

Audit and Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of a meeting held at County Hall
Colliton Park, Dorchester on 11 June 2013.

Present:-

Trevor Jones (Chairman)
Mike Byatt (Vice-Chairman)

Andrew Cattaway, Deborah Croney, Lesley Dedman, Ian Gardner, David Harris and
Peter Wharf

Officers:

Robin Taylor (Senior Policy and Performance Manager), Mark Taylor (Head of Internal Audit, Insurance and Risk Management), Jonathan Mair (Head of Legal and Democratic Services) and Helen Whitby (Principal Democratic Services Officer).

Toni Coombs, Cabinet Member for Education and Communications attended for minutes 126 to 140.

Rebecca Knox, Cabinet Member for Children's Safeguarding and Chairman of the Dorset Fire Authority attended for minutes 123 to 125.

The Following officers attended for certain items, as appropriate:

Debbie Ward (Chief Executive), Richard Dodson (Planning Obligations Manager), Becky Forrester (Policy Officer), Jacqueline Groves (Head of School Organisation), Helen Heanes (Senior Economic Development Officer), David Hill (Group Audit Manager, South West Audit Partnership), Peter Illsley (Head of Corporate Finance), Sally North-East (Public Relations Manager), David Roe (Buildings and Design Manager), Stuart Riddle (Acting Head of Children's and Families) and Lisa Trickey (ICT Business Partner, Children's Services). Sally White (Audit Manager, South West Audit Partnership)

Andy Fox, Head of Fire Safety, Dorset Fire and Rescue, attended for minutes 123 to 125.

Apology

108. There were no apologies for absence.

Code of Conduct

109. Peter Wharf declared an interest in minutes 125 to 126 as Chairman of Purbeck District Council's Planning Committee (not a disclosable pecuniary interest) and stated that he had not taken part in any planning decisions regarding Lytchett Minster School.

Terms of Reference

110. The Committee were informed that the current terms of reference needed to be updated to reflect current working practices. Officers were asked to provide the updated terms of reference for consideration at the next meeting.

Resolved

111. That officers review the current terms of reference and provide these for consideration at the Committee's meeting on 23 July 2013 meeting.

Minutes

112. The minutes of the meeting held on 16 April 2013 were confirmed and signed.

Matters ArisingMinute 58.3 – LGA Peer Challenge

113.1 With regard to whether members had been identified to take part in the forthcoming Peer Challenge, it was reported that details would be announced shortly.

Minute 102 - Six Month Progress Report on the Committee's Work

113.2 In response to a question as to why the overpayment notification was removed, it was explained that the matter had been resolved and had been removed from the Committee's progress report.

Progress on Matters Raised at Previous Meetings

114.1 The Committee considered a report by the Director for Corporate Resources which updated members on progress made following discussions at previous meetings.

Minute 49.2 - ICT Incident 14 September 2012

114.2 With regard to whether Hampshire County Council had reviewed the County Council's ICT resilience, it was reported that this work was currently being scoped. The Chairman asked for an update to be provided for consideration on 23 July 2013.

Minute 51 – Government Requirements for Data Transparency

114.3 The Committee noted that the Government had not given any indication as to when it would publish its conclusions following the recent consultation on whether the recommended practice for local authorities on data transparency should be mandatory. Further details of the action taken by other Dorset local authorities would be sent to members following the next meeting of the Dorset Finance Officers' Group.

Minute 69.2 – Asset Management and Capital Programme Update

114.4 Officers were currently developing a strategy to address issues raised at a previous meeting. This would be reported to the Cabinet and the Committee in mid-October 2013.

114.5 With regard to the publication of the County Council's buildings and assets, the Committee noted that the County Council was not currently fully compliant. A list of assets was held but not in the format required and work would be required to achieve this. Officers were waiting for further Government guidance as to what exactly was required before undertaking further work. The Head of Legal and Democratic Services added that there was no legal requirement for a list of County Council assets to be published and if this became statutory, then all local councils would publish what was necessary on a cluster basis.

Internal Audit Annual Report 2012/13

115.1 The Committee considered a report by the Director for Corporate Resources on the work of the Internal Audit Services for 2012/13.

115.2 With regard to the significant risk identified in the Internal Audit Quarterly Report discussed at the previous meeting, the ICT Business Partner confirmed that although there had been the potential for a breach of contract, this had not occurred and there were no further concerns. In fact the supplier was seeking accreditation for a security standard higher than the County Council would expect. Officers would continue to work with the supplier to understand the improvements they were making and would continue to monitor the situation over the next 12-18 months. The Chairman asked that a further update be provided for consideration at a future meeting.

115.3 For the benefit of new members of the Committee, the Head of Internal Audit, Insurance and Risk Management explained the relationship between his role for the County

Council and the role of the South West Audit Partnership. The SWAP Group Audit Manager then added that SWAP was a Company Limited by Guarantee. Its Governance Boards were made up of representatives from its partner councils and therefore its direction was solely determined by them. The overall arrangement provided the member councils with a wide pool of expertise, benchmarking ability and the opportunity to share good practice across councils. The Committee noted that Deborah Croney was the County Council's representative on the SWAP Board and it was confirmed that SWAP's business plan included seeking and considering applications from other local authorities who might wish to join the partnership, as well as reviewing potential opportunities to deliver external contract work.

115.4 The Head of Internal Audit, Insurance and Risk Management explained that the Internal Audit Annual Report 2012/13 summarised the Internal Audit work carried out during the year and provided an independent opinion on the Council's framework of risk management, governance and internal control. This was a statutory requirement.

115.5 The SWAP Group Audit Manager reported a "reasonable" assurance in respect of the areas reviewed during the year. 84% of reviews had been completed and the other 17 would be completed by the end of June 2013. Work to improve draft report figures was under way and although the quality of audit work had slipped, customer feedback was encouraged in order to identify areas for improvement.

115.6 There was some discussion about SWAP targets, the need for these to be challenging and the potential for current targets to be increased.

115.7 The SWAP Group Audit Manager reported that as a result of the redistribution of reserves, SWAP would be refunding approximately £20,000 to the County Council.

115.8 With regard to whether an audit of ICT requirements for members, access systems and security arrangements was to be undertaken, the SWAP Group Audit Manager explained that a number of ICT audits were in place and he agreed to respond to this question outside of the meeting.

115.9 A member drew attention to a number of audits within the report which were shown as "draft" and dated July 2012. Members asked that an explanation be provided for these audits at the Committee's next meeting.

Resolved

116.1 That the Head of Internal Audit's overall positive assurance opinion on the Council's risk management, governance and internal control environment for 2012/13 be noted.

116.2 That the assurance opinion given in respect of the "review of the effectiveness of internal audit", as required by the Accounts and Audit (Amendment) (England) Regulations 2011 be noted.

The Protocol for involving Local Members in Matters affecting their Electoral Divisions

117.1 The Committee considered a report by the Director for Corporate Resources on the protocol for involving local members in matters affecting their electoral divisions.

117.2 The Chairman explained that local member involvement had been an issue for the Committee for many years. Many officers did not follow the protocol and this situation could not continue. Members were a resource with a valuable contribution to make and officers did not recognise this. A culture change was required to ensure that the protocol was observed.

117.3 Some members cited personal instances where the protocol had not been used and supported the need for the current situation to change. One member thought that staff did their best to communicate with local members and cited instances where this had occurred. Another member cited Weymouth and Portland as a special case where, due to its urban nature and proximity, all local members needed to be informed of activities within the area.

117.4 The Chief Executive stated that officers had a role to support and advise members about changes in their localities, agreed that the current situation could not continue and needed to improve. She was developing a transformational change programme as a means of addressing these concerns and she hoped that by explaining the different roles, responsibilities and relationships between the different layers of councils in Dorset that officers' understanding would be increased. She hoped to develop officer/member relationships and would be putting new supporting and briefing arrangements in place so that information would be shared with member groups at an early stage. She recognised the need to find the best communication methods to be used and stated that a geographic bulletin would be shared with district and parish councils.

117.5 Members welcomed these improvements as a constructive way forward. Some commented that they preferred personal contact whilst others preferred emails to keep them informed. They asked that any newsletters be provided on a regular basis.

117.6 As a means of moving forward the Chairman suggested the establishment of the Policy Development Panel comprising himself, the Vice-Chairman, the lead Conservative member and the Cabinet Member for Education and Communications. The Chief Executive and Head of Legal and Democratic Services supported this as a means of scrutinising the current arrangements in order to improve the situation. The Committee were informed that the issue had been raised during member reviews and no problems had been highlighted at that time.

Resolved

118.1 That a Policy Development Panel be established to scrutinise current member/officer relations in order to effect improvement.

118.2 That the Policy Development Panel comprise the Chairman, Vice-Chairman and lead Conservative member of the Audit and Scrutiny committee and the Cabinet Member for Education and Communications.

Corporate Resources and Chief Executive's Revenue Budget Monitoring 2012/13

119.1 The Committee considered a report by the Chief Financial Officer on the Corporate Resources and Chief Executive's Revenue Budget for 2012/13.

119.2 The Committee noted that the Corporate Resources revenue budget for 2012/13 showed an underspend of £743,800 at the year end whereas the Chief Executive's Office showed an underspend of £91,500. The figures took account of carry forwards agreed in January and March 2013 and further carry forwards were recommended as set out in section 3.3 of the report.

119.3 One member asked whether directorates were encouraged not to spend in order to be able to carry forward sums or whether this was seen as managerial weakness. The Chief Executive stated that budgets were expected to be spent on what they were identified for and there was no incentive to retain an underspend. The Head of Legal and Democratic Services added that there was a rigorous challenge during one to one meetings with directors during which reasons for underspends were identified.

Resolved

120. That the final outturn position for the Corporate Resources Directorate and the Chief Executive's Office be noted.

Recommended

121. That the Cabinet approve the carry forwards set out in paragraph 3.3 of the Chief Financial Officer's report.

Reason for Recommendation

122. Close monitoring of the budget position was an essential requirement to ensure that money and resources were used efficiently and effectively.

Meeting Future Challenges – Progress Report

123.1 The Committee considered a report by the Chief Executive on progress of the Meeting Future Challenges (MFC) programme and the delivery of savings of £43.2M over the period 2013-2016.

123.2 For the benefit of new members, the Head of Corporate Finance explained that the MFC programme had been in place for three years and had achieved significant savings for the authority during this time. He then presented the report in detail drawing attention to the fact that only one project out of 140 had a red status because delivery was uncertain and he drew attention to paragraph 2.6 which detailed savings targets which would not be met. These were monitored by Directors who were tasked with finding alternative ways of making these savings. The report also set out progress with regard to the Corporate Resources Directorate and Chief Executive's Office MFC programme.

123.3 Attention was drawn to AS-020 (redesign front line service delivery through "Connecting Health and Social Care") which had total savings of £411,000 and savings of £264,000 in 2013-14. The Head of Corporate Finance explained that previous savings from this programme in 2011-12 and 2012-13 were not shown in the table and he confirmed that the cumulative savings were less than the target. He also confirmed that some projects had slipped rather than not been achieved and he agreed to extend future reporting to include information about these.

123.4 With regard to OV029 (Implement an asset and work style strategy incorporating asset reduction, flexible working, document management and other related improvements as a single, joined-up programme), the Head of Corporate Finance confirmed that a range of activities fell within this project, including the work of the Development Partnership, and that there had been slippage with regard to achievement in this area. In response to a question it was confirmed that the Cabinet was kept informed of slippage when alternative savings needed to be found and this involved policy changes.

Noted**Review of the County Council's Response to the Fire at Lytchett Minster School**

124.1 The Committee considered a joint report by the Acting Director for Children's Services and the Director for Environment on the County Council's response to the recent fire at Lytchett Minster School.

124.2 The Committee noted that there had been two major fires at Lytchett Minster School in recent years. The first had been caused by arson and the latest one by a lightning strike. The Head of School Organisation, using photographs, explained the damage caused by the fire within the School's Creative Arts Block on 27 December 2012. This meant that steps had to be taken quickly to replace the facilities lost in order to enable students to complete courses relating to art, dance, music and theatre. To finalise the design of the

replacement building within a short timescale, officers had found new ways of working across departments. As a result of this, a temporary building used during the Olympic Games had been identified as a way of providing the necessary replacement facilities and this was on site within three months of the fire taking place. The temporary building required retrospective planning permission and the costs of the temporary building were being met by the insurers. The temporary building would be dismantled and returned to the suppliers for use elsewhere once the rebuild had been completed. The Committee noted that plans to rebuild the Creative Arts Block and another building which was needed as part of the Purbeck Schools' Review did not currently include sprinkler systems as the School were unable to fund this.

124.3 The Chairman referred to a letter he had received from the Chief Fire Officer stating his concerns about the lack of sprinklers in the new buildings.

124.4 The Head of Fire Safety explained that the temporary building currently being used did not comply with fire regulations as it had insufficient compartmentation which would be required for any new build. In view of the urgency of the situation, the Dorset Fire Authority had not objected to the temporary building being used. However, the Dorset Fire Authority were very concerned at the suggestion that the new buildings would not include sprinkler systems. He described the December 2012 fire, the number of appliances and fire fighters in attendance, and the costs involved. He asked the Committee to consider the need for sprinklers.

124.5 The Cabinet Member for Children Safeguarding and Families, who was also Chairman of the Dorset Fire Authority, stated that the County Council and the Fire Authority were leading the way nationally by including sprinkler systems in all new buildings. She supported the need for sprinklers in all school buildings and domestic premises. She had been contacted at the time of the latest fire because the number of appliances and firefighters in attendance meant that resources covering any other emergency were in short supply.

124.6 The Head of Legal and Democratic Services confirmed that as a Foundation School the County Council did not have the power to insist that sprinklers be included in the new builds at Lytchett Minster School but the County Council could enter into an agreement with the school to fund sprinklers on a voluntary basis. He also confirmed that the County Council were not accountable for Lytchett Minster School as it had Foundation Status.

124.7 The Committee was advised that there were three key aspects to the question of sprinkler installation, or otherwise. Firstly, a formal review was undertaken by Building Control as part of the statutory building regulation requirements. This assessed whether system installation was necessary to provide for "life protection". If so, there was a statutory requirement for sprinklers to be fitted. The second consideration was the Department for Education's Schools Building Bulletin requirement that a risk assessment be undertaken to objectively evaluate their need. Finally, there was the County Council's own Sprinkler Policy, which currently stipulated that sprinkler systems would be fitted in all new school buildings. It was also recognised that, in situations where a sprinkler system was not considered to be providing a primary "life protection" role, clearly it would provide additional protection to both the building and the fire safety crews attending any fire.

124.8 Members were reminded that guidance from the Department for Education specified that a Risk Assessment should be undertaken whether this was a legal requirement or not and if the Risk Assessment specified that a sprinkler system should be fitted, then it should be.

124.9 Attention was drawn to the fact that the County Council procured the necessary insurance coverage for schools including Foundation Schools (but not Academies). Lytchett Minster School therefore formed part of these insurance arrangements and it was clear from communications received from the County Council's insurers that they were concerned about the situation of the proposed non-installation of sprinklers in the replacement building. The insurers were not prepared to pay for their installation as they were only required to replace on a like for like basis and did not provide any funding for betterment. They had, however, indicated that they might seek to impose an increased deductible levy (excess) on any future fire damage claims at the School if the decision was taken not to install sprinklers, especially in the light of the previous claims history at the School.

124.10 The Committee was concerned that life protecting sprinkler systems were not currently included in plans for the new buildings at the School and that these were essential in order to provide protection for the school and for firefighters attending any future fires. Members felt that the County Council's current policy needed to be reviewed so that there was one policy that everyone signed up to. In view of the Government's encouragement of schools to become academies it was crucial that the County Council's procedures were clear and coherent, and provided a firm basis upon which future decisions could be decided. In view of this, it was recommended that a more detailed report be provided for consideration by the Cabinet on the implications for Dorset schools of the present sprinkler policies and the need for one coherent policy to be developed.

124.12 Having considered the report and information presented at the meeting, the Committee agreed that a letter should be sent to the Governing Body on behalf of the Committee and the Dorset Fire Authority. As well as advocating that a sprinkler system be installed, this should set out the concerns expressed at the meeting and the fact that if the County Council provided funding this would result in insufficient funding being available for the basic needs programme. The letter should ask the Governing Body to reconsider their decision not to include a sprinkler system in both new buildings.

124.13 The Committee considered the response to the most recent fire to be a good example of joint working between the County Council and the Dorset Fire Authority

Resolved

125. That officers word a letter of representation on behalf of the County Council to the Governing Body of Lytchett Minster School setting out the concerns and asking them to reconsider installation of a building protection sprinkler system in both new buildings and that the Fire Authority be invited to be a cosignatory to that letter.

Recommended

126.1 That the Cabinet receive a further urgent report on the status of the decision regarding the installation, or otherwise, of sprinklers at Lytchett Minster School, including a legal interpretation of the County Council's obligation (or otherwise) to provide sprinklers in the context of a Foundation School.

126.2 The implications for Dorset Schools of the present national and local sprinkler policies, and the need for one coherent policy for Dorset County Council, be reviewed and reported to a future meeting of the Cabinet.

Annual Governance Statement 2012/13

127.1 The Committee considered a report by the Director for Corporate Resources which presented the draft Annual Governance Statement for 2012/13. This had been prepared in line with the recommendations published in 2007 by CIPFA and SOLACE, the public sector accountancy and local authorities' chief executives' organisations.

127.2 The Head of Corporate Finance summarised the key features of the governance framework of the Authority and the review of its effectiveness. It was noted that the report highlighted nine elements of the detailed governance framework where the Council was considered to be only partially compliant from a total of eighty two, these being different from the nine elements highlighted the previous year. The report also identified nine significant governance issues facing the Council as set out in paragraph 5.5 of the report.

127.3 Particular attention was drawn to paragraph 5.3(a) of the report which highlighted the need for protocols to be developed to ensure effective communication between members and officers in their respective roles. The work of the newly established Policy Development Panel would consider this.

Noted

Non-directly Employed Contract Workforce – Quarter 4 2012/13

128.1 The Committee considered a report by the Director for Corporate Resources which provided information on expenditure on agency staff and consultants in the final quarter of 2012/13.

128.2 It was noted that expenditure on agency staff was a little above that for the same quarter the previous year but the total spend for 2012/13 was £0.5M below that of the previous year. Expenditure on consultants was slightly below that for 2011/12 and less than half that for each of the previous two years.

128.3 The high number of agency staff employed by the Dorset Waste Partnership (DWP) was highlighted but it was recognised that this was in order to help with the current roll out of new services across the County. The Committee noted that the DWP's Joint Committee was equally concerned and now received regular reports on its management and the costs involved.

128.4 The Cabinet Member for Education and Communications drew attention to the fact that consultancy costs included ad hoc payments to independent members of the Adoption and Fostering Panels. She suggested that, as these were particular roles, they should be shown separately in future.

128.5 One member referred to the possible impact on performance of temporary staff and that no assurance was given that service levels and performance had been maintained. The Senior Policy Performance Manager explained that the Committee received regular performance monitoring reports but confirmed that these areas were not cross referenced within it.

Noted

Supporting Local Businesses

129.1 The Committee considered a report by the Director for Corporate Resources on ways the County Council could support the local economy by making funding available to local businesses.

129.2 The Head of Corporate Finance reminded the Committee that at their meeting on 15 January 2013 they had asked for information about support that other local authorities provided for local business. The Director for Corporate Resources had sought information about this from the Society of County Treasurers. The report outlined current support offered by the County Council, other assistance the County Council could provide and details of business rates relief and ways of reducing business costs. The Committee was

asked to consider ways in which more support to local businesses could be provided. The Director advised that it would be more appropriate to use reserves set aside for this purpose rather than use Pension Fund money.

129.3 The Senior Economic Development Officer outlined some of the schemes run by other local authorities, drew attention to the risks involved in such schemes and that 5% of monies lent were not repaid. She said that businesses seeking local authority support would probably have been refused by banks and so were of greater risk. The County Council could provide more support to help businesses develop plans prior to seeking financial support from banks but this would require professional indemnity insurance. The Committee noted that Bournemouth, Dorset and Poole Councils had been unsuccessful in their bid for Regional Growth Funding to top up a local loan scheme, that new EU funding was expected to be available in 2015 and that the Government wanted to promote growth to increase existing banking arrangements.

129.4 Members discussed help available to businesses currently, the roles of district and borough councils and the Local Enterprise Partnership, and other means of helping businesses and encouraging economic growth. They concluded that in view of the current economic situation, a local scheme should not be developed but suggested that ways of promoting economic development in particular with district and borough councils be explored.

Resolved

130. That the County Council should not provide loans for local businesses.

Recommended

131. That the Cabinet explore ways of promoting economic development, in particular with district and borough councils.

Reason for Recommendation

132. Aim 4 in the Council's Budget and Corporate Plan includes support for the development of the local economy, including maximising the legacy from the 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games.

Joint Scrutiny Review Panel

133.1 The Committee considered a report by the Chief Executive which sought to revise the terms of reference of the Joint Scrutiny Review Panel, formalise its meetings and appoint members to it.

133.2 The Committee were reminded that the Joint Scrutiny Review Panel comprised the chairmen of scrutiny committees at district and County level to scrutinise partnership working and avoid duplication of work. The Committee were asked to consider revised terms of reference, whether meetings should be formalised and held in public, and to identify representatives to sit on it. Attention was drawn to the advantages and disadvantages formalisation of the Panel would bring.

133.3 The Committee supported the formalisation of the Panel and asked that their terms of reference include the ability to scrutinise matters of common interest.

Resolved

134.1 That the establishment of the Joint Scrutiny Review Panel as a formal sub-committee of the Audit and Scrutiny Committee with the terms of reference set out in Appendix 2 of the report and minute 131.3 above, be agreed.

134.2 That Mike Byatt, David Harris and Peter Wharf represent the Audit and Scrutiny Committee on the Joint Scrutiny Review Panel.

Reason for Decisions

135. To provide innovative and value for money services (Aim 5 of the County Council's Budget and Corporate Plan).

Communicating in Times of Change 2012/15 – Monitoring Report 2012/13

136.1 The Committee considered a report by the Director for Corporate Resources on the first year of the operation of the new Strategy.

136.2 The Public Relations Manager presented the report, drawing attention to particular successes as set out in paragraph 2.1 of the report and the targets which were not met as set out in paragraph 2.2.

136.3 With regard to internal communication, the Committee noted that the Chief Executive wrote a monthly newsletter for staff and produced a two weekly newsletter for members. One member commented that he had not received any newsletter following the recent elections and officers confirmed that a newsletter was imminent. The newsletter would form part of the work of the recently established Policy Development Panel.

136.4 One member asked why the income generated by the communications service (£20,000) had exceeded the anticipated income (£5,000). The Public Relations Manager explained that it had been difficult to estimate the potential level of income and that more schools had bought into the services than had been anticipated.

136.5 The Chairman reminded members that he had previously requested that standard letters to the public be reviewed to make them more easily understood. The Public Relations Manager confirmed that this had been carried out and that her team had provided extensive training for staff. The Cabinet Member for Education and Communications explained that as part of her new role, she would be trying to encourage the use of plain English across the whole authority and improve visible means of communication with the public. She was currently undertaking research in order to inform the way forward.

Noted**Planning Obligations and Community Infrastructure Levy – Update**

137.1 The Committee considered a report by the Director for Environment which gave an update on the County Council's need to ensure its infrastructure responsibilities were given sufficient weight and priority by district councils in developing their infrastructure delivery plans and Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) charging schedules.

137.2 The Planning Obligations Manager presented the report in detail. The Committee noted that the CIL was operated by district and borough councils as local planning authorities and that the County Council would need to work closely with them on their Local and Infrastructure Delivery Plans and the development of their charging plans in order to ensure it received the appropriate amount of funding to provide the necessary infrastructure to support development. The current reduction in receipts to local authorities due to more developments being zero rated for CIL meant that the CIL was unlikely to pay for all identified infrastructure. There was no right of appeal against CIL levied. County Council officers were working closely with district officers on their Infrastructure Delivery Plans so that these reflected the County Council's needs.

137.4 One member reported that an appeal against a CIL contribution had resulted in income to Purbeck District Council reducing from £100,000 to £8,000. Their CIL arrangements allowed for an appeal to be decided by the District Valuer. The member also reported that Planning Inspectors considered CIL rates to be too high and would substantially reduce these. In response, the Planning Obligations Manager explained that

the Cabinet had received a report on the CIL and the fact that income was likely to be less than expected when it was established in 2008.

137.5 With regard to why the district and borough councils were at different positions, as set out in paragraph 2.2 of the report, the Planning Obligations Manager explained that this depended on the developments proposed in each district area.

137.6 Attention was drawn to the difficulties that would arise if a district or borough council changed their strategies mid-stream, that a further consultation on the CIL was expected and that, under current arrangements, CIL money was not ring-fenced and could be used for other purposes.

Resolved

138. That

- (i) The ability to secure future developer contributions via CIL was dependent on the successful identification of infrastructure and service needs
 - (ii) Financial viability of development was the key determinant of the amount of CIL which might be charged. This was irrespective of the cost of infrastructure needed.
 - (iii) The critical importance of joint working with districts and unitary authorities to ensure that the infrastructure needs of County Council service providers and wider sub-regional infrastructure needs were prioritised.
- be noted.

Reason for Decisions

139. Investment in infrastructure would contribute substantially to the following corporate objectives:

- (i) safeguard and enhance Dorset's unique environment and support our local economy.
- (ii) help build strong communities for all.

Sickness Absence in Social Work Teams

140.1 The Committee considered a report by the Acting Director for Children's Services on the number and nature of sickness absences in Children's Services social work teams for the period 1 April 2012 to 24 March 2013.

140.2 The Acting Head of Children and Families reminded the Committee that during discussions about initial and core assessment performance, they had been concerned about sickness absence levels in social work teams and its effect on performance. The report provided a breakdown of absences. The Committee was reminded that the nature of the work was stressful and steps being taken to improve the situation were outlined.

140.3 It was noted that it had not been possible to provide a breakdown of absence figures because of a bug within the DES system, but this had now been fixed and short and long term absence figures for the last six months were available. Sickness absence was an area of concern and risk and, because of the demands of the service, agency staff covered absences where appropriate.

140.4 The Chairman reminded members that they focused on matters which might affect the County Council's reputational risk and that gaps in critical social work teams could result in delayed child assessments being carried out and the children not receiving the necessary care. The Acting Head of Children and Families added that stress levels were being reviewed, that current performance was "good" and a safeguarding inspection by Ofsted was not due.

140.5 One member referred to the previous concern about the length of time taken to complete assessments and asked whether this had improved. The Acting Head of Children and Families explained that assessments had been delayed not only by sickness absences but by other absences too. As a result of new national guidance, there was no longer a statutory time limit for the completion of children's assessments and local authorities were able to establish their own arrangements. Children and families were able to receive support now without an assessment being completed and the authority were able to take immediate steps to safeguard children if this was appropriate. There was now a single assessment process which was simpler, clearer and provided staff with more time to support children and families. As a result assessments took longer to complete but were of better quality.

140.6 With regard to whether sickness absence was being under-reported, the Acting Head of Children and Families thought this was possible but steps were being taken to simplify the sickness reporting procedure and the DES system was continually being improved.

140.7 The Chairman stated that the next performance monitoring report was due to be considered on 23 July 2013 and the Committee would be able to scrutinise current performance at that time.

Noted

Work Programme

137. The Committee considered its updated work programme and an item was added as specified in minute 115.2 above. A progress report on the work of the Policy Development Panel on Local Member Involvement would be added to the agenda for the meeting on 17 September 2013.

Forward Plan of Key Decisions

138.2 The Committee received the County Council's Cabinet Forward Plan published on 28 May 2013.

Farewell

139. The Chairman explained that the Senior Policy Performance Manager would be leaving the authority to take up a post in Waverley. He thanked him for the support he had provided the Committee and wished him well for the future.

Questions

140. No questions were asked by members under Standing Order 20(2).

Meeting duration: 10.00am to 3:50pm