

PLACE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON THURSDAY 30 JANUARY 2020

Present: Cllrs Daryl Turner (Chairman), Cherry Brooks (Vice-Chairman), Robin Cook, Simon Gibson, Ryan Hope, Val Potheary, Andrew Starr, Roland Tarr and David Taylor

Apologies: Cllrs Jean Dunseith

Also present: Cllr Tony Alford, Cllr Jon Andrews, Cllr Ray Bryan, Cllr Spencer Flower, Cllr Les Fry, Cllr Barry Goringe, Cllr Sherry Jespersen, Cllr Andrew Kerby and Cllr Jane Somper

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

Bridget Betts (Environmental Advice Manager), Tony Bygrave (Senior Assurance Officer - Complaints), Graham Duggan (Head of Community & Public Protection), Andy Frost (Community Safety and Drug Action Manager), Stuart Hendry (Dog Warden), Matthew Piles (Corporate Director - Economic Growth and Infrastructure), John Sellgren (Executive Director, Place), Jane Williams (Team Leader - Public Protection), Jack Wiltshire (Head of Highways) and Lindsey Watson (Senior Democratic Services Officer)

27. Minutes

The minutes of the meetings held on 24 October 2019 and 13 January 2020 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

28. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

29. Public Participation

There were no representations from town or parish councils or from members of the public.

30. Urgent Items

There were no urgent items.

31. Review of Place Enforcement Activities

The committee received and considered a report of the Head of Community and Public Protection in order to agree a scope for a review of Place Services enforcement activities. The committee had previously requested a review of Place Services enforcement activities to ensure that resources were being

used efficiently and effectively and that the council embraced best practice and innovation. The review would take place over the following 6 months and consideration was given to nominating two members of the committee to work with officers in order to develop a project plan. Once developed, the project plan would be shared with the committee and the committee would also receive update reports at particular milestones.

It was agreed that Councillors David Taylor and Robin Cook would be nominated to work with officers in order to develop a project plan for the review.

32. Policy Review Update - Presentation

The Executive Director of Place provided a presentation in respect of the review of policies in the Place area for Dorset Council. The presentation provided the context for the review and the importance of undertaking a review, noted reviews required by the Order, work being undertaken in Executive Advisory Panels and potential areas for review by scrutiny. There were two main areas that could potentially be reviewed by the Place Scrutiny Committee:

- Regulatory – could be progressed as part of the scrutiny work on enforcement
- Waste and cleansing – awaiting outcome of Government Waste and Resources Strategy and therefore could form part of future work programme

Councillors considered the issues arising from the presentation and during discussion the following points were raised:

- It was felt that there would be merit in committee members having an appropriate form of briefing or training prior to considering reports related to licensing issues. This could be made available to the wider Council membership
- The licensing policies would be in place by March 2021. The wider review of policies would be subject to an operational timetable to be signed off by councillors. Statutory policies would be reviewed as a priority
- It was important that policies were accessible to all
- It was highlighted that policies inherited from the former councils continued to be fit and proper from a legal point of view. The review would assist in standardising policies across the Dorset Council area
- The Chairman noted that not all policies would come to committee and some may be circulated to councillors electronically.

33. Dog Control Enforcement Activity

The Portfolio Holder for Customer, Community and Regulatory Services introduced the report, which set out detail of a review of the dog welfare and control service, to be undertaken as part of the wider review of enforcement

activities. This was a small but high profile service and there was a need to consider how best to allocate resources in this area, the important role of education and the involvement of town and parish councils. The Head of Community and Public Protection, Team Leader Public Protection and Dog Warden attended the meeting to provide information and answer questions.

Councillors considered the issues arising from the report and during discussion the following points were raised:

- With regard to the issue of dog fouling and education in this area, it was noted that there had previously been more resource available in order to do work in schools for example. There may be a need to consider ways of using social media to get messages out
- Further thought could be given to how the council could work with schools and town and parish councils in this area
- The balance between use of education and enforcement in respect of dog fouling was considered
- An example was provided of a parish council providing dog waste bags
- Reporting of incidents could be undertaken through normal council routes including by telephone and online. The use of a reporting hotline could be considered. There was a need to bring the dog wardens together with one reporting system
- A point was made that it was important to recognise that not all dog owners were irresponsible and that community groups could be used as points of contact in local areas
- The process for dealing with reports of dog fouling was considered and the use of overt versus covert surveillance
- Resource for this area would be considered as part of the wider review of enforcement activities in Place Services to include a look at how enforcement officers could support each other across the wider service
- In response to a question with regard to the incentive to town and parish councils to provide support in this area, it was noted that the benefit would be cleaner local environments
- A current consultation relating to the Public Space Protection Order (PSPO) for dog control was seeking views from town and parish councils
- Discussion was also taking place in the Engaging with Town and Parish Councils Executive Advisory Panel, looking at services that town and parish councils may wish to have devolved to them
- The Dog Warden service had strong links to the Dorset Waste Partnership
- Reference was made to information on public complaints set out in the report and the difference in trends between 2018/19 and 2019/20. In response, the Head of Community and Public Protection confirmed that service convergence work may affect how information was recorded
- A specific point was raised with regard to legacy contracts

- It was noted that microchipping was assisting with incidents of stray dogs
- Issues around animal welfare were discussed and it was noted that the RSPCA provided the lead in the area alongside the Police. The council had a role in licensing in this area and specific examples were provided. The Dog Warden noted that steps would be taken if a dog required assistance such as veterinary care. The balance between the statutory and non-statutory parts of the service was recognised
- Councillors were able to spend time with the dog wardens if required.

The comments made during discussion at the meeting would be considered as part of the wider review of enforcement activities and would assist in shaping the future Dog Warden service.

34. Single Use Plastic Policy

The committee was presented with the opportunity to consider and comment on the Single Use Plastic Policy and recommend its adoption to Cabinet. The policy aimed to bring consistency of approaches to reducing single use plastic throughout Dorset Council offices and services.

The committee discussed the issues arising from the report and particular reference was made to the need for education in this area, the importance of the council leading by example and work being undertaken with other organisations.

Recommendation to Cabinet

That the Single Use Plastic Policy be adopted.

35. Community Safety Plan 2020 - 2023

Councillor Kerby presented the report as the Chair of the Community Safety Partnership, provided an introduction to the process for developing the plan and thanked Councillors Gill Taylor and Molly Rennie in particular for their work in this area.

The Chairman noted the reference made to social media within the Community Safety questions to the People's Panel and commented that this could be widened to include other social media platforms, particularly to capture the views of younger persons.

36. Quarterly Complaints Update - Place

The committee received a report of the Senior Assurance Officer (Complaints) with regard to the performance of complaints made against functions within the Place Directorate.

The Chairman noted that the report was still being developed and that a similar report may be brought to the other scrutiny committees in the future. The importance of acknowledging compliments as well as complaints was recognised.

The Leader of Council highlighted how having a structure in place would provide the council with consistency in how complaints were dealt with. He indicated that he was content with progress being made and noted that dealing with complaints gave the council the opportunity to learn and improve services where required.

The committee considered the report and raised issues as follows:

- There were areas where trends could be identified, however it was noted that there were instances where due process needed to be completed before an issue was dealt with as a complaint
- The percentage of fully justified complaints was low
- A point was raised about the importance of keeping in touch with complainants during the time their complaint was being dealt with
- A request was made for a breakdown of complaints by area and specific reference made to planning and highways
- Consideration needed to be given to how complaints made to and dealt with by councillors were recorded
- It was important that people felt able to contact the council if they had a complaint and for the process to give them a voice. It was also important for lessons to be learnt and improvements made where required. In this respect, the council welcomed a higher number of complaints. Complaints were reviewed by managers on a monthly basis and learning undertaken
- The use of social media for sharing success stories was highlighted. Social media could also be used as a way of raising awareness of how complaints could be made as well as information being made available on the council's website
- It was important to note that not all complaints reached the formal complaints stage and that many were resolved before they reached that point.

37. Place Scrutiny Committee Forward Plan

The Senior Democratic Services Officer provided an overview of the items on the committee's work programme and comments were made / items added to the work programme as follows:

- A report from the Rural Access to Services Executive Advisory Panel would be considered by the committee at the meeting on 10 March 2020, prior to a report going to Cabinet
- The committee would consider the draft order for the Public Space Protection Order in respect of Dogs at the meeting on 2 July 2020
- Councillor Tarr referred to points that he had raised at the last meeting of Cabinet with regard to the Dorset Natural History and Archaeological Society. In response it was noted that the points

that had been agreed at Cabinet would be incorporated into the plan.

38. Exempt Business

Decision

That the press and the public be excluded for the following items in view of the likely disclosure of exempt information within the meaning of paragraph 3 of schedule 12 A to the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended).

39. Reinstating essential highway maintenance activities and investing in highway infrastructure assets - Exempt

The committee considered an exempt report of the Head of Highways with regard to reinvesting in essential highway maintenance activities and investing in highway infrastructure assets. The issues contained within the report had been considered by the Highways Executive Advisory Panel (EAP) and the recommendations presented had received cross party support within the panel. Members of the EAP attended the meeting and hoped that the committee would support the proposals contained within the report.

Councillor Brooks confirmed that she had checked with the Monitoring Officer and was able to take part in consideration of the item, as she was chair of the EAP.

The Portfolio Holder for Highways, Travel and Environment thanked the EAP for their work on the issue and supported the report and recommendations put forward. He also thanked the Highways Team for their work.

The committee considered the issues around the timing of funding.

It was proposed by S Gibson seconded by D Taylor

Recommendation to Cabinet

That the recommendation set out within the exempt report be agreed with the inclusion of a recommendation with regard to the development of a timeline for the recommendations and consideration of options for funding.

Duration of meeting: 10.00 am - 12.05 pm

Chairman

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