

Shadow Dorset Council

Executive Committee

**Minutes of meeting held at South Walks House, Dorchester
on Monday 25 MARCH 2019.**

Present: Cllrs R Knox (Chairman), G Suttle (Vice-Chair), A Alford, P Batstone, S Butler, G Carr-Jones, S Flower, M Hall, J Haynes, C Huckle, S Jespersen, A Parry, M Penfold, B Quinn, D Turner, D Walsh and P Wharf.

Officers present (for all or part of the meeting): Matt Prosser (Chief Executive Designate), Keith Cheesman (LGR Programme Director), Aidan Dunn (Executive Director - Corporate Development S151 Designate), Mathew Kendall (Executive Director of People - Adults), Jonathan Mair (Corporate Director - Legal & Democratic Service Monitoring Officer, Designate), Sarah Parker (Executive Director of People - Children), John Sellgren (Executive Director, Place) and Lee Gallagher (Democratic Services Manager - Dorset County Council).

In accordance with the Overview and Scrutiny procedure Rules of the Shadow Dorset Council, the decisions set out in these minutes will come into force and may then be implemented on the expiry of five working days after the publication date.

51. **Apologies**

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs Tony Ferrari and Simon Tong.

52. **Declaration of Interests**

There were no declarations by members of disclosable pecuniary interests under the Shadow Dorset Council's Code of Conduct.

53. **Minutes**

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 11 March 2019 were confirmed and signed.

54. **Public Participation**

There were no public questions or statements received at the meeting in accordance with Standing Order 28.

55. **Dorset Council Forward Plan**

The Committee received the latest draft Forward Plan, which included all decisions to be taken throughout the Shadow Dorset Council period until 1 April 2019, whilst recognising that the plan would continue to evolve and be updated with lead members and further information in due course.

Noted

56. **Programme Highlight Report**

The Committee considered a report by the Programme Director which provided an overview of the Local Government Reorganisation Programme.

A question was asked by Cllr Kate Wheller to the Lead Member for HR and Workforce in relation to staffing. The question and answer are included in the minutes as an annexure.

A question was asked by Cllr Lucy Hamilton to the Lead Member for Children's Services regarding progress on the Base Budget Review of Children's Services. The question and answer are included in the minutes as an annexure. Cllr Hamilton was also directed to liaise with the appropriate Executive Director for further information.

Following members' questions, the Programme Director introduced the report and summarised programme activity which included key achievements as the programme progressed towards completion, logo signage changes, communications to staff and members, completion of a series of equality impact assessments, TUPE letters received by staff, and council tax bills had been issued. Data migration regarding social care information remained as an outstanding risk, but was on track and progressing. Over the next few months risks would continue to be addressed and be closed as part of the residual and continuing activity together with Phase 3 of the programme which would be the responsibility of the new Cabinet.

The Programme Director thanked the core team, officers and members throughout the programme to deliver a safe a legal Council from 1 April 2019. Likewise, members expressed their gratitude to the Programme Director and wished him well for the future.

Noted

57. **Adoption of Overarching Enforcement Policy**

The Committee considered a report by the Lead Member for Governance on the overarching enforcement policy for Dorset Council.

Decision

That the draft overarching enforcement policy be adopted.

Reason for Decision

The adoption and compliance with the draft policy would meet the requirements of the Legislative and Regulatory Reform Act 2006 and the Regulators Code 2014 to which Regulators whose functions were specified by order under section 24(2) of the Act must have regard when developing policies and operational procedures that guide their regulatory activities.

58. **Internal Audit Forward Plan**

The Committee considered a report by the Lead Member for Governance on internal audit provision for Dorset Council by South West Audit Partnership (SWAP) following appointment as the internal auditor to Dorset Council by the Shadow Executive Committee on 21 August 2018.

Confirmation was provided regarding the process for members to raise issues through Executive Directors which could be considered by the Senior Leadership Team when managing the Internal Audit Plan. Formal Committees were also a direct route for members to raise audit items.

A summary was also provided in relation to the number of hours applied to internal audit work which collectively comprised approximately 2200 hours for the sovereign councils. The hours applied for Dorset Council were 1900 hours, but this would be reviewed and decreased over the next three years to reflect reducing risk profile following Local Government Reorganisation and as the new Council then benchmarked its activity against other similar sized authorities.

Decision

That the Internal Audit plan be adopted.

Reason for Decision

To ensure that the new Council maintains an effective internal audit provision.

59. **Dorset History Centre - Capital Project Update**

The Committee considered a recommendation from the Joint Archives Advisory Board at its meeting held on 1 March 2019 on the Dorset History Centre capital project.

As the original accommodation neared the end of its operation life it was explained that there was a need to look at options jointly with Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Council regarding capital bids, and there was a need for work to continue to arrive at a definitive position as the most logical and pragmatic way forward.

It was recognised that as part of the overall context of the service there would be a business plan in relation to the Heritage Lottery Fund bid and that it would help to frame future service delivery and objectives.

The future archiving landscape was discussed with a clear need for digitisation to support preservation of information, together with complementing the physical storage of items of historic importance for the residents of Dorset. There was also an opportunity to look at future service delivery as income generating that could be offered to other organisations.

In addition, appreciation was shared by members regarding the commitment and value of volunteers who spent their time supporting the service.

Decision

That as a matter of urgency after 1 April 2019, a report be considered by the Dorset Council Cabinet on this capital project, bearing in mind the urgent need for additional space.

60. **Plot Sale at Dorset Innovation Park**

Decision

That the item be withdrawn from the meeting.

61. **Urgent Items**

There were no items of urgent business pursuant to section 100B (4) b) of the Local Government Act 1972 considered at the meeting.

Duration of meeting: 4.00 - 4.41 pm

Chairman
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Member Speaking at the Meeting

Question from Cllr Kate Wheller to the Lead Member for HR and Workforce in relation to Staffing

I am concerned that very experienced knowledgeable staff are leaving the authority, either by choice or design. Can you reassure me that unique knowledge will not be lost?

Answer

The loss of key knowledge and skills as the new council is formed is an identified risk that is monitored closely, both at Programme Board level and specifically as part of the Transitional Structures Review. We will continue to see organisational change as we bring the employees from six former councils together into the new Dorset Council, reducing duplication and management overheads. This will inevitably result in employees leaving the council, either through resignation, redundancy or voluntary release.

Measures put in place to mitigate the risk include the need to ensure all employees work sufficient notice periods and that knowledge transfer is a planned and coordinated activity across all areas to ensure that knowledge and skills held by individual employees are shared with colleagues before an employee leaves.

Any request for voluntary redundancy will be considered against a set of agreed criteria, ensuring that decisions take account of key skills and knowledge and are considered carefully and robustly.

At any point an organisation can lose long serving members of staff who have comprehensive corporate knowledge. As part of the LGR process to bring six organisations into one, we were always aware that this would have the potential for loss of corporate knowledge and understanding. In order to mitigate this we have undertaken the following, this is on top of working co-operatively as a Shaping Dorset Council programme supported by all six councils, where knowledge has been freely shared between all councils:

1. Full handover from serving team members to the new Executive Directors - having the Executive Directors in role ahead of the vesting day on 1 April, has allowed for full hand-over of responsibilities from previous post-holders/Interim Officers.
2. Where employees are known to be leaving their authorities we have also built into the exit process the handover of knowledge as part of this process.

At this point I think it would be right to thank those employees who have worked so hard to prepare the six councils for Dorset Council, regardless of whether they are part of the new council, or not, they have all committed to ensure the new council has the best possible start. This has been very much appreciated.

Question from Cllr Lucy Hamilton to the Lead Member for Children's Services regarding progress on the Base Budget Review of Children's Services

At Shadow Dorset Full Council on 20 Feb, councillors were told: At the time of writing this report there is an emerging picture of further costs in the Children's Services budget over and above the increased amount already built into the 2019/20 budget proposals. It is therefore recommended that a Base Budget Review exercise is carried out on this area as a priority in order to establish the on-going position with the new Executive Director of People - Children.

I understand that Dorset Council will need to make further savings in the region of £8 million as a result of budget shortfall. All social workers in Children's Services have been advised that compulsory redundancies will be necessary.

How many redundancies are needed? What is the impact on caseload? The figures that have been previously provided are calculated assuming that senior managers carry a caseload. Austerity is letting down our most vulnerable children, families and young people.

Answer

Statement from Shadow Executive Leader:

Under shadow procedure rules question are limited to 50 words or fewer. Cllr Hamilton's question is 175 words in length and so is more than three times the word the limit. Despite this I am exercising my discretion and allowing the question so that the important issue raised is addressed.

Answer from Cllr Steve Butler, Lead member for Safeguarding:

Cllr Hamilton's question is based upon the entirely false premise that social workers in Children's Services have been advised that compulsory redundancies will be necessary. It simply is not true that social worker redundancies will be needed. Instead it is key to protecting children and doing so cost effectively that we invest in employing and retaining social workers rather than employing expensive agency workers.

Questions like this destabilise our staff and only serve to undermine our success in attracting social workers to Dorset. Let me be clear, social workers are not at risk of redundancy.