

Agenda Supplement

Dorset County Council



Meeting: Cabinet
Time: 10.00 am
Date: 17 January 2018
Venue: Committee Room 1, County Hall, Colliton Park, Dorchester, Dorset, DT1 1XJ

Debbie Ward
Chief Executive

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| 4. Public Participation | 3 - 4 |
| To receive questions from the public | |
| 7. Admission Arrangements 2019-2020 and Transport Policy 2018-2019 | 5 - 6 |
| To consider a recommendation from the People and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee. | |
| 10. Questions from County Councillors | 7 - 8 |
| To receive questions from County Councillors. | |

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Agenda Item 4

Public Questions for the Cabinet meeting on 17 January 2018

Questions from Ms Linda Thompson to the Cabinet Member for Natural and Built Environment in relation to the No. 5 Bus Service between Crossways, Broadmayne, West Knighton and Dorchester

Questions

- Why was route extended to cover Weymouth when there was an existing regular service covering Dorchester to Weymouth?
- Was there no clause in the business plan / contract safeguarding this service for minimum of a year to obtain true figures?
- Were user audits carried out over various weekdays and times of day?
(I was told by First that they were ending the service as 'fewer people were using the bus'. As a regular passenger I saw the opposite!)
- We're told people can use community transport to get to hospital appointments in the absence of a bus, and that schoolchildren will be covered – what about those who work?

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Cabinet – 17 January 2018

Extract from the People and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 10 January 2018

Admission Arrangements 2019-2020 and Transport Policy 2018-19

The Committee considered a report by the Interim Director for Children's Services which summarised the results of the statutory consultation the County had undertaken for the admission arrangements for 2019-20, the transport policy for 2018-19 and a proposed change to the Published Admission Number for Charmouth Primary School.

The Council consulted annually on admission arrangements for voluntary controlled and community schools before any changes were determined. Voluntary Aided schools and Academies were their own admission authorities and would go through a similar process. The Committee then considered the individual elements contained within the report.

Admissions Arrangements

No significant changes were proposed and the Committee agreed to recommend these to the Cabinet for formal agreement.

Home to School Transport Assistance Eligibility Policy

The proposed changes aimed to make entitlement clearer for families to understand. Members were reminded that a series of incremental rises for Post 16 transport were agreed two years ago. The increase in a surplus seat price from £640 to £770 from September 2018 had been consulted upon and a likely increase in 2019 in line with the tender index for transport as advised by Dorset Travel was highlighted for consultation in April 2018. It was noted that families in receipt of working families tax credit or free school meals would be eligible for a 50% discount. The increases had been reviewed by Dorset Travel for consistency, were competitive with other councils, and were progressing towards cost recovery.

Whilst members supported the need for policies to be clear and understandable, views were expressed about the proposed increases. These included concerns about travel distances for children on Portland, that the lack of assistance meant that more families were choosing to home educate which meant that children were further disadvantaged; a need for a good communications plan to explain the reasoning behind any increases; any increase to take into account the use of taxis or one-off provision; that any increase might result in more parents driving their children to school, thus increasing congestion and impacting on cost recovery; and that a decision should be delayed pending further information being sought, given the concerns expressed.

It was suggested that any increase should not be more than inflation but this was balanced by a view that if this was the case then a similar decision about increases would be needed in subsequent years; and that it would have been helpful if the report had included how figures were calculated by Dorset Transport, how many pupils would be affected and safeguards for those most at risk.

The Interim Director for Children's Services referred to the Children's Services budget and the need to address a £7m funding gap with a significant part being attributed to home to school transport. If the increases were not agreed, then any shortfall would have a serious impact on the Council's budget and would have to be found from elsewhere, resulting in equally difficult decisions needing to be made in other areas of spend.

The Cabinet Member for the Natural and Built Environment drew attention to the fact that there had been little consultation with the Head of Transport prior to the report's publication and that any impact on commercial routes because of the proposed changes needed to be addressed.

Transport Catchment Area for the Swanage School

The proposed change would give the Swanage School an identified transport catchment area and bring it into line with other secondary schools. Members noted that the proposed change was part of a wider review currently being undertaken across Dorset.

3 or 5 Mile Criteria for the reduction of 50% for contribution to Post 16 Transport

The change of the criteria from 5 to 3 miles was proposed to bring it in line with the criteria for Key Stages 3 and 4. The change would result in an additional cost of £70k.

A member commented that the reduction might result in greater uptake of available places.

The Cabinet Member for Health and Care, whilst recognising the problem facing those needing to access further education in rural areas, was concerned about the additional cost and, given the current pressures on the Children's Services budget, where this would be found. The Interim Director for Children's Services explained that the cost would be added to the home to school transport savings of £483k already identified and that this would have to be found from within the budget.

Pupil Admission Number (PAN) for Charmouth Primary School

Charmouth Primary School currently had a PAN of 25 but was suffering from low numbers. A reduction to 15 from 2019 onwards would be more efficient and cost effective.

Members were concerned about the school's viability and asked whether it could be used more. It was explained that the school would be viable, efficient and provide a quality of education for a total of 105 students. Primary school numbers were not as acute now and, should the numbers increase or there be additional housing in the area, then there would be capacity to increase the PAN again. The Interim Director for Children's Services added that although the optimum level for primary schools was 250 students on roll, Dorset had a lot of small, rural schools which were more expensive. Based on the forecasts for births, it looked like demand in the catchment area would decline. If the PAN were retained there would be surplus places and this would result in an unnecessary attenuation of the school's budget. In his view, the reduction was the right option.

Recommended

That the Cabinet formally agree to the adoption of the following:-

1. Dorset County Council Admissions Arrangements including the Co-ordinated Scheme, the Admissions Arrangements for Community and Voluntary Controlled Schools in Dorset 2019-20, the Admission of Armed Forces Community Children Policy and the Guidance on the Placement of a Pupil Outside His or Her Normal Age Group, the 6th Form Admissions Policy and the Nursery Admissions Policy.
2. The Home to School Transport Assistance Eligibility Policy for Children and Young People attending School 2018-19 and the Dorset Post 16 Transport Support Policy for 2018-19 which includes a rise in the surplus seat price from £640 to £770. Cabinet is also advised that a cost of £795 will be used for consultation in April 2018 for September 2019 surplus seat/cost recovery charge.
3. Approval of the identification of a transport catchment area for the Swanage School.
4. Approval of the 5 mile criteria for the reduction of 50% for contribution towards Post 16 Transport.
5. Changes to the Pupil Admission Number for Charmouth Primary School reducing from 25 to 15.

Reason for Recommendations

1. To determine admissions arrangements in accordance with statutory requirements including the School Admissions Code December 2014.
2. To ensure compliance with the latest legislation and subsequent regulation/statutory guidance.

County Councillor Questions for the Cabinet - 17 January 2018

Question from Cllr Clare Sutton to the Cabinet Member for Natural and Built Environment in relation to the Council's Waste Plan and Non-Hazardous Residual Waste Treatment

Question

I welcome the detailed Waste Plan currently out for consultation, and note that one of the major issues identified is the emerging shortfall of capacity to treat non-hazardous residual waste. I note too that the draft plan (Policy 6) says:

Proposals for the recovery of non-hazardous waste, including materials recovery, mechanical biological treatment, thermal treatment, anaerobic digestion and biomass facilities, will be permitted where it is demonstrated that they meet all of the following criteria: ...

d) where energy is produced, they provide combined heat and power.

This policy does not explicitly include the mass incineration of non-hazardous residual waste in the list in the pre-amble, but nor does it exclude it. Is it the Council's intention to allow mass incineration of non-hazardous residual waste within the County, and if so what criteria would apply to permissible sites?

Question from Cllr Nick Ireland to the Cabinet Member for Natural and Built Environment in relation to the No. 5 Bus Service between Crossways, Broadmayne, West Knighton and Dorchester

Question

Can the Cabinet confirm what travel provisions are to be provided for the general public by the new bus service which Dorset County Council have contracted Damory to provide from the 22nd January 2018 as a consequence of the termination of the First Bus #5 route?