

Minutes of a meeting of the **Policy Group** of the Purbeck District Council held in the Council Chamber, Westport House, Wareham on Wednesday 14 March 2018 at 7.00pm.

Present:-

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

Councillors Cherry Brooks, Bill Pipe and Peter Webb

Also present: Councillor Bill Trite

Officers in attendance for all or part of the meeting: Karen Graham, Community Safety Officer; Sue Joyce, General Manager – Resources; Steve Mackenzie, Chief Executive and Isla Mitchell, Democratic and Electoral Services Co-ordinator.

(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).

80.17/18 **Apologies**

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Laura Miller.

81.17/18 **Urgent items**

The Chairman reported there were no urgent items.

82.17/18 **Public participation time**

Ms Josephine Parish of Corfe Castle drew Members' attention to an article in a local newspaper which referred to West Dorset District Council setting up a local authority company to deliver housing and she enquired about the possibility of such a company being set up by Purbeck District Council to meet the demand for affordable housing in the district. In response, the Chief Executive advised that whilst he had not seen the newspaper article, he was aware that West Dorset District Council's budget report had allocated £4m to affordable housing schemes. However, that council was in the fortunate position of having far more substantial reserves than this Council. In response to a Member's query, he clarified that the £4m allocated by West Dorset District Council was for low cost home ownership, as opposed to affordable housing available to rent which some Members considered was more important in Purbeck.

Mr Peter Bowyer, Chairman of the Pan Purbeck Action Campaign, asked for details of the arrangements for oversight and scrutiny of the Local Plan Review consultation process being conducted by Public Perspectives and when full Council would receive the report on the consultation. He also asked for confirmation that responses to the consultation indicating "strongly opposed" would be recognised by the consultants as valid responses, explaining that it had been brought to his attention that such responses would be discounted. In response, the Chief Executive advised that in terms of scrutiny, the Council had set up a Local Plan Working Group of Councillors which had overseen the development of the consultation process and would, in the first instance, receive feedback from the consultants once the consultation has formally

finished. Although all the consultation events had now finished, the deadline for the responses had been extended, at the request of Moreton residents, until 19 March 2018. He reported that over 5000 responses had been received to date but he did not expect to see any analysis until this was complete. Once the final report from Public Perspectives had been received, a decision would be taken as to the most appropriate method for it to be brought to full Council. Both the Chief Executive and Chairman expressed their surprise at the suggestion that “strongly opposed” responses might be ignored in the consultation and stated that this is not true. Mr Bowyer was asked to send further details to the Chief Executive so that this could be investigated.

83.17/18 **Minutes**

Resolved that the minutes of the meeting held on 31 January 2018 be taken as read, confirmed and signed by the Chairman.

84.17/18 **Declarations of Interest by Members**

There were no declarations of disclosable pecuniary interests.

85.17/18 **Forward Plan**

The Policy Group considered the current Forward Plan. The report on possible third party management of Purbeck Sports Centre was discussed and it was noted that partners were currently considering their positions through their own democratic decision making processes.

Resolved that the Forward Plan be received.

86.17/18 **Local Plan Review**

Following on from the discussion during public participation time, the Chairman advised that the extension to the consultation deadline would not greatly delay the receipt of the report from Public Perspectives and there would be an update on timescales at the next Council meeting.

The Chief Executive advised Members that the Government was now consulting on the revised National Planning Policy Framework, Community Infrastructure Levy and Section 106 arrangements, with the deadline for responses being 10 May 2018. In view of the tightness of the deadline, it was proposed to bring reports to the Local Plan Working Party to help Members form the Council’s response, which would then be taken to Council for consideration at its meeting on 10 April 2018.

He also reported that the Government had confirmed the approach for calculating housing numbers as being the one that it consulted upon last September / October. This was considered to be good news, although the Government had stressed that this provided the minimum number of houses, not the maximum or optimum number.

A Member enquired whether the downgrading of land parcel no. 23 at Lytchett Minster was an error. The Chief Executive advised that this issue had been raised by local residents at the last Council Meeting and he had suggested they should include their concerns in their consultation responses to ensure these were captured. He would ask officers to respond direct to the Member following the meeting.

87.17/18 **Business Rates Revaluation Support Scheme 2018/19**

The General Manager – Resources presented a report seeking support for the second year of the Business Rates Revaluation Support Scheme, which proposed ongoing support for those local businesses which were faced with a significant increase in rates, following the national revaluation on 1 April 2017.

In response to a Member's query, the General Manager – Resources confirmed that the £13,000 under spend for the proposed scheme in 2018/19 would be used to assist those qualifying businesses which, despite receiving Business Rates relief, were still significantly in arrears, with the aim of putting them in a better financial position for the following year.

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

- (1) the Business Rates Revaluation Support Scheme 2018/19, as set out in Appendix 1 to the report;
- (2) a delegation to the General Manager – Resources for authority to approve support for struggling businesses, to utilise all of the 2018/19 Business Rate Support grant; and
- (3) a report being submitted to Council later in the year, recommending a Business Rates Revaluation Support Scheme for 2019/20.

88.17/18 **Modern Slavery Protocol and Guidance**

The Community Safety Officer presented a report seeking support for the adoption of the Dorset Modern Slavery Protocol and Guidance. This had been developed in partnership with other Dorset Councils, Dorset Police, Dorset Clinical Commissioning Group and organisations from the voluntary and community sector, for use in the Dorset County area. The document provided guidance for staff on how to fulfil the statutory duty placed upon local authorities to notify central government of any potential victims of modern slavery. It also set out how partners would organise themselves in the event of a modern slavery operation. Members were informed that, as the Protocol and Guidance was a working document, it would need to be updated regularly by officers to incorporate any changes in legislation or guidance and in light of any practical experience gained in using it. It was therefore proposed that authority be delegated to the General Manager – Public Health and Housing to agree non-material amendments.

In response to a Member's question, the Community Safety Officer confirmed that a case of modern slavery had been identified in the district and it was agreed that the report would be amended to draw attention to this local issue.

The Communities and Involvement Spokesperson reported that Bournemouth Borough Council and Borough of Poole were also looking to adopt a modern slavery protocol and in response to queries the Community Safety Officer advised that this would be based on the same principles, albeit with a different notification process and contacts, as Purbeck District Council's Protocol and Guidance.

Resolved that a report be submitted to Council recommending the formal adoption of the Modern Slavery Protocol and Guidance and approval of a delegation to the General Manager – Public Health and Housing to agree non-material amendments.

The meeting ended at 7.21pm.

Chairman