

WEST DORSET DISTRICT COUNCIL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY 9 AUGUST 2016

Present: Cllrs A Alford (Chairman), P Barrowcliff, I Gardner, M Penfold and J Russell

Apologies: Cllrs A Thacker and T Yarker

Also present: Cllr N Bundy, Cllr J Dunseith, Cllr D Elliott, Cllr T Farmer, Cllr R Gould, Cllr M Hall, Cllr S Hosford, Cllr D Rickard, Cllr P Shorland and Cllr D Taylor

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

David Brown (Head of Assets & Infrastructure), Susan Carne (Democratic Services Manager), Stuart Caundle (Assistant Chief Executive), Jack Creeber (Parking & Transport Manager), Martin Hamilton (Strategic Director), Trevor Hedger (Senior Economic Regeneration Officer), Tony Hurley (Leisure Commissioning Manager), Andrew Martin (Specialist Projects), Matt Ryan (Tourism & Events Manager), Jason Vaughan (Strategic Director) and Trevor Warrick (Head of Spatial Policy)

1. **Apologies**

Apologies were received from Cllr A Thacker and Cllr T Yarker.

2. **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 30 June were approved and signed as a correct record.

3. **Code of Conduct**

Cllr J Russell declared an interest of the report on the Shire Hall project, as Chairman of the Shire Hall Dorchester Trust and did not take part in the discussion or voting.

4. **Scrutiny Review of council support for Bridport Leisure Centre**

Cllr Penfold presented the report which set out the recommendations of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee's review of council support for the operation of Bridport Leisure Centre.

The Leader of Council reported that the district council was facing significant financial cuts to budgets over the next two years and it was therefore prudent to consider the financial support for Bridport Leisure Centre as part of the wider budget setting process for 2017/18, rather than dealing with issues on an individual basis.

Decision

That the Executive Committee notes the Overview & Scrutiny Committee's recommendation that the council's offer of future support to the Bridport & West Dorset Sports Trust for the operation of Bridport Leisure Centre and that the matter is considered as part of the forthcoming budget setting process for 2017-18.

5. **West Dorset Tourist Information Centres Service Review**

The committee received a report on the review of the West Dorset Tourist Information service review. The report set out the proposed way forward for the Bridport Tourist Information Centre (TIC), options for the Dorchester TIC and an update on the Sherborne and Lyme Regis TIC reviews.

Cllr Penfold advised the committee that the council operated four TIC's in Bridport, Dorchester, Lyme Regis and Sherborne at an annual operating cost of approximately £353,000, excluding central recharges of £221,000. The review of the service had commenced in 2014, with an aim of achieving £300,000 savings from the operating costs managed by the Economy, Leisure & Tourism division. As part of the service review extensive stakeholder engagement had been undertaken in June 2015 with the results informing the options for future service delivery.

Cllrs David Taylor and Nigel Bundy addressed the committee concerning Dorchester TIC and requested that the existing arrangements should be maintained. Cllr Bundy highlighted that the Dorchester TIC provided an excellent service to visitors, local businesses and residents and that he had received many emails from residents concerned about the possible loss of the TIC in Dorchester. He urged everyone to become involved in the consultation process and to support the retention of the TIC.

Bridport Town Council had submitted a formal proposal for taking over the management of the TIC, which would include TUPE transfer of existing TIC employees. The committee welcomed the proposal put forward by Bridport Town Council and agreed that the TIC be transferred without public consultation.

Decision

(a) That Bridport Tourist Information Centre is transferred to Bridport Town Council by 1st April 2017;

(b) That a sum of £150,000 from the Council's reserves be paid to Bridport Town Council in association with the transfer of Bridport Tourist Information Centre;

(c) That the ability to operate the Bridport Charter market is provided to the Town Council and that the annual fee is waived;

(d) That Bridport Tourist Information Centre is transferred without public consultation;

(e) That, for Dorchester TIC, the options of relocation to Dorchester Library or replacement of the existing service with an unstaffed Tourist Information Point (TIP) are presented for public consultation, with the results informing a report to be considered at the December Executive Committee meeting.

6. **Proposals for a Combined Authority for Dorset**

Cllr Barrowcliff updated the committee on the progress of establishing a Dorset Combined Authority (DCA), the next steps to be taken and the approach for the final approval process. The functions selected, strategic transport and economic development would be transferred to the new authority and would provide Dorset with a strong basis on which to pursue any future devolution deals.

The Combined Authority would bring a number of advantages for Dorset by providing the basis for a single unified approach and enabling a centralised bids for government funding.

Cllr D Rickard addressed the committee and highlighted that the consultation results did not provide an overwhelming endorsement for moving to the Combined Authority model. He felt that respondents to the consultation thought that the questionnaire related to a Unitary Authority and therefore the results were not representative of the views of Dorset residents.

Recommendation to Council

a) That the council formally joins a Combined Authority (CA) for Dorset once it is established

b) To agree delegated authority for the Chief Executive in consultation with the Leader to take a decision on final consent before the final draft Order is laid before Parliament

c) To note that no decisions are currently required on the formation of a Growth Unit or any operational support structure for the CA

7. **Business Review Quarter 1 2016/17**

The committee received the strategic overview of the council's performance, risk, revenue and capital expenditure and income as at the end of June 2016, together with the projected outturn for the 2016/17 financial year. In addition a recent presentation from Arlingclose had provide members with useful information on how the council's finances were managed.

In response to a question on the performance of processing new housing benefit claims members were advised that the number of claimants was increasing, the complexity of cases was increasing and that no new staff resources had been put in place which had stretched performance . The partnership had however employed Capita to held deal with the backlog.

In response to a question on the performance of calls answered by a Customer Services Advisor, Jason Vaughan, Strategic Director, agreed to report back on reasons for staff sickness absence.

With regard to levels of food hygiene it was agreed that Graham Duggan would be asked to respond to a question on how the targeted campaign for 'poor performers' was being undertaken.

In response to a question on the rate of return on property asset value for all non operational properties, the Head of Assets and Infrastructure confirmed that the figures were based on periodic asset valuations.

Decision

That the latest position and the projected outturn for the year in respect of the 2016/17 revenue and capital budgets be noted.

8. **Shire Hall Dorchester - Project Update**

Cllr M Penfold introduced a report which updated members on the progress of the Shire Hall project. The report set out details of the tender returns for the main capital works to Shire Hall and the options following the receipt of tenders to deal with the budget funding shortfall. The report also set out the proposed future relationship between the district council as landlord and the Shire Hall (Dorchester) Trust as the tenant. In presenting the report Cllr M Penfold proposed that the frequency of the Management Board meetings be amended to every 3 months.

In response to a question, the Strategic Director, Martin Hamilton, confirmed that members of the district council would continue to have a monitoring role of the performance of the Shire Hall (Dorchester) Trust through the Management Board.

Decision

(a) In order to be able to award the main capital works contract based upon the current tender specification and evaluation in line with the WDDC procurement rules, WDDC seek a contribution from the HLF in the sum of £223,452.84 and also commit themselves to further funding of up to £206,264.16 from the Corporate Projects Reserve for the Shire Hall Project;

(b) That officers complete the ongoing value engineering exercise on the Shire Hall specification and report to the Executive Committee at the earliest opportunity the outcome of this and the HLF bid in order that Executive may determine any further action required;

(c) That the member task and finish group is reformatted upon completion of the Capital works, and becomes the main point of liaison between WDDC and SHDT with terms of reference as set out in Appendix 1, subject to the group meeting every 3 months;

(d) That WDDC provide an additional sum of £50,000 from the Corporate Projects Reserve, to SHDT to pay for the financial effect of a delayed handover to them, legal and accountancy fees, and deficit from events.

9. **Allocation of developer contributions for enhancement of recreation provision in Dorchester**

Members considered a report which sought agreement on the process for the allocation of developer contributions for the enhancement of recreational facilities in Dorchester.

Cllr S Hosford made representations to the committee on behalf of all Dorchester members and made the following points:

- The opportunity to fund recreation and leisure projects in Dorchester was welcomed but members would prefer to see the money allocated to a large project to create a legacy rather than many smaller projects;
- The allocation of the funding should be member led, with members having the opportunity to have active involvement in the process;
- There was some concern that four of the members on the panel were also Executive Committee members.

The Leader of Council advised that it was important for members of surrounding wards to be able to participate in the process as the projects would also need support from the rural areas in order to be viable and he was therefore content with the proposed membership of the member panel. The Leader also highlighted that it was important for members to set priorities at an early stage in the process and suggested that members should meet as soon as possible.

Decision

That the Committee endorses the process for the allocation of developer contributions in Dorchester as set out in paragraphs 23 and 24 of this report, including:

- a) the establishment of a member panel comprising the district councillors for the wards of Dorchester, Puddletown, Winterborne St Martin, Cerne Valley. and Broadmayne & Crossways and the portfolio holders for Planning and for Enabling.
- b) the presentation, in due course, of the member panel's recommendations to the Executive Committee for approval.

10. **Review of car parking charges**

The committee received a report on the review of the condition of the council's car parks and the level of investment and charges required in order to upgrade the car parks.

The Leader reported that it was important to consult of the review of car parking charges and he therefore proposed that a consultation exercise take place before any of the charging proposals were implemented.

The following members addressed the committee and made a number of points on the proposals within the report:

Cllr D Rickard asked about the planned improvement work for West Bay and whether the money to be allocated was for just for primary work, and the timescale for getting the car park into even better condition after the initial work.

Cllr T Farmer expressed his concern regarding the proposed level of charges in the long stay Culverhayes car park and asked the committee to consult on the proposals prior to a decision being taken.

Cllr S Hosford made the following points regarding Dorchester proposals:

- There was no reference in the report to season ticket holders
- No mention in the report on what collaboration had been undertaken with regard to DTEP and the LEP strategic overview
- The proposals to increase long stay charges would push long stay workers to park in residential areas.
- Dorchester Town Council would like to see some short stay parking spaces retained in the Top O Town car park, for use by people visiting the nearby businesses

Cllr M Rennie made the following points:

- The report did not refer to evening or Sunday car parking charges
- The report proposed removing the 20 minute period as too many parking fines were being received but there are no figures in the report to support this. Could a 30 minute period be looked at for library and TIC users?
- Shoppers permits were not mentioned in the report

Cllr R Gould made the following observations:

- This was an important issue for both residents and workers and for the management of traffic congestion
- Constructive discussions on parking had been held in Sherborne but the report was disappointing, so a period of consultation would be welcomed with the opportunity to involve Dorset County Council for a joined up strategy
- There was a need to improve the position for residents and to keep town centres thriving
- The proposal to undertake a consultation exercise was welcomed

The Interim Parking and Transport Manager, Jack Creeber responded to the comments made:

- West Bay – these were one-off funds to improve the condition of the car parks. The funding for West Bay would enable the work to be completed, it would not be phased work.
- Officers were working closely with Dorset County Council. The DCC study would not be completed for some time but it was important to complete the improvement works in the current financial year
- Car parking charges were necessary it was therefore a difficult issue to resolve for low paid workers
- The number of parking fines received for the 20 minute period and an extension to 30 minutes would be looked at and reported back to Cllr M Rennie
- There was no proposal to change the Shoppers Permit
- The proposal for Top O Town car park was to enable short stay parking in any part of the car park

In respect of the proposal to cease the 30 minute period in Bridport short stay car parks the Leader of Council suggested that the consultation exercise suggests a period of phasing in of the new charge. The Leader also expressed his concern for the proposed charge of £6.30 for all day parking in a short stay car park. There was also inconsistency between the long stay charges for East Beach West Bay and long stay charges at Lyme Regis. It was therefore necessary to provide options as part of the consultation exercise. Cllr Gardner also expressed his concern over the significant increases proposed for long stay parking.

Decision

(a) That a planned maintenance budget be approved for the current year of £100,000, funded by the Corporate Projects Reserve, to enable immediate repairs and upgrades (Appendix 1) that are essential to be carried out within the car parks;

(b) That £300,000 from the Corporate Projects Reserve be approved for planned specified capital works (Appendix 2) that are necessary to improve the condition and safety of the car parks;

(c) That the proposals for car parking charges, as set out in Appendix 3, together with the comments made at the Executive Committee be the subject of a consultation exercise with town councils, BID and chambers of commerce;

(d) That the renegotiation of fees be approved for the management and/or collecting pay & display cash from car parks that this Council does not own.

11. **New National Policy on Affordable Housing**

The committee was informed of the changes to the national policy on affordable housing and was asked to consider the implications arising from those changes in relation to planning decisions.

Decision

That members endorse the approach set out in the report in relation to the changes to national policy on affordable housing including, in appropriate circumstances:

- for applications to which local plan policy HOUS1 and new national policy and guidance on affordable housing relate, officers normally attaching very considerable weight to the provisions in new national policy and guidance;
- officers normally applying or recommending the application of the thresholds in national policy and guidance below which affordable housing should not be sought, including officers applying, or recommending the application of, a different threshold in 'rural areas' described under Section 157(1) of the Housing Act 1985; and
- officers normally applying or recommending the application of vacant building credit in accordance with national policy and guidance.

12. **Purbeck Local Plan Partial Review - Response to Options Consultation**

Cllr I Gardner introduced the report that sought member endorsement for the response to the consultation on options for the Purbeck Local Plan Partial Review. Cllr Gardner pointed out that West Dorset District Council's response included concerns on the development proposals in the Moreton area and the potential negative impact that this housing allocation would have on the Crossways area.

Decision

That the officer response attached in Appendix A be approved as West Dorset District Council's response to consultation on options for the Purbeck Local Plan Partial Review.

13. **Private Sector Housing Assistance Policy**

Approval was sought for the adoption of a revised Housing Assistance Policy that would deliver consistency across Dorset and be funded totally from government allocations.

Decision

(a) That the Housing Assistance Policy attached to the report, designed to deliver a more integrated customer focussed service for disabled, be adopted;

(b) That the policy be reviewed at the conclusion of the 2016-17 financial year, with any necessary revisions being the subject of a further report for consideration.

14. **Property Asset Management Plan**

The committee received the draft Property Asset Management Plan for the period 2016 – 2020 that would provide the framework for the management of the council's assets. It was noted that a schedule of the details of individual properties would come forward to a future meeting of the committee.

Decision

(a) That the draft Property Asset Management Plan be approved covering the period 2016 – 2020 as being a framework document for the management of the Council's Assets;

(b) That the more detailed work program timetable be received once completed.

(c) That a spreadsheet containing details of all council assets be received by October 2016.

15. **Proposal to sell The Chantry, Bridport**

The committee received a report on the proposal to sell The Chantry, Bridport which had returned to the possession of the district council following the liquidation of the Vivat Trust.

Cllr Rickard addressed the committee and expressed his surprise that no discussions on this potential sale had been held with Bridport Town Council. He stated that residents in Bridport were concerned about the land and property that had been transferred to the district council as part of local government reorganisation in 1974 and that they were still seen as town council assets. Cllr Rickard stated that Bridport Town Council would be very interested in any property that was surplus to district council requirements and asked that a decision on The Chantry be delayed so that discussions could be held with the town council. If the property were to be sold on the private market he asked that the town council be the beneficiary of the sale. In response the Leader of Council stated that he could not promise to give the sale proceeds back to the town council and that district council had invested in the town over past years. Strategic Director, Martin Hamilton reported that he was not aware of any expression of interest in the property from the town council. Members were advised that given the need to prevent the deterioration in the condition of the building, the sale needed to be progressed but he was happy to have dialogue with the town council.

Decision

(a) That planning permission on the Chantry be obtained for use as a single dwelling;

(b) That the furnishings and effects currently in the Chantry be purchased;

(c)That the Chantry be sold by private treaty.;

16. **Urgent items**

There were no items of urgent business.

17. **Exempt Business**

18. **Exempt Appendix - Shire Hall Dorchester - Project Update**

Members received an exempt appendix.

Duration of meeting: 10.00 am - 12.40 pm

Chairman

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