

Minutes of a meeting of the **Policy Group** of the Purbeck District Council held in the Council Chamber, Westport House, Wareham on Wednesday 18 July 2018 at 7.00pm.

Present:-

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

Councillors Cherry Brooks, Laura Miller and Peter Webb

Also present: Councillor Nigel Dragon

Officers in attendance for all or part of the meeting: Fiona Brown, Housing Manager; 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).

10.18/19 **Apologies**

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Bill Pipe.

11.18/19 **Urgent items**

The Chairman reported there were no urgent items.

12.18/19 **Public participation time**

Mrs Diana Parry of Wool asked what plans the Council had to use the funds received from the Government's Community Housing Fund before the cessation of the Council on 31 March 2019. The Chief Executive explained that the Council had received £910,000 from this Fund, which was intended to tackle the problem of high levels of second home ownership through community-led housing initiatives. To date, £100,000 had been committed. The Council was seeking to engage with a contractor to work with communities on identifying schemes and help them bring forward bids for funding, through community land trusts or similar. Any commitment made by the Council would be honoured and any uncommitted funds would be used in areas of Dorset where second home ownership was a particular problem; West Dorset District Council had also received funding from the Community Housing Fund. It was not possible to guarantee that the funding allocated to Purbeck District Council would be used solely in Purbeck after 1 April 2019.

Mrs Beryl Ezzard, Trustee of the Purbeck Youth and Community Foundation, asked when a response would be received to a request submitted for funds to support the youth workers and projects at Wareham Youth Centre. The Chief Executive explained that, following discussion with the Leader of the Council, work was underway to identify other similar youth and community foundations in the district created following the changes made to Dorset County Council's Youth and Community Service to enable a single approach to be taken to considering the allocation of grant funding. He

understood there were two other such groups and he would discuss with the Leader of the Council how to progress the request.

Mr John Loader of Lytchett Minster asked how the emerging Local Plan impacted upon any areas where the European Habitats Regulations applied. The Chief Executive explained that the Council was not considering development or policies in the new Local Plan that were likely to have harmful effects on any European sites which could not be avoided or mitigated. He added that where any development was proposed within 5km of a European site, the Council was required to develop strategies or deliver infrastructure to mitigate this harm, such as Suitable Areas of Natural Greenspace.

Mr Steve Clarke, Vice-Chairman of Corfe Castle Parish Council, referred to the public survey launched by the Police and Crime Commissioners for Dorset, and Devon and Cornwall about the proposed merger of the two police forces and asked if Purbeck District Council would be submitting a view on holding this 'consultation' during July and August. The Leader of the Council reported that the Leaders' Growth Board had recently received a presentation on the proposed merger and the Council would be looking at the consultation period and may write to request an extension.

Ms Josephine Parish of Corfe Castle requested that the Community Housing Fund allocation to the Council be earmarked for use in Purbeck. The Chief Executive reiterated that it would be for the new Dorset Council to decide how to allocate any uncommitted funding after 1 April 2019. However, officers were encouraging community land trusts in Purbeck to submit capital grant requests as quickly as possible to maximise the amount of funding committed. The Leader of the Council added that he would discuss, with the Interim Section 151 Officer, the ring-fencing of this funding for use in Purbeck.

Mr Peter Bowyer, Vice-Chairman of the Dorset Association of Parish and Town Council's Purbeck Area Committee, expressed his concern at the arrangements for public participation at meetings of the Shadow Dorset Council and its committees as set out in its Constitution and asked what contribution had been made from Purbeck District Council to the drafting of this document. The Chief Executive explained that the Council's Monitoring Officer had been involved in the drafting of the Constitution, together with the Monitoring Officers of the other Dorset area councils. He pointed out that the Council's approach to public participation time was more flexible than most of the other councils and it was unusual not to require advance notice of questions or statements. As the Shadow Period would come to an end on 31 March 2019, it would be necessary for a Constitution to be adopted to come into effect for Dorset Council on 1 April 2019. This would set out the approach to public participation to be applied from that time. The Leader of the Council added that he would be lobbying the Shadow Executive Committee to establish open and free public participation time as he considered it was the democratic right of local residents to ask questions of the Council.

13.18/19 **Minutes**

Resolved that the minutes of the meeting held on 16 May 2018 be taken as read, confirmed and signed by the Chairman.

14.18/19 **Declarations of Interest by Members**

There were no declarations of disclosable pecuniary interests.

15.18/19 **Forward Plan**

The Policy Group considered the current Forward Plan. The Deputy Leader drew attention to the item relating to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England's draft recommendation on electoral arrangements for Dorset Council and reported that officers had been asked to negotiate an extension to the deadline for submissions in view of the consultation period including most of August.

The Chief Executive informed Members that the Shadow Executive Committee had now agreed how it wished to be involved in decisions on services to be made by the Dorset area councils with an impact following 1 April 2019. There would, therefore, be increasing numbers of proposals which would need to go to the Shadow Executive Committee for consultation before being submitted to Council for decision.

Resolved that the Forward Plan be received.

16.18/19 **Local Plan Review**

The Chief Executive reported that the Local Plan Review Working Party had met the previous week. The Leader of the Council confirmed that work was on track to submit the pre-submission draft of the Local Plan to be considered by Policy Group in September and Council in October 2018.

17.18/19 **Transfer of toilets and reserved car park area to Corfe Castle Parish Council**

The General Manager – Public Health and Housing presented a report regarding the transfer of the toilets at West Street, Corfe Castle, along with 22 car parking spaces in the reserved parking area at West Street, to Corfe Castle Parish Council. Members were reminded that at the Council meeting on 8 April 2018, it was agreed that all assets required for the delivery of statutory services and those capable of generating income would be transferred to the new unitary Dorset Council. However, property held as public open space, free car parks and the public toilets at Corfe Castle and Studland would be offered to the appropriate town and parish councils. At its meeting on 11 June 2018, Corfe Castle Parish Council resolved that, in principle, it would be interested in adopting the toilets in West Street on the condition that the residents' reserved car park spaces also be transferred to assist with the financial commitment of running the toilets. Members were informed that the net cost of running the toilets during 2018/19 was £7,345.

Particular attention was drawn to reference in paragraph 5.3 to the Parish Council needing to make its own Parking Order. The General Manager clarified that parish councils were unable to make Parking Orders but could make bye-laws to enable parking enforcement. It would be for the Parish Council to negotiate with Dorset County Council or the new Dorset Council, as appropriate, to undertake enforcement if it wished it to do so.

Members were informed that some high level principles about the transfer of assets to town and parish councils would be considered by the Shadow Executive Committee later in the week. However, one of the proposed principles would be to ensure any transfer of an asset to a town or parish council was cost neutral. The transfer of both assets to Corfe Castle Parish Council would meet this principle and would result in a small financial saving to Dorset Council.

Members welcomed the proposal but requested that further information relating to the 22 reserved parking spaces be provided in the report submitted to Council.

Resolved that, subject to support of the Shadow Executive Committee, a report be submitted to Council seeking approval for the transfer of West Street toilets and the reserved car parking area to Corfe Castle Parish Council at no cost; the legal transfer incorporating a covenant stating that full public toilet facilities be maintained at the site along with reserved permit parking spaces.

18.18/19 **Creation of capital property purchase fund**

The General Manager – Public Health and Housing presented a report seeking support for the creation of a capital property purchase fund for the purchase of houses to help meet the housing needs of the community. She reminded Members that the number of households the Council was placing into temporary accommodation, including bed and breakfast, was increasing as there was a lack of general needs housing becoming available. It was therefore a priority to secure additional temporary accommodation. Following a successful bid to the Local Government Association, the Council had secured a grant to work with a housing advisor to identify ways to increase the amount of temporary accommodation. One of the recommendations made by the advisor was to increase the amount of accommodation owned by the Council. This had already begun with the recent approval to purchase a property in Upton.

The housing market in Purbeck was buoyant and properties that would be deemed suitable for use as temporary accommodation sold quickly. To enable the Council to secure suitable properties, there was a need to act quickly in making offers without the delay that would be incurred in seeking individual approvals for the funding. It was therefore proposed that a capital housing purchase fund be created, with authority to spend this delegated to the General Manager – Public Health and Housing, in consultation with the Section 151 Officer and the Housing Portfolio Holder.

Members noted that it would be necessary to consult the Shadow Executive Committee on the proposal before it proceeded to Council as the creation of a new capital fund would reduce the reserves available to the new Dorset Council. However, Dorset Council would also benefit from the social and economic benefits of avoiding the expensive use of temporary accommodation and its detrimental impact on local families and, in particular, children.

The Housing Portfolio Holder expressed her support for this proposal, reiterating the urgent need for more temporary accommodation. This was echoed by the Leader of the Council, who reminded Members that this would be funded from uncommitted right to buy receipts and Section 106 agreements.

Resolved that, subject to support of the Shadow Executive Committee, a report be submitted to Council recommending that:

- (1) a capital property purchase fund be created of £620,000 to enable the Council to purchase property for use as temporary accommodation to be funded from Section 106 agreements and uncommitted right to buy receipts received in 2017/18;
- (2) authority be delegated to the General Manager – Public Health and Housing, in consultation with the Section 151 Officer and the Housing Portfolio Holder, to purchase suitable property for temporary accommodation;

- (3) details of any properties purchased be reported to the next Audit and Governance Committee; and
- (4) a supplementary estimate of £5,000 be approved for 2018/19 for revenue costs associated with bringing the initial properties to a letting standard and to meet initial routine landlord health and safety responsibilities.

19.18/19 **Purbeck Citizens Advice – Homelessness Reduction Caseworker**

The Housing Manager presented a report seeking approval to fund a Homelessness Reduction Caseworker at the Purbeck Citizens Advice (PCA) on a two year fixed term contract. Members were reminded that when Council agreed, in April 2018, to fund an additional Housing Needs Officer working in the Housing Needs Team, the report referred to discussions taking place with PCA about how they might be able to assist the Council to fulfil its new duties under the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017. PCA's proposal was based on two part-time caseworkers providing a 0.5 FT Homelessness Reduction Caseworker role to supplement the work carried out by the Housing Specialist Adviser. The caseworkers would provide a dedicated housing, welfare benefits and income maximisation service to residents who approached PCA direct for assistance with their housing, as well as those referred by the Council's Housing Needs Team. The cost of the post would be £16,766 (including on-costs) per annum.

Members expressed their support for the proposal.

Resolved that a report be submitted to Council to approve the provision of funding for a 0.5 FT Homelessness Reduction Caseworker working 18.5 hours a week for Purbeck Citizens Advice on a two year fixed term contract at a cost of £16,766 (including on-costs) per annum.

The meeting ended at 7.34pm.

Chairman