

DORSET COUNCIL

MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON THURSDAY 12 OCTOBER 2023

Present: Cllrs Val Potheary (Chairman), Bill Trite (Vice-Chairman), Tony Alford, Mike Barron, Pete Barrow, Shane Bartlett, Pauline Batstone, Belinda Bawden, Laura Beddow, Derek Beer, Richard Biggs, Dave Bolwell, Cherry Brooks, Piers Brown, Ray Bryan, Simon Christopher, Kelvin Clayton, Susan Cocking, Robin Cook, Tim Cook, Toni Coombs, Richard Crabb, Jean Dunseith, Beryl Ezzard, Tony Ferrari, Spencer Flower, Les Fry, Simon Gibson, Barry Goringe, David Gray, Jill Haynes, Ryan Hope, Rob Hughes, Nick Ireland, Sherry Jespersen, Carole Jones, Stella Jones, Andrew Kerby, Howard Legg, Robin Legg, Cathy Lugg, David Morgan, Louie O'Leary, Jon Orrell, Emma Parker, Mike Parkes, Andrew Parry, Mary Penfold, Byron Quayle, Molly Rennie, Belinda Ridout, Mark Roberts, Jane Somper, Andrew Starr, Gary Suttle, Clare Sutton, Roland Tarr, Gill Taylor, David Tooke, David Walsh, Kate Wheller, Sarah Williams and John Worth

Present remotely: Cllrs

Apologies: Cllrs Jon Andrews, Alex Brenton, Andy Canning, Graham Carr-Jones, Janet Dover, Mike Dyer, Paul Harrison, Brian Heatley, Ryan Holloway, Paul Kimber, Rebecca Knox, Nocturin Lacey-Clarke, Bill Pipe, Julie Robinson, Maria Roe, David Shortell, David Taylor and Peter Wharf

Also present:

Also present remotely:

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

Hayley Caves (Member Development and Support Officer), Kate Critchel (Senior Democratic Services Officer), Susan Dallison (Democratic Services Team Leader), Aidan Dunn (Executive Director - Corporate Development S151), Jonathan Mair (Director of Legal and Democratic and Monitoring Officer), Matt Prosser (Chief Executive), John Sellgren (Executive Director of Place) and Lindsey Watson (Senior Democratic Services Officer)

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

33. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 13 July 2023 were confirmed and signed.

34. Declarations of Interest

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

35. Chairman's Announcements

The Chairman reported the death of Honorary Alderman Della Jones MBE, who served as a Member of North Dorset District Council and Dorset County Council. She also reported on the death of Honorary Alderman Jeffrey Miller who also served as a member of North Dorset District Council. She paid tribute to both Honorary Alderman.

The Chairman took this opportunity, on behalf of the council and residents, to thank John Sellgren, Executive Director of Place, who had recently announced his retirement at the end of the year. She thanked him for his service and commitment to the Council over the last 5 years.

Finally, the Chairman shared that Councillor Spencer Flower, Leader of the Council since 2019, had been shortlisted for the Local Government Information Unit "Leader of the Year" Award. She wished him luck at the awards ceremony due to be held on 16 November 2023.

36. Public Participation

Public questions, statements and the responses from the Leader of the Council or the appropriate Portfolio Holder are set out in Appendix 1 to these minutes.

37. Public participation - petitions and deputations

There were no petitions or deputations to report.

38. Announcements and Reports from the Leader of Council and Cabinet Members

The Leader of the Council advised members that his bulletin would be published at the conclusion of the meeting and some of the areas covered by the bulletin included:-

- Lobbying Government for a better deal for Dorset
- Congratulating officers of their recent success at the Highways Awards
- Congratulations to the Digital Champions scheme at the Connected Britain Awards
- Dorset Council was also shortlisted for Decarbonisation Work, and he also reported on the Community Safety Team's recent visit to the Home Office.

39. Questions from Councillors

There were four questions received from councillors. A copy of the questions and the responses are attached at Appendix 2 to these minutes.

40. Devolution Deal for Dorset

The Portfolio Holder for Economic Growth and Levelling Up advised that at its meeting on 25 July 2023, Cabinet considered a report titled 'A devolution deal for Dorset'. Set out in the context of a further announcement by Government about

devolution deals being struck and against a commitment for all areas of England which wanted one, to have a devolution deal by 2030, Cabinet thought it appropriate to consider this proposal for Dorset Council.

He continued by reporting that work had commenced to progress a devolution deal for Dorset; but it was clear that such a deal would be finalised not in the current but under a future Parliament. However, for this to occur work needed to commence now. The Portfolio Holder reported that it was generally considered that English devolution had gained a strong foothold and therefore he considered it to be prudent for Dorset Council to prepare proactively in order to be able to secure the best outcome for Dorset in the future.

The report set out the potential wider policy implications of a devolution deal and sought council's endorsement of the need to widen the scope of the Council Plan. The Portfolio Holder acknowledged that there was no appetite for a directly elected mayor model, however, there were other models to be considered and these were set out within the report.

Councillor N Ireland, Group Leader for the Liberal Democrats group indicated that the group would be supporting the recommendation, however he advised that he did find the report vague, which was indicative of the current situation around devolution in England. He saw no reason not to support the recommendation, but expressed concerns that it would not be the financial solution for properly funded local government going forward.

Other members expressed similar concerns and sought assurances around governance, a reduction in autonomy and the potential impact on council sovereignty.

In response to questions and concerns, the Leader of the Council agreed that Council needed more information to build on this proposal before any final decision was made. However, he sought support from members to continue conversations regarding a devolution deal for Dorset. He confirmed that this would not affect the sovereignty of individual councils and advised that the government had acknowledged that the mayoral model doesn't work for all areas. In response to a question around which councils Dorset was in conversation with, the Leader of the Council indicated that he was in early negotiations with some local authorities and needed to respect the Leaders of those councils, who needed to have further discussions with their own councillors and Chief Executives before proceeding. He confirmed that all councillors would be kept fully informed of progress.

It was proposed by Cllr S Gibson and seconded by Cllr S Flower

Decision

- (a) That the pursuit of a Devolution Deal for Dorset be added to all sections of the approved Council Plan, be agreed.
- Protecting our natural environment, climate, and ecology
 - Creating stronger, healthier communities

- Creating sustainable development and housing
- Driving economic prosperity
- Becoming a more responsive, customer focused council

(b) That work, which the Leader of the Council had progressed following the resolution made by the Cabinet on 25 July 2023, to secure a Devolution Deal for Dorset be supported.

41. Appointment of Co-opted Members to the Audit & Governance Committee

The Chairman of the Audit and Governance Committee set out the committee's recommendation to appoint 2 new co-opted members to the Audit and Governance Committee.

It was proposed by Cllr R Biggs seconded by Cllr S Cocking

Decision

That Mr S Roach and Mr R Ong be endorsed as co-opted members of the Audit and Governance Committee.

42. Appointment of Co-opted Committee Member to the Harbour Advisory Committee

The Chairman of the Harbours Advisory Committee set out a report on the recruitment process and recommendation for a new co-opted member of the Harbours Advisory committee.

It was proposed by Cllr M Roberts and seconded by Cllr R Hughes

Decision

That the co-option of Mr Mark Saxby as a co-opted member of the Harbours Advisory Committee be endorsed.

43. Dispensation Under Section 85 of the Local Government Act 1972

Cllr S Flower, Leader of the Council introduced a report to approve a dispensation for Cllr P Wharf due to ill health.

It was proposed by Cllr S Flower and seconded by Cllr N Ireland

Decision

That a dispensation for Cllr P Wharf from attending meetings of the Council until 2 May 2024, by reason of ill health be approved.

44. Urgent items

There were no urgent items to report.

45. **Exempt Business**

There was no exempt business to report.

Appendix 1 - Public Question and Response
Appendix 2 - Councillor Questions and Responses

Duration of meeting: 6.30 - 7.41 pm

Chairman

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