



Minutes of a meeting of the **Policy Group** of the Purbeck District Council held in the Council Chamber, Westport House, Wareham on Wednesday 18 October 2017 at 7.00pm.

Present:-

Councillor Gary Suttle (Chairman)
Councillor Barry Quinn (Vice-Chairman)

Councillors Cherry Brooks, Laura Miller, Bill Pipe and Peter Webb

Also present: Councillors David Budd and Beryl Ezzard

Officers in attendance for all or part of the meeting: Richard Conway, Environment Manager; Bridget Downton, General Manager – Planning and Community Services; Sue Joyce, General Manager – Resources; Rebecca Kirk, General Manager – Public Health and Housing; Steve Mackenzie, Chief Executive and Kirsty Riglar, Democratic and Electoral Services 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 Group).

39.17/18 **Apologies**

There were no apologies for absence.

40.17/18 **Urgent items**

The Chairman reported there were no urgent items.

41.17/18 **Public participation time**

Mr Nigel Hill of Moreton sought clarification as to where in the Government's consultation document it referred to economic growth being an optional consideration for local authorities, the timeframe for the updating of the Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) and the impact of not having secured Local Enterprise Partnership funding for Dorset Innovation Park. The General Manager – Planning and Community Services drew Mr Hill's attention to paragraph 46 of the consultation document and the fact that the proposed approach did not include economic forecasting. In relation to the updated SHMA, she explained that the final draft of the figures for Purbeck had been received earlier in October and this would be published online in November. In relation to the Dorset Innovation Park Enterprise Zone, she explained that the unsuccessful bid for funding was for the development of an innovation centre, which was not part of the 'business case' and the success of the Enterprise Zone was therefore not predicated upon this.

42.17/18 **Minutes**

Resolved that the minutes of the meeting held on 20 September 2017 be taken as read, confirmed and signed by the Chairman.



43.17/18 **Declarations of Interest by Members**

Councillor Bill Pipe declared a personal interest in the item relating to the Purbeck Sports Centre as Chairman of the Lytchett Minster and Upton Sports Trust and a member of the Lytchett Manor Sports Hall Committee.

Councillor Gary Suttle declared a personal interest in the item relating to the Dorset Accessible Homes Grant as his daughter had previously been in receipt of a disabled facility grant.

There were no declarations of disclosable pecuniary interests.

44.17/18 **Forward Plan**

As the current Forward Plan was not circulated with the agenda, the Chairman moved to the next item.

45.17/18 **Local Plan Review**

The General Manager – Planning and Community Services reminded Members that the Government had published its consultation entitled ‘planning for the right homes in the right places’ and Council had agreed its response to this at its meeting the previous week. As this consultation had been received later than expected, the Local Plan Review consultation would now be delayed until January 2018. However, the additional studies and background papers that had been completed would be published in mid-November, with the remainder published alongside the consultation document in January.

In response to a Member’s question, the General Manager confirmed that officers were seeking whatever clarification could be gained on the content of a revised National Planning Policy Framework to inform the work on the Review.

46.17/18 **Proposed fees and charges 2018/19**

The General Manager – Resources presented a report seeking support for the proposed fees and charges for activities at the Purbeck Sports Centre and advertisements on the tourism website for 2018 and changes to planning pre-application advice, for inclusion in the draft 2018/19 budget. Whilst fees and charges should be approved at the same time as the revenue budget and setting of the council tax each year in February, the charges for the Sports Centre and the tourism website were increased from 1 January and therefore could not be approved as part of the budget setting process. Members were informed that planning pre-application advice had been reviewed and a new householder service introduced. It was considered advantageous to introduce this charge from 1 January 2018 rather than to wait until April.

Approval was being sought for increases in the statutory local air pollution and control charges which had been brought into effect from 1 October 2017. In relation to new or increases in existing statutory charges, it was proposed that the approval of these be delegated to the General Manager – Resources to enable them to come into effect during the financial year.



Members drew attention to a small group of proposed Sports Centre charges and suggested that these be rounded up. Officers agreed that this was sensible and undertook to include revised figures in the report submitted to Council.

One Member expressed concern about the proposed increase in fees and charges for the Sports Centre, as there was a public perception that these were already too expensive. The General Manager – Public Health and Housing explained that the fees and charges were benchmarked against other sports centres in the area in order to inform the proposals. She confirmed that the proposed fees and charges tended to be in the middle for most elements. It was agreed to provide information to give assurance about the appropriateness of the fees and charges in the report submitted to Council.

In response to a Member's question, the General Manager – Planning and Community Services explained that the proposed householder pre-application advice service was currently being undertaken on an ad hoc basis and the proposal would formalise the position. She confirmed that anyone making an appointment would be informed that this would be for a period of 15 minutes.

Resolved that a report be submitted to Council recommending approval of:

- (a) the proposed fees and charges for the Purbeck Sports Centre, as set out in Appendix 1 (subject to some additional rounding taking place), tourism website, as set out in Appendix 2 and planning householder pre-application advice, as set out in Appendix 3, with effect from 1 January 2018;
- (b) the local air pollution and control charges, shown in Appendix 4, with effect from 1 October 2017; and
- (c) a delegation to the relevant General Manager, in consultation with the General Manager – Resources and the Resources and Efficiencies Portfolio Holder, to approve any new, or changes to existing, statutory fees that come into effect during the financial year.

47.17/18 **Dorset Accessible Homes Grant**

The Environment Manager presented a report seeking support for revision of the Council's Housing Assistance Policy by amendment of the conditions of the Dorset Accessible Homes Grant and Safe and Secure Grant. He reminded Members that Council agreed in August 2016 to introduce this new Policy for disabled people living in Purbeck which incorporated the two grants, enhancing what was available under the mandatory Disabled Facilities Grant. This had been reviewed after a year of operation and a number of minor changes were recommended. These were intended to improve clarity in some areas of the Policy as well as to provide more help for applicants living in rented accommodation and to those considering moving to a more suitable home.

The Housing Portfolio Holder welcomed the report and the improved clarity as a result of the proposed amendments.

In response to Members' questions, the Environment Manager explained that some of the proposed amendments would provide the contractor with greater opportunity for flexibility to enable the best solutions to be found for individual applicants. He also



confirmed that applicants were able to contribute the difference for a higher quality or more expensive solution.

In response to a Member's question, he confirmed that the Policy related to both disabled and older people and undertook to ensure that this was reflected throughout the report submitted to Council.

Resolved that a report be submitted to Council recommending that the reviewed Housing Assistance Policy, as set out in Appendix 2, is approved.

48.17/18 **Purbeck Sports Centre lease renewal and future service delivery**

The General Manager – Public Health and Housing presented a report on the work of the Policy Development Panel set up to look at the detail, strategic implications and options for the future of the Purbeck Sports Centre, which sought approval of the Panel's proposal for the renewal of the lease and future management.

The Local Communities Portfolio Holder reported that the Panel had heard evidence from a range of users of the Centre and considered three options in detail. The Panel's preference was option 3 – negotiate a new lease along the same lines as the existing lease but for a longer term (20-25 years) and then go out to tender for the management of the Centre in partnership with neighbouring councils. The Panel considered this would safeguard the Centre as a facility for use by the public.

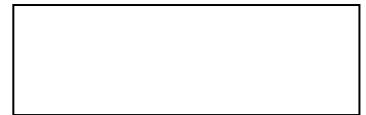
In response to a Member's question, the General Manager explained that whilst some potential savings were included in the options appraisal, it was difficult to identify savings with any certainty. Benchmarking had been carried out and fees paid to management companies varied significantly.

One Member expressed her disappointment that alternative means of providing the Sports Centre had not been investigated in any detail to ensure the Council was achieving value for money. She considered it was remiss to make a loss on the running of the Centre if it could be operated more efficiently. The General Manager explained that the remit of the Panel had been to consider whether the Council should continue to run the Sports Centre once the current lease expired. The Leader of the Council added that the Sports Centre was a community facility provided by the Council, which needed to be maintained. He acknowledged that ideally it would not cost the taxpayer as much as at present and every effort should be made to keep costs to a minimum whilst continuing to provide this facility for residents of Purbeck.

It was recognised that the dual use of the Centre by The Purbeck School and members of the public added complexity to the issue and there would be a need to engage closely with Dorset County Council about any alternative management arrangements.

Members expressed their support for the Panel's recommendations as set out in the report. It was considered vital to safeguard the Centre as a community facility serving the residents of Purbeck and that negotiations on the renewal of the lease should begin as soon as possible.

In response to a Member's question, the General Manager confirmed that Christchurch and East Dorset Councils managed sports centres in-house but had indicated they did not wish to participate in a potential combined tender for management arrangements.



The Chief Executive cautioned that, if a decision on local government reorganisation was made imminently, there was a risk that the County Council may decide not to engage in negotiations. Whilst he supported the Panel's recommendations, it was possible that these could be overtaken by events.

Resolved that a report be submitted to Council recommending that:

- (1) the Policy Development Panel be thanked for their work and their conclusion be noted;
- (2) the General Manager – Public Health and Housing, in consultation with the Solicitor to the Council, begin negotiations for the renewal of the lease for Purbeck Sports Centre along the same lines as the existing lease but for a longer term (20-25 years);
- (3) the General Manager – Public Health and Housing enter into discussions with Dorset Councils Partnership and Dorset County Council to initiate a combined tender for management arrangements of sports centres in Dorset, including Purbeck; and
- (4) a further report be considered by Policy Group and Council once the costs of appointing a specialist company to run the procurement process is known.

The meeting ended at 7:58pm.

Chairman