Agenda item 7

For decision – Proposed changes to management structure
Authors: Peter Wheelhouse, Town Clerk & Fiona Barrows, Chair & Leader

Summary incl. recommendations

This report sets out the recommendations of the Improvement Advisory Group in relation to changes in the staff management structure and the recruitment of three new roles. The purposes of these changes are to ensure that the structure is aligned with the Council Plan, there is management resource where it is needed to deliver on our strategic objectives, managers have sufficient capacity to undertake the strategic work that is expected of them and we have a structure that will help the Council to meet future challenges.

The key recommendations are to reduce the size of the Senior Management Team from 9 to 6 persons, merge the Business & Finance Team and HR Team, merge the Environment Team and other teams involved with facilities management and merge the Communities and Climate Action Teams. The three proposed new posts include a Business Services Lead, Economic Development & Regeneration Lead and an Events Lead.

It is proposed to implement the proposed changes in staff management structure and team mergers from 1 December 2026 and for the proposed new posts to be recruited as soon as possible to ensure that staff are in position from the new financial year.

Background

On 22 April 2026, Council considered a report setting out the case for reviewing the Council's management structure. Following a period of considerable organic growth, and with a new permanent Town Clerk in place, it was an opportune time to consider how the Council's management structure could best support the organisation, both now and in the future. The review was guided by four key objectives:

- Support delivery of the Council Plan, with leadership, responsibilities and resources aligned to our strategic priorities.
- Strengthen strategic leadership and capacity, giving managers the time and support to focus on longer-term planning and organisational development.
- Create a clear and accountable organisation, with well-defined roles, responsibilities and decision-making, and effective collaboration across teams.
- Build organisational resilience for the future, enabling the Council to respond effectively to changing needs, opportunities and challenges.

Councillors also noted that there were notable vacancies within the structure including that of Deputy Town Clerk and an officer to take the lead on developing a thriving economy, an important aim within the Council Plan.

Councillors agreed to engage Council HR & Governance Support (CHRGS) to provide advice on the Council's management structure and for the Improvement Advisory Group (IAG) to develop costed recommendations to be presented to a future meeting of Council.

Some advice was sought from CHRGS. They engaged senior managers and members of the Improvement Advisory Group as part of their work.

Their key findings were:

- Incremental growth in service provision has resulted in a situation where the Town Clerk has eight reports plus one other manager on the Senior Management Team (see Appendix 7.1 on the website here, for current management structure) – in their view this was neither ideal nor sustainable
- They considered several possibilities but their firm recommendation was for the Council to consider the appointment of three heads of service reporting to the Town Clerk, one for Community & Place, one for Environmental Services and the third for Corporate Services bringing together like functions and enabling the heads of those services to take strategic responsibility for the delivery of the priorities within the Council Plan.

The review also identified that a number of job titles across the organisation no longer accurately reflected the responsibilities and work undertaken by postholders. It therefore recommended updating titles to better reflect roles. It also recommended incorporating the deputy Town Clerk responsibilities into an existing senior management post rather than creating a separate deputy Town Clerk position.

IAG recognised the merits of moving towards a simpler senior management structure and strengthening the capacity of senior managers to take a more strategic role. However, members felt that creating three new Heads of Service posts would be unnecessary and too disruptive to implement in one step, particularly as the Council approaches the end of the current administration.

Instead, IAG favoured a more phased approach, retaining five senior management roles while bringing some teams together over time. A draft structure was agreed for the Town Clerk to discuss with managers, evaluate the costs of the proposed changes and bring back to IAG for further consideration.

At its meeting on 21 October, IAG considered the resulting proposals and agreed a set of recommendations to Council, which are set out below.

Recommendations of IAG

Management Structure

Members of IAG support a reduction in the size of the Senior Management Team (including the Town Clerk) from 9 to 6 persons. The proposed new structure is set out in Appendix 7.2 and can be viewed on the website here. As part of this restructure, it is proposed that the following team mergers are implemented:

Merger of Business & Finance Team and HR Team

This would bring together staff involved with the delivery of business services that are important to the operation of all parts of the Council including HR, finance, business support, IT, data governance, legal and insurance. The new merged team to be led by the Business Manager & RFO.

Establishment of an Environment & Assets Team

This would bring together all services that involve some kind of facilities management i.e. the management of our open spaces and built assets including the Town Hall, Key Centre and tenanted properties. The Facilities Manager would join this team (he is currently line managed by the Business Manager & RFO) and the Town Hall Steward and Town Hall cleaning staff would report to the Facilities Manager (they are currently line managed by the Marketing & Communications Manager). The Environment & Assets Team to be led by the current Environment Manager whose title would change to Environment & Assets Manager.

Merger of Communities Team and Climate Action Teams

Recognising the interconnected nature of community development and climate action priorities such as home energy advice and climate adaptation, it is proposed to bring the Communities and Climate Action Teams together under the leadership of the Community Partnerships & Development Manager.

Business case for these structural changes

The business case for these proposals can be summed up as follows:

- By reducing the size of the senior management team, the Town Clerk would have more time to address future challenges including preparing the foundations for the next Council Strategy (2027–31), building relationships with strategic partners and driving forward continued improvement in the way that the Council operates as set out in the agreed Improvement Plan
- The proposed structural changes would bring similar functions together under the most experienced managers
- They would strengthen already positive working relationships that have developed between managers
- Those working relationships will pay dividends in terms of meeting future challenges e.g. ensuring that the most vulnerable members of our community benefit from the provision of home energy advice and we can address the challenges associated with managing the Town Hall which as an older building requires a long-term maintenance programme – bringing together the Council's expertise in this area within a single team will assist in meeting this challenge
- These changes will enable the Marketing & Communications Manager to focus on management of the marketing & communications functions of the Council and strategic priorities such as the development of our communications strategy and website

These proposals have already been subject to consultation with affected staff and have been received positively.

The impact of these changes on grading of senior management posts is exempt under the Local Government Act 1972 (Schedule 12A) and can only be discussed in confidential session should councillors vote to do so at the meeting.

Critical gaps in staff capacity

Through the consultation process, it became clear that there are critical gaps in the Council's staff capacity that are constraining the ability of senior managers to deliver on the agreed priorities within the Council Plan. They include the following:

- The growth of the Council both in scale and complexity has placed increasing demands on the Business & Finance Team and there is a current lack of capacity and capability to coordinate the development of the IT, data governance and other systems needed by a larger Council. In addition, due to the scale of financial transactions now involved and other demands on the team, the Business Manager and RFO does not have the time to work on medium term financial planning, a critical project identified within the agreed Improvement Plan. It is widely recognised that such planning, typically for a 3–5-year period in the future, has the benefit of improving resource and budget alignment and is vital in terms of managing medium terms financial risks.

- With the departure of the previous Lead Marketing & Communications Officer, the Marketing & Communications Team has been stretched. Whilst some slack has been taken up by temporary backfilling, staff including the Marketing & Communications Manager have been drawn away from priority work to enhance our communications (see Aim 5 of the Council Plan) in order to deliver an extensive events programme.

- With the promotion of Peter Wheelhouse to the position of Town Clerk, the Council now lacks the services of an experienced economic development professional that can identify and capitalise on opportunities for sustainable economic growth and ensure that the town is well positioned to benefit from Government funding for business and skills development when the new Wessex Mayoral Strategic Authority is established in May 2028. This is a key objective within the Council Plan (see Aim 2).

- The post of Deputy Town Clerk (fulfilled on a part-time basis and in the absence of the Town Clerk) remains vacant – Jane Llewellyn, the Planning & Development Manager has been Acting Deputy since October 2025. To provide clarity and certainty to both councillors and the wider community in terms of the performance of this role, and following advice from SW Councils, expressions of interest have been invited from all senior managers in performing this role. The outcome of this process is exempt information under the Local Government Act 1972 (Schedule 12A) and can only be discussed in confidential session should councillors vote to do so at the meeting.

Proposed new roles

Business Services Lead

The purpose of this role would be to coordinate work on IT infrastructure and digital systems, data governance and complaints register, information management, legal agreements and contracts, tenant management, insurance management, risk management and office operations. The postholder would report to the Business Manager & RFO and have line management responsibility for the Business Administrator. The draft job description and person specification can be found in Appendix 7.3 and can be viewed on the website here. How this would fit into the Business & Finance Team is shown in Appendix 7.4 and can be viewed on the website here.

In order that the Business Manager & RFO could delegate with confidence, it is considered that the postholder would come with evidenced experience in business administration, systems development and the other functions discussed above. Due to the volume of work to be completed, this would be advertised as a full-time (37 hours per week) role.

This role has been evaluated by SW Councils as a Grade 6 role. The 2027/28 cost to the organisation including on costs is estimated to be £51k assuming a 37 hours per week role and a starting salary at the bottom of the grade.

Business case

The business case for this role can be summarised as follows:

- It would address the lack of capacity and capability in-house to comply with a strict statutory and legal framework for data governance as set out in the UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR), Data Protection Act 2018 and Freedom of Information Act 2000.
- We could confidently implement the new Complaints Procedure as agreed by Council in July 2026
- It would enable us to advance much needed IT systems development such as SharePoint organisation
- The role will free the Business Manager & RFO to focus more on strategy, finance and management including work on a Medium-Term Financial Plan and implement the work on this Plan agreed by Council in August 2026
- Overall, the proposal will support delivery of our agreed Improvement Plan (Aim 5 of the Council Plan)

Economic Development & Regeneration Lead

The purpose of this role would be to foster a vibrant and sustainable economy, seek out opportunities and bring forward innovative ideas. It would involve understanding the strengths and weaknesses of the economy, identifying opportunities for new jobs and investment, post-16 education/training (in partnership with the Communities Team) and working with partners to capitalise on Frome's economic growth potential. A key task would be to develop an Economic Prospectus for Frome including options for strategic investment and funding whether from Government (through a new regional authority) or from other sources.

The postholder would report to the Planning & Development Manager. This line management relationship would provide an opportunity to contribute to our work to secure sustainable

development and new infrastructure that meets the needs of the town. It would also enhance our efforts to develop a thriving town centre given the potential of Saxonvale for example to create new jobs and training opportunities. However, the intention is that this postholder would explore and exploit the potential across Frome.

The draft job description and person specification can be found in Appendix 7.5 and can be viewed on the website here. How this would fit into the Planning & Development Team is shown in Appendix 7.6 and can be viewed on the website here. Due to the volume of work associated with this role, the proposal is that this is a full time (37 hours per week) position.

In order that the Council could quickly hit the ground running, it is recommended that we look for someone with relevant sector specific experience. Typically, someone with membership of the Institute of Economic Development (MiED designation) would have the level of professional standing, technical knowledge, and practical competence across a broad spectrum of economic development and regeneration required for this role. They would also need to demonstrate success in securing external/grant funding and taking projects from concept through to delivery.

The role has been assessed as a Grade 6 role. The 2027/28 cost to the organisation including on costs is estimated to be £51k assuming a 37 hours per week role and a starting salary at the bottom of the grade.

Business case

The business case for this role can be summarised as follows:

- It fills a key vacancy created by the promotion of Peter Wheelhouse to Town Clerk
- It moves us from reacting to actively shaping our economic future
- Economic outcomes would be secured alongside new residential development and community facilities in the town
- The role would provide a dedicated point of contact for business engagement outside of the town centre especially for growing businesses at Commerce Park, Marston Trading Estate and elsewhere both within the parish and adjoining parishes
- The Wessex Strategic Mayoral Authority to be established in 2028 presents an opportunity to secure Government funding for economic development projects in Frome – we need to be ready to present Frome's case as soon as possible
- The postholder would take the lead in delivering Council Plan Aim 2 (Supporting a Thriving Town)

Events Lead

The purpose of this role would be to lead the operational planning and delivery of FTC's civic, cultural, community and town centre events programme, including complex live events. The creation of this post would mark a change in how work within the Marketing & Communications is organised. In the past, the role of staff has been multi-functional dipping in and out of day-to-day communications and marketing work, the planning and delivery of FTC's events and the support of those delivered by the Communities Team and community organisations. We already have an experienced Marketing & Communications Lead in Laura Hales reporting to Rachel Griffin, our Marketing & Communications Manager. With the

recruitment of an experienced Events Lead, an opportunity is provided to free the Marketing & Communications Manager from day-to-day event operations whilst retaining an oversight of that area of work and enabling her to play more of a strategic and managerial role within the Marketing & Communications Team.

The Events Lead would be line managed by the Marketing & Communications Manager and in turn would supervise the Events Administrator and Events Volunteers. It is proposed to be a 30-hours per week role in line with the Marketing & Communications Lead post. The draft job description and person specification can be found in Appendix 7.7 and can be viewed on the website here. How this would fit into the wider Marketing & Communications Team is shown in Appendix 7.8 and can be viewed on the website here.

To enable the Marketing & Communications Manager to confidently delegate to the Events Lead, we would be looking for someone with at least three years' experience in delivering public events and experience in managing complex projects which our larger events have become. The postholder would coordinate work around such issues as event safety, logistics and engagement with stakeholder organisations such as Somerset Council and the Police.

The role has been assessed as a Grade 6 role. The 2027/28 cost to the organisation including on costs is estimated to be £42k assuming a 30 hours per week role and the postholder's salary starting at the bottom of the grade.

Business case

The business case for this role can be summarised as follows:

- There would be clearer roles and responsibilities within the Marketing & Communications Team
- This structural change would enable each Lead Officer to focus on their professional specialisms
- Recruitment of the Events Lead would fill in a gap in staff capacity generated by the departure of Lucy McMahon and therefore ease pressure on other members of the team.
- This proposal would mean that the Team could provide a quicker response to other teams which would mean greater efficiency and outcomes across the organisation
- Recruitment of an Events Lead will enable the Marketing & Comms Manager to focus more on management and the delivery of strategic priorities and free more time to support the Town Clerk and colleagues on the Senior Management Team in their running of the organisation

Other options considered	In terms of the proposed new management structure, IAG has considered the advice from consultants, CHRGS which was to appoint three new heads of service. However, they felt that creating three new Heads of Service posts would be unnecessary and too disruptive to implement in one step, particularly as the Council approaches the end of the current administration.

	Together with selective team mergers, the structure that IAG are recommending will ensure alignment with the strategic priorities within the Council Plan.
Key considerations for the Council	Aim 5 of the Council Plan is all about building a bolder and more effective Council and refers to the need to examine the management structure. The purposes of doing so are to ensure that: • The current management structure is aligned with the Council Plan and there is management resource where it is needed to deliver on our strategic objectives • Managers have sufficient capacity to undertake the strategic work that is increasingly expected of them • Our structure will help us to meet future challenges These considerations have informed the recommendations to Council.
Consultation and feedback	In making these recommendations, account has been taken of consultation with staff affected by the proposals together with advice from SW Councils, the Council's retained HR advisor and CHRGS as well as the views of members of IAG.
Links to Council Plan and Medium-Term Financial Plan	Relevant to Aim 5 of the Council Plan
Financial and Risk Implications	The total cost of the proposed new roles is estimated to be £144k in 2027/28. Changes to grading of existing managers is exempt information and will be discussed in confidential session.
Legal / HR Implications	As the report sets out, there would be changes for staff within the teams that are being merged. Job descriptions have already been amended in draft in anticipation of a decision by Council and where significant changes are proposed they have been subject to job evaluation by SW Councils. Staff have already been consulted, and the proposals have been received positively. Care will be taken to ensure that any changes are managed sensitively and there are appropriate handover arrangements in place to ensure a smooth transition. It is proposed that any mergers/new line management arrangements agreed by Council will take effect from 1 December 2026. Subject to the outcome of this meeting, it is proposed that the recruitment process for new roles starts as soon as possible to ensure that staff are in post by the start of the new financial year. The outcome of the internal process to identify a permanent Deputy Town Clerk is exempt information and will be discussed in confidential session.

Equalities Implications	None
Community Safety Implications	None
Climate Change and Sustainability Implications	None
Health and Safety Implications	None
Constitutional Requirements	Standing orders require that matters relating to staff management structure must be resolved by Council. Ordinarily, the Operations & Assets Committee would deal with proposed changes to the organisation chart so long as these are within the overall staff budget. In this instance, the proposed new roles are not within the current staff budget and so it is appropriate for the Council to consider those proposals. Exempt information will be discussed in confidential session in compliance with the Local Government Act 1972 (Section 12A).
Background Papers	https://www.frometowncouncil.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2026/04/Agenda-item-7-For-decision-Proposed-Management-Structure-Review.pdf
Report Sign-Off	Peter Wheelhouse, Town Clerk, Fiona Barrows, Chair & Leader 3/11/2

Recommendations

1. To reduce the size of the Senior Management Team from 9 to 6 persons. The new team to comprise the Town Clerk, Business Manager & RFO, Planning & Development Manager, Environment & Assets Manager (new title for Environment Manager), Marketing & Communications Manager and Community Partnerships & Development Manager. One of the team members to take on the part-time role of Deputy Town Clerk alongside their substantive role subject to the outcome of an internal process (exempt information to be discussed in confidential session)

2. To merge the following teams:
    a. Business & Finance Team and HR Team under the line management of the Business Manager & RFO
    b. Environment Team and staff involved with facilities management to form a new Environment & Assets Team under the line management of the Environment & Assets Manager
    c. Communities and Climate Action Teams under the line management of the Community Partnerships & Development Manager

3. To recruit three new posts:
    a. A full time (37 hours per week) Business Services Lead at Grade 6 and at an estimated total cost (including on costs) of £51k in 2027/28

b. A full time (37 hours per week) Economic Development & Regeneration Lead at Grade 6 and at an estimated total cost (including on costs) of £51k in 2027/28
c. A part time (30 hours per week) Events Lead at Grade 6 and at an estimated total cost (including on costs) of £42k in 2027/28

4. To implement the proposed changes in staff management structure and team mergers from 1 December 2026

5. To recruit the new posts as soon as possible to ensure that staff are in position from the new financial year