

Shadow Dorset Council

Executive Committee

**Minutes of meeting held at South Walks House, Dorchester
on Monday 17 SEPTEMBER 2018.**

Present: Cllrs Rebecca Knox (Chairman), G Suttle (Vice-Chair), S Butler, J Cant, G Carr-Jones, T Ferrari, S Flower, M Hall, J Haynes, C Huckle, S Jespersen, Andrew Parry, M Penfold, D Turner, D Walsh and P Wharf.

Officers present (for all or part of the meeting): Matt Prosser (Interim Head of Paid Service), Keith Cheesman (LGR Programme Director), Stephen Hill (Strategic Director, Dorset Councils Partnership), Steve Mackenzie (Chief Executive - Purbeck District Council), Jonathan Mair (Interim Monitoring Officer), Jason Vaughan (Interim Section 151 Officer) and Lee Gallagher (Democratic Services Manager - Dorset County Council).

43. **Apologies**

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs Anthony Alford, Pauline Batstone and Barry Quinn.

44. **Declaration of Interests**

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

45. **Minutes**

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 28 August 2018 were confirmed and signed.

46. **Public Participation**

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

47. **Shadow Executive 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.

Noted

48. **Programme Highlight Report**

The Committee considered a report by the Programme Director which provided an overview of the Local Government Reorganisation Programme including workstream activity, progress on Phase 2 in respect of Service Continuity Implementation Plans, the formation of Theme Boards, and the activity of the wider Programme Board. The progress so far was challenging and resource intensive, but assurance was provided that it was sufficient to meet the deadline of 1 April 2019 as day 1 of the new Council.

The formation of convergence plans was raised together with clarity regarding member and officer roles. It was confirmed that an Informal Shadow Executive Committee on 24

September 2018 would consider options for the convergence timeline, which had been accelerated from the original business case assumption of a two-year period. More detail would also be included in the Programme Highlight report to the next meeting on 15 October 2018.

Theme Boards would now be engaged to focus of Phase 3 transformation and convergence which needed to be closely linked to the activity of the Budget Working Group in relation to any achievable convergence savings. Further clarification was provided that any plans developed for convergence could not endanger processes such as TUPE, and also not to prevent any potential transformation at a later stage which would bring a greater benefit to the new Council.

Concern was expressed regarding stranded costs associated with the formation of the two new Dorset councils. It was clarified that there was no assumption of stranded costs in the original financial case prepared by Local Partnerships. The stranded costs currently amounted £5.4m which would change through effective vacancy management and would be addressed as part of convergence work.

Noted

49. **Risk Register**

The Committee considered a report by the Programme Director on the current status of the Programme risk management, together with the high impact risks. A consolidated risk register was currently being prepared to provide a corporate register, which would be available from October 2018 and would be brought to the Committee at its meeting on 12 November 2018. The Corporate Risk Register would provide a framework for all Shadow Council members to take moral collective responsibility for all risks.

The Leader of the Shadow Council indicated that she would engage with all Shadow Executive members outside of the meeting to ensure that all were receiving appropriate information to fulfil their lead member roles.

Decisions

1. That the Shaping Dorset Programme risk management process be agreed.
2. That the high impact (4 and 5) risks, description, rating and mitigating actions be approved.

Reason for Decisions

To report the current risks as agreed at the Risk Workshop on 22 August 2018.

50. **Local Council Tax Support Scheme**

The Committee considered a report by the Lead Member for Finance on the need for a Local Council Tax Support scheme for Dorset Council. An aligned scheme would be required from 2021/22, but this report outlined the benefits of having an aligned scheme for 2019/20 and the opportunities to help reduce customer confusion and local authority administration.

Decision

That the Committee agrees to undertake a review of the Local Council Tax Support scheme.

Reason for Decision

To help ensure that the Dorset Council Local Council Tax Support scheme treats claimants consistently, was clear to understand and easy to administer.

51. **Grants to Voluntary and Community Organisations**

The Committee considered a report by the Lead Member for Communities on a review of the grants to the voluntary and community sector to provide some certainty as to their future funding in advance of the budget setting process for Dorset Council. As part of the introduction of the report, the Lead Member asked for Recommendation 2 in the report be removed as there had not been an opportunity to gather enough information and assess the impact of a change in funding for Local Town Partnerships and that the funding for these bodies would roll forward in the same way as other funding. A robust review would then be undertaken of all grants early in the new financial year. Steve Mackenzie, Chief Executive of Purbeck District Council and lead officer for the report, summarised the remit of the exercise undertaken so far and also clarified that most of the funding arrangements were managed through Service Level Agreements which were due to end on 31 March 2019 except for East Dorset arrangements which were due to end on 31 March 2020. Further clarification was provided regarding the requested budget level which took account of an additional £52,698 in relation to the funding for the Citizen's Advice Bureau in North Dorset and Weymouth & Portland which had not been included in the figures. This increased the gross budget to £2,006,722 and the requested budget to £1,545,113.

On discussing the report, it was suggested that a caveat be added to the remit of the review of grants to ensure that there was a clear outcomes focus and evidence base for the continuation of funding. Reference also had to be made to the community benefits created as a result of the funding, together with an impact assessment of the additional income generated as a result of the use of the funding. All groups would be notified of the roll forward of funding and it would be made very clear that there would be a robust and fair review of all funding in the 2019/20 financial year.

Decisions

1. That grants which are given to organisations on a continuing basis are rolled forward for 2019/20, subject to the grants to pan-Dorset organisations being reduced to take account of the loss of Christchurch.
2. That comprehensive reviews of the grants be undertaken, to inform the budget setting process for 2020/21 and provide certainty to the sector.

Reason for Decisions

That there was a clear approach to grants to voluntary and community organisations in 2019/20, so that recipient organisations and Finance Officers could plan accordingly.

52. **Transfer of Services and Assets**

The Committee considered a report by the Leader of West Dorset District Council (WDDC) on "agreements in principle" established with Town and Parish Councils in West Dorset to take responsibility for discretionary services with a package of assets and money to facilitate the transfer in accordance with the principles for transfer of assets and services agreed by the Shadow Executive Committee on 20 July 2018.

Three questions were submitted by Cllr Cheryl Reynolds from WDDC as follows:

Will this committee confirm its commitment to localism and the devolution of services to local councils, to protect services and deliver long-term savings? Why are we making this so complicated? We must ask ourselves, can we afford not to accept proposals that clearly benefit the communities we represent?

In response to the questions, the Leader of the Shadow Dorset Council indicated that the Shadow Council was committed to working with local councils, but that proposals had to be in line with the agreed protocol and decisions would be taken in the best interest of all councils. Cllr Reynolds was thanked for her questions.

Cllr Alan Thacker, Portfolio holder for Community Safety and Access & Deputy Leader at WDDC, introduced the report and highlighted that this was a process which had started before Local Government Reorganisation to make more efficient provision of services and assets locally. As part of this, meetings had been taking place with Mayors and Clerks of Town Councils over the past year. The upfront cost and commitment was planned to come from WDDC reserves to implement proprietary work and to retain assets in the public sector.

The Interim Section 151 Officer confirmed that the value of the assets proposed to be transferred exceeded a financial threshold previously agreed by the Shadow Executive Committee. In the light of this the Interim Monitoring Officer advised that although the item appeared within the consultation part of the agenda, the value of the proposed asset transfers meant that they should not go ahead without the support of the Shadow Executive Committee. A proposal was tabled by Cllr Rebecca Knox, and seconded by Cllr Spencer Flower, not to support the proposed transfers.

Decision

That the proposals in relation to the transfer of assets and services considered by West Dorset District Council not be supported.

53. Decision Making Activity of Dorset Councils

The Committee received notification of the decision activity of Dorset councils. There were no matters raised in respect of decision making of Dorset Council.

Noted

54. Shaping Dorset Council Programme - Operational Structures from Day 1 - Tier 2

(Note: Jonathan Mair and Jason Vaughan withdrew from the meeting for this item.)

The Committee considered a report by the Leader of the Shadow Council and Lead Member for Human Resources on the recruitment of senior posts as a significant part of setting the culture of the new Dorset Council in accordance with design principles. A summary of the design principles, proposed structure, comments from consultation with officers, post requirements, salary ranges, timelines, and decision-making approach were provided. It was noted that the voluntary redundancy process would be reported to the next meeting on 15 October 2018.

Cllr Peter Wharf as the Lead Member for HR and Workforce explained that there had been differing views expressed by a range of officers including sovereign council Chief Executives to the proposed structure. He also explained that there may be some variation to the model depending on being able to secure the right people for the right roles. The role of Director of Public Health would not be included in the recruitment as this was a co-hosted position.

There was also an important need to ensure service continuity and it may therefore be necessary to use contractors or interims to ensure there were no vacancies. It was recognised that it may not be possible to attract ideal candidates to the roles such as those for Adult and Children's Services as they were for a Council which did not yet exist.

Reference was made to the need to be prepared to fully justify the reasoning for the roles being six times the Dorset average salary of £20k and to explain what tax payers would 'get for their money'.

At the end of the debate it was clarified that a report would be considered at the next Shadow Dorset Council meeting on 27 September 2018 to outline the member-led appointment process and to seek approval to make the necessary recruitment arrangements including confirmation of the salary ranges.

Decision

1. That the proposed tier 2 structure and one tier 3 post, for the purposes of engaging with employees be agreed.
2. That delegated authority be granted to the Interim Head of Paid Service, working in conjunction with the Leader of the Shadow Council and Shadow Executive Member Theme lead for HR and Workforce, to:
 - a. Finalise and agree the job titles, role profiles and the allocation of service responsibilities;
 - b. Arrange for the roles to be fully evaluated and to propose final salary recommendations to the Shadow Council at their meeting on 27 September 2018;
 - c. Run an engagement process with employees, enabling their views on the structure to be considered;
 - d. Agree the recruitment process and support to be made available to internal applicants; and,
 - e. Recruit and appoint an agency to support the selection centre process as set out in the report 4.1 to 4.3.
3. That the recruitment process be started from October 2018, once the employee engagement process is complete and appropriate comments/feedback have been taken on board.
4. That a report be considered at the 15 October 2018 Shadow Executive Committee on the Voluntary Redundancy principles and process.

Reason for Decisions

Not filling these posts would create high risk for the new council to operate effectively without statutory officer posts in place.

55. **Exempt Business**

Decision

That in accordance with Section 100 A (4) of the Local Government Act 1972 to exclude the public from the meeting in relation to the business specified below it was likely that if members of the public were present, there would be disclosure to them of exempt information as defined in paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the public interest in disclosing the information to the public.

56. Funding for Highway Maintenance - 2019/20

The Committee considered a report by the Cabinet Member for Natural and Built Environment following activity to examine the current funding strategy in relation to the management of highway maintenance. A number of the recommendations within the report related to future revenue funding issues from 1 April 2019 and were for the Shadow Executive Committee to consider. The report was considered and approved by Dorset County Council's Cabinet on 5 September 2018.

Clarification was provided regarding the additional funding for highway maintenance in 2019/20 as a mixture of revenue and capital financing through the disposal of assets.

Recognition was given to the need to invest in highways maintenance and to commend the ongoing work of the Highways Team who worked incredibly hard with limited resources.

Decision

That the content of the Policy Development Panel's report be taken into account within future budget development work.

Reason for Decision

To address concerns about the current levels of maintenance and condition of the highway network.

57. 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 - 5.30 pm

Chairman

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