

WEST DORSET DISTRICT COUNCIL STRATEGY COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON THURSDAY 13 DECEMBER 2018

Present: Cllrs A Alford (Chairman), A Thacker (Vice-Chairman), I Gardner, M Hall, S Hosford, S Jones MBE, M Penfold MBE, J Russell and T Yarker

Apologies: Cllrs P Barrowcliff

Also present: Cllr S Christopher, Cllr M Rennie MBE and Cllr D Rickard

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

Stuart Caundle (Head of Paid Service), Stuart C Dawson (Head of Revenues and Benefits), Martin Hamilton (Strategic Director), Tony Hurley (Leisure Commissioning Manager), Terry Sneller (Local Plan Team Leader) and Nick Thornley (Head of Economy, Leisure & Tourism)

48. Code of Conduct

Cllr A Alford declared a non pecuniary interest as the West Dorset District Council member representative on the Beaminster Museum Trust.

Cllr T Yarker declared an interest as Director of Homes Dorset and did not vote on the item.

49. Forward Plan

The committee received the Forward Plan. It was noted that the following reports would be submitted to the committee meeting in February:-

Annual Report for Dorchester Sports Centre
Bridport Museum – Grant Request
Beaminster Skate Park – Grant Request from Town Council.

50. Shadow Executive Committee Forward Plan

The committee noted the Forward Plan for the Shadow Executive Committee.

51. Minutes

The minutes of the last meeting were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

52. Transfer of assets and services

The committee received a report on the programme for the transfer of assets and services to town and parish councils that had been approved by the Strategy Committee on 20th August 2018. The Dorset Council Shadow Executive Committee had considered the Strategy Committee decision on 17th September 2018, however the Shadow Executive Committee did not

support the original Strategy Committee decision. Subsequently the decision was subject to a request for an Officer Call to Account.

Cllr A Thacker introduced the report which summarised the elements of the programme which were still able to proceed within the limits established by the Shadow Executive principles and to agree the implementation on the residual elements of the programme. Officers were still waiting for the final valuations on some properties before the work could be completed, however the target was still the 31st March 2019. Cllr A Thacker reflected that the process to date had not been easy however he wished to place on record his thanks to the town council clerks for their involvement in the process.

Cllr D Rickard thanked officers for the work that had been done to date but stated that it was a bitter blow that the programme had been stopped because of the principles that were already in place and he felt that the decision of the Shadow Executive Committee was flawed. Cllr Rickard felt that a decision by the Strategy Committee was premature as the Officer Call to Account had been delayed until January 2019. Cllr Rickard asked for the opportunity to revisit the issue dependent upon the outcome of the Call to Account in January and asked that at this stage all options should be kept open.

Cllr Christopher addressed the committee and suggested that the time to consider the property portfolio of the new unitary council was after 1st April 2019 rather than prior to this date. The issue required careful consideration and the new unitary council needed to have the opportunity to consider how effectively to use those parcels of land; he asked members to be patient and allow time for the issues to be resolved.

Cllr A Alford explained that the Call to Account would not change any of the committee decisions taken to date but conclusions of the Call to Account may mean that the Shadow Executive Committee may want to reflect on its decision. In the meantime it was important that action was taken to complete the revised package of asset transfers.

Cllr S Jones expressed the need to support the recommendations set out in the report, if the committee approved the report then officers would take the appropriate action to progress the programme with individual town councils as soon as possible.

Cllr M Rennie highlighted her concerns regarding the Dorchester Market Charter which she felt should be transferred to Dorchester Town Council. This issue needed to be addressed and action taken as it was possible that the new Dorset Council would not address these issues. Cllr Alford acknowledged the concerns and agreed that the governance process for the market needed to be looked at and asked officers to make progress on this matter and engage with the town council.

Cllr M Hall asked for a response to a question that had been raised by Cllr R Legg on whether the process needed to be done collectively or could be done on an individual basis. In response to the question Cllr A Alford advised that

all of the towns wanted to work together which is why officers were working collectively with town councils, the aim now was to make progress as quickly as possible.

In response to a question Cllr A Alford confirmed that an amendment to the recommendations was not required in relation to the Call to Account, however a further report would come back to the Strategy Committee if required.

Decision (Unanimous)

(a) That Strategy Committee supports the revised packages of asset transfers to Town Councils as set out in the appendix to the report which is permissible within the Shadow Executive principles;

(b) That authority is delegated to the Strategic Director, in consultation with the S151 Officer, to take all actions considered necessary or expedient to make a final decision to implement the asset transfers;

(c) That approval is given to draw down up to a further £90k from WDDC Reserve to implement the transfers from £1.3m Services Transferred to Organisations Reserve.

53. Request for Grant from Beaminster Museum

Cllr Penfold introduced a report on a request for funding from Beaminster Museum Trust for improvements to the museum and to help secure a grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund.

As the district council representative on the Beaminster Museum Trust, Cllr Alford reported that a small number of people had been working very hard on the project to build a two storey extension and he expressed his appreciation for their work and dedication to the project and therefore supported the recommendation set out in the report.

Cllr S Hosford was supportive in principle but asked whether the museum trust would be asked to guarantee that the rest of the funding would be raised. In response Cllr M Penfold confirmed that the grant was not conditional upon the remainder of the funds being raised.

It was proposed by Cllr S Jones seconded by Cllr S Hosford 'That the grant be awarded when the other funding is forthcoming to the project'. On being put to the vote the proposal was LOST.

Decision

That the request for a grant of £15,000 from the Beaminster Museum Trust (charity no. 299616) be approved for the project to build a two-storey extension to Beaminster Museum (planning reference WD/D/18/001824).

54. Homes Dorset Next Steps

Cllr A Alford introduced a report which set out the next steps to be taken following the establishment of Homes Dorset Ltd.

In response to a question Cllr T Yarker reported that the mission of the new company was to build houses of right type and in right location in Dorset, the directors were already looking at a number of options and hoped he that progress would be well under way before the end of the West Dorset District Council.

In response to a question regarding the delegation at paragraph 2. (ii), the Head of Paid Service reported that arrangements would be put in place to ensure that this delegation was not forgotten and carried forward into the new Dorset Council.

Decision

1. (i) That pursuant to resolution 102 (a) and (b) of the Strategy Committee on 13th March 2018, the Council will subscribe to the entire shareholding of Homes Dorset Ltd in stages; and that the detail of the subscription is determine under the delegation in the following paragraph.

(ii) That authority is delegated to the S.151 Officer in consultation with the Leader and the portfolio holders for Housing and Corporate;

a) To determine the dates of each subscription referred to in the previous paragraph

b) To determine the number of shares to be acquired through each subscription

c) To take all action necessary to implement these share subscriptions and

d) To take any other action he considers necessary or expedient to ensure that Homes Dorset Ltd is able to function in accordance with and for the purposes set out in its memorandum and article of association.

e) For the avoidance of doubt, the above delegation includes authority to agree an interest free loan of up to twenty thousand pounds to Homes Dorset Ltd, for a period of up to three months.

55. Application for Council Tax Discount

The committee received an application for council tax discretionary discount from a resident at Redpoll Close, Broadway. Appendix 1 of the report set out the circumstances of the council tax payer.

The Head of Revenues and Benefits reported that the committee had considered similar cases in the past and it was not an unusual case as many houses required to be brought up to standard but in such cases the council did not give council tax discounts. However each application needed to be

considered and determined on the merits of the individual case. Members noted that the property under consideration was a second home for which owners were required to pay 100% council tax as there was no discount awarded by the council.

Decision (unanimous)

That the application for Council Tax Discretionary Discount as set out in the appendix to the report re: property in Redpoll Close, Broadwey, be declined.

56. Harbour Operations Annual Report

The committee received the Harbour Operations Annual report and the Portfolio Holder, Cllr M Penfold, took the opportunity to thank all of the volunteers who helped out at Bridport Harbour and Lyme Reis Harbour and who acted as ambassadors on behalf of the council.

Decision

- a) That committee notes and endorses the annual report 2018.
- b) That committee approves the harbour fees and charges for 2019/20 (Appendix A).
- c) That committee approves minor amendments to the Harbour Policy, Rules and Regulations (Appendix B).
- d) That committee notes and endorses the reports of the Council's Health, Safety and Welfare Officer, in his role as Designated Person for the harbours (Appendix C (i) & C (ii)).

57. Holwell Neighbourhood Plan - Independent Examiner's Report

Cllr I Gardner introduced a report on the report of the Independent Examiner on the Holwell Neighbourhood Plan. Cllr Gardner congratulated the Holwell Neighbourhood Plan Team on producing an excellent plan and reported that the Parish Council had agreed the recommendations of the examiner. It was hoped that the Neighbourhood Plan would come to the Full Council meeting in February for approval.

Decision (unanimous)

- a) That the Holwell Neighbourhood Plan be approved subject to the amendments to reflect the recommendations in the examiner's report (Appendix A);
- b) That a referendum on the amended neighbourhood plan is held over the neighbourhood area and is arranged as soon as possible;

and

- c) That a recommendation to 'make' the Holwell Neighbourhood Plan be made to the next Full Council meeting after the referendum, if the results of the referendum are in support of the making of the plan and there are no other issues identified that would go against such a decision.

58. Statement of Common Ground on strategic planning matters, between Dorset local planning authorities

The committee was asked to approve the Statement of Common Ground as part of the supporting documentation for Local Plans across Dorset. A Statement of Common Ground was a written record of progress made on planning for strategic matters across local authority boundaries. A copy of the draft statement was appended to the report.

Decision

That the draft Statement of Common Ground, attached at Appendix 1 to the report, be approved.

59. Urgent items

There were no urgent items.

60. Exempt Business

There were no items of Exempt Business.

Duration of meeting: 10.15 - 10.59 am

Chairman

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