



## Environment and Economy Overview Committee

Minutes of the meeting held at County Hall, Colliton Park, Dorchester, DT1 1XJ on Thursday, 17 March 2016

### Present:

Daryl Turner (Chairman)

Richard Biggs, Ronald Coatsworth, Hilary Cox, Mervyn Jeffery, Paul Kimber, Mike Lovell, Peter Richardson and John Wilson.

### Members Attending

Robert Gould (Leader of the Council) and Peter Finney (Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Environment) attended under Standing Order 54 (1).

### Officers Attending

Andrew Martin (Head of Highways), Peter Moore (Head of Environment), Matthew Piles (Head of Economy), Andy Smith (Group Finance Manager) and David Northover (Senior Democratic Services Officer).

### For certain items, as appropriate

John Alexander (Policy and Performance Manager), Nicky Cleave (Assistant Director of Public Health), Mike Garrity (County Planning, Minerals and Waste Team Leader), Mike Hansford (Manager, Dorset Highways), Ben Lancaster (Senior Estate Surveyor), Giles Nicholson (Greenspace Team Leader) and Phil Sterling (Coast and Countryside Service Manager).

(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 Committee to be held on **Wednesday, 15 June 2016**.)

### **Apologies**

- 1 Apologies for absence were received from Andy Canning, Margaret Phipps, Mark Tewkesbury and Mike Harries (Director for Environment and the Economy).

### **Code of Conduct**

- 2 There were no declarations by members of disclosable pecuniary interests under the Code of Conduct.

In respect of the item on key cross boundary planning issues and timeline for cross-boundary planning work in Dorset, Councillor John Wilson mentioned that this issue had been considered at East Dorset District Council, of which he was a member.

### **Minutes**

- 3 The minutes of the meeting held on 19 January 2016 were confirmed and signed.

### **Public Participation**

#### 4 Public Speaking

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

There were no public statements received in accordance with Standing Order 21 (1).

### Petitions

The Committee were informed that one petition had been submitted for consideration, set out below.

#### **Procedure for Petitions - Petition entitled 'Improving the Pavement in the Highcliffe Shopping Centre'**

The Committee considered a report by the Head of Highways on the receipt of a petition containing 1469 signatures asking that the current poor condition of the pavement in the Lymington Road Shopping Centre at Highcliffe be rectified and for attention to be given to the improvement of its condition on safety grounds. The report set out a series of options available to the Committee on how they might wish to respond to the petition. The officer's report was supplemented by a visual presentation showing a series of photographs.

Malcolm Mawbey, local resident and petition organiser, explained that the condition of the pavements had deteriorated considerably and had raised the concerns primarily on safety grounds. He explained that the footways were uneven and became slippery in wet weather, especially when leaves were attracted to the depressions. Icy conditions compounded this. The proximity to the busy A338 also was of concern. Trips and slips were particularly prevalent amongst the vulnerable in society and the unevenness of the footway's surface contributed to this notably. The petition was as a direct response to complaints received and, as it stood, the standard of maintenance was unacceptable. He hoped that positive action could be taken to rectify this.

Officers acknowledged that the pavement was uneven in places, this being similar to numerous footways throughout the County. They confirmed that if the condition of the footway was considered to be impaired as a result of work instigated by private utilities, then there was scope to recover suitable costs from them in rectifying this. Having investigated the matter, Highways Operations considered that the scheme extended beyond that of the remit of structural maintenance. This had subsequently been referred to the Strategic Highway Planning team for consideration, with the recommendation that it be considered for improvement requiring design and consultation, and that it had the backing of a Borough member and the local County Council member.

Accordingly, a pre-feasibility study was to be undertaken to explore the extent of the works required, what options there were, and to determine an estimated cost. Once established, the scheme would be prioritised against other schemes county wide, with a source of funding also needing to be identified.

The Committee considered that this course of action provided a practical solution which went a considerable way to meeting the petitioners' wishes.

### **Resolved**

That the petition be noted and the petitioner informed that a pre-feasibility study was to be undertaken to explore the extent of the works required, what options there were, and to determine an estimated cost. Once established, the scheme would be prioritised against other schemes County wide.

### **Reason for Decision**

In order to comply with the County Council's published scheme for responding to petitions and so as to enable local people to connect with local elected decision makers.

### **Forward Together for Environment and the Economy**

5 The Committee considered a report by the Director for Environment and the Economy which provided an update on the progress being made on workstreams for the Directorate's Transformation Programme, the three elements of which were; the Directorate's restructuring, the Holistic Transport Services Review and the Highways Service Delivery Model. Officers reported that good progress was being made in this regard with promising outcomes being delivered.

Details of the progress being made across the Programme were set out in the Director's report. Particular mention was made of the significant reduction in Special Educational Needs Transport spend by the way in which this service was now being delivered. Officers reported that the Directorate was on course to deliver a better than balanced budget in 2015/16, with £828K of additional targeted under-spend, with plans in place to achieve the necessary savings in 2016/17 and beyond. The Committee were pleased to see the progress being made and the actions being taken to ensure that the effects of the transformation continued to be realised.

#### **Noted**

### **Revenue Budget Monitoring 2015/16**

6 The Committee considered a report by the Chief Financial Officer setting out budget monitoring information as at the end of January 2016, which showed a forecast overspend against service budgets for the County Council of £4,442,000.

The Environment and the Economy Directorate, was forecast to underspend by £828,000, with the details attributable to each cost centre being set out in the report. Officers confirmed the County Council's commitment to deliver a balanced budget outturn in future years and responded to a series of questions on particular aspects of the report.

The Committee were pleased to see the actions being taken to improve on the forecast position for the end of the financial year.

#### **Noted**

### **Key Cross Boundary Planning Issues and Timeline for Cross Boundary Planning work in Dorset**

7 The Committee considered a report by the Head of Economy which summarised key strategic cross boundary planning issues, together with a proposed timeline for the strategic cross boundary work, having been agreed by the Strategic Planning Forum. The arrangements primarily covered strategic and local planning issues, housing and employment needs and minerals and waste considerations. Endorsement of the appendices to the report detailing this was also being sought.

Officers explained how the Forum operated, what it was designed to achieve and what it entailed. This non legally binding arrangement provided for a consistent approach to how planning was addressed between each District; the effect each local plan had on neighbouring authority areas; how it was applied; the relationship between the differing planning authorities within the Dorset Local Enterprise Partnership area approaches taken in respect of their particular planning needs; and provided a basis on which to make progress.

As no statutory strategy existed, the idea was to provide a basis for cooperation between all planning authorities on strategic planning matters and the affect these had. Officers were now asking the Committee to endorse the approach being taken so as to provide a clear steer on how to proceed and the governance arrangements to do so.

Whilst members understood the need for collaborative arrangements on issues which had significant effects across local plan boundaries and how these were addressed, there was some concern expressed, notably by the Chairman of the County Council, on how housing needs in eastern Dorset were being accounted for and the implications of this for individual local plan housing allocations.

The Committee were reassured to hear that the concern raised over the implications of the Strategic Housing Market assessment for Eastern Dorset were mitigated by the need for this evidence to be thoroughly tested through the planning process. An assessment of need would only be made on that basis, this being one of a number of considerations. The benefits of the joint working would be to determine what housing needs could be met and how these should be allocated and applied, taking into account all necessary considerations. Officers assured the Committee that there was no commitment to proceed on the basis of the Strategic Housing Market assessment alone. Pan authority cooperation was the only basis on which this could be addressed and one authority alone could not proceed in its own right.

The Committee appreciated how the proposed arrangements would benefit the cross boundary issue in successfully achieving what was necessary and endorsed how this was proposed to be addressed.

### **Recommended**

That the Committee endorse the proposals and the Cabinet be asked to agree:-

- the summary of cross-boundary planning issues (Appendix 1 of the report); and
- the timeline for cross-boundary strategic planning work (Appendix 2 of the report).

### **Reason for Recommendation**

To add Dorset County Council's endorsement of the key issues and timetable of work on cross-boundary planning matters.

## **Highways Asset Management Plan (HAMP)**

8

The Committee considered a report by the Head of Highways in respect of the Highways Asset Management Plan (HAMP) which was designed to provide a comprehensive and strategic overview of the Dorset road network, the assets associated with this - including details of Dorset's 10 Highway Asset groups - and how the financial consequences of maintaining the network were being addressed.

The attention of the Committee was drawn to the purpose of the HAMP, what it was designed to achieve, what it entailed and how its provisions could be applied. As well as detailing the protocol for the collection and recording of asset inventory and providing a breakdown of the value of individual assets and their maintenance and replacement costs, the importance of having a HAMP was essential for maximising Government funding allocations, given the introduction of the new Incentive Fund. This now required all authorities to complete an annual self-assessment questionnaire to determine which of three performance bands they fell within and to demonstrate what investment was being made in the network.

How the self assessment process was managed was described and, whilst the County Council currently identified itself as being in Band 2, the HAMP was a means of providing a basis for demonstrating how assets were being managed and what assessment was being made for their improvement and maintenance. Given that further investment was to be made to ensure the continued commitment in the fabric

of the network and to maintain the progress already made, there were clear aspirations that, for 2017/18 the County Council should be categorised in the uppermost Band 3. The Committee understood the importance of progression to Band 3 in order to benefit from the receipt of full funding allocations. Members noted that failing to achieve Band 3 would have very significant implications.

The means by which the Department of Transport could ensure that this process was objective was explained. The Committee were pleased to see that the HAMP provided the means of demonstrating how the County Council remained committed to investment in, and the improvement of, the County's road network.

The Committee acknowledged the point raised by the Cabinet Member for Environment that the principle of investing to save was fundamental in ensuring that highway assets the Council had were fully optimised and fulfilled their value.

### **Recommended**

That the Cabinet be asked to adopt the revised Volume 1, and the newly developed Volume 2 of the Highway Asset Management Plan which would set out the strategy for managing Dorset's highway infrastructure.

### **Reasons for Recommendation**

1. To obtain approval of the revisions to Volume 1 of the HAMP and the newly developed HAMP Volume 2.
2. To ensure Dorset Highways complied with the recommendations set out in the Highway Infrastructure Asset Management guidance, published by the Department for Transport through its Highway Maintenance Efficiency Programme.
3. This demonstrated to the Department for Transport that Dorset had embraced best practice through Asset Management and was making best use of the available funding allocations.

## **County Farms Management Plan 2016-21**

9

The Committee considered a report by the Head of Environment which reviewed the County Farms Management Plan so that it remained meaningful and relevant for the next 5 year period and what needed to be addressed. Given that the Estate, and the County Council, had changed the way they operated in recent years, the opportunity was being taken to review current management practices.

The Committee were informed that the principle aims of the Estate were to provide the opportunity to access agricultural practice, allowing tenants to be able to farm independently, and to play its part in sustaining rural communities by facilitating the means by which the vibrancy of the countryside was maintained and fulfilled.

The proposed new Estate Management Plan focused on a greater partnership based relationship with tenant farmers to empower them to take more responsibility for the maintenance of their holdings; providing good quality, public access to the countryside to benefit public health and wellbeing; and encouraging tenants to provide agricultural apprenticeship opportunities.

The Committee acknowledged that the Management Plan had been considered by the County Farms Liaison Panel, who had recommended that the Plan be approved.

The Committee acknowledged the benefits which the Estate brought, both to the County Council and the rural sector alike. There remained considerable merit in maintaining a thriving and successful Estate and, from the way in which it had been managed over recent years, in the consolidation of farming enterprises and the

amalgamation of farms, this had realised considerable benefits by the way operations were efficiently managed.

The Committee were pleased to see the proposals and considered the Estate to be a valuable asset in the County Council portfolio and was much valued for the work it did.

### **Recommended**

That the County Farms Estate Management Plan 2016-21 be endorsed and the Cabinet be asked to agree to its formal adoption.

### **Reason for Recommendation**

To support Corporate Plan objectives on economic growth and the delivery of the Corporate Asset Management Plan objectives and targets on increasing returns from the County Farms Estate.

## **Dorset County Council Historic Environment Services**

10

The Committee considered a report by the Head of Environment which set out the role and responsibilities of the County Council's Historic Environment Service and what it did in fulfilling the archaeological requirements on behalf of all Dorset's Local Planning Authorities, through the maintenance of the Dorset Historic Environment Record (HER) and the provision of expert, archaeological advice. The importance of the HER was explained and how this important tool was used to categorise and classify artefacts. Duties undertaken by the team were explained, including care for the Roman Town House and other heritage sites, provision of archaeological advice and outreach to engage the wider community in caring for the historic environment. The team also contributed to a number of other elements of the County Council's work, working with other services and teams in the care of Dorset's heritage.

The report set out how the Service currently operated and was managed and, in order to continue to fulfil its basic statutory and planning policy obligations in respect of heritage assets, what was needed in order to achieve this. The Service was reviewed on an ongoing basis and officers considered that with just two full time members of staff it would be difficult for the County Council to meet its obligations in this area with any less capacity. As it stood, the teams' structure ensured that National Planning Policy Framework requirements and statutory provisions in relation to heritage assets were met.

The Committee were informed that comparisons with other counties indicated that the Service offered a cost effective service, which was pleasing given all that it did and the funding it received. However, as services continued to be transformed and savings made, in order for this level of efficiency to be maintained, officers considered that there was a need to formalise the arrangements for ensuring that a higher proportion of the costs of providing Dorset's other Local Planning Authorities with access to the HER were recovered from those authorities.

The Committee acknowledged that there was a need for heritage assets to be satisfactorily managed and that the work of the team in doing this was important and much valued. As an aside, the Vice-Chairman considered that the Walks Programme the Service ran was much valued and should be published to a far greater extent.

### **Resolved**

That the continued role of the Historic Environment team in helping the County Council and other local planning authorities in Dorset meet their obligations to Dorset's heritage be endorsed.

That the arrangements for ensuring that a higher proportion of the costs of providing

Dorset's other Local Planning Authorities with access to the HER were recovered from those authorities be agreed on a formal basis and the scope for doing this prioritised.

### Reason for Decisions

To support Corporate Plan aims on economic growth and wellbeing, and the commitment that 'Dorset's natural, cultural and heritage environments would be well managed, healthy, productive and vibrant' in particular.

### **Update on Key Developments in Public Health**

11 The Committee considered a report by the Director of Public Health which outlined the key developments and achievements within Public Health over the previous 12 months, as well as key on-going areas of development.

The report set out in detail what the work of Public Health entailed and its relationship with the Environment and the Economy Directorate. What service provision was available was explained and members took the opportunity to ask a series of questions on how the delivery of such provision was being applied.

Officers considered that the part the Directorate could play in helping to deliver the public health agenda, in encouraging and promoting activity, was critical to its success and members were pleased to see the approach being taken and the interaction between the two Directorates.

### **Noted**

### **Corporate Performance Monitoring Report, Third Quarter 2015/16 (1 October - 31 December 2015) and Draft Corporate Plan Refresh 2016-17**

12 The Committee considered a joint report by the Chief Executive and the Director for Environment and the Economy which contained analysis of the Council's progress against both of its corporate aims and presented the results of the monitoring of the County Council's Corporate Balanced Scorecard for the third quarter of 2015/16. Whilst the Scorecard summarised performance monitoring analysis across the whole Authority, there was a specific focus on those elements of the plan which were managed by the Environment and the Economy Directorate. Members' attention was drawn to the Outcomes Framework. Members' endorsement of the Draft Corporate Plan Refresh 2016-17 was also being sought.

Officers reported on the performance measures for the Directorate and to what these were attributable. Detailed performance information for all of these measures was provided in the Appendix to the report, with a significant proportion being on target. Particular mention was made to the improvement in the direction of travel for the Growing Places Fund. The way in which performance information would be available in future was highlighted, with it being more readily accessible and interactive, in enabling more timely performance data to be provided which would prove to be more relevant and meaningful to members' understanding of the issues at hand.

Councillors' attention was drawn to a series of performance monitoring measures of note, what was being done to address and manage these and how these would continue to be assessed in the future.

The Committee acknowledged the need for the Draft Corporate Plan Refresh, how it was being delivered and considered that it provided a good basis on which the delivery and provision of services could be achieved.

The Vice-Chairman considered that there was a need for greater acknowledgement of the role played by Dorset's unique environment. She considered that the natural environment, and the benefits it brought to Dorset, was fundamental to everything that the County Council was trying to achieve in its Corporate Aims. Officers agreed to

bear this in mind in finalising the Corporate Plan.

Accordingly, the Committee endorsed the Draft Corporate Plan Refresh, subject to the comments made being reflected, and how the corporate performance monitoring was being addressed.

**Noted**

**Policy Development Panels**

- 13 The Panel were updated on progress with the Policy Development Panel on HGV Management.

**Noted**

**Schedule of Councillor Seminars and Events 2016**

- 14 The Committee's attention was drawn to the Schedule of Councillors' Seminars and Events for the future.

**Noted**

**Environment and Economy Overview Committee Work Programme**

- 15 The Committee noted that because of the impending change in committee structures, the Work Programme for this particular Committee had now become obsolete. Outstanding issues would be allocated to the relevant new Committee.

**Noted**

**Questions from County Councillors**

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

**Strategy for Highway Verge Management : March 2016 update**

- 17 **Exempt Business**

**Resolved**

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

**Strategy for Highway Verge Management : March 2016 update**

The Committee considered an exempt report by the Head of Environment on the means by which the highway verge management strategy was being implemented, how the process was being managed and what arrangements should be put in place to realise greater efficiency savings, whilst ensuring that an acceptable level of service delivery was maintained.

As there was to be consideration of contractual arrangements, the Committee understood the need for this item to be considered on a confidential basis.

Officers explained that the way in which the Service was now managed capitalised on the benefits of the integration within the Greenspace team. This provided for greater capacity and flexibility in how verge cutting was addressed. Comparisons were made between how other authorities, notably Devon County Council, and Dorset were operating their service. As satisfactory progress was being made, officers considered that there was the prospect of accelerating the strategy in order that savings might be realised at an earlier stage. Options on how this could be best managed were drawn



to the Committee's attention. Officers confirmed that the number of urban cuts would remain unaltered.

The Committee acknowledged the success to date in implementing the strategy and agreed that the recommendations contained in the Head of Environment's report should be progressed.

**Resolved**

That the recommendations contained in the Head of Environment's report on how progress should be made, be endorsed.

**Reason for Decision**

To support corporate plan aims on enabling economic growth, specifically the commitments to manage and maintain highway infrastructure, and to ensure good management of our environmental and heritage assets.

Meeting Duration: 10.00 am - 11.50 am