

DORSET COUNCIL - CABINET

MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY 28 JANUARY 2020

Present: Cllrs Spencer Flower (Chairman), Peter Wharf (Vice-Chairman), Tony Alford, Ray Bryan, Graham Carr-Jones, Laura Miller, Andrew Parry and David Walsh

Apologies: Cllrs Tony Ferrari and Gary Suttle

Also present: Cllr Jon Andrews, Cllr Pete Barrow, Cllr Shane Bartlett, Cllr Pauline Batstone, Cllr Cherry Brooks, Cllr Barry Goringe, Cllr David Gray, Cllr Brian Heatley, Cllr Rob Hughes, Cllr Nick Ireland, Cllr Paul Kimber, Cllr Val Potheary, Cllr Molly Rennie, Cllr Jane Somper, Cllr Roland Tarr, Cllr Daryl Turner and Cllr John Worth

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

Aidan Dunn (Executive Director - Corporate Development S151), Jonathan Mair (Corporate Director - Legal & Democratic Service Monitoring Officer), John Sellgren (Executive Director, Place), Kate Critchel (Senior Democratic Services Officer), Bridget Downton (Head of Business Insight and Corporate Communications), Theresa Leavy (Interim Executive Director of People - Children) and Vivienne Broadhurst (Interim Corporate Director - Adult Care Operations)

110. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 10 December 2020 were confirmed and signed by the Chairman.

111. Declarations of Interest

No declarations of disclosable pecuniary interests were made at the meeting.

112. Public Participation

There was no public participation to report.

113. Questions from Members

There were two questions received from councillors. The questions and answers were attached to these minutes as an appendix A.

114. Forward Plan

The Forward Plan was received and noted with minor amendments.

115. **Budget Strategy Report**

In the absence of the Portfolio Holder for Finance, Commercial and Assets, the Chairman (Leader of the Council) presented the Budget Strategy for 2020-2021.

The Chairman advised that the budget carried forward many aspects of the submitted paper to the scrutiny committee(s), but had been improved following their engagement. The Chairman thanked Scrutiny for their contribution and their constructive challenge to the budget process.

Cabinet was advised that there was two key focuses that underpinned the budget. The transfer of resources to front line services, in particular Adult Social Care and Children's Services. £11.7m had been added to the expenditure on the most vulnerable adults in the Dorset area and £10.3m was to be spent on children with care or educational needs.

The budget increased the council tax burden to residents by just under 4% and this proposed increase was considered carefully before being presented to members, but was necessary to meet the needs of Dorset's most vulnerable residents. The council tax increase provided £9.6m which was less than half of the extra money allocated to the care services. Members noted that the formation of the unitary council meant that there would be not cut in services through the budget presented to members for 2020-2021

The second element of the budget related to the move of money from back office tasks to front line services. The creation of the unitary council had allowed a reduction to central costs, including a slim-lined leadership team, reduction in councillors and the removal of duplication across other levels of the organisation. This rationalising would continue in future years.

In proposing the recommendation to Full Council, the Chairman advised that this was a balanced budget that members could have confidence in.

In response to questions from non-executive councillors, the Executive Director of Corporate Development explained that there had been minor changes from the figures presented to the Scrutiny Committee(s) as more details of funding had recently been announced by Government, in particular details of the New Homes Bonus. Members noted that there may be some further very minor adjustments to the final figures to be presented to Full Council on 18 February 2020, to take account of rounding's in the calculation of the precept bandings.

Both the Portfolio Holders for Children, Education and Early Help and Adult Social Care and Health welcomed the budget; they acknowledged that the Blue Print for Change and other transforming projects must continue at pace, in order that the council was able to respond to increasing demand. However it was also essential that councillors continued to lobby central government regarding future funding for Dorset.

Members also welcomed the proposed approach to policy change that was intended to encourage owners of long-term empty properties to return these to homes of use.

In response to questions, the Executive Director of Corporate Development confirmed that senior officer of the council had been part of the budget process to ensure their departmental budgets were realistic stating that it was important that officers understood budget expectations.

Recommendation to Full Council

1. That the revenue budget summarised in Appendix 1 be approved;
2. That the increase in general council tax of 1.995% and to levy 2% as the social care precept, providing a band D council tax figure for Dorset Council of £1,694.79, be approved;
3. That the capital strategy set out in Appendix 3 and the capital programme set out in Appendix 4, be approved;
4. The treasury management strategy set out in Appendix 5, be approved;
5. That the assumptions used to develop the budget strategy and MTFP as set out throughout the report be Cabinet and summarised in Appendix 6, be approved;
6. That the recommended balances on earmarked reserves and on general funds, including the minimum level of the general fund, be approved;
7. That the application of council tax premiums as set out in the report to Cabinet, for long-term empty properties, to encourage those homes back into use, be approved;
8. That the responses to the recommendations and comments made as part of the budget scrutiny process, as set out in Appendix 8 of the report be agreed.

The cost reductions flowing from reorganisation as summarised in Appendix 7 of the report to cabinet were received and noted.

Reason for Recommendation:

The Council is required to set a balanced revenue budget, and to approve a level of council tax as an integral part of this.

The Council is also required to approve a capital strategy, a capital programme and budget, and a treasury management strategy.

The draft budget proposals have been considered and endorsed by the four Dorset Council scrutiny committees (People, Place, Resources and Health).

116. Dorset Council Plan

Cabinet was reminded that at the beginning of September 2020, councillors took part in a workshop to shape Dorset Council's first draft plan. This set out what the council's priorities would be for the next four years.

Following Cabinet approval of the draft plan the council undertook a public conversation and this report set out to sum up the responses from the engagement and the resulting changes to the plan for approval.

People were generally supportive of the five overall priorities and following consultation changes had been made to reflect that climate and ecological

emergency was a cross cutting theme that must be emphasised across the entire the plan.

Non executive members welcomed the plan and made the following observations:-

- Welcomed support for the arts and culture.
- Noted that tourism needed to be an all year round provision and not just have seasonal impact to the economy.
- Expressed the importance of considering the green economy and how this impacted on Dorset's climate change challenge.
- Suggested additional organisations that the council should work with as part of addressing the council's priorities.
- Welcomed the strengthening of the climate change and ecological emergency within the plan's priorities.
- Should focus on management of highways as well and the road verges.
- Expressed the importance of focusing of areas of deprivation to address social housing matters and issues around second homes

The Portfolio Holder for Corporate Development and Change thanked members for their input, the issues raised and reported that many of these concerns were being addressed through the Executive Advisory Panel(s) that would be reporting to Scrutiny Committee(s) and Cabinet in the near future.

The Portfolio Holder of Highways, Travel and Environment reminded all present that climate and ecological emergency sat at the centre of the plan and cut across the plans priorities and services.

The Portfolio Holder for Housing advised about bringing empty homes back into use and the councils desire to address issues around second homes as it was important that Dorset had thriving healthy communities.

Decision

That in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Corporate Development and Change, any minor amendments be delegated to the Chief Executive to approve.

Recommendation to Full Council

That the Dorset Council Plan be adopted.

Reason for the recommendation

To provide clarity about the council's priorities for the next four years.

117. Peer Challenge - Action Plan

The Chairman presented the proposed action plan following the recommendations from the Peer Challenge team who visited Dorset Council in October 2019.

The Portfolio Holder for Corporate Development and Change set out the details of the action plan and the key responses to the suggestions and observations made within the Peer Challenge report. These included:- Governance, Financial Control, Transformation, Communication, Learning and Challenge.

The Peer Challenge Team acknowledged that the council was working hard at developing its culture and effective staff engagement. The council's external challenge at an early stage was welcomed by the team and they felt that Dorset had the potential to be a strong and progressive council.

The Chairman indicated that a member briefing on the action plan would be held at a date in the near future.

Decision

That the Peer Challenge Action Plan be approved, subject to minor amendments being agreed by the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Corporate Development and Change.

Reason for Decision

To ensure that the council acts on the corporate peer team's recommendations.

118. **School Admissions Policy**

The Portfolio Holder for Children, Education, Early Help presented a report on the consultation of the proposed admission arrangements for September 2021 prior to determination. The report summarised the consultations that had taken place and sought approval of the policies as a result of those consultations in order to meet the Local Authority's statutory duties.

This process ensured that Dorset children were allocated school places in a clear, open and transparent manner with an opportunity for parents/guardians to get the school place of their preference.

Cabinet members welcomed the report, the attached policies and supported their approval.

Decision

(a) That the following policies that make up Dorset Council's School Admissions Arrangements and Coordinated Scheme for school place allocations from September 2021, be adopted:

1. Co-ordinated Admissions Scheme Timetable 2021-2022
2. Primary Co-ordinated Scheme 2021-2022
3. Secondary Co-ordinated Scheme 2021-2022
4. In Year Co-ordinated Scheme 2021-2022
5. Admissions Arrangements for Community & Voluntary Controlled Schools 2021-2022.
6. Admissions to Maintained Nursery Units Policy 2021-2022

7. Sixth Form Admissions Policy 2021-2022
8. Guidance on Placement Outside of Normal/Chronological Age Group 2021-2022
9. Armed Forces Policy 2021-2022
10. Guidance on Consulting on Admissions Arrangements – November 2021

(b) That the reduction of Pupil Admissions Number (PAN) be agreed for the following:-

1. St. Mary's First School, Charminster to lower its PAN from 42 places to 30 places from September 2021
2. Manor Park First School, Dorchester to lower its PAN from 90 places to 60 places from September 2021
3. Holy Trinity Primary School, Weymouth to lower its PAN from 90 to 60 places from September 2021.

Reason for Decision

To determine admissions arrangements in accordance with statutory requirements including the Schools Admissions Code December 2014.

To ensure compliance with the latest legislation and subsequent regulation/statutory guidance.

119. **Statement of Community Involvement**

The Portfolio Holder for Planning set out a report seeking approval for the adoption of the Dorset Council Statement of Community Involvement (SCI)

The SCI sets out how and when a local planning authority would involve the community as part of its planning duties. The draft SCI was consulted upon with 165 responses being received, analysed and the final version of the document seeking Cabinet's approval.

The Portfolio Holder for Planning reported that because planning affected the future of Dorset, the council wanted to be sure that everybody was able to be involved in both the preparation of Local Plans and decisions on planning applications. He further advised that training and engagement for town and parishes would be provided. It was suggested that this should include Parish Clerks and video training modules would also be welcomed. The Portfolio Holder agreed to discuss this proposal with the Council's Communications team.

Decision

That the Dorset Council Statement of Community Involvement (SCI), as set out in Appendix 1, be adopted.

Reason for the Decision

To ensure Dorset Council had an adopted SCI detailing how and when it will involve the community as part of its planning duties.

120. Unreasonable Complaints Policy

The Leader of the Council set out a report advising that a corporate complaints policy was set out as a Day One required for Dorset Council and the overview performance during 2019/20 was attached to the report to Cabinet.

In respect of unreasonable complaints members were advised that a draft Unreasonable Behaviours protocol had been designed to set a framework for how such behaviour was identified in the future, recorded and where appropriate shared across the council services. It was proposed that this protocol would replace the current complaints policy.

Decision

- (a) That the number of complaints received by Dorset Council, set out at Q1 & Q2 of Appendix A, be received and noted.
- (b) That the proposed approach to managing unreasonable behaviour, as set out at Appendix B of the report be approved and endorsed.
- (c) That, in consultation with the Leader of the Council, the Corporate Director of Legal and Democratic be delegated to finalise the protocol document.

Reason for the Decision

To protect the health and wellbeing of representatives of the Council (whether staff, volunteers or elected members)

121. Climate & Ecological Emergency Executive Advisory Panel Update

The Portfolio Holder of Highways, Travel and Environment advised members that the Climate & Ecological Emergency Executive Advisory Panel (EAP) had met twice since the last meeting of Cabinet.

Task and Finish groups had been established to set their terms of reference and were now collating data and information setting time schedules, estimating cost of action and carbon reduction.

He further advised that a meeting with town & parish councils had taken place and more than 50% of parish councils in the area had also declared a climate emergency, supporting Dorset Council's position.

Cabinet was informed that an Inquiry Day had been arranged for 21 February 2020 following the council's call of ideas. He reported that over 550 people had responded and in excess of 200 individuals had offered to address the EAP on the day. Due to this high response a second open day would be arranged.

Reports were to be presented to Cabinet in the near future on Single Use Plastics Policy and the Council's Tree Policy. These would also report to Scrutiny prior to coming forward to Cabinet. It was proposed that a schedule of target dates be created for the reduction of the council's carbon footprint and this would be based on information obtained from the task and finish groups.

The Portfolio Holder for Highways, Travel and Environment also updated Cabinet on a recent LGA conference attended with Cllr R Hughes. Ideas and suggestions for action were shared with other councils across the country and these would be discussed further by the EAP in future meetings.

122. Urgent items

There were no urgent items considered at the meeting.

123. Exempt Business

There was no exempt business to report.

Appendix

Duration of meeting: 10.00 am - 12.28 pm

Chairman

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