

## **DORSET COUNCIL - PLACE AND RESOURCES OVERVIEW COMMITTEE**

### **MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON THURSDAY 25 FEBRUARY 2021**

**Present:** Cllrs Daryl Turner (Chairman), Les Fry (Vice-Chairman), Pauline Batstone, Ryan Hope, Sherry Jespersen, Carole Jones, Val Potheary, Andrew Starr, Roland Tarr and David Taylor

**Apologies:**

**Also present:** Cllr Tony Alford, Cllr Jon Andrews, Cllr Richard Biggs, Cllr Cherry Brooks, Cllr Ray Bryan, Cllr Beryl Ezzard, Cllr Spencer Flower, Cllr Matthew Hall, Cllr Jill Haynes, Cllr Nick Ireland, Cllr Rebecca Knox, Cllr Nocturin Lacey-Clarke, Cllr Laura Miller, Cllr Andrew Parry, Cllr Jane Somper and Cllr Peter Wharf

**Officers present (for all or part of the meeting):**

John Sellgren (Executive Director, Place), Jonathan Mair (Corporate Director - Legal & Democratic Service Monitoring Officer), Bridget Betts (Environmental Advice Manager), Karyn Punchard (Corporate Director for Place Services), Graham Duggan (Head of Community & Public Protection), Tracy McGregor (Service Manager for Libraries), Bridget Downton (Head of Business Insight and Corporate Communications), Deborah Smart (Corporate Director – Digital & Change), Lisa Trickey (Service Manager for Digital Strategy and Design) and Lindsey Watson (Senior Democratic Services Officer)

**29. Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 17 December 2020 were agreed as a correct record and would be signed by the Chairman at a later date.

**30. Declarations of interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

**31. Chairman's Update**

The Chairman reported that an additional meeting of the committee would be held on 9 March 2021 in order to review a report on 'APSE Review of Waste Services'.

The Chairman provided an update in respect of an issue raised by South West Audit Partnership (SWAP) relating to an operators license associated with waste operations, and following a meeting with the chair of the Audit and Governance Committee and the chairs of the Place and Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committees it was noted that the issues had been addressed and that the chairmen were content with the checks and balances introduced.

The Chairman noted that members were being sought to undertake some review work in respect of the future disposal of assets and the council's new website. Volunteers would be sought after the meeting.

**32. Public Participation**

One question had been received from a member of the public and had been made available to the committee and published on the council's website in advance of the meeting.

A copy of the question and the response provided at the meeting is set out in Appendix 1 to these minutes.

**33. Options for the control of disposable barbeques and other fire related activities**

The committee considered a report of the Environment Advice Manager which set out options to look at both the legislative as well as other alternatives available to control or prohibit barbeques and other fire related activities in the Dorset Council area. The options paper had been put together working with Dorset and Wiltshire Fire and Rescue and other partners.

Councillors discussed the issues arising from the report and reference was made to the importance of working with local members and town and parish councils to consider the particular circumstances of different areas, the use of signage and education in this area, enforcement issues and the need to review the approaches following the summer season.

It was proposed by R Tarr seconded by V Potheary

**Recommendation to Cabinet**

- (a) Cabinet are recommended to adopt a two-step approach to the control of disposable barbeques and other fire related activities firstly focussing on increasing public awareness about the risks and the wider impacts through campaigns, policies and schemes, then if necessary, introducing legislation which will result in penalties for those in contravention.
- (b) To achieve this Cabinet are recommended to approve the following options:
  - (1) Not to pursue designating areas or Dorset Council areas with a PSPO relating to BBQ's and fire related activities this year but evaluate 2022 (Option 1)
  - (2) Not to pursue having a specific byelaw at this current time (Option 2)

- (3) The Sky Lantern and Balloon Policy and the new BBQ and campfire/Wildfire Policy is adopted by Dorset Council (Option 3)
- (4) Moors Valley to investigate the gas/electric communal style BBQ option with Forestry England later (Option 4)
- (5) Officers to investigate partnership funding options to support having a new Firewise voluntary warden scheme delivered through the Dorset Firewise project (Option 5)
- (6) The campaign and communication work are supported and developed and taken forward for 2021 season in line with any recommendations from this report. (Option 6)
- (7) Dorset council initiate a coordinated approach to the banning of disposable BBQs in agreed high risk area's locations. This work should link with Option 3, 5 and 6 (Option 7).

#### **34. Developing Dorset's Digital Vision**

Further to the Place and Resources Overview Committee meeting in December 2020, the draft digital vision had been finalised, and reflected the comments, suggestions and ideas put forward.

The committee considered the issues arising from the report and particular reference was made to connectivity issues and levels of digital access across the Dorset Council area and the important role played by councillors.

It was proposed by L Fry seconded by R Hope

#### **Recommendation to Cabinet**

That the Digital Vision and accompanying delivery plan be adopted.

#### **35. Dorset Council Tourist Information Centres - Service Review: Consultation responses and next steps**

The committee received a joint report of the Service Manager for Libraries and Head of Business Insight and Corporate Communications, which sought support on the way forward for Dorset Council in respect of its approach to funding and managing tourist information centres. In introducing the report, the Chairman noted that tourist information centres were a discretionary service and there was currently disparity across the council area. Consultation had been undertaken and alternative delivery models were being investigated.

The committee considered the issues arising from the report and strong support was raised in respect of opportunities to look at the 'Visit Dorset' website including how rural areas away from the coast were marketed and the

potential to develop an app for mobile phones. If the recommendations were agreed, existing funding levels would cease at the end of the current financial year, however, there would be continued support and negotiations moving forward.

It was proposed by S Jespersen seconded by A Starr.

### **Recommendation to Cabinet**

That the following recommendations are endorsed:

1. Dorset Council stops directly funding tourist information centres (TICs) in Dorchester, Sherborne and Wareham.
2. Dorset Council continues to work with the Town Councils and/or other local services and will consider one-off support funding for suitable transitional arrangements to reduce the impact of the closure of the TIC on local people.
3. Authority is delegated to the Portfolio Holder for Customer and Community Services, in consultation with the Executive Director for Place, to agree any support payment arrangements agreed.
4. Dorset Council continues to promote Dorset as a visitor destination through its Visit Dorset website.

### **36. Place and Resources Overview Committee Forward Plan**

Councillors noted the committee's forward plan and the Chairman reported that work was being undertaken to prioritise items for future review by the committee.

Reference was made to a 'Wheels to work' transport scheme. Further discussion would be held between the Chairman and relevant lead member in respect of transport issues generally and how the committee could be involved in this work.

### **37. Urgent items**

There were no urgent items.

### **38. Exempt Business**

There was no exempt business.

## **APPENDIX 1 - PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

### **Question from John Calvert**

#### **Item 8 Tourist Information Centre Funding**

The Executive Summary comments that TICs provide the following key services: ~ free information including maps, local attractions and events, general information about the local area, bus/transport provision and

information about accessibility ~ ticket sales for some transport providers and for local events ~accommodation information and booking for the local area.

As a resident of Dorchester for over 10 years I have used the Dorchester Tourist Information for all these when they were available and I use them in other towns every time my wife and I visit for the first time.

This situation is not recent, there were plans for the TIC to go into the Shire Hall but then there weren't. The obvious next place was the new Library but no plans there. Finally the reorganisation of the Corn Exchange surely offered possibilities.

The response from Dorchester Town Council is sympathetic but seemingly at an early stage.

My question is this - If Tourism is so important for Dorset and in particular for Dorchester why is the Council stopping the funding and releasing the expert staff before agreeing a replacement service?

Some transitional funding is no substitute for proper planning.

### **Response from the Service Manager for Libraries**

Thank you for the question about the TICs. As you have mentioned, the two TICs that were part of the former West Dorset District Council (Dorchester and Sherborne) were part of a service review commenced in 2014/15 by the district council. During an extended review period, some changes were made to the TICs operated by West Dorset District Council including relocating the Dorchester TIC into the town's library in order to reduce the cost to the council in supporting the TIC function. The review was not fully completed before the Local Government Re-organisation work to create the new Dorset Council took priority. Dorset Council has undertaken a review of the Council managed TICs to consider how best to provide this type of service in the future in a fair and equitable way.

Tourism remains important to Dorset Council and the council's Economic Growth Strategy includes support for the tourism sector by developing the 'Visit Dorset' brand and service to support the visitor economy and promote sustainable tourism in Dorset. Dorset Council currently operate and fund three TICs across the county with other TICs being operated at a local level by town/parish councils and/or volunteer support. There is disparity in terms of the council support for TICs across the area and Dorset Council cannot afford to fund TICs across the whole of the area.

In terms of implementing this change, there have already been some initial discussions with the three Town Councils and these discussions will continue particularly once we have a decision about the future provision of TICs. In addition, there is a period of organisational change management process with the workforce that will take a period of several months to complete which provides time for any alternative arrangements with the Town Councils to develop and be implemented.

**Duration of meeting:** 10.00 - 11.21 am

**Chairman**

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