

Economic Growth Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of the meeting held at Durlston Country Park, BH19 2JL
on Thursday, 26 July 2018

Present:

Ray Bryan (Chairman)

Jon Andrews (Vice-Chairman), Jean Dunseith, Spencer Flower, Jon Orrell and David Shortell

Officers Attending: Mike Harries (Corporate Director for Environment and Economy), David Bonner (Data, Intelligence, Insight and Performance Manager), Ken Buchan (Coast and Countryside Service Manager), Ben Lancaster (Rural Practice Team Leader), Annabel King (Senior Ecologist and Head of Natural Environment Team), Giles Nicholson (Greenspace Team Leader), Ali Tuckey (Countryside Ranger and Project Leader Durlston Pleasure Grounds Project) 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 **Monday, 15 October 2018.**)

Apologies for Absence

19 Apologies for absence were received from Cherry Brooks, Andy Canning, Peter Hall, and Margaret Phipps.

The Cabinet Member for Natural and Built Environment also conveyed his apologies.

The Chairman expressed disappointment and concern about members lack of attendance especially when so much hard work had been undertaken to produce the information being presented.

Appointment of Vice-Chairman

20 **Resolved**

That Jon Andrews be appointed Vice-Chairman for the remainder of 2018/19.

Code of Conduct

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

Terms of Reference

22 Members noted the Terms of Reference for the Committee.

Noted

Minutes

23 The minutes of the meeting held on 26 March 2018 were confirmed and signed.

Public Participation

24 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).

Highlighting our Natural Capital and the Green Economy

25 Members received the following presentations (attached as an Annexure to these minutes):-

- **Natural Capital and our Green Economy** from the Coast and Countryside Service Manager:-
 - Natural Environment designations covered a large portion of Dorset;
 - 4 ecosystem services explained to members along with the services that sat under them to support them;
 - Pollinators action plan highlighted;
 - Management of countryside sites, County Farms and the provision of environmental advice was key to this area;
 - Mental health and wellbeing benefits and assets highlighted;
 - Economic value – supported in Dorset between 17,000 and 61,000 jobs in the economy which was vital to the economy of Dorset.
- **DCC Country Parks and Nature Reserves** from the Greenspace Team Leader who talked about the green space that Dorset County Council (DCC) managed as well as:-
 - 4 Gypsy and Traveller sites with 50 pitches, the rent from this helped to pay for unauthorised camps and evictions as and when needed;
 - Over 40 countryside sites and Nature Reserves across Dorset were managed by DCC which resulted in £730k income per annum and covered their costs;
 - 3 visitor centres and 2 country parks which attracted 820,000 visitors per year;
 - Improving and making green spaces accessible for everyone – the stepping into nature programme was highlighted which was improving health outcomes for people;
 - Dorset has 73 miles of the South West Coast Path;
 - Nearly 3,000 miles of Rights of Way in Dorset, tourism and health benefits highlighted here. Over £700k of external funding was received last year to help with the upkeep of the Rights of Ways;
 - The number of volunteers used was highlighted and members thanked them for their support;
 - The Chairman highlighted the issue of fires at the present time and the importance of ensuring fire breaks were in place. Whilst staff were doing an excellent job he felt members of the public were not aware of the amount of work taken to do this safety work;
 - Members felt there could be more joint working with the Town and Parish Councils to achieve a shared cost.
 - Following a question about the ease of opening up of old railway lines, the Greenspace Team Leader advised that once it was known who owned the land and once agreement had been reached with all the relevant landowners it was relatively simple to approach external funders e.g Sustrans.
 - Members felt there was a lot of things that the council did of which residents weren't aware. Officers confirmed this was in the process of being addressed with the new lead officer in Communications.
- **Social value of our Countryside – Parks for People** from the Countryside Ranger and Project Leader for the Durlston Pleasure Grounds Project:-
 - Durlston was Dorset's first country park with 340 acres of coast and countryside and attracted 250,00 visitors per year;
 - Durlston had 150+ volunteers and 3.5 permanent members of staff. There was a 114% cost recovery rate at the Park;
 - £902,000 had recently been received from the Heritage Lottery Fund. Officers were trying out different ways to deliver services and the

- additional funding would help with this;
 - Target groups were highlighted: older people who were socially isolated, the disabled, young adults and children;
 - The Country Parks Liaison Panel was highlighted as a good example of member/officer engagement.
- **The County Farms Estate and its added value** from the Rural Practice Team Leader:-
 - The County Farms Estate comprises 2500 Ha (6,200 acres) which is the 9th largest estate held by a local authority and supported 260 local jobs;
 - The DCC aims and objectives were highlighted in conjunction with Section 39 of the Agriculture Act 1970;
 - The Estate structure comprised Starter Farms and Promotion Farms, a total of 44 farms to date and there were no arable farms on the estate;
 - Plans for the future included rebranding the estate, wider environmental, social and economic opportunities and the opportunity to harmonise with the new Dorset Council.
 - In response to a question about tenancies the Rural Practice Team Leader advised that those with longer term tenancies (20 years) were more likely to invest in their farm. One member suggested more arable farming in the future could be a consideration.
 - The Chairman felt this was a great success story of which most residents wouldn't be aware. It was noted that a marketing campaign was currently being worked on.
- **Enhancing our Natural Environment through the Dorset Biodiversity Planning Protocol** from the Senior Ecologist and Head of Natural Environment Team:-
 - European and English legislation highlighted to members;
 - Designated sites and how sites were protected also explained;
 - The Environmental Economy contributed about £1.5bn of gross value added per annum and supported about 30,000 jobs in Dorset;
 - 12% of all employment was tourism related;
 - The use of the Dorset Biodiversity Appraisal Protocol in relation to planning consents was highlighted along with a number of successful outcomes;
 - The Dorset Compensation Framework which was non-statutory was explained and had brought in £3.75m over the last 10 years investment in Dorset's natural environment.

In order to gain feedback from members, officers asked the following questions and encouraged members to respond directly to the Coast and Countryside Service Manager (k.buchan@dorsetcc.gov.uk) by email outside of the meeting:-

- How can we make better use of our Natural capital to promote Dorset to new business investment?
- What else would you like to see the County Farm Estate deliver to help the people and economy of Dorset?
- Designated sites are the jewels in the crown of our countryside. Should we expect development in the vicinity of these sites to contribute financially towards the upkeep and enhancement of the sites and the wider ecological network?
- How can small DCC countryside sites and rights of way increase the community benefits they generate with limited resources?
- How can we measure the overall value of the countryside sites, rights of way and farms? Direct income can be measured, but what about the economic value of improving health and wellbeing, strengthening communities,

stimulating other local businesses and providing good opportunities for training and social benefit?

- What are members hopes and priorities for the natural environment moving forward?

Following a question from a member about the amount of work being done in conjunction with Town and Parish Councils, the Senior Ecologist advised that officers were currently working with them on neighbourhood plans and welcomed their help with surveys etc.

The Chairman thanked the officers for their detailed and very informative presentations. He was keen to protect what Dorset had but to also find opportunities to make it more commercial in order to generate more income and was a firm believer in members and officers working together as a team and felt that this meeting had been a really good example of this.

Resolved

That the presentations and questions be shared with all members of the County Council and also with members of the Dorset Shadow Council along with a narrative providing the context for the meetings focus.

Proposal to Amend Adopted Highway Policy

- 26 Members received a report by the Cabinet Member for Natural and Built Environment which had been considered and approved by the Cabinet at their meeting on 18 July 2018.

The report had sought the Cabinet's approval to amend the current Adopted Highways Policy so that it clearly set out revised delivery options for such works. The proposed policy amendment would provide additional delivery options to current practice and would provide Dorset County Council with the choice to design and/or construct highway improvements under specific conditions.

Resolved

That members supported the Cabinet's decision to approve the amended Adopted Highways Policy.

Outcomes Focused Monitoring Report: July 2018

- 27 The Committee considered a report by the Corporate Director for the Environment and Economy which included the most up to date available data on the population indicators within the 'prosperous' outcome and also included information on performance measures and risk management information.

The Intelligence, Insight and Performance Manager highlighted the percentage of residents educated to level 4 (or equivalent) and above to members. The Chairman expressed concern that this would affect economic growth in the future and had asked the Chairman of the People and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee for more details, as this fell within their remit. In respect of the education being provided and the specific areas this drop in performance was affecting, a solution needed to be found as this affected all members not just those on the scrutiny committees. The falling figures were a concern as big businesses would not relocate to the area if there was a recognised skills shortage.

Following a question about apprenticeships, the Corporate Director advised that there may be a smaller number of providers offering apprenticeships and that more research would be needed the factors behind the decline in the number of apprenticeships.

Members also considered the Annual Report for the Economic Growth Overview and Scrutiny Committee 2017-18. The report summarised and communicated the key elements of the work of the Committee, its purpose, the work it had been directly involved in along with the outcomes that had been achieved to strengthen the Council's operating framework as a direct result of its involvement.

The Chairman was pleased to see so many positives within the report but did have a couple of areas he wished to return to and add to the work programme for the Committee :- Broadband and Mobile telecommunications.

Resolved

That the following items be added to the Committee's work programme:- Broadband and Mobile telecommunications.

Work Programme

- 28 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 Chairman also felt that the Committee needed to look at the road programme for Dorset and advised members that the final report from the Policy Development Panel for Highways Maintenance Management was nearly complete and would be presented to the Cabinet in September 2018.

Resolved

That the Committee's Work Programme be updated accordingly.

Questions from County Councillors

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

Meeting Duration: 10.00 am - 1.00 pm