

Report to Council

Ward(s) affected: n/a

Report of Director of Finance

Author: John Armstrong, Democratic Services Manager

Tel: 01483 444102

Email: john.armstrong@guildford.gov.uk

Lead Councillor responsible: Caroline Reeves

Tel: 07890 591968

Email: caroline.reeves@guildford.gov.uk

Date: 23 July 2019

Election of Chairman of Guildford Joint Committee 2019-20

Executive Summary

Under the Constitution of the Guildford Joint Committee, for the 2018-19 Municipal year only, the Chairman was a County Councillor (Cllr Keith Taylor) and the Vice-Chairman was a Borough Councillor (Cllr Paul Spooner). The Constitution then provides that, from the 2019-20 municipal year, the offices of Chairman and Vice-Chairman shall alternate between the two councils every year, with the Borough Council providing the Chairman and the County Council providing the Vice-Chairman in 2019-20.

Should the Chairman or Vice-Chairman not complete a full term of office, a further member from the same council shall be appointed through the relevant authority's usual procedures for the remainder of that term.

At the last Council meeting on 15 May, Councillor Paul Spooner was elected chairman of the Guildford Joint Committee for the 2019-20 municipal year. The County Council elected Councillor Taylor Vice-Chairman of the Joint Committee for 2019-20. However, on 3 June, Councillor Spooner resigned as chairman of the Joint Committee in order for him to stand for election as chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 4 June.

The office of chairman of the Guildford Joint Committee is now vacant, and under the Constitution of the Joint Committee the Borough Council is expected to elect a new Chairman of the Joint Committee for the remainder of the 2019-20 municipal year.

The Council is invited to elect a replacement chairman for 2019-20, or to consider an alternative proposal to ask Surrey County Council (SCC) to continue chairing the Joint Committee until the end of the 2019-20 municipal year and, thereafter, the Borough Council to elect a chairman for the ensuing two municipal years 2020-21 and 2021-22. At the end of 2021-22, the trial arrangement would be reviewed.

Recommendation to Council

Option A:

That the Council elects a replacement chairman of the Guildford Joint Committee for the remainder of the 2019-20 municipal year

Option B:

- (1) That the Council adopts, on a trial basis, an alternative arrangement with Surrey County Councillor Keith Taylor continuing to chair the Guildford Joint Committee until the end of the 2019-20 municipal year; and, thereafter, the Borough Council electing a chairman for the ensuing two municipal years 2020-21 and 2021-22, with the trial arrangement being reviewed at the end of 2021-22.
- (2) That the Council elects a Vice-Chairman of the Guildford Joint Committee for the remainder of the 2019-20 municipal year.

Reason for Recommendation:

To ensure that the Guildford Joint Committee has a chairman for the 2019-20 municipal year.

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To consider whether the Council should elect a replacement chairman of the Guildford Joint Committee for the remainder of the 2019-20 municipal year, or an alternative (trial) arrangement to ask SCC to continue chairing the Joint Committee until the end of the 2019-20 municipal year and, thereafter, the Borough Council to elect a chairman for the ensuing two municipal years 2020-21 and 2021-22.

2. Strategic Priorities

- 2.1 The Guildford Joint Committee provides a more integrated approach to delivery of local services, enabling closer partnership working and providing the ability to respond jointly to local issues for the benefit of residents, thereby strengthening democratic accountability.

3. Background

- 3.1 Under the Constitution of the Guildford Joint Committee, for the 2018-19 Municipal year only, the Chairman was a County Councillor (Cllr Keith Taylor) and the Vice-Chairman was a Borough Councillor (Cllr Paul Spooner). The Constitution then provides that, from the 2019-20 Municipal year, the offices of Chairman and Vice-Chairman shall alternate between the two councils every year, with the Borough Council providing the Chairman and the County Council providing the Vice-Chairman in 2019-20.
- 3.2 Should the Chairman or Vice-Chairman not complete a full term of office, a further member from the same council shall be appointed through the relevant authority's usual procedures for the remainder of that term.
- 3.3 Councillors will recall that, at the last Council meeting on 15 May, Councillor Paul Spooner was elected chairman of the Guildford Joint Committee for the 2019-20

municipal year. The County Council elected Councillor Taylor Vice-Chairman of the Joint Committee for 2019-20. However, on 3 June, Councillor Spooner resigned as chairman of the Joint Committee in order for him to stand for election as chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 4 June.

- 3.4 The office of chairman of the Guildford Joint Committee is now vacant, and under the Constitution of the Joint Committee the Borough Council is expected to elect a new Chairman of the Joint Committee for the remainder of the 2019-20 municipal year.
- 3.5 On 5 June, the Council received an email from the Vice-Chairman of the Joint Committee, Councillor Taylor (with the support of the Leader of SCC) suggesting an arrangement for the chairmanship of the Guildford Joint Committee for 2019-20 that is currently being trialled with the Spelthorne Joint Committee.
- 3.6 Under this arrangement, it was agreed between SCC and Spelthorne Borough Council that the Chairman last year (a County Councillor) would remain Chairman for this year but that Spelthorne would then nominate a Chairman who would serve for both of the following years (2020-21 and 2021-22).
- 3.7 This came about because Spelthorne had a large turnover of Borough members following the recent local elections (albeit not as large as Guildford's) and Spelthorne felt that it would be appropriate to leave the Joint Committee Chair in County hands for 2019-20. Looking ahead, they also felt that it would be more sensible to have a Borough Chairman in 2020-21 and 2021-22 so that a county councillor, who would otherwise have been chairman, would not be distracted by having to fight a County election in May 2021 and to provide some continuity whatever the outcome of the County elections. Nothing is being done to amend the Constitution of the Spelthorne Joint Committee at this stage. This arrangement is being regarded as a "trial" for the period up to 2022, when it would be reviewed by both councils to see whether a permanent arrangement should be introduced by way of an amendment to that Joint Committee's Constitution.
- 3.8 If the Council thinks that such an arrangement would help with the current situation in Guildford, Councillor Taylor would be happy to continue as Guildford Joint Committee Chairman for 2019-20 and SCC would be happy to commit to the Chairman being a Borough councillor in both 2020-21 and 2021-22. This trial arrangement would be subject to review at the end of the 2021-22.
- 3.9 Of course, if the Council does not wish to do this, it may simply elect a new chairman to replace Councillor Spooner for the remainder of the 2019-20 municipal year. If that happens, the Council will need to consider nominations in respect of such election in the usual way. However, if the Council is minded to support the alternative arrangement for a trial period, it will need to pass a resolution to that effect and elect formally a Vice-Chairman for the remainder of the 2019-20 Municipal year.

4. Consultations

- 4.1 Group leaders were consulted on the alternative proposal and all five indicated that they would be happy to support it.

5. Financial Implications

- 5.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from this report.

6. Legal Implications

- 6.1 Although there are no statutory requirements governing arrangements between constituent authorities of a joint committee as to who should chair a joint committee, the adopted Constitution of the Guildford Joint Committee (Section 3 – Standing Orders, paragraph 2) provides that the chairman and vice-chairman appointments should alternate annually between Guildford Borough Council and Surrey County Council.

7. Human Resource Implications

- 7.1 There are no human resources implications arising from this report

8. Summary of Options

- 8.1 The Council has two options to consider:

Option A asks the Council to consider electing a replacement for Councillor Spooner as chairman of the Guildford Joint Committee for the remainder of the 2019-20 municipal year.

Option B asks the Council to consider, on a trial basis, an alternative arrangement with Surrey County Councillor Keith Taylor continuing to chair the Guildford Joint Committee until the end of the 2019-20 municipal year; and, thereafter, the Borough Council electing a chairman for the ensuing two municipal years 2020-21 and 2021-22, with the trial arrangement being reviewed at the end of 2021-22.

If Option B is adopted, the Council will need to elect a Vice-Chairman of the Guildford Joint Committee for the remainder of the 2019-20 municipal year.

9. Background Papers

Email dated 5 June 2019 from Councillor Keith Taylor

10. Appendices

None