



People and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of the meeting held at County Hall, Colliton Park,
Dorchester, Dorset, DT1 1XJ on Wednesday, 11 January 2017.

Present:

David Walsh (Chairman)

Steve Butler (Vice-Chairman)

, Ronald Coatsworth, Barrie Cooper, Fred Drane, David Jones, Ros Kayes, William Trite and
Kate Wheller.

Members Attending

Robin Cook, Cabinet Member for Organisational Development and Transformation

Janet Dover, County Councillor for Colehill and Stapehill

Robert Gould, Leader of the Council

Jill Haynes, Cabinet Member for Adult Health, Care and Independence

Peter Richardson, County Councillor for St Leonards and St Ives

Daryl Turner, County Councillor for Marshwood Vale.

Officer Attending:

Helen Coombes (Interim Director for Adult and Community Services), Steve Hedges (Group Finance Manager), Fiona King (Communications Officer), Paul Leivers (Assistant Director - Early Help and Community Services) and Helen Whitby (Senior Democratic Services Officer).

For certain items, as appropriate

John Alexander (Performance and Policy Manager), Richard Bates (Chief Financial Officer), Nicky Cleave (Deputy Director of Public Health), Jonathan Mair (Monitoring Officer), Patrick Myers (Assistant Director - Design and Development), Debbie Ward (Chief Executive) and Sally Wernick (Strategic Lead for Safeguarding and Quality - Adults)

- (Notes:(1) 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 People and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee to be held on **Monday, 20 March 2017**.
- 2) **RECOMMENDED** in this type denotes that a decision of County Council is required.)

Apologies for Absence

- 1 Apologies for absence were received from Spencer Flower and Mary Kahn.

Code of Conduct

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

Councillors Drane and Jones declared general interests in that their wives were in receipt of care.

Councillor Kayes reported that she would be recording a new disclosable pecuniary interest as a member of a group of psychotherapists who had just won a contract to provide counselling for carers. There was nothing of relevance on the agenda which would require her to leave the meeting.

Minutes

- 3 The minutes of the meeting held on 11 October 2016 were confirmed and signed.

Progress on Matters Raised at Previous Meetings

- 4 The Committee considered a report by the Interim Director for Adult and Community Services which set out progress on matters raised at the previous meeting. Three of these related to items on the agenda for the meeting and one confirmed that recommendations made at the previous meeting had been adopted by the Cabinet on 26 October 2016.

Noted

Public Participation

5 Public Speaking

One public question had been received at the meeting in accordance with Standing Order 21(1) and which related to proposed changes to the Registration Service. This is reported at minute 32 below and is included as an annexure to these minutes.

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

Exploring Options for the future of Local Government in Poole, Bournemouth and Dorset

- 6 The Committee considered a report by the Chief Executive on the future of Local Government in Bournemouth, Dorset and Poole. The Committee was asked to scrutinise and comment on the report prior to it being considered by the County Council on 26 January 2017.

The Chairman reminded members that their role at the meeting was to consider and comment on the report from the County Council's perspective and how it affected its constituents. Members had a further opportunity to comment as district and borough councillors when the report was considered by them throughout January 2017.

The Chief Executive presented the report in detail summarising previous discussion of the subject at County Council meetings, the case for change report from PricewaterhouseCoopers, financial analysis from the Local Partnership, the results of the public consultation, the involvement of the Shaping Dorset's Future Group and the Leaders and Chief Executives Group. This had led to a common approach being agreed by all nine local authorities on the sustainability of local government in Dorset as set out in the report being considered. Each of the councils would consider the report in January 2017.

A very thorough and rigorous approach had been taken throughout this process and there had been a robust challenge of the figures and principles to ensure that a good evidence base was used to help councillors in their decision-making. Reports had been made available and briefing sessions held for councillors in order to provide time for questions, debate and discussion prior to any decisions being taken. The evidence provided a case for change for local government in Dorset with Option 2(b) - two unitary authorities, one based on Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole and one on East Dorset, North Dorset, Purbeck, West Dorset and Weymouth and Portland – being the favoured option.

Some members favoured Christchurch being included in Shire Dorset and some spoke in favour of keeping the current close working relationship between the County Council and district and borough councils and the flexibility this provided. Some expressed concern about the transfer of power away from residents and some spoke in support of devolution and the involvement of Town and Parish Councils. In response to the latter point, it was explained that the Shaping Dorset's Future Group

was progressing this. The Chief Executive of the Dorset Association of Parish and Town Councils (DAPTC) had attended the last meeting and the Head of Organisation Development attended the Executive meeting of the DAPTC to progress joint working.

Some members advocated services being provided at the most appropriate level and for decisions to be taken at the most appropriate level nearest to the people affected by them. Some concern was expressed about the increased number of people councillors would represent under any new arrangements and whether this would be “democratic”. The need for strong democratic representation under any new arrangements was highlighted.

In response to concerns expressed about the consultation process, the Chief Executive confirmed that the consultation process followed had been valid and supported by the Department for Communities and Local Government. All the assumptions had been clearly set out and gave a basis on which to take a reasoned financial view. She was confident that the figures gave a basis for financial viability. The Chairman added that Opinion Research Services, who had carried out the public consultation exercise, were confident that the process would stand up to any judicial review.

During the discussion the following additional recommendation was proposed, seconded and agreed:-

“That regard be paid to Christchurch Borough Council and, should that council so request, that Dorset County Council support the inclusion of Christchurch in the new Shire authority.”

With regard to the potential costs of transformation, the Chief Financial Officer confirmed that Government had not indicated that any transformation grant would be provided but authorities would continue to ask for this. If this was not forthcoming, all nine authorities would share the costs, initially from reserves, based upon population. It was hoped that any remaining costs could be capitalised and paid back from savings made as a result of the new authorities.

Following concern about devolution and Town and Parish Council involvement, another recommendation was proposed, seconded and agreed unanimously:-

“That the preparatory work with Town and Parish Councils begun by the Shaping Dorset’s Future Group is further developed to enable a clear process by which downward devolution of powers to third tier authorities can be timetabled and managed.”

The Monitoring Officer confirmed that these additional recommendations, and members’ comments would be included in the minutes to be considered by the County Council on 26 January 2017.

The Chairman stated that he believed in the public consultation and that the views expressed by the public could not be disregarded. He referred back to the minutes of the recent meeting of Christchurch Borough Council which also concluded that more weight should be given to the results of the household survey and he, therefore, supported Option 2b.

The Vice-Chairman thought that recent changes in the Local Government supported the need for fewer councillors but he expressed concern about the potential of the new city deal for Bournemouth and Poole and how this might affect Dorset’s future. He thought that a model should be created for devolution and that this should be better explained for the public so that it was clear where they should go for the services and to allay concerns about “take-over bids”.

That the County Council consider the following recommendations:-

RECOMMENDED

1. That regard be paid to Christchurch Borough Council and, should that council so request, that Dorset County Council support the inclusion of Christchurch in the new Shire authority.
2. That the preparatory work with Town and Parish Councils begun the by Shaping Dorset's Future Group is further developed to enable a clear process by which downward devolution of powers to third tier authorities can be timetabled and managed.

Corporate Plan: Outcomes Focused Monitoring Report

7 The Committee considered a joint report by the Interim Director for Adult and Community Services and the Director of Public Health which set out outcome indicators relating to the Committee's areas of responsibility under the Corporate Plan.

The Senior Assurance Manager and the Assistant Director of Public Health presented the report. Members were reminded that the Corporate Plan was based on important outcomes for residents and the Committee's role was to scrutinise progress towards those outcomes under the headings of Independence and Health. The report provided information on the current state of play in these areas and highlighted areas where improvement was needed so that the Committee could identify areas for scrutiny. Members noted that some data within the report was out of date but information included on the outcomes tracker which could be followed through the link provided in the report was current. It was also explained that some trends had been misidentified and showed a worsening situation when the long term trend was more even. Members noted that a few outcome indicators were still being developed.

Members welcomed this report and the detail contained within it. It provided areas of interest and concern and it was suggested that further consideration would be needed to identify areas for future scrutiny, possibly by way of a workshop.

There was some discussion about information concerning SEN transport and self-harm, and the need for psychological health education in schools and increased mental health services to help address this for children. Particular concern was expressed about the worsening direction of travel for many areas.

The Interim Director for Adult and Community Services Committee highlighted that activity undertaken did not necessarily mean that this was having any impact on outcomes and if there was no impact that activity should be refocused. She also explained that Dorset may not follow national trends and she cited the example of delayed discharges where there had been a recent improvement in Dorset compared to the worsening situation in the rest of the country. She asked the Committee to help identify where resources should be focused in order to improve outcomes for residents.

Resolved

That Cllr Ros Kayes (Lead Member), Cllr Kate Wheller and John Alexander complete a scoping report to help identify items for scrutiny for consideration at the Committee's next meeting.

Hate Crimes - Quarter Two 2016/17

8 The Committee considered a report by the Assistant Director for Design and Development which provided an update on Hate Crimes for Quarter Two 2016/17, as requested at the Committee's last meeting.

The Assistant Director reminded the Committee of the Council's duty of care under the Equality Act to address hate crime issues. Whilst the number of crimes was low, there had been an increase in incidents in all areas, although this had subsequently reduced. However, there was a need to get a better understanding of the figures and more work was being undertaken with regard to the local impact of crimes against the disabled and those with mental health issues. He suggested that the Committee might like to hold an Inquiry Morning to consider current and planned activity which helped the Council fulfil its public sector equality duty and how that activity was supporting the reduction in hate crime and incidents.

Questions were posed as to whether any reported incidents were mischief-making, whether the peaks in July were related to the influx of holidaymakers and they reported their own experience of hate crimes. They recognised the importance of continuing to monitor the situation and for them to encourage action to be taken to address hate crime. They noted the role of Dorset's Safeguarding Boards, the Community Safety Partnership and the Police and other partners to address hate crime.

Members supported the suggestion of holding an Inquiry Morning and Councillor David Jones would act as Lead Member for this review.

Resolved

1. That an Inquiry Morning be held to consider current and planned activity which helped the Council fulfil its public sector equality duty and how that activity was supporting the reduction in hate crime and incidents.
2. That the Inquiry Panel comprise Steve Butler, David Jones (Lead Member) and David Walsh.
3. That other County Councillors be contacted to see whether they would want to be involved in this review.

Policy Development Panel on Registration - Final Report

- 9 The Committee considered the minutes of the final meeting of the Policy Development Panel on Registration held on 2 December 2016 and its report on future Registration Service proposals.

A question had been submitted under the Council's Public Participation arrangements by Councillor Jon Andrews, Sherborne Town Councillor, which related to changes to the Registration Service provided in Sherborne. This, and the response provided, is attached to the minutes as an annexure.

Comments had also been received from the County Councillor for Rodwell, who supported the retention of a service in Weymouth. Her comments are included in the annexure to the minutes.

The Chairman of the Policy Development Panel presented the Panel's report and drew attention to an amendment to it in that Option 5C(h) should be italicised, not Option 5C(e) as shown in the report. He explained that the review had taken nearly a year and had proven more complex than originally anticipated. The review had been detailed, the need to make financial savings accepted, and had led to the recommendations put forward which would cause least disruption. He confirmed that Town Councils had agreed to financially support outreach services in Gillingham, Sherborne and Swanage. Officers were thanked for their work in supporting the Panel. The Assistant Director – Early Help and Community Services highlighted the success of the Service which was self-funding and reminded members that the Panel had been established to address potential forthcoming legislative changes to marriage ceremonies and budget pressures arising.

Recommended

That the Cabinet approve:

1. That the service provided be developed into a more customer focussed service, through six office locations across Dorset (at Blandford, Bridport, Dorchester, Ferndown, Wareham and Weymouth) and for outreach services to be provided at (Gillingham, Sherborne and Swanage), subject to Town Council support being secured for the outreach services.
2. That the service be based on seven ceremony rooms across the County. (At Blandford, Bridport, Ferndown, Gillingham, Sherborne, Swanage and Weymouth this reflects the present circumstances, however, as property matters emerge in the future it might be appropriate to make changes to these arrangements).
3. That Officers be encouraged to develop a schedule of fees and charges based on a full cost recovery model in relation to ceremonies, and to authorise the Assistant Director - Early Help and Community Services, after consultation with the Cabinet Member for Health, Care and Independence, to set the schedule.
4. That the Tell Us Once service for deaths be retained, and the service for births be withdrawn.

Policy Development Panel on Community Capacity Building and Social Isolation

- 10 The Committee received an update on progress with the Policy Development Panel on Community Capacity Building and Social Isolation.

The Chairman, as Lead Member for the review, explained that the completion of the scoping document had shown how complex this subject was and further consideration was needed prior to the Panel's first meeting.

Noted

Update on Inquiry Day into the Quality and Cost of Care

- 11 The Committee received an update on progress with the Inquiry Date into the Cost and Quality of Nursing and Residential Care across Dorset. This was to be held on Monday, 13 February 2017 and would involve four evidence gathering sessions. Representatives from the Council's quality improvement team and commissioners, service users, carers, Healthwatch, the Dorset Clinical Commissioning Group and the Care Quality Commission would be attending.

The Senior Democratic Services Officer was asked to re-send members details of the day.

Noted

Update on Fair Charges for Care and Support

- 12 The Committee received an update on Making Charges Fairer for Adult Social Care, which included reference to the work of the Executive Advisory Panel on Pathways to Independence and highlighted that any recommendations would be considered by the Cabinet in March 2017.

Noted

Work Programme

- 13 The Committee considered its work programme.

Additional items to be added to the work programme were set out in minute numbers 7 and 8.

Noted

Questions from County Councillors

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

Meeting Duration: 10.00 am - 12.30 pm

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Annexure

Question from Councillor Jon Andrews, Sherborne Town Council

Please can the committee explain how the decision on the towns that will continue to be supported by the registrar services was taken? Could the committee also explain how they came to the conclusion that all people would be able to access their nearest registrar service with a 20 minute drive and will the people in the towns and villages that will not be affected have their council tax raised, as they will in Sherborne, to pay to keep the service if agreed and do you believe this to be fair?

Answer

No decision has been made at this point – the People and Communities Committee will make recommendations for the Cabinet to make a decision in due course.

The report to committee makes recommendations from the work of the Policy Development Panel. The Panel considered options for future registration offices and agreed that one proposal should be consulted on. This public consultation ran for eight weeks opening on Thursday 16 June and closing on Thursday 11 August. The on-line survey was kept open until Wednesday 17 August, allowing an additional week for late respondents and to allow for a two working days delay in public consultation notification to Dorset Parish and Town Councils.

Dorset Registration Service continued to accept paper survey responses until 23 August, allowing for postal delays etc.

The question asked in the consultation was:

Number and Location of Registration Offices:

On average a customer will attend a registration office four times in their lifetime. Customers usually attend to:

- Register a birth
- Register a death
- In the case of non-Anglican marriages to give notice of their intention to marry or,
- To give notice of their intention to form a civil partnership.

Currently registration offices are based at the following eleven locations:

- Blandford
- Bridport
- Christchurch
- Dorchester
- Ferndown
- Gillingham
- Shaftesbury

- Sherborne
- Swanage
- Wareham
- Weymouth

Our preferred view is to reduce the number of registration offices from eleven to five. A reduction in the number of offices will reduce the amount of central support required for each office. The proposal is for the offices to be based at the following locations:

- Blandford
- Bridport
- Dorchester
- Ferndown
- Wareham

This will mean that 91% of Dorset residents will live within a 20 minute car journey of an office.

The Panel considered the results of this public consultation, representations received from Councillors and directed that officers undertook further work with Sherborne, Gillingham and Swanage Town Councils. As a result of this consideration the Panel has made recommendations to the People and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

There has never been any conclusion that all people would be able to access the registration within 20 minutes' drive time. In looking at accessibility of the service consideration was given to indicative journey times which found that 44% of the population were within an estimated 10 minute car journey of an office, 91% within an estimated 20 minutes and 100% within an estimated 30 minutes.

In respect of council tax the report describes the position reached through discussions with Gillingham, Sherborne, and Swanage Town Councils. The gist of this is that the County Council continues to pay for the registrars' time in providing public service at these three locations and that the Town Council assists with paying for travel time and mileage. It is estimated that on average a person will use the Registration Service four times during their lifetime. This balances the pressures on the County Council budget with the local Town Council view that local access in the towns is important. The question of fairness is one for the Committee and Cabinet to consider as the County Council makes a decision on this matter.

Comment from Councillor Clare Sutton, Elected Member for Rodwell

I would like to express my very strong support for the retention of the Weymouth office, for the following reasons:

The registry office serves, in effect, around 17% of DCC residents (in Weymouth, Portland and Chickerell). It is currently the only Registry Office other than Dorchester open full-time, and it is booked out.

This office serves the least well off part of Dorset (lowest wages), with the lowest level of car ownership (24% of households do not have a car, compared to 15% for DCC as a whole), and with unemployment almost double the DCC average. I therefore believe that the residents of Weymouth and Portland, particularly the elderly and frail, when needing to register the death of a loved one, would be least able to carry the cost burden should their local office close.

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