

WEST DORSET DISTRICT COUNCIL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON THURSDAY 9 FEBRUARY 2017

Present: Cllrs A Alford (Chairman), P Barrowcliff, I Gardner, M Penfold MBE, J Russell, A Thacker (Vice-Chairman) and T Yarker

Apologies: There were no apologies for absence.

Also present: Cllr J Dunseith, Cllr S Jones MBE, Cllr M Rennie, Cllr D Rickard, Cllr G Symonds, Cllr D Taylor and Cllr D Turner

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

Susan Carne (Democratic Services Manager), Stuart Caundle (Assistant Chief Executive), Graham Duggan (Head of Community Protection), Stephen Hill (Strategic Director), Tony Hurley (Leisure Commissioning Manager), Matt Prosser (Chief Executive), Nick Thornley (Head of Economy, Leisure & Tourism) and Jason Vaughan (Strategic Director)

68. Minutes

The minutes of the meetings held on 15 December 2016 and 16 January 2017 were confirmed and signed as a correct record.

69. Code of Conduct

Cllr M Penfold declared an interest in the Clinical Services Review report and left the room during the discussion and voting.

70. Executive Committee Forward Plan

Members noted the following changes to the draft forward plan:

Release of Housing Reserves to Fund Homelessness Prevention Work in West Dorset – March
Calendar of Meetings - March
Consideration of Once-Off Funding to Support Projects and Scheme – April
Piddle Valley Neighbourhood Plan - May
Dorset Homelessness Strategy - June
Shire Hall – removed.

71. Dorchester's Centre - Retail Enhancement

Cllr Russell introduced an update on progress with the soft market testing, the archaeological peer review and the preparation of the development strategy. Members expressed their support for the recommendations set out in the report which represented an important step for the redevelopment of Dorchester town centre. The soft market testing on development opportunities for Charles Street provided confidence for the council to move forward, as quickly as possible with the project.

The Leader of Council thanked all those who were participating in the Charles Street Working Group.

Decision

- a) That the results of the soft market testing on development opportunities at Charles Street be received;
- b) That the archaeological peer review for the Charles Street site be received;
- c) That up to £520k be allocated from the Corporate Projects Reserves to enable preparation of feasibility studies, the development strategy and then marketing of the Charles Street site and other Dorchester town centre sites;
- d) That authority be delegated to the Strategic Director, in consultation with the Charles Street Member Working Group to spend up to £520k on the preparation of feasibility studies, the development strategy and then marketing of the Charles Street side and other Dorchester town centre sites;
- e) That initial discussions commence with interested food retailers for the Charles Street site so as to give direct market insight into their requirements and thus allow a faster decision making process when reporting back to members.
- f) That discussions commence with owners, occupiers and interested parties on the Trinity Street and Fairfield car park sites so as to allow a better initial assessment of their potential viability and feasibility for redevelopment as part of the wider Dorchester Town Centre redevelopment options. These will then be reported back to members in conjunction with the other assessments and works.

72. NHS Dorset Clinical Commissioning Group - Clinical Services Review

The committee considered a report that requested a response to the Dorset Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) consultation on the Clinical Services Review about the future of clinical healthcare services in Dorset.

Pauline Malins, Head of Engagement and Communications for the CCG provided an overview of the proposals being put forward in the consultation. The proposals included bringing services closer to home and in order to achieve this some changes needed to be made to the current hospitals. It was proposed that the major emergency hospital should be located in either Bournemouth or Poole and that a major planned care hospital with a 24/7 Urgent Care Centre be located in the other town. The same range of services would be retained at Dorset County Hospital including a 24/7 A&E service.

It was agreed that the Portfolio Holder should work in conjunction with the Head of Community Protection to prepare a response to the Dorset CCG consultation, with the inclusion of any specific points raised by members.

Decision

That the Portfolio Holder for Community Safety and Access, in consultation with the Head of Community Protection and taking into account comments made by the committee, submits a response on behalf of the council to the CCG Clinical Services Review consultation.

73. 2017-18 Budget

Members considered the revenue and capital budget proposals for the 2017/18 financial year including the level of council tax and reserves. The report also outlined the Medium Term Financial Forecast for future years.

The council had been allocated £1,365,432 from central government to fund community led housing developments, 50% of the allocation had been received and to receive the final 50% the council was required to produce an action plan. In response to a question the Strategic Director agreed to find out and advise members of the deadline for the action plan.

Decision

That the committee receives a report on the level of once-off funding available and potential bids at its next meeting.

Recommendation to Council

- a. That the once off funding from New Homes Bonus of £756,873 (as set out in Appendix 1) is added to reserves;
- b. That the funding for community-led housing developments is put into an earmarked reserve and that an action plan on its use is produced;
- c. That the proposals for balancing the 2017/18 revenue budget set out in Appendix 3 are approved;
- d. That the 2017/18 Capital Programme in Appendix 4 is approved;
- e. That the formal resolutions in respect of the 2017/18 Budget and Council Tax including details of the council tax levels for Dorset County Council, Dorset Police & Crime Commissioner and Fire & Rescue Authority and Town Councils are included in the Budget Report to the 28 February Council meeting.

74. Business Review Quarter 3 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 December, 2016 together with the projected outturn for the 2016/17 financial year.

It was noted that the development control income had dropped considerably during the last quarter and that two planning enquiries has incurred considerable cost. Cllr G Symonds asked the committee if poor performance was affecting the income levels. In response the Strategic Director reported that there were many factors contributing to the drop in income such as the cost of construction, materials and labour.

Members were pleased to see that the percentage of non disputed invoices paid within 30 calendar days had improved and that performance for processing new housing benefit claims had started to improve. The Development Control Improvement Plan was also achieving results in performance, together with a slow improvement in land charges.

Decision

- a) That committee notes the latest position and the projected outturn for the year in respect of the 2016/17 revenue and capital budgets.
- (b) That the use of £20,000 from the projected Democratic Service underspend for legal support as detailed in paragraph 5.2. be approved.
- (c) That the carry forward requests as detailed in appendix 3 be approved.

75. 2017-18 Treasury Management Strategy Statement and Annual Investment Strategy

Cllr Barrowcliff introduced a report on the Treasury Management Statement and Annual Investment Strategy for the coming year; the council was also required to set prudential indicators and to review the policy on Minimum Revenue Provision.

Recommendation to Full Council

- (a) That the Treasury Management Strategy Statement and Investment Strategy 2017/2018 be approved;
- (b) That the Minimum Revenue Provision Policy set out in Appendix C of the Treasury Management Strategy Statement be approved;
- (c) The Prudential Indicators set out in Appendix C of the Treasury Management Strategy Statement be approved;
- d) The 2017/2018 Authorised borrowing limit be approved.

76. Appointment of External Auditors

Approval was sought for the process to be followed for the appointment of external auditors following the closure of the Audit Commission and the end of the transitional arrangements at the conclusion of the 2017/18 audits.

Recommendation to Full Council

- (a) That West Dorset District Council opts into the appointing person arrangements made by Public Sector Audit Appointments (PSAA) for the appointment of external auditors;
- (b) That the Strategic Director for Finance be delegated responsibility to ensure that the District Council is active in supporting delivery of best value for money arrangements in light of LGR arrangements yet to be confirmed.

77. Funding request from Dorset County Museum

Members considered a request from the Dorset Natural History and Archaeological Society for both a capital grant and short term loan to support the society's major development project. The report also sought the committee's approval for an arrangement with Dorchester Town Council with regard to the allocation of future developer contributions to the project.

The committee discussed the report and expressed some concern regarding the proposal for a loan of £475,000 to be repaid with interest over a 5 year period. Members felt that they needed to see more robust financial information from the museum before taking a decision. The Leader of Council proposed that the decision be deferred until the next meeting to enable to the committee to consider the detailed financial information.

Decision

That consideration of the report be deferred and the report be resubmitted to the Executive Committee on 14 March 2017, to allow further consideration and to ensure that due diligence work is undertaken.

78. Urgent items

There were no urgent items.

79. Exempt Business

80. Dorchester's Centre - Retail Enhancement

The committee received copies of the exempt appendices.

Duration of meeting: 2.15 - 3.28 pm

Chairman

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