



Economic Growth Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of the meeting held at County Hall, Colliton Park,
Dorchester, Dorset, DT1 1XJ on Monday, 26 March 2018

Present:

Ray Bryan (Chairman)
Cherry Brooks (Vice-Chairman), Jon Andrews, Andy Canning, Jean Dunseith, Spencer Flower,
Jon Orrell, Margaret Phipps and David Shortell

Members Attending

Daryl Turner, Cabinet Member for Natural and Built Environment
Derek Beer, County Councillor for Shaftesbury

Officers Attending: Mike Harries (Corporate Director for Environment and Economy), John Alexander (Senior Assurance Manager - Performance), Bridget Betts (Environment Officer), Doug Gilbert (Advisor - Children's Services), Julie Hammon (Wild Purbeck Project Assistant), Rosie Knapper (Acting Senior Advisor - Children's Services), Anthony Littlechild (Corporate Sustainability Officer), Rupert Lloyd (Programme Co-ordinator), Matthew Piles (Service Director - Economy, Natural and Built Environment) and Fiona King (Senior Democratic Services Officer).

(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 **Thursday, 28 June 2018.**)

Apologies for Absence

10 An apology for absence was received from Cllr Deborah Croney, Cabinet Member for Economy, Education, Learning and Skills.

Code of Conduct

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

Minutes

12 The minutes of the meeting held on 24 January 2018 were confirmed and signed subject to the deletion of the word 'minor' in Minute 48, under the Reason for Decision paragraph.

Public Participation

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

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

The Government's 25 Year Environmental Plan and Dorset County Council "green assets"

14 The Committee considered a report from the Coast and Countryside Service Manager which included a summary of the Government's 25 Year Environment Plan and showed how these were relevant to all four of the County Council's corporate outcomes.

Members also received the following presentations:-

- The Healthy Places Project - which gave members a focus on natural environment and prevention, along with an overview of collaborative work with Public Health and Dorset County Council.
- Stepping into Nature – which highlighted the Dorset Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) on Stepping into Nature project to deliver health and wellbeing benefits for older people. It was a partnership of cross sector organisations. The increase in wellbeing and quality of life was highlighted. The Chairman was keen for members to receive regular updates to see how this work was progressing.
- Social, Economic and Environmental Initiatives on our Coast - This Partnership was hosted by the County Council but funded by a number of organisations. The litter free coast and sea campaign was highlighted to reduce the environmental, social and economic impacts of marine and beach litter. The Plastics Surgery campaign was highlighted which was a campaign throughout the whole of Dorset. Litter Free Dorset aimed to reduce the environmental, social and economic impacts of litter in Dorset and had been running for around a year. Park yoga had been a very successful project which was free for people to attend. The Dorset Coastal Connections Project was all about businesses and having good public places.
- The Low Carbon Dorset Project - Helping Reduce Dorset's Footprint with the aim to stimulate growth in Dorset's low carbon economy.

In respect of the healthy side of the agenda, it was commented that in the past the promotion of cycling and walking had been aimed at more energetic people, a better approach would be to design routes closer to people's homes to avoid reliance on cars and public transport. The Service Director for Economy, Natural and Built Environment advised that the Health and Wellbeing Board were currently discussing these issues and what improvements could be made. It was all about localities, making small improvements that could make a huge difference. The Director highlighted that the real challenge was to work with those groups who chose not to access and to then try and remove those boundaries.

The Vice-Chairman highlighted that with the removal of stiles and gates being put in place, the biggest group affected would be the elderly and she urged officers to ensure that the gates were accessible.

One member made reference to the huge network of horse riders and the difficulty they had with the increasing amount of traffic when trying to get to the areas that they needed to get to. The Service Director emphasised the importance of looking at all users and all modes to ensure access for all.

Following a discussion about the future in respect of Local Government reorganisation (LGR), the Service Director advised that colleagues in Planning were in constant discussion about the changes and that all local authorities were reviewing their local plans at different stages. It was also noted that already a number of projects involved joint working with the Districts and Boroughs.

A member questioned if perhaps Appendix 2 of the report could be a bit more ambitious in respect of Dorset Topsoil, the cutting down of trees and the sustainable catch of fish. The Coast and Countryside Service Manager advised that there were already a number of designated marine protected areas and that Rights of Way officers were doing joined up work across the county, including tree conservation in Dorset. It was also confirmed that there was no fracking taking place in Dorset and that any change would of course come back to members. A question was also raised about the setting off of Chinese lanterns from County Council land.

The Chairman added that he felt the waterways needed to be maintained to ensure they didn't become a health hazard and to also ensure there were facilities in place to enable someone to be able to get out of water should they fall in. He would also like to see some reference to chewing gum being discarded thoughtlessly. He also made reference to the vulnerability of heathland following a recent decision by the Planning Inspectorate and suggested it would be helpful for local businesses and members of the Committee to meet.

The Chairman thanked officers for their very informative presentations and felt that Dorset had a unique opportunity to highlight the fantastic work in the community. The major headline as he saw it was 'making Dorset a better place to live and work' with a focus on increasing tourism.

Resolved

1. That the implications of the 25 Year Environmental Plan across the full range of local authority services and County Council functions as summarised in Section 2 of the report be noted.
2. That consideration be given to the opportunities arising from the 25 Year Environment Plan, and support given to the officers to pursue these.
3. That the interim conclusions of the 'green asset' review summarised in Appendix 1 of the report be endorsed.
4. That the presentations be shared with all elected members.

Reason for Decisions

To support delivery of corporate outcomes, particularly in respect of 'healthy' and 'prosperous', associated with maintenance and enhancement of Dorset's environment.

Outcomes Focused Monitoring Report, March 2018

- 15 The Committee considered the fourth and final monitoring report against the 2017-18 corporate plan which also included the most up to date available data on the population indicators within the 'Prosperous' outcome.

The Senior Assurance Manager highlighted to members that the rate of start-up of local business was showing a marginally improving trend. He also advised of the opening of the Dorset Innovation Enterprise Zone on 26 January 2018 which supported business start-ups and growth.

An issue of concern was the percentage of children achieving the 'Basics' measures at Key Stage 4. There had been a decline over the last 2 years in educational attainment. It was noted that the People and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee had also focused on this and it was suggested that it would be sensible to let the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board decide where this area was best scrutinised in order to avoid any duplication.

The Advisor from Children's Services highlighted that whilst some schools in Dorset had declined, around half had either stayed the same or improved. There were specific concerns around the 4 schools in the Weymouth and Portland area. Two of these were Academies (The Wey Valley Sports College and the Atlantic Academy) and two were still maintained by the Local Authority (Budmouth College and All Saints School). Different levels of support had been offered to the schools but there was a wider issue around social mobility. The social mobility index covered the whole life span of people and not just those in school. The Director added that across the County 4 out of the 6 district council areas had gone down in the indices with particular hot spots in Weymouth and Portland but in essence it was an issue for most of the County to consider.

One member highlighted the substantial drop in funding being experienced by schools in Weymouth and Portland but was pleased to hear that additional funding was trying to be secured to support school improvement.

Following a question from the Vice-Chairman about the length of time the Local Authority had been involved with these particular schools, the Advisor noted that the Wey Valley Sports College and Atlantic Academy had been a concern for some time, although the Wey Valley Sports College was showing signs of improvement. All Saints School required improvement and their decline had been more recent. This year's results had impacted on Budmouth College quite significantly. With both of these schools, there was clearly an issue around their leadership management going forward and officers had been working closely with both of them.

Following a discussion about Ofsted and their reputation for increasing the bar over time, officers did not feel these schools were necessarily victims of this, it was more about changes due to policy change impacting on curriculum planning.

Members discussed apprenticeships and noted the need for young people to have a good Maths and English base. The Service Director for Economy, the Natural and Built Environment advised members of a recent meeting he had attended about a Skills Academy for Dorset and that discussions were ongoing about how to move forward with this. He and the Director had been asked to lead on apprenticeships for the Authority. Members noted the importance of having young people work ready and felt it was the responsibility of schools to ensure they were ready for work at the appropriate time. The Director advised members that the 4 schools in Weymouth and Portland all now had a Careers and Enterprise Company Enterprise Advisor in place.

The Chairman commented that one year in a child's education life was crucial and the Committee needed to do all they could to help improve the situation.

The Senior Assurance Manager also highlighted the ratio of lower quartile house prices to lower quartile earnings. This had been increasing over a number of years and he drew members' attention to the area of modular housing, which the Cabinet had discussed at their meeting on 7 March 2018. The proposal referenced prefabricated modular housing which could meet the needs of people with an Adult Social Care need. Following discussion on this, the Director noted that the County Council had significant land assets and suggested looking at the model that Dorchester Town Council had used. He suggested that members might wish to consider hosting an Enquiry Day event on housing in order to get all the relevant people together to think about it further.

Noted

Review of Integrated Transport held 26 February 2018

16 Members received a verbal update from Cllr Derek Beer on the recent Review of Integrated Transport event that was held on 26 February 2018. He advised members that delegates from all walks of life, transport providers and the health service had attended. The aim was to promote local transport to do their job better and to ensure that good community transport schemes could be shared and as a networking event had been very useful. It was anticipated that a report would be presented to members of the Committee in due course to show how the work was progressing

The Service Director for Economy, Natural and Built Environment noted that a lot of the frustrations in the community were health transport related and he felt that communications needed to be promoted more and it was more about communities working together.

Cllr Beer noted that there were reasonably effective transport groups around the County and felt there was a need to promote the schemes that were available.

The Chairman added that whilst the event was a success, for any future events it would be worth considering the venue in respect of the presentation screens being accessible for all.

Noted

Work Programme

17 The Committee considered its work programme and gave consideration to the inclusion of a number of items which had been discussed earlier in the meeting.

The Service Director for Economy, Natural and Built Environment highlighted a recent conference he had attended on Rural Productivity and felt that it was a subject that members could consider at one of its meetings. Following a discussion, members agreed that the main item for the meeting on 28 June 2018 would be the Industrial Strategy. Whilst the strategy would not yet be ready for any formal discussion it could include presentations within it on Rural Productivity, the Western Growth Corridor, the Innovation Park, Dorset Leader and Dorset Growth.

Members agreed that it would be helpful to host a joint Housing Enquiry Day with District and Borough Colleagues. This would provide a good opportunity for all officers and members to come together and discuss housing before the new Unitary Council was created next year.

The Chairman advised members of a recent Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) meeting he had attended and was disappointed to see that Dorset was one of the lowest funded. He felt it was important to work closer with the LEP to ensure Dorset received a fair amount of funding.

Resolved

That the Committee's Work Programme be updated accordingly.

Questions from County Councillors

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

Meeting Duration: 10.00 am - 12.15 pm