

Audit and Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of a meeting held at County Hall
Colliton Park, Dorchester on 22 July 2014.

Present:-

Trevor Jones (Chairman)
Mike Byatt (Vice-Chairman)
Andrew Cattaway, Deborah Croney, Lesley Dedman, David Harris and Peter Wharf.

Toni Coombs (Cabinet Member for Education and Communications), Robert Gould (Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Corporate Resources), Jill Haynes (Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care) and Rebecca Knox (Cabinet Member for Children's Safeguarding and Families) attended under Standing Order 54(1).

Officers:

Sam Fox-Adams (Senior Policy and Performance Manager), Mark Taylor (Head of Internal Audit, Insurance and Risk Management) and Helen Whitby (Principal Democratic Services Officer).

The following officers attended for certain items, as appropriate:

Mike Harries (Director for Environment and the Economy), Paul Kent (Director for Corporate Resources), John Alexander (Policy and Performance Manager), Dave Ayre (Head of Countryside and Business Development), Fiona Case (Audit Manager, South West Audit Partnership), Jonathan French (Corporate Policy and Performance Officer (Complaints)), Glen Gocoul (Head of Specialist Adult Services), Mike Hansford (Strategy and Community Liaison Officer), Dave Hill (Director of Planning, South West Audit Partnership), Margaret Judd (Sufficiency and Funding Manager), Cyril Loveridge (Capital Programme Manager), Andrew Martin (Head of Dorset Highways), Matthew Piles (Senior Policy and Performance Manager), Anne Salter (Head of Strategy, Partnerships and Performance) and Peter Scarlett (Estate and Assets Manager).

Local Members

Janet Dover, County Council Member for Colehill and Stapehill (Minutes 120 to 121).
Barrie Cooper, County Council Member for Blandford (Minutes 120 to 121).

(Note: These minutes have been prepared by officers as a record of the meeting and of any decisions reached. They are to be considered and confirmed at the next meeting of the Audit and Scrutiny Committee on **16 September 2014**.)

Apology for Absence

114. An apology for absence was received from Ian Gardner.

Code of Conduct

115. There were no declarations by members of any discloseable pecuniary interests under the Code of Conduct.

Minutes

116. The minutes of the meeting held on 10 June 2014 were confirmed and signed.

Progress on Matters raised at Previous Meetings

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

Noted**Public Participation****Public Speaking**

118.1 There were no public questions received at the meeting in accordance with Standing Order 21(1).

118.2 There were no public statements received at the meeting in accordance with Standing Order 21(2).

Petitions

118.3 There were no petitions received in accordance with the County Council's petition scheme at this meeting.

Work Programme

119.1 The Committee considered its updated work programme.

119.2 The Chairman reported that he and a leading Conservative member had recently met with the Overview Chairmen with a view to aligning scrutiny across the four Overview Committees with a focus on supporting delivery of the Corporate Plan through the Forward Together Programme.

119.3 He then explained that from September a risk based approach would be taken with regard to agendas and items for consideration by the Committee and that no annual report would be produced this year due to officers' commitments. He reminded members that copies of previous annual reports were available from the Principal Democratic Services Officer.

Noted**Scoping report in relation to a Call to Account about the decision taken by the Cabinet to close Phoenix House, Blandford**

120.1 The Committee considered a report by the Chief Executive which explained the decision taken by the Cabinet on 2 July 2014 to close Phoenix House, Blandford. The report was in response to a request from the County Council Member for Blandford for the Committee to call to account this decision.

120.2 There was some discussion about whether the item should be considered with the exclusion of the public. As the matter had been considered by the Cabinet in open session and as the Committee were considering whether to look at the matter in more detail, it was agreed that it was unnecessary for the public to be excluded.

120.3 The Corporate Policy and Performance Officer (Complaints) explained that Phoenix House was a residential care home for people with learning disabilities which also provided respite care and short breaks. Since Phoenix House had opened two years ago, national best practice had changed and people with learning disabilities were being accommodated in supported housing in a community setting rather than in residential care. Only one of the ten residential beds in Phoenix House was being used on a permanent basis and there was only 26% occupancy of the six respite beds. Learning disability services were to be reconfigured to contribute to the Directorate's savings for the next three years and the sale of Phoenix House formed part of the savings plan. The report set out the background to the decision being taken, concerns raised at the Cabinet meeting and possible key questions for the Committee to consider.

120.4 The County Council Member for Blandford had provided members with copies of an email giving his reasons for asking for a Call to Account. He explained his concerns, the main ones being how the decision to build Phoenix House had been reached, whether alternative uses had been explored, whether other providers had been considered and that the sale of Phoenix House would only realise part of the original building cost. Phoenix House had been built to replace the Beeches and provide accommodation for people with complex needs who previously were placed out of county.

120.5 The County Council Member for Colehill and Stapehill expressed the concerns of service users in her electoral division and elsewhere in the County. She questioned the rationale for building Phoenix House, how service users would be looked after when it closed as there was no evidence of placements being available, whether the possibility of other providers using Phoenix House had been explored and whether an Equality Impact Assessment had been undertaken. She asked the Committee to support the Call to Account for the sake of the service users at Phoenix House and their families.

120.6 In response the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care explained that the Cabinet had considered a report with a business case for a replacement for the Beeches and at that time placements were not marketed to self-funders. The possibility of other providers using Phoenix House had been explored but no correspondence was held on file as this had been done by email and word of mouth. A tendering exercise would need to be undertaken to identify providers of the alternative services needed by those currently using Phoenix House, but this could not be started until such time as the decision to sell had been made. She assured the Committee that residents and service users would not be moved until other appropriate services were in place. The sale would be dealt with by Dorset Property and local members would be kept informed of progress. With regard to the Equality Impact Assessment, this had been undertaken but contained sensitive information and had not formed part of any of the reports to Committees. She also added that the service users who had moved from the Beeches whilst Phoenix House had been built, had been so happy with their accommodation that they had not wanted to move into Phoenix House and this had led to the lower occupancy levels. Although the sale would not recoup the cost of building Phoenix House, the equipment which cost £1m would be reused elsewhere in the County.

120.7 The Head of Specialist Adult Services added that the Cabinet had considered the business case on 17 November 2010. He confirmed that the possibility of other providers using Phoenix House had been explored and this correspondence was available and that the Registered Manager was responsible for the day to day management of Phoenix House. It was regulated by the Care Quality Commission (CQC) and information about monitoring and marketing was published on the CQC website. With regard to staffing, it was explained that staff previously employed at the Beeches now worked at Phoenix House. They were not full time primarily and provided care 24 hour a day. The Chairman added that he had been given assurance that Phoenix House would not be sold until later in the year and this would allow time for a Call to Account if this was agreed.

120.8 In the light of the information presented, members discussed whether a Call to Account was warranted. They recognised that circumstances had changed in between the time of the decision to build Phoenix House and its occupancy in that people with learning disabilities were now accommodated in community settings with the appropriate support. The decision to sell would release funding which could be spent elsewhere even if this was less than the original cost of build. They concluded that there was no case for a call to account. They did, however, think it important for the matter to be discussed and explanations given to counter criticisms from the public. They also thought that

consideration should be given to any lessons learned and they suggested that the criteria for a call to account be reviewed.

120.9 As the decision to build Phoenix House had involved a capital bid, the Chairman asked for a report to be provided on how capital bids were scored. The Committee were reminded that they had the power to ask for post project appraisals too. The Chairman issued an invitation to the County Council member for Blandford to attend when this item was considered.

Resolved

121.1 That the criteria for a call to account in to the decision to sell Phoenix House was not met.

121.2 That a report on capital bid scoring and the post project appraisal for Phoenix House be provided for consideration at a future meeting.

Scoping report in relation to a review of Community Transport

122.1 The Committee considered a report by the Chief Executive which scoped a review of community transport which the Committee had agreed to undertake on 10 June 2014.

122.2 The Corporate Policy and Performance Officer (Complaints) presented the report which explained what community transport included, detailed some of the many schemes in Dorset, potential barriers to delivery and suggested key lines of enquiry for the review.

122.3 The Cabinet Member for Children's Safeguarding and Families hoped that the review of current community transport arrangements would take into account the views of users, deliverers and those providing alternative forms of transport so that a more inclusive, joined up approach would be taken in future. She was concerned that the County Council was not considering the matter holistically and that there was a lack of transparency as to how Cabinet funding for community transport was being used.

122.4 Attention was drawn to the evidence provided by the North Dorset Travel Study, that community transport schemes worked well in North Dorset and that the County Council had not yet considered this report in its planning.

122.5 The Chairman drew attention to paragraphs 5.2 and 5.3 of the report which set out key questions for the review and asked members to direct any additional questions or details of anyone should be invited to take part in the review to the Senior Policy and Performance Manager by the end of July 2014.

122.6 One member suggested that the key questions be split into options available and lessons learned from voluntary car schemes and examples of voluntary car schemes should be included.

122.8 The Director for Environment and the Economy explained that there were transport concerns in the Adult and Community Services, Children's and Environment Directorates. He recognised that there was a budget issue for rural transport and that current arrangements were not working. He welcomed a review which considered the North Dorset study and views from those involved and which would enable the County Council to take a leadership role in improving the current situation.

122.9 Some concern was expressed that invitees might not take part in the review and the use of the Call to Account procedure to require some people to attend was discussed. It was agreed that interested parties would be invited to take part and if

participation was insufficient consideration would be given as to how it could be increased. It was also agreed that the review would require at least a whole day and that this should be held in September.

Resolved

123.1 That the proposed scope of the review of community transport as amended in minute 122.6 above, be agreed.

123.2 That the review be held on a date to be arranged in September 2014.

Forward Together Update – LGA Peer Challenge

124.1 The Committee considered a report by the Chief Executive which provided an update on progress taking forward the recommendations from the Peer Review action plans arising from the Reviews carried out in July 2013 and April 2014.

124.2 The Senior Policy and Performance Manager presented the report drawing attention to the findings of the follow-up review on 7 April 2014 as set out in the report. Members were provided with copies of the appendix to the report as this had been omitted from the agenda.

124.3 One member commented that communications did not work well currently and that more should be done to improve them. Another member referred to the need for the outcomes of the Forward Together programme to be clearly articulated and suggested that this be reviewed by the Committee to see whether outcomes were achieved. The Director for Corporate Resources explained that the Action Plan to address the Peer Review's concerns on communications was virtually complete. Members asked to review the Action Plan.

Resolved

125. That the Committee review the Action Plan at a future meeting.

Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) Update

126.1 The Committee considered a report by the Director for Corporate Resources which provided a summary of the national and local issues that impacted on the County Council's finances that would need to be taken into account when developing the next three-year financial plan. The report was considered by the Cabinet on 2 July 2014.

126.2 The Director for Corporate Resources explained that the report was the start of the budget setting process for the Council. He reported an overspend on service budgets for 2013/14 of £1.1m, which was below earlier projections, and the offsetting of an underspend of £4.8m on centrally controlled budgets which had resulted in a £3.7m underspend against the revenue budget overall. He drew attention to the particular challenges the Care Act and Better Care Fund would provide and the significant sums the Council had received from Government for road maintenance due to the severe weather conditions experienced earlier in the year. The report also identified carry forwards from directorates which the Cabinet had agreed.

126.3 The balances of £19.2m put the Council in a good position, although challenges remained and some required savings had yet to be identified. The Cabinet and Forward Together Board would be focusing on addressing the shortfall in the next few months. The Director then responded to questions about particular issues impacting on the MTFP – single state pension, the Dorset Public Sector Network (DPSN), Local Government funding and spending, and Education. One member asked for an update on the DPSN for the Autumn.

126.4 The Vice-Chairman drew attention to the challenges provided by the Care Act and the risk this posed for the County Council and asked whether the reconfiguration and

transformation of services would align with the budget. The Director stated that this posed enormous questions for the County Council and the NHS and joint working to prevent hospital admissions and to move patients into the community more quickly was being undertaken. The Care Act could bring more people into the system and there was a danger that the system would not cope with this influx and alternative solutions were being sought. The Local Government Association and County Councils' Network were lobbying the Government for resources to meet the anticipated increased demand.

Noted

Debt Recovery Performance for Year 2013-14

127.1 The Committee considered a report by the Director for Corporate Resources which provided information about annual debt recovery performance for 2013-14.

127.2 The Director for Corporate Resources responded to a recent front page article in the local press by stating that it was not unusual for organisations of the County Council's size to have a debt of £8-9m at any one time. At the year end the figure was £12m, however £8m of this related to invoices issued within 30 days including £2.3m regarding NHS bills issued in March and paid in the new financial year. The article gave the impression that the County Council did not pursue debts when this was not the case and staff worked hard to do so.

127.3 Overall there was a positive picture with the total debt over 30 days being less than in 2012-13. However, sundry debts were higher than the previous year but this was attributed to increased operational activity. There were two significant write-offs. Within the Adult and Community Services Directorate, these related to £270k which should have been written off previously. In addition there were £106k on payroll debts which could not be recovered. With regard to the Council's percentage of debt over income, this was normal for the industry and the write-off percentage was also extremely low. The report also outlined steps to improve business processes and procedures.

127.4 Members agreed that it was important for the public to be given information to illustrate that the Council was effective and efficient in recovering debt and that robust mechanisms were in place to reduce debt wherever possible. It was recognised that the current economic climate might put more people under financial pressure with the risk that more people would be unable to pay for services.

127.5 The Head of Internal Audit, Insurance and Risk Management drew attention to the fact that 23% of the write-off were due to there being insufficient funds in a deceased service user's estate to pay for services received. In such circumstances there was no other option than to write the debt off.

127.6 One member advocated moving towards a paperless system for debt recovery and the Cabinet Member for Corporate Resources looked forward to the help new technology could provide. He considered the current situation to be satisfactory.

Noted

Treasury Management and Prudential Code Review 2013/14

128.1 The Committee considered a report by the Director for Corporate Resources which provided an update on the economic situation, its impact on interest rates, performance against the annual investment strategy, an update on any new borrowing, any debt re-scheduling, compliance with the Prudential Code and an update on the deposits held with Icelandic Banks.

128.2 The Director for Corporate Resources reported that since the Icelandic Bank issue arose in 2008, the criteria for placing funds with the banking sector had been tightened. Current performance was good, income generation was above that for local authorities and borrowing was financed at lower levels than other local authorities.

128.3 Attention was drawn to the request to remove the support ratings from the Treasury Management Strategy as a means of assessing the financial strength of counterparties as it no longer served its purpose. The removal would not affect the Strategy in any way. The Committee noted that 96% of the investment in Icelandic Banks had been recovered.

Recommended

129. That the Cabinet be recommended to remove the support ratings as a means of assessing the financial strength of counterparties.

Reason for Recommendation

130. To better inform members of the Treasury Management process and strategy, in accordance with the corporate priority to ensure money and resources were used wisely.

Internal Audit Quarterly Report

131.1 The Committee considered a report by the Director for Corporate Resources which summarised the work of the Council's Internal Audit Service and provided an overall positive assurance opinion on the Council's management of risk and the systems on internal Control; a schedule of audits completed during the period detailing their respective assurance opinion ratings, recommendations and their ranking; and details of audit reviews which had either received a "Partial Assurance Opinion" or where risks had been identified which were considered to represent potential significant corporate risk to the Council

131.2 The Director of Planning, South West Audit Partnership (SWAP), drew attention to the support SWAP was providing for the Forward Together Programme; that he was confident that the audit plan would be completed on time; that there were no significant risks to report; and highlighted the scheme of audits, their status and opinions and areas of partial assurance.

131.3 Concern was expressed about the level of activity within the Dorset Local Enterprise Partnership (DLEP) and assurance sought that governance arrangements were sound and effective. The fact that the DLEP had favoured projects in the Poole and Bournemouth areas with a lack of focus on pan-Dorset issues was highlighted. The SWAP Audit Manager explained that she will be scoping an audit of the governance arrangements of the DLEP and accountability for projects in an audit that is planned for quarter three. She aims to meet with the DLEP Director to scope the work initially in September. More detail would be available at that time. The Committee noted that the County Council was the accountable body for the DLEP.

131.4 The Head of Internal Audit, Insurance and Risk Management provided some further context, reporting on recent appointments in the Environment and the Economy Directorate which would influence discussions about accountability arrangements of the DLEP. The Committee noted that the governance framework would be reported to the Cabinet in due course.

Resolved

132.1 That the work undertaken by SWAP, the positive conclusion reached that risks are generally well managed and the systems of internal control are working effectively be noted.

132.2 That there were no issues of potential significant corporate risk.

132.3 That those audit assignments which have been given a “partial” assurance opinion, but are not considered to present significant risk to the Council’s overall operations be noted.

132.4 That those audit assignments which have been allocated either a “substantial” or “reasonable” assurance opinion where it has generally been concluded that controls are operating satisfactorily be noted.

Corporate Performance Monitoring Report – Fourth Quarter 2013/14

133.1 The Committee considered a report by the Chief Executive which presented the monitoring of the Budget and Corporate Plan for the fourth quarter of 2013-14. At the end of the quarter the Budget and Corporate Plan had an average “amber” rating with 60% of indicators meeting or exceeding their target and 68% of actions being on course or complete. The report also highlighted headline issues and the Corporate Balanced Scorecard which detailed performance information about a small number of high quality qualitative performance indicators. Those shown in red were significantly off target and might provide increased risk to the County Council.

133.2 The Corporate Policy and Performance Manager distributed information about significant issues for the Committee to consider and explained his concerns. These related to the significant overspends in Adult and Community Services and Children’s Services; the falling percentage of residents who felt well informed about what was going on at the Council; the poor performance for children subject of child protection plans within one year of cessation; and the percentage of highway safety defects made safe within defined service levels.

133.3 With regard to the Council’s increasing spend on children in care and the increasing cost of special educational needs transport, members asked for clarification on the extent of the overspend in each of the two areas. They recognised that the number of Children in Care was part of a national trend, but sought assurance that steps were being taken to address the continuing overspend in special educational needs transport. The Director for Environment and the Economy agreed that a reduction was necessary but no answer had been found as yet. The situation was being monitored closely.

133.4 With regard to whether the changes to Adult and Community Services would impact on performance, it was noted that the Care Bill would have a significant impact for the Council and steps were currently being taken to prepare for its introduction. The 2014-15 Corporate Plan contained a number of measures that would monitor the impact of these changes on social care performance.

133.5 The Chairman stated that children’s safety was a high priority for the Council and he referred to the change in target for children subject to a child protection plan and asked that information about the change be to be sent to members.

133.6 The Committee noted that the Corporate Plan had been published and recognised the need for it to be underpinned with targets which were likely to be relevant to more than one Directorate. It was suggested that the Committee review how the new targets would relate to Overview Committees. The Corporate Policy and Performance Manager would discuss the targets with the Overview Chairmen.

Noted

Highways Asset Management Plan (HAMP)

134.1 The Committee considered a report by the Director for Environment and the Economy on the revised and updated Highways Asset Management Plan (HAMP) following recommendations in the Highway Maintenance Efficiency Programme which was published in May 2013.

134.2 The Committee were reminded that they had considered the HAMP before in draft form. The capital programme had been maintained during the last four or five years through prudential borrowing and one-off Government funding and the local authority had also secured severe weather funding. This had led to the improved condition of the road network. But from next year these funding streams would not be available, which would result in the budget being halved to £9m. If the current funding level was not maintained, the road network would deteriorate. The HAMP outlined options for future maintenance of the highways asset and the implications these had for the Council. The Director for Corporate Resources added that currently loan charges were stable but he hoped to avoid additional capital financing in 2016. If the road network was maintained at the current funding level, then funding for other services would have to be reduced or cut. The reduction in funding essentially took maintenance back to the 2010/11 level.

134.3 It was suggested that any future report be shortened to key messages, but it was explained that the HAMP was tailored to meet the requirements of the Department for Transport and the Highways Maintenance Efficiency Programme and this had resulted in the Council securing a higher percentage of funding than had been achieved before.

134.4 Some members welcomed the detail that the HAMP provided and the options for future maintenance but asked how the authority compared to its peers. The Head of Dorset Highways explained that he was investigating other authorities but Somerset, Wiltshire and Hampshire had provided additional funding for their maintenance programmes. The Director for Environment and the Economy referred to page 41 of the report where the consequences of “doing nothing” and maintaining current levels of funding were illustrated. He recognised that with the diminishing resources available it was difficult to allocate additional resources for maintenance. He recommended that scenario 3 be followed which required an annual investment of £15.3m but resources were diminishing and the Council could only work within the available funding. The Highways Team would have to explore all options to become more efficient and effective and do things differently in order to optimise road condition and this might mean that maintenance would be varied across the County.

Resolved

135.1 That the approval of Volume 1 of the Highways Asset Management Plan (HAMP), subject to further minor revisions approved by the Director for Environment and the Economy be supported.

135.2 That the need for further work to develop a business case for additional capital highway maintenance funding be recognised.

135.3 That the progress made with Volume 2 of the HAMP be noted.

Complaints and Compliments Annual Report 2013/14

136.1 The Committee considered a report by the Chief Executive which presented an analysis of the complaints recorded under the County Council’s complaints procedure in 2013-14 and learning points and improvements made as a result of these.

136.2 The Corporate Policy and Performance Officer (Complaints) presented the report. There had been a reduction in the number of complaints received (359) compared to the previous two years (370 in 2012-13 and 349 in 2011-12) and fewer fully justified complaints (56 compare to 66 in 2012-13 and 96 in 2011-12). The number of compliments had also reduced (990 compared to 1089 in 2012-13 and 1365 in 2011-12). Complaints were

used to improve performance and lessons learned from each Directorate were noted at paragraph 8 of the report. Attention was also drawn to the expenditure on external investigators for two Stage 2 complaints, the one Stage 3 complaint, and final decisions made by the Local Government Ombudsman in relation to complaints against Dorset County Council.

Resolved

137. That the Complaints Annual Report 2013-14 be approved.

Quarterly Asset Management Plan

138.1 The Committee considered a report by the Director for Environment and the Economy which provided a quarterly update on progress against the asset management objectives and on progress with the Buildings, Highways, Waste Management, ICT and Fleet Management programmes. It also provided an overview of the financial performance of the whole capital programme.

138.2 The Capital Programme Manager presented the report in detail. The 25% reduction in the Council's asset portfolio within five years had slowed so that it looked as though 18% would be achieved by 31 March 2015 and the 25% target met in March 2016. He also highlighted that 11% of the current fleet would be replaced this year; that the disposal of Bovington Park had been approved; a Memorandum of Understanding with East Dorset District Council would be established relating to the use of space within the Wimborne Hub; the Dorchester Transport Environmental Plan was progressing; the Highways Asset Management Plan had identified a maintenance backlog in excess of £200m; the authority had successfully bid for funding for the severe weather experienced in the winter; the costs of maintaining an ageing fleet; and that the flexibility in the capital programme was £1.028m up to the end of 2016/17.

138.3 The Chairman stated that the Committee had always been sceptical that a 25% reduction in the Councils' property portfolio could be achieved and sought clarification of the aspiration of retaining only 25% of the portfolio. The Director for the Environment and the Economy explained that he had produced a report for the Cabinet (the Baseline Property Portfolio) on what property would be needed if the County Council was built from scratch and this exercise had identified that only 25% of the current assets would be needed and that they could be situated in 15 locations across the county. The implied 75% reduction was not a target but provided a framework on which future decisions could be made. The 75% was unlikely to be achieved, but it gave an indication that the 25% target could readily be exceeded.

138.4 One member said he was not concerned about the 31 March 2015 date being exceeded as long as the 25% target was achieved. He also referred to the decision to sell Bovington Park and the fact that as the local member he had not been invited to the meeting where this decision was made. He also asked that he be involved in the plans for the future use of the Park as he had local knowledge which might prove useful.

138.5 With regard to the role of the Dorset Development Partnership, the Estate and Assets Manager explained that service delivery models needed to change and this would lead to premises being identified for disposal. All services were now engaged and there was a clearer view of the strategy in relation to reducing the portfolio to a manageable level. He was confident that more assets would be disposed of next year but disposal should be at the optimum time and it might be that some properties would need to be kept or alternative uses found so as to achieve the best value when they were sold.

138.6 Attention was drawn to the fire which occurred 12 months ago at County Hall and which resulted in the telephone system crashing and a question asked as to when the

Hampshire back up solution would come on line. The Director for Corporate Resources was confident that this would be resolved within the next two months. Attention was also drawn to the Public Internet Access Project which also involved Hampshire and which also had been delayed. The new Library System had also been planned for three years and the need for a joined up approach was highlighted. Assurances were given that the two were being managed together, and the Committee was reminded that a report on the Public Internet Access Project would be considered on 16 September 2014, which would address these points.

Noted

Outside Bodies

139. No comments had been received from members appointed to outside bodies which related to the Chief Executive's Office or the Corporate Resources Directorate.

Cabinet Forward Plan and Work Programmes of Overview Committees

140. The Committee considered the Cabinet's draft Forward Plan for the meeting to be held on 3 September 2014, and the work programmes of the Adult and Community Services, Children's Services and Environment Overview Committees.

Noted

Questions from Members of the Council

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

Exempt Business

Exclusion of the Public

Resolved

142. That under Section 100A (4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the meeting for minute 143 to ? to because it was likely that if members of the public were present, there would be a disclosure to them of exempt information as defined in paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A and the public interest in withholding the information outweighed the public interest in disclosing that information

Progress report on Dorset Development Partnership

143.1 The Committee considered an exempt report by the Director for Environment and the Economy which provided an update on the work of the Dorset Development Partnership.

143.2 The report contained information about the projects given to the Dorset Development Partnership for disposal and financial gains to date. The Partnership was a tool for the Council to use to secure enhanced value for surplus properties and provided a means of reducing risk to the Council and had advantages for both parties. The Council had been the second to use this model and six other Councils had since followed suit.

143.3 In response to a question, the Estate and Assets Manager explained the governance arrangements for the Partnership and elected member involvement. He also explained the validation process which properties underwent before being passed to the Partnership for disposal.

Noted

Top Five School Deficits

144.1 The Committee considered an exempt report by the Director for Children's Services which provided details of the top five school deficits, as requested by the Committee on 10 June 2014.

144.2 The Committee noted that a total of eighteen schools were currently in deficit. Eleven of these were expected to reach break even at the end of the current year and two had recovery plans in place.

144.3 The Sufficiency and Funding Manager explained the deficit situation for each of the top five schools, steps taken to address them and implications for the County Council. The Cabinet Member for Education and Communications provided further information on the individual schools to supplement that contained in the report.

144.4 Having considered the information provided about the current level of deficits, steps taken to address this and the implications for the County Council, the Committee asked for an annual report on school deficits to be provided.

Resolved

145. That a report on school deficits be provided annually for consideration by the Committee.

Meeting duration: 10.00am to 2.40pm