for delivering improvement through transformation • Customers have greater opportunity to self-serve • Service has good track record for facilitating agile working (including home working). This will help mitigate against any increased accommodation needs
				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sovereign Councils have autonomy of their services • Service should have greater flexibility than the other options and be able to change focus quickly • Services can be integrated corporately • May be easier to address software provider issue than the other options 	

Weaknesses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Duplicated roles with SVPP Not sustainable in the medium to long term due to the fact that Dorset databases (and service provisions) will need to be aligned Potential for different customer journey (and experience) than for customers in the former EDDC and NDDC areas of Dorset Council Efficiency savings cannot be maximised Recent initiatives to deliver income have not been delivered = SDP Internal Enforcement Service and Penalties Income 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Operating on two ICT software systems for BCP Council Since April policies produced by Dorset Council have meant SVPP polices and procedures are no longer aligned for operational efficiency Not sustainable in the long term due to the fact that Dorset databases (and service provisions) will need to be aligned Potential for different customer journey (and experience) than for customers in the former PDC, WDDC and WPBC areas of Dorset Council Efficiency savings cannot be maximised SVPP staff may not feel fully integrated with Dorset Council Potential difficulties for sharing information (and data) with other internal services Separate Democratic Services support required to deliver governance arrangements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Two local authority's agreement (Chief Executives and Councillors) required on how to run the Partnership. Each LA developing design principles may differ Any un-avoidable issues that arise with performance will impact a larger number of residents The potential need to Tender software systems during 2020 would move alignment of databases potentially to April 2022 Size may cause the Service to be unwieldy and not able to change focus quickly Efficiencies are based on the alignment of policies and procedures (such as Council Tax Support, Council Tax discounts, etc) Issue of allocation of recharges would need to be addressed Does not necessarily allow for customer service to tie in with corporate model Will need to address software provider issue May be unpopular with some staff TUPE impact on staff (ranging from 90-327 depending on who is employer of staff) Greater initial impact on support services than other options (e.g. Will need to agree new governance arrangements, TUPE arrangements, etc) Separate Democratic Services support required to deliver governance arrangements (when compared to Option 3) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Service may be held back by being part of a Corporate program of change – delayed implementation of automation / ICT systems Cannot initially align databases – requirement to Tender BCP currently employ 213 FTE but estimated will need approximately 176 (includes specialist services) – redundancy or redeployment Budget pressure to reflect the loss of income from Dorset Council (35% reduction in SVPP income) Existing MTFP based upon Partnership savings Likely to loose experienced staff 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No current experience at Dorset Council of managing a Unitary Council database and the resourcing demands for increasing the database by 60% East and North customer telephony experience will change from person / process at point of contact to recorded / push button answering service Dorset currently employ 76 FTE but estimated by consultant at needing 132 Loss of the SVEA Team to collect debt and the income generated by that service. Loss of the BCP CAT for all one point of contact telephony and F2F services provided at Wimborne, Blandford and Gillingham. No experienced staff / relationship with BID managers and software required As planning to use existing software it may not represent VFM or meet future service needs. Software not procured in over 10 years
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Divided responsibility for administration of Dorset Council's R&B Services Customers may be confused as to where they need to go Customers at both new Councils have two different service contact points and websites / forms for same areas ICT systems need aligning / tendering with inevitable impact upon service delivery when managed by two services Both Councils unable to plan service delivery SVPP currently is not considered part of either council and treated as "outside body / contractor" 			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Residents moving between the Unitary Councils may identify differences in service. Both Councils will need to fund redundancy costs of BCP/SVPP staff May be unpopular with some staff Less resilience than Option 2 	
Opportunities		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2020/21 will see alignment of staff across SVPP & Bmth to one operational structure Can mitigate redundancies by vacancy control where workload decreases and robotics / automation enhanced Could seek to provide services to others SVEA could undertake other services Staff will be able to work from their most local processing centre / from home for all areas of service Free up accommodation space 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To fully embed digital and automated solutions and provide dedicated services to those who need support. Ability to offer a vehicle to provide efficiencies (both financial and non-financial) for other service areas at BCP and / or Dorset as "specialist services" such as Corporate Debtors, School meal subsidies, financial assessments The opportunity to consider in the future if Partner's wanted it to grow across County Boundaries Efficiencies gained through managing a substantial database. Would be second largest R&B services in the country – spotlight on work and performance. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There will still be opportunity to bring together all BCP staff to one processing centre and release "in demand" accommodation by agile working The Council will be able to tender in for new software system to meet future service demand As Lead Authority could through the Partnership seek a new Partner to deliver efficiencies Can mitigate redundancies by vacancy freeze and temporary staff until end of 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There will be opportunity to operate from one processing centre (depending on accommodation) Telephony services and F2F could align to Dorset Customer Access Team Opportunities for delivering efficiencies through transformation. £846k pa identified can be delivered by 2022/23 Greater opportunity to share data corporately where it is to the benefit of other services/customers (e.g. Service already in conversation with Adult and Children Services to share data and information)

		by agile working and reduce travel • <i>Rather than end SVPP and create a new partnership, the SDP part of Dorset Council could join SVPP and receive all support services from BCP Council and operate with Northmead House as main processing centre with regional offices at Dorchester supported by Agile working for all staff.</i>	• Potential to share data (and information) with internal services	SVPP • The SVEA could potentially create same level of income from BCP as have been for SVPP • The SVPP apprenticeship scheme and staff development model could be rolled out through Financial Services	• Opportunities to undertake additional work for partners (E.g. Sundry Debtor collection, Fairer Charging assessments) • Greater opportunity to utilise Service skills, knowledge and spare capacity corporately (e.g. Service already assisting other services with workloads – such as Housing, Elections, etc)
				• Autonomy of the individual Local Authority on how the service is delivered. • Externalise if not efficient or partner with other departments. • Opportunity to partner at some point in the future • Opportunity to expand SVEA to include Dorset Council area	
Threats		• Dorset Council proposal to align database during 2020 will mean SVPP will have to operate on two servers based at different councils and lose current ability of making efficiencies through shared desktop and one workflow system • Policies between councils continue to go in different directions and impact efficiencies of partnership working • Unable to deliver automation without database / website alignment	• Individual Local Authority decisions being made can impact the ability to maximise efficiencies of the 'Pan-Dorset Partnership' (e.g. Dorset Council proposes to align databases in 2020 with existing supplier. This would move data base to Dorchester and end ability for staff to work from one desktop in the Partnership). • Staff retention – job evaluation may not reflect size and responsibilities of roles • Employing Authority may not be able to support services needs (e.g. redundancies) • Recharges are not agreed by partner councils and Partnership charges do not reflect VFM • <i>Will be second largest R&B services in the country – spotlight on work and performance.</i> • KPMG review could recommend a new model for service delivery • Potential issues over hosting arrangements. This includes agreement over who becomes the employer of staff, provider of IT support, etc • Potential impacts for issues where there are conflicting demands by Unitary Councils • Potential difficulties for sharing information (and data) with other internal services • Database conversions will provide significant risk (incrementally for the number of conversions required) • Councils may not be able to determine own policies if efficiencies are to be maximised	• There may need to be significant reduction in staffing and redundancy costs when ending SVPP as no TUPE transfers to Dorset • Loss of staff at a time of restructuring and new ICT software platforms will present high risk to service continuity • KPMG review could recommend a new model for service delivery	• The Council will need to allocate resources to ensure that by Jan 2021 all data held by SVPP (BCP) is securely transferred to the Dorset database so that annual billing can be delivered in Feb 21 for 2021/22 financial year and 2020/21 year end. • Staff shortages if unable to recruit staff for 1 April 2021 • Requirement for hardware and software for new staff (or transferred staff) • Will the accommodation at South Walks House meet demand of service • Potential not to realise efficiencies through large caseload / requirement for temporary resources • EDDC and NDDC customers may experience a different service as not being provided by BCP CAT • Potential TUPE impact for up to 50 staff • Potential impact on support services (such as HR, IT, etc)
				• Will the services be able on their own to reduce operational costs • Will the services compete with each other for Resources • Increased possibility of competing for scarce resources	
	<p>Decisions by each Council on Customer Access Strategies may impact R&B Service delivery</p> <p>Any change to the databases/software will affect service delivery during the conversion process (Learn from other – e.g. Cornwall & Wiltshire)</p> <p>Mitigation by planning, resource allocation and contract negotiations</p> <p>Natural migration of Working Age Housing Benefit Claimants to Universal Credit Claims will continue to impact the service and create the need to reduce staffing / transfer to other Council areas</p>				

OPTIONS ANALYSIS PROVIDING REVENUES AND BENEFITS (R&B) SERVICES FOR BCP COUNCIL AND DORSET COUNCIL

Date: July 2020

ACS refers to ACS Consultancy Services Ltd

Option	Option 1 End Stour Valley & Poole Partnership (SVPP) and each Council to create their own Revenues and Benefit Service with Financial Services		Option 2 Partnership between BCP & Dorset Council for Revenues and Benefits Services
	BCP Council Revenues and Benefits Service	Dorset Council Revenues and Benefit Service	(NEW) Stour Valley Partnership (SVP)
Description	By mutual agreement between BCP Council and Dorset Council end the SVPP on 31 March 2021 Each Council to have in place their own Revenues and Benefits Service for 1 April 2021		To create a new Partnership between BCP Council and Dorset Council to deliver Revenues and Benefit Services as from 1 April 2021
CTAX Properties	185,195	177,963	363,158
Size Nationally on CTAX properties	11	12	2
2020/21 Budget	£5,092,800 needs to include Bmth element	£5,726,933 (SDP £3,960,750 + SVPP £1,766,183)	£12,436,277 (BCP £6,696,954 / Dorset £5,726,933)
Current R&B Staffing Levels (FTE)	186 (Includes 24 BCP CAT) (Excludes Specialist Services 49 FTE = 235 total)	89 (Includes an estimate of 12 FTE for Dorset debtors and CAT support)	275 Estimate (includes 24 BCP CAT) (Excludes Specialist Services 49 FTE = 324 total)
Proposed Staffing Levels – ACS Consultancy	148	132	265
Change required	Reduce by 38 FTE	Increase by 43 FTE	Reduce by 10 FTE
Approach	HR advice is that upon ending of SVPP based upon workload share TUPE to Dorset Council in most cases would not apply. May agree a process with Dorset for SVPP/ BCP staff transfer to avoid redundancies. Consult with staff in SVPP and BCP Customer Services on ending SVPP & joining Financial Services with new delivery structure. Formal consultation on new structure. Likely to require up to 30 June for restructure and work notice periods. Financial impact may be mitigated with some staff going to Dorset. Corporate resources to be impacted by diseconomies of scale (sometimes referred to as stranded costs).	New single Dorset Council database and proposed Operational Model from December 2020 supports the consideration of returning services for April 2021. Assess staffing needs to cover increase in caseload upon ending of SVPP. May agree a process for SVPP staff to be able to apply for roles at Dorset Council to avoid need for SVPP redundancies. Transfer of responsibility for face to face and telephony services from BCP CAT.	To create a Pan-Dorset Partnership through the existing SVPP Collaboration Agreement as from 1 April 2021. Use the Stour Valley Enforcement Service (SVEA) across both BCP Council and Dorset Council. Each Council to supply access to ICT services to support Partnership. Would require both to be on same operating platform and document management system which should be 'cloud based' to enable shared desktop. The Partnership through Agile working, building on the existing digital technology and automation (robotics) to reduce staffing numbers and budget by 15% over a 3-year period. Both Councils to ensure the Partnership can negotiate on 'recharges'.
	A mutually agreed and timetabled exit plan would need to be presented to Joint Committee and each Council for approval inclusive of one-off exit/transition costs for redundancies and other shared partner costs. Each Council to take full responsibility exiting the Partnership and create their own databases, document management systems, customer engagement models and ensuring all customer data is protected.		

Option	Option 1 End Stour Valley & Poole Partnership (SVPP) and each Council to create their own Revenues and Benefit Service with Financial Services		Option 2 Partnership between BCP & Dorset Council for Revenues and Benefits Services
	BCP Council Revenues and Benefits Service	Dorset Council Revenues and Benefit Service	(NEW) Stour Valley Partnership (SVP)
Financial Details	Loss of income of £1,674,000 (net) from Dorset Council towards SVPP Mitigation £1,225,000 reduction in R&B service costs Budget pressure £475,000	End contributions to BCP of £1,674,000 (net) towards SVPP No stranded costs and ICT system will need to be in place for April 2021. Need to recruit staff and take on costs of: <ul style="list-style-type: none">Printing & postage £90,000Reception facilities at East & NorthStaff estimate between 30 to 43 FTE £900,000 to £1,300,000	The Partnership cost share to be established based upon existing budget spend as a percentage of overall budget. Based upon 2019/20 budget this would be: BCP Council £6,696,954 53.85% Dorset Council £5,739,323 46.15% Total £12,436,277 100%
MTFP Proposals	MTFP impact could be depending on principles adopted; <ul style="list-style-type: none">2021/22 £693,000 Pressure2022/23 (£400,000) Saving Total pressure across two years £293,000 Without reduction in Corporate Costs.	Not known, but previously detailed on exiting SVPP as: <ul style="list-style-type: none">2021/22 (£428,000)2022/23 (£310,000) Saving (£738,000) These details were supplied by Dorset Council at previous assessments.	To be detailed in a Business Plan agreed through Joint Committee: <ul style="list-style-type: none">2021/22 (£900,000)2022/23 (£875,000) Saving (£1,775,000) If split on contribution, then: <ul style="list-style-type: none">BCP Council saving (£955,000)Dorset Council saving (£820,000)
Processes to be undertaken to support delivery of proposals	Potential Actions: 2021/22 <ul style="list-style-type: none">£1,674,000 shortfall in incomeEnd SVPP & transfer to Financial Services to reduce operational service costs by £1,225,000Stranded costs for Central Support / Corporate resourcesRedundancy costs or TUPEAlign on 1 databaseReview Central Support costsReview senior roles 2022/23 <ul style="list-style-type: none">Reduce staff as on one system = 10 FTE £300,000ICT costs £100,000Reduce Central Support costs	Potential Actions: 2021/22 <ul style="list-style-type: none">End SVPP & potential transfer of staff from SVPPIf no staff transfer then assess staffing needs for service deliveryMTFP expectationsEnsure transfer of all CAT functions	Potential Actions 2021/22 <ul style="list-style-type: none">Reduce Staffing costs by £900,000Reduce accommodation footprintPut BCP onto one database and operating systemAlign proceduresS151 review recharges 2022/23 <ul style="list-style-type: none">Reduce staff through vacancy control £450,000SVEA expanded to cover other service areas £100,000Reduce software costs £150,000Reduce printing & postage costs £75,000Reduce corporate charges £100,000
Costs to support delivery of proposals	Suggest principles to be applied <ul style="list-style-type: none">Dorset Council agree to cover all costs however arising relating to the ending of the partnership. This includes the redundancy costs of any employees of the service of support activities, unwinding any contract arrangements especially ICT related, and managing the cessation of the specific pension fund admitted body.BCP Council will take all reasonable steps to mitigate the costs arising from the ending of the partnership.Dorset Council make an annual payment to BCP Council for a period of not less than the three financial years following termination to cover the diseconomies of scale to BCP Council as the host authority on bringing this agreement to an end to the extent to which such costs cannot be mitigated by redundancy or contract renegotiation. This payment to be agreed prior to the date of termination otherwise the termination is ineffective.SVPP Partnership Reserve balance of £383k (£580k 31 March 2020 balance less £197k 2020/21 commitments) be distributed between the two Council in line with the cost share agreement during 2020/21. Any further balance (positive or negative) as at the date of termination to be apportioned on the same basis.Both Council to agree to commit Human Resources & Legal support for ending collaboration agreementSystem conversion costs funded by each council		2021/22 <ul style="list-style-type: none">Joint agreement on service delivery through new collaboration agreementRedundancy costs 15 FTE - £450,000BCP fund their system conversion costs

Option	Option 1 End Stour Valley & Poole Partnership (SVPP) and each Council to create their own Revenues and Benefit Service with Financial Services		Option 2 Partnership between BCP & Dorset Council for Revenues and Benefits Services
	BCP Council Revenues and Benefits Service	Dorset Council Revenues and Benefit Service	(NEW) Stour Valley Partnership (SVP)
Strengths	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Minimal service change at initial cessation of partnership.The face-to-face and telephone enquires for the service can be delivered by BCP CAT from day 1 of changeEstablished service with track record for delivering improvementDigitally enabled	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Potentially able to absorb current SVPP (BCP) recharge contributionMinimum change to current structure at DorsetOne database from 1 April 2021Core service has track record for delivering improvement through transformation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Based on BCP/SVPP & SDP track record extremely likely to deliver the efficienciesWould create a large resilient service with highly experienced staffCouncillors would be directly involved in monitoring the services and setting performance targets and budgetAccess to the services for customers and agencies would be consistent across the whole of DorsetRationalisation of duplicated roles.To offer a range of development opportunities for staff in a large organisationGreater opportunity to share skill sets and reduce competing for scarce resources
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Sovereign Councils have autonomy of their servicesService should have greater flexibility than the other options and be able to change focus quicklyServices can be integrated corporately into sovereign CouncilStaff only need to learn one set of working practices		
Weaknesses	<ul style="list-style-type: none">SVPP model of delivery and efficiencies will be lost.Large reduction in staff requiredExperienced staff may go to Dorset / leave serviceBudget pressureStranded support service costs	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Loss of the SVEA serviceLoss of the BCP CAT for one point of contact telephony and F2F services provided at Wimborne, Blandford and Gillingham.Potential lack of staff alongside impact of system	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Two local authority’s agreement required on how to run the Partnership. Duplication of corporate decision making as it has to go through both Council’s processDifferent Political views/directionsEfficiencies are based on the alignment of proceduresWill need to address software provider issueMay not be supported by some staff or managementTUPE impact on staffGreater initial impact on support services than other options (e.g. will need to agree new governance arrangements, TUPE arrangements, etc)Separate Democratic Services support required to deliver governance arrangements
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Residents moving between the Unitary Councils may identify differences in service.		
Opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Bring together all R&B staff to one processing centre with Agile workingCan mitigate some redundancies by vacancy freeze and temporary staff until end of SVPPSVEA could potentially create same level of income from BCP as have been for SVPPCan continue roll out of digital service delivery and robotics	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Opportunity to operate from one processing centreTelephony services and F2F could align to Dorset Customer Access TeamOpportunities for delivering efficiencies through transformation.Opportunities to undertake additional work for partners (use the SVPP model)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Fully embed digital and automated solutions and provide dedicated services to those who need support.Ability to offer a vehicle to provide efficiencies (both financial and non-financial) for other service areas at BCP and / or Dorset as “specialist services” such as Corporate Debtors, social services financial assessmentsThe opportunity to consider in the future if Partner’s wanted it to grow across county boundariesWould be second largest R&B services in the country – spotlight on work and performance.Greater influence with DWP/HCMLG on funding issues with software suppliers
Threats	<ul style="list-style-type: none">There may need to be significant reduction in staffing and redundancy costs when ending SVPP as no TUPE transfers to DorsetLoss of staff at a time of restructuring and the change to a new ICT software platform will present high risk to service continuity	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Staff shortages if unable to recruit and train staff for 1 April 2021Potential not to realise efficiencies through large caseload / requirement for temporary resourcesEDDC and NDDC customers may experience a different service as not being provided by BCP CATPossibility of competing for scarce resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Individual Local Authority decisions may impact the ability to maximise efficiencies of the ‘Pan-Dorset Partnership’.Recharges and hosting issues are not agreed by partner councils and Partnership charges do not reflect VFM.Potential impacts for issues where there are conflicting demands by Unitary CouncilsWould be second largest R&B services in the country which would put greater scrutiny on our performance, delays, error and other issues would impact a greater number of customers
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Will the services be able on their own to reduce operational costs?Will the services compete with each other for resources?		

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STOUR VALLEY AND POOLE PARTNERSHIP JOINT COMMITTEE



Report subject	Proposed Budget 2021/2022
Meeting date	8 February 2021
Status	Public Report
Executive summary	To agree the Stour Valley and Poole Partnership (SVPP) operational budget for the 2021/2022 financial year
Recommendations	<p>It is RECOMMENDED that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) the draft budget for Stour Valley and Poole Partnership (SVPP) for 2021/2022 be set at £4,951,000 (b) the income expectation for the Stour Valley Enforcement Agency (SVEA) for 2021/22 be set at £175,000 (c) any amendments to these budgets that may be required be delegated to SVPP Board and presented to the next meeting of Joint Committee for acknowledgement
Reason for recommendations	To set the budget for SVPP and SVEA for the 2021/2022 financial year in accordance with the Collaboration Agreement.

Portfolio Holder(s):	Not applicable - SVPP
Corporate Director	Not applicable - SVPP
Contributors	Emma Richens, Project Accountant. BCP Council. Paul Hudson, Head of SVPP
Wards	All
Classification	Decision

Background

1. The Joint Committee is required to consider and approve the budget for the Stour Valley and Poole Partnership (SVPP).
2. The Scrutiny Panel are required to monitor the SVPP and its budget and performance for Joint Committee. Any variances of greater than 5% in budget to be fully reviewed by Scrutiny Panel and presented to Joint Committee.
3. This report presents the draft budget for 2021/22 for approval.

SVPP Collaboration Agreement

4. The Business Case for the SVPP was approved by each of the four sovereign authorities during the course of 2013. The Collaboration Agreement was signed on 1 April 2014 by the preceding Councils and a Deed of Variation agreed between BCP Council and Dorset Council effective from 1 April 2019.
5. Phase 1 was a shared management structure which applied for the 2014/15 financial year. Phase 2 saw the full integration of staff which applied for the 2015/16 financial year onwards. The cost sharing agreement within the business case and therefore within the joint agreement by the preceding Councils includes the following principles;

For the second phase the cost sharing will be based on the current costs of the full service and therefore the share of costs will be based on the following split.

Phase 2	Cost Share	Cost Share break down Preceding Councils	Cost share as from 1 April 2019	
Poole	49%	49%	49% + 16.32% 65.32%	BCP Council
SVP	51%	CBC 16.32% NDDC 16.32% EDDC 18.36%	16.32% + 18.36% 34.68%	Dorset Council
SVPP	100%	100%	100%	SVPP

6. In order to deliver efficiencies it was acknowledged that SVPP would continue to work in Partnership with BCP Council (Bournemouth Revenues and Benefits

Services) to deliver operational efficiencies as were detailed in the proposed Bournemouth/SVPP and Dorset Business Case.

2020/2021 BUDGET

7. The budget for the SVPP for 2020/21 is £5,093,000. This budget recognised that £275,000 of efficiencies would be delivered in 2020/21 through Joint working with Bournemouth Revenues and Benefits Service as detailed below:

BBC & SVPP	Comment	Estimate 2018/19	Estimated 2019/20	Estimated 2020/21	Estimated 2021/22	Total
Staffing	1 Service Head Reduction staff	75,000 250,000	0 175,000	0 175,000	0 100,000	75,000 700,000
ICT Software	Move to 1 ICT provider	0	0	75,000	25,000	100,000
Printing and Postage	External Contract	25,000	25,000	25,000	0	75,000
Enforcement Service	SVPP & BBC Service	75,000	25,000	0	0	100,000
Total		425,000	225,000	275,000	125,000	1,050,000

8. The savings of £275,000 and all associated costs were agreed to be split as 60% SVPP and 40% Bournemouth.
9. As at November the Partnership is predicted to achieve an underspend.

2021/22 Budget

10. The present Target Budget for 2021/22 is £4,951,000 for the SVPP.
11. This budget allows for:
- a pay award of 1% (to cover the recommended £250 award to lower paid staff) being a budget pressure of £76,000 for partners, the cost of incremental drift is met by additional savings made by the service.
 - A reduction in ICT software costs of £183,000, this cost is now charged directly to the sovereign authorities by the supplier.
 - Delivering a saving of £75,000 of budget being SVPP's 60% share of £125,000 as shown in item 7 above.
 - The provision by Dorset Council of property inspection services on behalf of SVPP at a cost of £48,000.
12. If approved the budget will have reduced year on year since the commencement of the Partnership having absorbed all on-going costs pressures through annual operational savings. The original 2013/14 budget was £5,931,000.
- This represents an actual budget reduction of over £1million through the period of the Partnership.*
13. The Partnership has not set future budget savings or a Business Plan at this point due to the impact on services by Covid19 and to allow for the partner Councils to review service delivery options for 1 April
14. Details of the proposed budget are contained within Appendix 1.

Stour Valley Enforcement Service (SVEA)

15. The approved principle of the Enforcement Service is that the relevant costs are apportioned to each sovereign authority in proportion to the actual fee income collected on their behalf.
16. For the 2021/22 financial year the SVEA, as previously agreed, will undertake work for all of BCP Council and the East and North areas of Dorset Council.
17. For 2021/22 (if notice is not given to the Partnership to end for 31 March 2022) the income expectation will remain at £175,000. This will mean the service will look to collect over £600,000 in fees to be paid.
18. It is noted that in 2020/21 the SVEA was not able to deliver services as a result of COVID19 measures and there being no Magistrate Court Hearings.
19. If Dorset Council issue notice to SVPP it is recommended that the SVEA will process accounts for BCP Council. For Dorset Council their external appointed bailiffs will be used from an agreed point prior to 1 April 2022 to ensure a smooth transition at the end of the Partnership.
20. Fees are charged at a prescribed rate and the service objective for those who engage is to agree payment plans which will eventually lead to customer maintaining future liabilities without falling into further debt.

Summary of legal implications

21. The Partnership operates to a Collaboration Agreement agreed by BCP Council and Dorset Council by way of a Deed of Variation from the preceding Councils of Christchurch, East Dorset, North Dorset and Poole.
22. The Scheme of Delegation and Budget are reviewed and agreed annually by Joint Committee on behalf of the Councils.

Summary of human resources implications

23. Not applicable to this report

Summary of environmental impact

24. The objectives of the service in 2021/22 are to engage with taxpayers and ratepayers wherever possibly digitally and to reduce the need for customer and staff travel.
25. Agile working was embedded into service delivery in 2020 and in future all core services for SVPP will be provided from Northmead House
26. Occupancy of office accommodation at Bournemouth, Christchurch and Wimborne will be reduced to a minimum

Summary of public health implications

27. Agile working and digital services have been deployed for the 2021/22 period to protect public health in accordance with government guidance on COVID19

Summary of equality implications

28. Members have a legal duty to pay 'due regard' to equality implications in their decision-making and reports must ensure they have the appropriate information to be able to do this. The approach remains to be proportionate in undertaking Equality Impact Assessments. The fact that this report contains no policy or service change means that there is no requirement for any further equalities impact assessments to be undertaken.

Summary of risk assessment

29. The Risk Register for 2020/21 is being reviewed to acknowledge the impact on service delivery of COVID19 and to detail the risks associated with ending the Partnership on 31 March 2022.

Background papers

30. Full Budget details for 2021/22 presented to SVPP Board on 12 January 2021

Appendices

1. SVPP Budget 2021/2022

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STOUR VALLEY AND POOLE PARTNERSHIP

YEAR 7 : 2021/22 - BUDGET (Core Functions)

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	20/21 Budget £000's	21/22 Budget £000's	BCP £000's	Dorset £000's	Total Allocation £000's
Employee Related	4,595	4,482			
ICT Services	370	197			
Printing and Postage	276	276			
Other Running Costs	104	152			
Central Support Charges	674	674			
Accommodation	161	161			
Specific Recharges					
- Bournemouth Shared Service Savings	(223)	(141)			
- Enforcement Team business case recharges	(31)	(33)			
- Poole - Debtors/SSFA/Cashiers/Corp Fraud	(740)	(740)			
- Christchurch Borough Council	(17)	(17)			
- East Dorset District Council	(17)	0			
- NDDC - Front of House Service	(42)	(42)			
- EDDC Bid Districts - Set Up and ongoing	(10)	(10)			
- Poole Bid District - Set Up and ongoing	(7)	(7)			
Other income	(1)	0			
	5,093	4,951	3,234	1,717	4,951
		Cost Share Agreement	65.32%	34.68%	100%
		2020/21 Approved Budget	3,327	1,766	5,093
		Decrease in budget	(93)	(49)	(142)

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STOUR VALLEY AND POOLE PARTNERSHIP SVPP JOINT COMMITTEE

Report subject	Partnership Business Plan, Collaboration Agreement and Delegated Functions 2021/22
Meeting date	8 February 2021
Status	Public
Executive summary	To detail the Business Plan of the Partnership for 2021/22 Financial Year and to give delegations to officers to administer accounts in accordance with the Collaboration Agreement between BCP Council and Dorset Council.
Recommendations	<p>It is RECOMMENDED that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) The Partnership work to the objectives detailed within item 7 of this report for the 2021/22 Financial Year and that a full timetable be presented to the next meeting of Scrutiny Panel and Joint Committee for review and endorsement (b) the Collaboration Agreement / Delegated Functions Proforma for 2021/22 be passed to each Council Partner for adoption (c) the updated Scheme of Delegation for 2021/22 be adopted for the Partnership and reviewed in line with each Council's Constitution and Scheme of Delegation (d) Section 151 officers of each Council can instruct the SVPP to undertake "delegated roles" as necessary for the delivery of legislative changes
Reason for recommendations	To detail the Business Plan and Scheme of Delegation for the Partnership in line with the Collaboration Agreement.

Portfolio Holder(s):	Not applicable - SVPP
Corporate Director	Not applicable - SVPP
Contributors	Paul Hudson. SVPP Partnership Manager
Wards	All
Classification	Note and Comment

BACKGROUND

1. The Stour Valley and Poole Partnership (SVPP) was established in 2014 and is responsible through the Joint Committee and Scrutiny Panel for the provision of Revenues and Benefits Services for BCP Council (Christchurch and Poole areas) and Dorset Council (East and North areas). Since 2017 the SVPP has worked in Partnership with BCP Council (Bournemouth) Revenues and Benefits Service to deliver efficiencies and share roles.
2. In accordance with the Collaboration Agreement the Partnership will set a Business Plan for service delivery and officers will operate to a Scheme of Delegation to undertake functions on behalf of BCP Council and Dorset Council.
3. The SVPP and BCP Council (Bournemouth area) were due to operate to one staffing structure in 2020 to perform the Revenues and Benefits functions for BCP Council and SVPP. This was deferred due to all resources being allocated to supporting each Council with Covid19 measures.
4. The Forward Plan for 2021/22 will be produced once a decision has been reached by both Councils on the future of SVPP. This will be presented to the next meeting of Joint Committee for approval.
5. The Business Plan for SVPP remains unchanged to that agreed previously for the period from April 2020 to March 2022.

BUSINESS PLAN / ACTION PLAN

6. An options appraisal on the future of Revenues and Benefit Services in Dorset is expected late in 2020/21 which will decide upon the future of SVPP. Based upon this the Partnership Business / Action Plan was produced for two financial years from April 2020 to March 2022.
7. The planned actions to be undertaken are to :
 - deliver a new service staffing structure
 - establish support required for Dorset Council software system conversion
 - implement Agile working alongside accommodation review
 - align BCP Debtors software databases
 - despatch of all post / documentation through CFH contract

- review LCTR schemes
- review all CTAX discount cases for two years*
- process claims for Benefits and collect Taxes / Rates in accordance with each Council's objectives
- Implement Partnership wide individual and service performance reports to align to Partnership objectives & regular 1-2-1 reviews*

**Funded from SVPP reserves – not yet commenced*

8. Due to the pandemic and resource allocations to process Grants, discounts, Test & Trace payments and implementation of Agile working most of these objectives listed above were delayed by the partnership and by both Councils. Full details will be presented with the 2020/21 year-end review to Scrutiny Panel for review at their first meeting of 2021/22.

COLLABORATION AGREEMENT & SCHEME OF DELEGATION

9. The attached Delegated Function Proforma (Appendix 1) has been updated to reflect where appropriate the Constitution and Financial Regulations of the two new Councils which came into existence on 1 April 2019 and replaced the preceding Councils within the Partnership.
10. It is acknowledged that the Delegated Functions Proforma defines roles and responsibilities of officers and that during any year the officer in post or their post may change within either the Partnership or the Sovereign Council. Where this does occur the Management Board will acknowledge and note any changes and impact on delegated roles. The Partnership Manager, when acting in the role of "Head of Revenues and Benefits" for each Council has the ability to undertake functions as required for all service areas with approval of each Council's Section 151 officer.
11. The Joint Committee will be presented with a revised Delegated Functions Proforma / Scheme of Delegation for approval when the revised structure is published.

THE SCHEME OF DELEGATION

12. The attached Scheme of Delegation (Appendix 2) has been updated to ensure the Partnership can carry out the functions detailed in the Collaboration Agreement for each Council.
13. It details the SVPP management responsibilities for decision making and acknowledges the role of each Councils Section 151 officer in approving decisions of the Partnership for each Council.
14. It may be necessary for delegation to be given directly by the Section 151 officer to the Partnership to carry out certain legislative functions as they arise in any financial year. Examples of this are "flood relief" and recent "grant" administration which was duly delegated to the Partnership.

15. Officers will ensure each Council's delegated functions, where changes may be necessary, reflect the delegations given to the SVPP by the Joint Committee in the Scheme of Delegation for 2020/21 financial year.

Summary of legal implications

16. The SVPP Collaboration Agreement is the legal document which enables SVPP to carry out its delegated functions on behalf of BCP Council and Dorset Council.
17. BCP Council and Dorset Council through their constitution acknowledge the role of SVPP.
18. Any new Partnership would result in a new Collaboration Agreement.
19. Each Council can give 'a financial years' notice to end the Partnership in accordance with the Collaboration Agreement.

Summary of human resources implications

20. Human Resources of BCP Council support the SVPP in their capacity of Employing Authority.
21. Human Resources would play a key role in any partnership disaggregation.

Summary of environmental impact

22. The Partnership will in line with BCP Council review the impact on the 'carbon footprint' of the organisation by office closures and homeworking / agile working.

Summary of public health implications

23. Not applicable to this report

Summary of equality implications

24. EQIA will be produced for all scheme changes, staffing structure alignment and agile working policies

Summary of risk assessment

25. The Risk Register for 2021/22 will be presented to Scrutiny Panel based upon the Business and Action Plan for the Partnership and the decision by the Partner Councils on the future of SVPP.

CONCLUSION

26. The Collaboration Agreement is the Legal document detailing the activities of the Partnership being undertaken for each Council and the Scheme of Delegation authorises officers of the SVPP to make decisions for each Council.
27. The Collaboration Agreement details each phase of the partnership formation and the Scheme of Delegation has been reviewed accordingly to align to the new Constitution / Financial Regulations of BCP Council and Dorset Councils.
28. The Business Plan details the activities of the Partnership for the year.

29. The role of each Council and their Section 151 officers as members of the Management Board ensures each Council's responsibilities are delivered through the Partnership.

Appendices

1. Delegated Proforma
2. Scheme of Delegation

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Stour Valley and Poole Partnership Collaboration Agreement

SCHEDULE 1 Delegated Function Proforma

Accountable Body: BCP Council

Responsible Council: BCP Council

Participating Councils:

BCP Council (preceding Partner Councils of Christchurch Borough Council and Borough of Poole) and Dorset Councils (preceding Partner Councils of East Dorset District Council and North Dorset District Council).

The Delegated Function ("the Services"): the functions more particularly described in Appendix A

Minimum Accommodation (where Delegated Function is to be performed at Participating Councils' offices): the accommodation more particularly described in Appendix B.

Appendix A: the Delegated Function ("the Services")

	Summary of Service	Participating Council to whom Service is to be provided	Relevant Date
1.	Administration and collection of Council Tax	All Participating Councils	01/04/2014
2.	Administration and collection of Non-Domestic Rates (Business Rates)	All Participating Councils	01/04/2014
3.	Administration of Council Tax Benefit / Localised Scheme for Council Tax Reduction scheme	All Participating Councils	01/04/2014
4.	Administration of Housing Benefit	All Participating Councils	01/04/2014
5.	Administration of Discretionary Housing Payments	All Participating Councils	01/04/2014
6.	Prevention, detection and resolution of fraud / underpayments / overpayments in relation to any of the above (provided that the commencement of any formal court proceedings require the prior approval of the Participating Council or relevant duly authorised Officer of that Participating Council on whose behalf such proceedings are commenced and subject to such terms as the Participating Council or duly authorised officer may from time to time specify)	All Participating Councils	01/04/2014
7.	Provision of all statutory returns relating to 1-6 above	All Participating Councils	01/04/2014 to 31/03/19
		BCP Council	01/04/19
8.	Processing of Postal Payments	All	01/04/2015
9.	Investigation and Compliance for all Delegated Functions	All	01/04/2015

Classification: PROTECT

V7 – 3 MARCH 2015

Stour Valley and Poole Partnership Collaboration Agreement

	Specialised Services		
1.	Social Services Financial Assessments	Poole	01/04/2014
		BCP Council	01/04/2019
2.	Sundry Debtor Systems	Christchurch East Dorset Poole	01/04/2014
		BCP Council Dorset Council	01/04/2019
3.	Sundry Debtor Collection and Enforcement <i>including</i> Corporate Infrastructure Levy (CIL Payments) collection and enforcement	Christchurch East Dorset Poole	01/04/2014
		BCP Council Dorset Council	01/04/2019
6.	Administrative support	Poole	01/04/2014
		BCP Council	01/04/2019
7.	Cash office and Cashiering Services	Poole	01/04/2014
		BCP Council	01/04/2019
8.	Business Improvement District Wimborne BID	East Dorset	01/04/2014
		Dorset Council	01/04/2019
9.	Business Improvement District Ferndown BID	East Dorset	01/04/2015
		Dorset Council	01/04/2019
10.	Business Improvement District Poole Town Centre BID	Poole	01/04/2016
		BCP Council	01/04/2019
11.	New Business Improvement District	All participating Councils	01/04/2019
12.	Processing of Complaints	All participating Councils	01/04/2017
13.	Provision of Face to Face Service at Norden	North Dorset	01/04/2015
		Dorset Council	

Save as otherwise mentioned the SVPPJC's functions shall comprise the statutory functions of the Participating Councils necessary for the undertaking and delivery of the Services as summarised above together with such powers as is necessary to facilitate the provision of the Support Activities as summarised below by the relevant Participating Council(s). Appendix B ("the Support Activities"):

	Activity	Participating Council initially providing activity	Relevant Date
1.	Delegated offices for the delivery of post, receipt of information and making claims / supplying information for all Partner Councils.	SVPP Main Processing Centre Northmead House Northmead Drive Poole. Dorset. BH17 7RP	01/04/2015
		BCP Council Civic Centre Poole. Dorset. BH15 2RU	01/04/2019
	<i>A claim can be made at any site by any SVPP Customer.</i>	BCP Council Civic Offices, Bridge Street Christchurch. Dorset. BH23 1AZ	01/04/2019

Classification: PROTECT

Stour Valley and Poole Partnership Collaboration Agreement

		And Wimborne Hub	01/04/2019
		Dorset Councils Southwalks House Dorchester. Dorset. DT1 1UZ And Norden Hub And Gillingham Hub	
		Any site designated by each Council as a access point	
2.	Democratic Services for Partnership	To remain as it currently is and reviewed.	01/04/2014
		Scrutiny Panel – Dorset Council	01/04/2019
		Joint Committee – BCP Council	01/04/2019
3.	Audit provisions	To be provided in partnership by the participating Councils under agreement of Section 151 Officers	01/04/2015
4.	Customer Access Points	Each Participating Council to provide own as required with provision for SVPP customer access as detailed in Section 1 Delegated Offices	01/04/2014
5.	Customer Access Team	Main Telephony Service from Poole supported by staff at each site as detailed in Section 1 Delegated Offices.	01/04/2015 to 31/03/2019
		SVPP Customer Access Team	01/04/2019
6.	Equipment, IT and other consumables	Poole equipment at all sites where SVPP has agreed a staff presence	01/04/2015
		BCP equipment at all sites where SVPP has agreed staff presence	01/04/2019
7.	External ICT Contracts and related support services	Poole	01/04/2015
		BCP Council	01/04/2019
8.	Facilities Management Services / Accommodation for SVPP	Poole for SVPP Main Staff Site Christchurch 10 Seats East 10 Seats	01/04/2015 <i>Amended seating for 01/04/2017</i>
		Bournemouth Borough Council – as agreed during 2018/19	<i>Added for 2018/19</i>
		All participating Councils with appropriate charges / recharges	01/04/2019
9.	Financial and accountancy Services	Poole with each Council monitoring controls	01/04/2015
		BCP Council with monitoring by Dorset Council	01/04/2019
10.	Health and Safety	Poole	01/04/2015
		BCP Council	01/04/2019
11.	Human Resources	Poole	01/04/2015
		BCP Council	01/04/2019

Classification: PROTECT

V7 – 3 MARCH 2015

Stour Valley and Poole Partnership Collaboration Agreement

12.	Bailiff / Enforcement Services	Internal Enforcement Agency SVPP	01/04/2014
		External Contract for all SVPP partners through BOP Contract	01/04/2015
		BCP (previous Poole contract) for SVPP extension to 31/03/20	01/04/2019
13.	Legal Services provided by Each Council	Continuing as in place to be reviewed in line with planned SFIS implementation	01/04/2015 to 31/03/17
		Poole	01/04/2017
		BCP Council	01/04/2019
14.	Payroll Services	Poole	01/01/2015
		BCP Council	01/04/2019
15.	Postal Services scanning, indexing and printing	Poole	01/04/2016
		Bournemouth Borough Council as agreed during 2018/19	<i>Added for 2018/19</i>
		BCP Council	01/04/2019
16.	Website and on-line account activities	Each participating Council	01/04/2015

Stour Valley and Poole Partnership Collaboration Agreement

Appendix C: Operational Arrangements

The SVPP JC and Management Board will operate as per Schedules 2, 3, 4 and 5 of the Collaboration Agreement dated 1 April 2014 and as amended by the Deed of Variation between BCP Council and Dorset Council.

The SVPP Management Team Consists of:

Head of Stour Valley and Poole Partnership (Partnership Manager) responsible for:

- Leading and managing all aspects of the Partnership in accordance with the agreed budget, ensuring compliance to the Collaboration Agreement, instruction of Joint Committee, Legal Partnership Framework, legislative and best practice requirements.
- Ensuring all objectives set by the Joint Committee are duly designated and delivered in accordance with the Service Business Plan and risks identified on the Service Risk Register.
- Acting in the capacity of the Head of Revenues and Benefits for BCP Council and Dorset Council (East and North areas).

Operations Manager (Deputy Partnership Manager) responsible for:

- Deputising for the Head of Stour Valley and Poole Partnership (Partnership Manager) in all aspects of Service Delivery.
- Managing the Operational Services of the Partnership ensuring that all systems, performance management, business planning, training and partnership activities are undertaken in accordance with the legislative, audit requirements and operational requirements instructed by the Joint Committee and Scrutiny Panel are undertaken

Collection Services Manager / Benefits Services Manager / BCP Customer Access Manager:

- Managing the Operational Services of the Partnership ensuring that all systems, Day-to-day delivery for their specified responsibilities
- Supporting and advising the Head of Stour Valley and Poole Partnership, Joint Committee Members, Council's s151 Officers, Chief Executives, Directors and wider Elected Members on matters associated with the delivery of the service.

These 5 posts are responsible to the SVPP JC and as such are classified as politically restricted posts.

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BCP/SVPP REVENUES AND BENEFITS BUSINESS PLAN 2020-22

BCP and SVPP working together as a Partnership to deliver resilient, accessible, cost effective and innovative revenues and benefit services for the taxpayer.

Our Service Standards ▶

- Process housing benefit and council tax support new claims in an average of **19 days** and changes in **10 days** where we have all the evidence
- Process correspondence in an average of **10 days**
- Collect **98%** of all council tax and business rates due in the year
- Take firm action to discourage fraudulent claims and sanction where necessary
- An Enforcement Service to collect debt

Our Customers ▶

In accordance with our Customer Charter we will:

- Provide and improve digital services
- Provide a dedicated telephone service
- Provide appointments in Local Offices
- Treat our customers with respect, being fair and helpful
- To process general account changes at first point of contact
- Act on feedback and measure satisfaction

Our Staff ▶

- Ensuring our staff are trained to meet the needs of the service
- Link appraisals to the Partnership's customers, aims and service standards
- Promote our career path and offer the opportunity for professional and management development
- Individual performance management in place across the Partnership
- An apprenticeship scheme that represents 5% of our workforce throughout all areas of the Partnership

Our Aims ▶

- To get it right first time, every time for the Customer
- To make the service accessible to all residents
- To retain our staff and improve our service
- To deliver savings and improve our service to customers
- To be efficient, effective and open

Our Action Plan ▶

- Consult and implement a new staffing structure for the partnership to deliver **£275,000** of savings to meet 2020/21 budget
- Establish support required for Dorset Council software Revenues and Benefits system conversion
- Support Dorset Council in the transfer of the Sundry Debtors function for the East area from the SVPP to the Dorset database
- Produce a Business Case for joint working in Dorset
- Align BCP Debtors software databases
- Implement Agile working alongside accommodation review
- Despatch of all post / documentation through CFH contract
- Tender and deliver the BCP Council software system conversion
- Review LCTR schemes
- Review eligibility of all CTAX discount cases for two years
- Process claims for Benefits and collect Taxes / Rates in accordance with each Council's objectives
- Implement Partnership wide individual and service performance reports to align to Partnership objectives and regular 1-2-1 reviews

Our Objectives ▶

Underpinning all that we do...

1. To mitigate the loss / reduction in Government Grant by reducing the costs of administration through Partnership working
2. To deliver a consistent and resilient service meeting our agreed performance standards
3. To maintain high quality local services and access for residents
4. To meet the challenges of Welfare Reforms for our claimants and Taxpayers
5. To retain jobs locally and strengthen the skill level in each service
6. To avoid the partner Councils competing for scarce Revenue and Benefit staff resources
7. To provide specialist services for Social Services Financial Assessments, Corporate Debt Recovering and Cashiering Services

We aim to achieve over £400,000 in savings from April 2020 to March 2022



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