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DORSET COUNCIL - CABINET

MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY 28 JULY 2020

Present: Cllrs Spencer Flower (Chairman), Peter Wharf (Vice-Chairman), Tony Alford, Ray Bryan, Graham Carr-Jones, Tony Ferrari, Laura Miller, Andrew Parry, Gary Suttle and David Walsh

Also present: Cllr Jon Andrews, Cllr Dave Bolwell, Cllr Jean Dunseith, Cllr Mike Dyer, Cllr Beryl Ezzard, Cllr David Gray, Cllr Nick Ireland, Cllr Roland Tarr, Cllr David Taylor, Cllr David Tooke, Cllr John Worth, Cllr Pauline Batstone, Cllr Cherry Brooks, Cllr Simon Christopher, Cllr Kelvin Clayton, Cllr Susan Cocking, Cllr Barry Goringe, Cllr Matthew Hall, Cllr Brian Heatley, Cllr Ryan Hope, Cllr Carole Jones, Cllr Nocturin Lacey-Clarke, Cllr Mike Parkes, Cllr Val Potheary, Cllr Molly Rennie, Cllr Jane Somper and Cllr Daryl Turner

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

Aidan Dunn (Executive Director - Corporate Development S151), Jonathan Mair (Corporate Director - Legal & Democratic Service Monitoring Officer), John Sellgren (Executive Director, Place), Susan Dallison (Democratic Services Manager), Kate Critchel (Senior Democratic Services Officer), Alex Clothier (Enterprise Zone & Regeneration Manager), David Walsh (Service Manager for Growth and Economic Regeneration), Antony Littlechild (Community Energy Manager), Dugald Lockhart (Senior Project Manager), David McIntosh (Corporate Director (HR & OD)), Tony Meadows (Head of Commissioning), Karyn Punchard (Corporate Director of Place Services) and David Webb (Service Manager - Dorset Combined Youth Offending Service)

169. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 30 June 2020 were confirmed as a correct record and would be signed by the Chairman in due course.

170. Declarations of Interest

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

171. Public Participation

Ten questions and two statements were received from the public. These were from Sarah James (Chief Executive, the Arts Development Company), Julie-Ann Booker (Extinction Rebellion) Len Herbert, Michael Tunbridge, Bridget Joslin, Dave Warren, David Redgewell, Luke Wakeling, Paula Klaentschi and Jasmine O'Hare.

The questions (but not the preamble) were read out by John Sellgren (Executive Director for Place), Jonathan Mair (Corporate Director, Legal and Democratic

Services) and David McIntosh (Corporate Director for HR & OD). A copy of the full questions, the responses and the statements are set out in Appendix 1 these minutes.

172. Questions from Members

There were four questions from members and these along with the responses are set out in Appendix 2 to these minutes.

173. Forward Plan

The Cabinet Forward Plan was received and it was noted that the following items would be added to the plan.

Climate and Ecological Emergency Action Plan

Leisure Services Review

Initial high level draft budget for 2021/22 and the MTFP for 2023 – 2026

174. Digital Infrastructure Projects to Accelerate Economic Recovery from the Impact of the Coronavirus Pandemic

In presenting the report the Portfolio Holder for Corporate Development advised that there was one minor amendment at page 25 of the papers. The following sentence “funded from Dorset Council transformation fund” should be in the box below within the table on the page. This amendment did not change the recommendation before members.

The report related to the acceleration of existing Government funded capital projects, to generate new activity within 18 months, to help create jobs and raise overall demand in the economy. Members were advised that the funding available was set out within the Covid Recovery Infrastructure Fund and this would be managed through Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEP). This did cause some concern due to past funding allocations from the LEP. It was important that LEP gave a fair deal to Dorset Council and it was hoped that the Dorset LEP would adopt a more strategic and whole county approach moving forward.

The business case was in rapid development for bringing multiple interventions together under one programme that would accelerate activity and close the digital connectivity gap, ensure continuing progress in Dorset in the next 18 months or so, before the next major full fibre government intervention programme began to be delivered during 2022 and beyond.

The report outlined progress to date, addressed high-level budget issues and sought to delegate decisions to enable the work to progress against very tight timescales. In proposing the recommendation, the Portfolio Holder proposed a minor amendment to recommendation (b) and this was accepted by Cabinet.

Decision

- (a) That the creation of a full business case to accelerate the deployment of full fibre and wireless / mobile connectivity predominately in the rural parts of the Dorset Council area, be supported;
- (b) That the Dorset Council budgetary commitment of up to £1m capital (from the Ringfenced Superfast Broadband budget) and revenue implementation commitment of £285k (funded from the Dorset Council Transformation fund) to leverage in external capital and commercial investment of up to £8.9m, be agreed;
- (c) That the commencement of the required public procurements be agreed;
- (d) That authority be delegated to the portfolio holder for Corporate Development, in consultation with the Executive Director of Place, to submit a full business case, procure and award services and enter into the necessary grant agreements to deliver this programme of activity;
- (d) That the unusually short timescales involved in developing these proposals, and the importance of responding and mobilising quickly to meet delivery deadlines to facilitate economic recovery from the impacts of the Coronavirus pandemic be noted.

Reason for the Decision

To enable the business case process to be submitted, complete due diligence and to facilitate the quickest possible deployment by March 2022.

175. Transport Infrastructure Investment Fund

The Portfolio Holder for Highways, Travel and the Environment reported on the Government's newly created Transport Infrastructure Investment Fund. Incorporated into the fund was a combination of already confirmed annual funds for Dorset Council, with the addition of a Pothole Fund, which included funds originally intended for the 2020/21 Challenge, now divided between authorities on the needs based formula. Dorset's share of the £1.7billion funding was set out in detail within the report.

Members were further advised that future investment strategies against all highways assets would be the subject to review and discussion at future Highway Executive Advisory Panel meetings.

In response to questions, the Portfolio Holder confirmed that council engineers were working closely with the private landowner to resolve recent issues in respect of the landslip near the Old Castle Road at Weymouth.

Cabinet members welcomed the report and supported the recommendation.

Decision

That the proposed spend allocation of the Transport Infrastructure Investment Fund be approved.

Reason for the Decision

That we can invest the Transport Infrastructure Investment Fund in accordance with Department for Transport (DfT) guidelines, to improve road condition, reducing the number of potholes, and to kick start the construction industry and wider economy. This is also intended to assist our recovery from the impacts of Covid 19 and flooding issues arising from the winter.

176. Approval of Youth Justice Plan 2020-21

The Portfolio Holder for Children, Education and Early Help advised members that under the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 there was a statutory requirement to publish an annual Youth Justice Plan which must provide specified information about the local provision of youth justice services. The Youth Justice Board provided guidance about what must be included within the plan and recommended a structure for the plan. Cabinet was advised that the People Scrutiny Committee had considered the Youth Justice Plan and endorsed its approval. A copy of their extract minutes had been published as a supplement to Cabinet's agenda.

Recommendation to Full Council

That the Youth Justice Plan be approved.

Reason for Recommendation:

Local authorities are required to publish an annual Youth Justice Plan, setting out how the statutory requirements for a multi-agency youth offending team are fulfilled locally. Dorset Combined Youth Offending Service is a partnership between Dorset Council and Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Council, along with Dorset Police, NHS Dorset Clinical Commissioning Group and the National Probation Service Dorset. Approval for the Youth Justice Plan is also being sought from Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Council. The Youth Justice Plan needs to be approved by the full Council.

177. Dorset Council Economic Growth Strategy

In presenting the strategy, the Portfolio Holder for Economic Growth and Skills advised that one of the council's priorities for 2020-2024 was to 'deliver sustainable economic growth, increasing productivity and the number of high-quality jobs in Dorset, creating great places to live, work and visit.' The Portfolio Holder took the opportunity to thank all those involved in creating the Strategy. In particular he thanked members of the Executive Advisory Panel which had now completed its work. But he hoped that the group would be re-branded to allow cross-party working in order to agree a way forward in respect of delivery of the action plan.

The Strategy covered six foundation areas; digital, people and skills, business environment, innovation ideas, place and transport infrastructure.

Members were reminded that a prosperous and inclusive local economy was vital to achieving the strategic priorities of the Council. The Economic Growth Strategy

set out how the Council would seek to deliver this priority and members looked forward to seeing the detailed action plan.

Decision

- (a) That the draft Dorset Council Economic Growth Strategy be approved.
- (b) That authority be delegated to the Portfolio Holder of Economic Development and Skills to make any further, minor amendments required following consideration by Cabinet.

Reason for the Decision

One of the priorities in the Dorset Council Plan 2020-2024 is to 'deliver sustainable economic growth, increasing productivity and the number of high-quality jobs in Dorset, creating great places to live, work and visit.' A prosperous and inclusive local economy is vital to achieving the strategic priorities of the Council. The Economic Growth Strategy explains how the Council will seek to deliver this priority and will be accompanied in due course by a detailed action plan.

178. Redundancy Multiplier

Cabinet considered a report on the Redundancy Multiplier. In the lead up to the formation of the new council, the Shadow Council resolved to harmonise the rate to (1.75 times). At that time it was expected that the convergence of services would have been completed by September 2020 upon which the multiplier would be reduced, ensuring that all employees affected by organisational change as a consequence of local government reorganisation were treated the same.

However due to COVID-19 and other factors there had been delays in progressing some convergence activity which could potentially lead to employees receiving less redundancy compensation if the existing level of multiplier was not extended beyond its current end date.

Decision

That the current 1.75 redundancy multiplier be extended until 31st March 2021, to ensure parity between those that have already been subject to organisational change and those due to be at risk of redundancy as Dorset Council moves through the remainder of the financial year.

Reason for Decision

This would reintroduce alignment with the additional protection arrangements and the review of terms and conditions. Consultation would take place before 31 March 2021 on the intention of reducing the multiplier thereafter.

179. Dorset Council Budget - Quarter 1 Financial Management Report

The Portfolio Holder for Finance, Commercial and Assets presented the Council's quarter 1 financial management report. Members were advised that the report set out the outturn position for 2019/20, an update on the financial impact of Covid-19 and other financial matters (to date) and sought approval for assumptions, methods and timing of the development of the 2021/22 budget and medium-term financial plan.

There had been a financial impact from Covid-19 on quarter 1 of the budget with loss of income and an increase in expenditure. Whilst the government had provided some funding to cover the financial gap, the balance of £43m was currently being funded by the Council's reserves.

Actions were being taken to address the short-fall including ending property leases and rolling back the capital programme to address a smaller number of projects. A review of on-going Covid-19 costs and seeking ways to contain the current year's operational and financial pressures was on-going.

The Portfolio Holder(s) for Adult Social Care and Health and Children, Education and Early Years set out the complex financial positions faced by the services as a result of the pandemic and the outcomes that the council wanted to achieve, the need to adjust to new ways of working and importance of the continuation of transforming services.

Decision

- (a) That the outturn position for 2019/20 and the impact this had on reserves be noted;
- (b) That the Senior Leadership Team's forecast for Dorset Council's position at the end of Quarter 1 be noted;
- (c) That the position on the capital programme be noted and the projects recommend by officers (as set out in Appendix 1 of the report) be approved;
- (d) That the key milestones lifted from the draft timetable for budget/Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) for 2021/22 be agreed (as set out in Appendix 2 of the report);
- (e) That the inherited and revised draft budget assumptions to allow development of the first iteration of the five-year MTFP be noted (as set out in Appendix 3 of the report);

Reason for the Decision

The Council has responsibilities to deliver against its 2019-20 Revenue Budget and 2019-20 Capital Programme and maintain adequate reserves. These recommendations and accompanying report demonstrate the Council's performance in delivering against these responsibilities.

Cabinet need to understand the significant financial impact and consequences of the Council's response to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Understanding the financial position at the start of the planning process is key to adopting the most appropriate assumptions in the development of the MTFP. Agreeing an initial set of assumptions will allow officers to develop the first iteration of the MTFP and budget for 2021/22 for consideration and conduct sensitivity testing.

Governance of the financial strategy will be critical as we build the next MTFP and agreeing key milestones for the work and member review/challenge are important at this stage to ensure maximum engagement.

180. Additional Procurement Forward Plan Report - over £500k (2020-21)

The Portfolio Holder for Finance, Commercial and Assets set out a report relating proposed contracts (detailed in the appendix to the report) which were in addition to those set out in the forward plan approved by Cabinet on 3 March 2020.

Decision

Cabinet agreed:-

- (a) To start each of the procurement processes as listed in Appendix 1 to the report the report to Cabinet of 28 July 2020;
- (b) That in each instance the further step of making any contract award be delegated to the relevant Cabinet portfolio holder, in consultation with the relevant Executive Director.

Reason for Decision

Cabinet is required to approve all key decisions with financial consequences of £500k or more. It is also good governance to provide Cabinet with a summary of all proposed procurements prior to them formally commencing.

181. Dorset Council - Community Infrastructure Levy Governance Arrangements

The Portfolio Holder for Planning outlined a report on the need for the Council to establish a clear Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Governance Structure to oversee the convergence of legacy council's CIL receipts and collection, auditing and spending of this and future CIL monies.

He continued that the report proposed the key governance arrangements for the delivery of infrastructure through CIL to ensure CIL serves its purpose of contributing to the delivery of the infrastructure necessary to support development in Dorset.

Members were advised that Place Scrutiny Committee had considered the report on 23 July 2020 and an extract of those minutes had been circulated to cabinet as a supplement to the agenda papers. The Portfolio Holder confirmed that in response to comments from the committee Appendix A and the scoring for the

category 'Wider community benefits and implications', in respect of foreseeable risks or negative impacts had been amended.

The Chairman of the Place Scrutiny Committee welcomed the recommendation and highlighted that 10.5 and 10.6 of the report where it indicated the financial importance for Town and Parish Council to have neighbourhood plans.

Decision

1. That the following specific arrangements be agreed:-
 - (a) To spend CIL monies within the same geographical charging area from which they were levied, pre and post 31/8/19.
 - (b) The CIL infrastructure spending priorities pre 1/9/19, as laid out in appendix C.
 - (c) The mechanism for prioritisation and spend of CIL funded infrastructure pre and post 31/8/19, as set out in the amended appendix A.
2. That the Terms of Reference for Property Management Group (PMG), be amended, to enable it to scrutinise & prioritise infrastructure projects seeking funding from the Community Infrastructure Levy and provide recommendations to Capital Strategy and Asset Management Group (CSAMG) / the Executive Director of Place regarding which projects should receive such funding.
3. That authority be delegated to the Executive Director of Place in consultation with the Portfolio Holder Planning, the approval of the prioritisation, of CIL spend on behalf of the Council as reported to CSAMG.

Reason for Decision

- i) To provide clarity, transparency and consistency in the allocation and spending of CIL receipts.
- ii) To set out the relationship between the Council as charging authority and key stakeholders and infrastructure providers (internal and external).
- iii) To ensure CIL receipts are spent on infrastructure required to support development, in accordance with the CIL Regulations 2010 specifically as amended in September 2019 ('the CIL Regulations').
- iv) To ensure CIL serves its purpose of supporting the delivery of the infrastructure necessary to support the development in Dorset.

182. Draft Dorset Council Climate and Ecological Emergency Strategy for Public Consultation

In presenting the report the Portfolio Holder for Highways, Travel and Environment reminded Cabinet that in May 2019 Dorset Council declared a climate & ecological emergency. The Council established a councillor led Executive Advisory Panel (EAP) responsible for gathering information and working with officers to make

recommendations to Dorset Council's Cabinet on actions that would help mitigate against climate change.

The EAP has overseen the development of a draft Dorset Council Climate and Ecological Emergency Strategy ready for consultation with the public. The strategy was attached as Appendix A to the report a detailed costed delivery plan was also being developed. This would be brought to Cabinet in October 2020 prior to it going out to public consultation.

The strategy highlighted the importance of engaging with the wider public and key stakeholders and as part of the strategy development views had been sought from the public through a 'call for ideas'. This received over 780 responses and 32 organisations or individuals were invited to present at one of two inquiry days sessions held by the Council.

In addition, young people were invited to share their views and a specific event was held for town and parish councils. The key themes identified through this engagement had been fed into the strategy and the more detailed responses would be further considered in the development of the delivery plan.

The Portfolio Holder took the opportunity to advise members of the work already being carried out, including highways space that had been put into cut and collate management. The land that had been brought into ecological improvement and park & recreational use. He also referred to the work of the Local Low Carbon project.

Public Consultation on the draft strategy and delivery plan would take place later this year. The final strategy and costed delivery plan would take account of the views of the public and interested parties and would be presented for consideration by members early next year.

Cabinet was informed that Place Scrutiny Committee had considered and supported the report at its meeting on 23 July 2020. (an extract minute from that meeting was circulated to members as a supplement to the agenda). In proposing the recommendation the Portfolio Holder also took the opportunity to thank officers and the EAP for their hard work in producing the draft strategy.

The Place Scrutiny Chairman agreed that this was an excellent strategy document and technical papers, but a delivery plan was now urgently required to move the strategy forward. In response to questions the Portfolio Holder confirmed that Place Scrutiny members would be invited to attend the EAP meeting to be part of the formation of the consultative document.

Members welcomed the strategy and supported the recommendations.

Decision

That the DRAFT Dorset Council climate and ecological emergency strategy be approved for consultation with the public following the development of a costed delivery plan.

Reason for Decision

Dorset Council have declared a climate & ecological emergency and established a councillor led Executive Advisory Panel (EAP) responsible for gathering information and working with officers to make recommendations to Dorset Council's Cabinet on actions that will help mitigate against climate change.

183. Climate & Ecological Emergency Executive Advisory Panel Update

There were no additional items to report.

184. Urgent items

There were no urgent items considered at the meeting.

185. Exempt Business

It was proposed by Councillor P Wharf seconded by Councillor T Ferrari

Decision

That the press and the public be excluded for the following item(s) 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).

The public Microsoft Teams Live Event ended

186. Defence Innovation Centre - Dorset Innovation Park

Cabinet considered a report in an Exempt Microsoft Teams meeting regarding the Defence Innovation Centre – Dorset Innovation Park.

Decision

That the recommendations set out in the exempt report of 28 July 2020 be approved.

Reason for Recommendation

One of the priorities in the Dorset Council Plan 2020-2024 is to 'deliver sustainable economic growth, increasing productivity and the number of high-quality jobs in Dorset, creating great places to live, work and visit.'

Appendix 1 - Public Q&A's

Appendix 2 Councillor Q&A's

Duration of meeting: 10.00 - 11.50 am

Chairman

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Public Questions – Cabinet 28 July 2020

Question 1 from Sarah James, Chief Executive, the Arts Development Company

Draft Dorset Council Economic Growth Strategy, agenda item 10:

Arts and Culture in Dorset is an essential component in supporting both economic growth and the development of higher paid, year round, skilled jobs and in attracting tourists to our county as well as an essential ingredient in what makes our towns and our county an attractive place to live, work, leisure and invest in. Dorset LEP's Industrial strategy now includes the Creative and Culture as 1 of its 4 priority areas.

Why then is arts and culture not mentioned nor name checked in the draft Economic Growth Strategy as a key industry contributing to Dorset and one which needs supporting through the recovery plans?

Response from the Portfolio Holder of Economic Growth and Skills

I welcome the question from Sarah James and acknowledge that arts and culture do have a role to play in the future prosperity of Dorset and this will be acknowledged in the final strategy. The significance of arts and culture has been discussed during the development of the strategy, and they have a particular role to play in addressing crucial issues such as seasonality in the visitor economy, bringing vibrancy to our towns and making Dorset an attractive inward investment proposition. Arts and culture have been severely impacted by COVID-19 and we must seek to recover and increase resilience to future economic shocks. These issues will be detailed further in the action plan to accompany the strategy, and we look forward to collaborating with the Arts Development Company and other appropriate partners.

Question 2 from Julie-Ann Booker (on behalf of Extinction Rebellion, Dorset)

When will costs and timetable be available

We welcome the release of this draft strategy and it's clear that a lot of time and effort has gone into researching, preparing and writing it. And on first review, the threats we face from this climate and ecological emergency are clearly stated. Dorset Council openly state we only have 8-10 years at the current rate of carbon emissions to take action to avert this crisis and avoid the worst impacts.

The first half of the document provides a well-researched, easy to understand and read analysis of the current scientific thinking. Indeed it could act as a 'stand-alone' document.

A strategy should be a document that shapes the future. Setting out and describing a vision of the end goal and actions for reaching it. Unfortunately, the draft strategy's second half sets out little more than a 'wish list' around a number of themes. Without any priorities, costs, targets or detailed action plans. Given how long it has been since Dorset Council declared an emergency this is indeed disappointing.

The document has been honest on this point by saying (p.57) "This strategy is a start at setting out the general direction of travel that is required within the County". This is not the ambitious statement that is needed to deal with a declared 'emergency'.

Question

When will Dorset Council's Climate and Ecological Strategy include a fully costed and timetabled action plan?

Response from the Portfolio Holder for Highways, Travel and Environment

As included in the Next Steps section of the Climate Strategy, work is now taking place on a costed detailed Action Plan which will map out Dorset Council's journey to being Carbon Neutral by 2040 against the Carbon Budgeting set out in the Strategy Document (p 22)

Our Action Plan will set out our objectives, specific detailed actions, who in Dorset Council will be responsible, timescales and performance measures. We will also include details of other key partners required to help deliver these actions, the scale of potential carbon savings and the associated co-benefits (health, economy, ecology and resilience).

The Action Plan will be completed and presented to Dorset Council Cabinet in Oct 2020.

Question 3 from Len Herbert

TELL THE TRUTH ABOUT THE CLIMATE & ECOLOGICAL EMERGENCY

I am pleased Dorset Council has released its Climate and Ecological Emergency draft strategy and I commend all involved on its scientific content about the facts of Climate Change. But only a minority in Dorset will read the document in full. When Extinction Rebellion presented to the Inquiry Day on 4th March, we provided 5 practical ideas for Dorset Council Tell the Truth.

Question:

So I ask Dorset Council that the next step is to communicate the climate and ecological emergency in a letter to all Dorset residents, businesses and institutions, telling the truth in a concise format about the crises facing us and the actions we must all take to avoid its worst implications.

Response from the Portfolio Holder for Highways, Travel and Environment

The release of the draft strategy and public consultation will be comprehensively communicated by Dorset Council through a wide variety of channels incl. social media, web site and printed media.

The Climate Change Strategy forms the public facing document and is a summary of the full technical analysis, found in the accompanying technical papers, which can be accessed using the links in the Strategy. There are numerous images, diagrams and video links along with a glossary & index to make reading the document as easy as possible, but which unenviably adds to the length of the overall document.

The consultative questions will be clearly linked to the relevant sections of the strategy to make answering the questions as easy as possible. Each section of the public consultation documents will contain an executive summary of the subject area.

Question 4 from Michael Tunbridge

"I very much welcome the publication of Dorset Council's Draft Climate and Ecological Emergency Strategy on the 15th July 2020. There was much to appreciate in this thorough and professionally produced document.

As a long-standing member of the Dorset Pension Fund I was very disappointed to find no commitment or statement of intent on fossil fuel divestment.

It may have been argued by the authors of the strategy that fossil fuel divestment does not relate directly to a narrow calculation of Dorset's carbon footprint. However, fossil fuel divestment certainly does relate to a wider understanding of the Climate Emergency - an understanding demonstrated in the excellent, analytical first half of the Strategy. Maintaining investments in fossil fuel and carbon intensive industries is incompatible with the declaration of a climate emergency.

I appreciate that the chain of authority is complicated, in that it is the Dorset Pension Committee that is the administering authority for the Pension Fund. The committee also includes BCP members and union representation. Despite similar complexities, some councils have chosen to send a powerful message as part of their strategy.

I particularly commend to you the motion passed on 16th July 2020 by Conservative-led Shropshire Council (42 in favour : 1 abstention). This motion calls on Shropshire pension fund to 'set a three year timescale for the reinvestment of funds currently invested in fossil fuel dependent assets'. This motion also recognises that fossil investments constitute part of the council's carbon footprint and resolves that this element should form part of the regular reporting.

<https://shropshire.gov.uk/committee-services/mgAi.aspx?ID=14947>

<https://www.shropshirelive.com/news/2020/07/16/shropshire-council-makes-historic-decision-to-divest-pension-fund-from-fossil-fuels/>

On 16th July 2020 Shropshire Council took the lead and called on Shropshire County Pension Fund to divest from fossil fuels within three years and resolved to include fossil fuel investments in their carbon footprint accounting. Will Dorset Council take similar steps?"

Response from Cllr Andy Canning, Chair Dorset County Pension Fund (read out by Cllr Peter Wharf)

As you recognise in your question the governance arrangements for the Dorset County Pension Fund are complex. While Dorset Council is the fund administrator the Pension Fund Committee is made up of members from BCP and a staff representative as well as Dorset Councillors.

We are conscious that both Dorset Council and BCP have declared a climate emergency and I can assure you that the Pension Fund Committee will take this fully into account when it makes investment decisions.

The Pension Fund reviews its investment strategy every three years based on an independent actuarial analysis of our level of funding and any action that is required to meet any shortfall. This is followed by an independent evaluation of investment prospects leading to recommendations concerning the Fund's Investment Strategy.

We will receive these recommendations in the next few weeks and they will be discussed and agreed at our next meeting on September 10th.

We have specifically requested that the independent evaluation includes an assessment of the merits of a Decarbonisation strategy versus a Fossil Fuel Free strategy.

To further complicate matters we are members of the Brunel Investment Partnership and are moving speedily to transfer all of our investments into their pooled funds.

The Brunel Partnership is committed to leading the way on sustainable investments. It is achieving this by:

1. A commitment that its mainstream funds are in line with the targets set in the Paris Climate Accord and, as a minimum, will reduce their carbon footprint by 7% a year
2. Launching a series of Sustainable Funds with low carbon footprint. The first of these (the Global Passive Low Carbon Fund) has a carbon footprint of around 50% compared to the MSCI World Index. Brunel will be launching three further Sustainable Funds in September – details of which will be presented to the Pension Fund Committee.

Question 5 from Bridget Joslin

I understand that it is possible to ask a question or make a statement before the meeting on July 23. I have read the document as best I can and applaud the work the committee has done on seeing a way forward.

My comment and question all in one is: are these targets ambitious enough? The Climate Change Commission's report to government in July 2020 spoke of only 4

out of 21 targets being met to be carbon zero in 2050, a date which many people believe is at least 15 years too late. Of 31 milestones 14 have made no progress at all, 15 have been met partially and 2 have been fully met. By 2050 runaway climate change will be unstoppable. All your hard work as a Council will be wasted. I believe we must be much more ambitious and be prepared for our lives to change as they have had to do with the Covid crisis. I recognise central government is blocking the path but lobbying must continue much more forcefully to clear the way. We also have a duty to inform the public what we must expect in the years ahead.

Thank you for this opportunity for me to voice my grave concerns.

Response from the Portfolio Holder for Highways, Travel and Environment

Dorset Council made it clear at the point at which it declared a climate and ecological emergency that its strategy to tackle this would be based upon informed and fully investigated actions against a realistic timetable that was achievable set against the financial pressures that are facing not just Dorset Council but all Local Authorities.

The Carbon Budgeting section of the Strategy shows the progress towards Carbon Neutrality will bring about significant reductions in Carbon emissions well in advance of the 2040 target.

Question 6 from Dave Warren

On Page 55, under The Waste section of the Climate and Ecological Emergency Strategy paper, is an Indirect Action to “*Establish appropriate infrastructure to support circular economy as part of Joint Municipal Waste Management Strategy for Dorset 2008 – 33*”.

In Section 9 - Residual Waste, of the same 2008 -33 report there is a league table that ranks Energy from Waste Incineration (aka Direct EfW) as the Council's No1 preferred option for the future management and treatment of residual waste (page 39 of 2008-33 report).

Even though it has been roundly criticized in two parliamentary debates this year with high profile MP's like Priti Patel, Dr Therese Coffey and Sir Ian Boyd (Defra Chief Scientific Adviser), all openly criticising the impact it has on the environment, local recycling rates and the circular economy, Energy from Waste Incineration appears to be the Council's No1 choice for treating Dorset's residual waste. I was also surprised that while tacitly stating it will establish this infrastructure, the Climate and Ecological Emergency Strategy paper makes no direct reference to energy from waste. **Please could the climate and environmental Advisory Panel publish their findings and recommendations concerning the environmental and ecological effects of EfW incineration?**

Because, if this is truly a forward looking document, it needs to advise on both current and potential future events that will impact the County's ability to achieve its climate targets.

Response from the Portfolio Holder for Highways, Travel and Environment

As part of any future waste treatment solution a range of technologies and different solutions would be explored taking into account environmental and ecological impact assessments, not just EfW, the results of this research and any future waste treatment solution would be publicly available.

Question 7 from Dave Warren

To protect investors from misleading claims by Finance Houses, who claim that their products only contain environmentally friendly investments, The EU have recently passed a set of laws and regulations that list (by name), all environmentally sustainable economic activities. Along with nuclear and fossil fuel activities, The EU have excluded energy from waste incineration from its Green List, as they have established that it is neither a sustainable or an environmentally friendly activity. These laws and regulations come into effect next year, with "comply or explain" rules scheduled for June 21. One of the reasons The EU have given to justify its decision is that EfW activities act as an obstacle to the development of the circular economy, and as we know, The Joint Municipal Waste Management Strategy for Dorset 2008 – 33 and the Climate and Ecological Emergency Strategy paper, makes regular reference to the importance of moving to a circular economy.

I'm sure the Advisory Panel would agree with the EU's Technical Expert Group's findings, as there is a wealth of information available in the UK and across the rest of Europe that correlates the reduction in recycling rates with council areas that have contracts that commit them to supply specified levels of RDF to Energy from Waste Incinerator plants. Sadly, in some councils, recyclable materials end up being incinerated in order to avoid contractual penalty costs.

As this is a forward looking initiative, Dorset's environmental strategy document should be bold and clear on its position regarding the environmental impact of energy from waste activities, and be used to provide other departments within the council with guidance when considering future planning applications to build energy from waste incinerators in Dorset. However, on speaking with one of the council's planning officers, they didn't believe that the findings of this Strategy document would be used to shape, influence or redefine Dorset's planning process. If, like The EU, this document identifies EfW activities as unsustainable, environmentally unfriendly and detrimental to the circular economy, **will the council revisit their position on the future use of EfW as a method to manage Dorset's residual waste?**

Response from the Portfolio Holder for Highways, Travel and Environment

The Joint Municipal Waste Strategy for Dorset was adopted in 2008 and revised in 2017. This was prior to the Green List being developed and prior to the Council declaring a Climate change emergency. The Joint Municipal Waste Strategy for Dorset sets out the strategic direction for Dorset's waste up to 2033, however it has already been updated and is due to be updated every 5 years, or if there's any significant change. A significant change in the waste industry is the Government's Waste and Resources Strategy for England, 2019, therefore any updated strategy (due in 2022) will take into account all of these local, national and international changes.

Question 8 from David Redgewell

To provide transport choices in Dorset buses are now funded by the Department for Transport. Covid 19 bus operator grant

We welcome the partnership on Transforming Transport funding of £79 million for sustainable transport in South East Dorset .

We are also unclear as to where the £300 000 rural bus grant is going to be used. The bus network needs improvements with investment required in evening and weekend services.

Key links need to be developed in the in the bus network map regarding service 6 Bridport to Yeovil bus station.

Dorchester South station to Brlport, Lyme Regis and Axminster station needs a 7 days a week bus service on routes X51 and X53 run by with a connection at Axminster for bus service 30 to Taunton and South West Railway services to London Waterloo and Exeter St Davids.

Lyme Regis to Exeter bus station is a key regional bus link service 7. Other important links are Weymouth, Blandford x12, Blandford Forum and Salisbury on services 20, Bournemouth, Poole to Swanage service 40 Poole to Weymouth X54 via Wareham

Poole to Blandford Forum X8 , Blandford Forum to Shaftesbury X3, X9 /and Blandford Forum to Yeovil bus station x10.

Bournemouth Poole links to Verwood but the map fails to show the importance of Ringwood in Hampshire as a key interchange with National Express Coaches to London via Southampton or the X3 Express bus service from Bournemouth to Salisbury.

The plan does not look at the role of park and ride services in Weymouth, Nordon on the Swanage railway and Lyme Regis and ways of reducing private car usage in those towns centres.

The plan lack details of National Express Coaches services serving Bournemouth and Dorset. The plan shows no investment in transport interchange facilities yet new bus/railway station interchanges are planned by Network Rail at Weymouth and Dorchester South stations. Or bus Station s such as Bridport or swanage. Or with in western gateway transport plan.

It's not clear how the public transport part of the climate change strategy will be addressed with covid 19 .and whilst the strategy talks about walking cycling and active travel funding its not clear on public transport or school buses service s which may not be open to the fare paying passengers other School and college students due to social distancing.

How Dorset council is is going to ask the department for transport fund the public transport strategy?

Response from the Portfolio Holder for Highways, Travel and Environment

Public transport is a component of the response to the Climate and Ecological Emergency and will be reviewed as part of the Local Transport Plan and included in the Climate and Ecological Action Plan.

Question 9 from David Redgewell

The Department for Transport are now managing railway funding through direct management contracts until September and has suspended all railway franchises. The plan is not clear on railway investment projects such as upgrading the Weymouth town station to Upwey, Dorchester West, Maiden Newton, Thornford, Yetminster, Chetnole, Yeovil Pen Mill, Castle Cary, Bruton, Frome, Westbury to Bath Spa and Bristol Temple Meads station route. It is important that there is clear investment in this important railway line both at Weymouth Town station and Dorchester West where disabled access is required to the hospital from the Bristol bound platform improved access to Dorchester South station for disabled passengers and houly train service to Bristol and Exeter.

The Wessex railway partnership or Blackmore Vale Railway Partnership are not mentioned.

Investment is required in the Weymouth to Poole Bournemouth and London Waterloo route with the track doubled through Moreton on the electrified section. The Wareham to Swanage route needs a daily rail service and

Wareham station should have proper disabled access with a lift, footbridge, disabled toilets and improvements in bus/rail integration.

Increasing the amount freight carried by rail should be a priority for the county to meet global emissions targets and investment is required in facilities at Weymouth, Wool and Hamworthy.

The Exeter St Davids, Exeter Central to Honiton, Axminster, Chard Junction, Crewkerne, Yeovil Junction, Sherborne, Templecombe, Gillingham Tisbury, Wilton, Salisbury, Basingstoke, Woking and London Waterloo route need a double track section between Yeovil and Salisbury as well as modern hybrid trains as being developed by south west railway first group MTR. The route needs electrification

What bid is the council making with the western gateway transport board to fund vital railway improvements and services in the plan.?

Response from the Portfolio Holder for Highways, Travel and Environment

“Thank you for the question. As yet there are no bidding opportunities via the Western Gateway Subnational Transport Body (STB) for rail improvements. What we are doing is preparing a rail strategy with our partners in the STB which will put us in the right position to make the best case for investment in Dorset and set it within the regional context – poor connectivity within Dorset is bad news for our neighbours as well as for us. We can then use this strategy as a basis for working with the Rail Industry and the Department for Transport to bring much needed investment in Dorset’s Railways.

In addition to the Western Gateway strategy, we are also working with Network Rail on their Continuous Modular Strategic Plan for Dorset which is addressing many of the issues you raise, such as the hourly service on the Heart of Wessex Line. It aims to ascertain what is achievable and what needs to be done to make aspirations deliverable. It is anticipated this work will be completed by the end of the year.

To respond on a couple of specifics in your lead in. I understand from Network Rail that they intend to start constructing disabled access to the North bound platform at Dorchester West later in the year. Also, using some Access for All

funding, Network Rail and South Western Railway will be providing step free access to each platform (though not between) at Dorchester South Station.

As regards Wareham Station, Dorset Council continue to work closely with train operating companies to provide a regular rail service between Swanage and Wareham.

Dorset Coast Forum in partnership with Dorset Council had a successful bid to the South Western Railway Customer and Communities Improvement Fund (SWR CCIF) which is being used as part of a package of improvements known as the Weymouth Station Gateway project More information can be found at www.dorsetcoasthaveyoursay.co.uk. A press release about the consultation will be going out in the next couple of weeks”

Question from Luke Wakeling

In these unprecedented times, many more people are working from home, and more than ever, we are all relying on a strong internet connection.

In Dorset Council’s largest conurbation (Chickerell, Portland & Weymouth) you are lucky to get a 50Mbps download speed. However, if I lived in Bournemouth, I could get Cable internet upto 350Mbps and in some areas Fibre internet upto 1000Mbps. (*See attachments*)

The Weymouth area receives internet speeds that are orders of magnitude slower than in the neighbouring authority. Our communities, already suffering from poverty and deprivation, are being left further behind every day.

Looking at Think Broadband’s stats by Council, Ultrafast (>100Mbps internet) is available to just 7.9% of Dorset Council’s residents- that ranks us 380 out of 419 councils - putting us in the bottom 10% of areas for ultrafast internet availability. Dorset Council’s area is suffering from digital poverty.

I know that DC is still working to get 24Mbps internet to some areas, however my questions pertain to the delivery of the next generation internet to our urban areas.

Questions

What are you doing, and when will we see results, to bring the next generation of internet access (ie. greater than 100Mbps) to the residents of Dorset?

What do you say to the young people of Dorset who are looking for jobs and opportunities in technology, and think they need to leave our beautiful county to succeed?

Response from the Portfolio Holder for Corporate development and Change

Dorset Council recognises that universal provision of superfast broadband is critical to the future economic and social prosperity of the county of Dorset. The Superfast Dorset programme provides gap-funding state aid to build open access Superfast Broadband network in locations where the commercial market will not provide a solution. It has been working with BT / Openreach over the past 5 years and has delivered access to superfast broadband to over 84,000 premises in the county, and a host of related activity to ensure strategic benefits are realised. Access to superfast broadband in Dorset has grown from a pre-contract level of 77% to 96% superfast availability across the county. The starting level of coverage represented the hand off point of commercial deployment in Dorset, beyond which 'gap funding' with Council, central government and Dorset LEP funding programme was necessary to fast track further network expansion.

As Cllr Wakeling alludes to, the focus is moving on to building faster, gigabit networks. The starting point for this is low in Dorset, in common with many predominately rural counties. The national strategy was set out in July 2018 in the Future Telecoms Infrastructure Review. This concluded that the most effective way to deliver nationwide full fibre connectivity at pace is to promote competition and commercial investment where possible, and intervene where necessary. This is a long-term agenda nationally, and in Dorset. Many actions are particular to central government and relate to changes to the regulatory (OFCOM) and taxation regimes to encourage greater investment. Specifically in Dorset:

- We are working with suppliers big and small to
 - understand their commercial plans and see how we can support deployment through operating best practice in relation to street works
 - facilitate network designs and access to land

- ensure that new build is provisioned with fibre.
- Our remaining contract with Openreach is now building exclusively full fibre in rural areas.
- Businesses and communities are able to access the Rural Gigabit voucher scheme, again subsidising connectivity at gigabit speeds.
- We are working with central government to understand the opportunity and likely impact of the gigabit 'outside-in' programme. It is too soon to know what the impact in Dorset of this £5b national programme will be, but it is clear that this intervention programme will be needed in large parts of Dorset where the market will not provide alone. The first outcomes from this intervention are expected from 2022 onwards. It is worth noting that this programme is being designed for those areas where commercial investment is not likely to occur.
- We are in discussion with Chris Loder MP who is working on behalf of all Dorset MPs to lobby on our behalf for improved connectivity.

Dorset Council recognises the importance of faster networks. On this month's Cabinet agenda you will see items:

- Approving our Economic Growth Strategy which recognises digital infrastructure as a foundation for sustainable and inclusive economic growth
- Seeking our own and Dorset LEP investment in full fibre infrastructure.

Government's ambition is to complete a national roll-out by 2025; this is recognised by industry as a really stretching target, by way of comparison the Future Telecoms Infrastructure Review gave a completion date of 2033.

If Cllr Wakeling would like more information or to delve deeper in relation to his own town or ward, Dugald Lockhart, the Lead officer on broadband and mobile infrastructure would be delighted to meet him to discuss further.

Statement from Paula Klaentschi

1. I would like to **thank the DC team** for getting this formative clear communication this far.
2. I ask that **2. Financial Implications** identifies the potential rewards to DC by Generating Renewable Energy in contrast to the costs. That DC promote Dorset expert manufacturers/remanufacturers using Council Tax incentives to lead in new circular economy initiatives.
3. In **3. Climate implications** add to Current/ Residual Risk the Inevitable Risk [what we have to prepare for] predicted rise in sea level, back flooding low ground and swamping Weymouth.
4. In **7. Background Papers** add:
 - 4.1 **Energy.** support the local economy to phase out all carbon fuels in energy generation. DC to stop directing RDF to EfW MSW Incineration and preventing new plants being built. Because incinerators emit more GHGs than a gas power station and crucially undermine the Circular Economy. Richard Drax wrote 07.07.20: “to the Secretary of State at DEFRA. I have pointed out that you have concerns about the whole issue of air pollution and the UK Government’s inadvertent proliferation of harmful emissions from EfW Incineration and the incorrect designation of this form of energy as being renewable. I have also highlighted your concerns that the Environment Agency should have the power to refuse permits on the grounds that a proposal is inconsistent with the declared Climate Emergency and that an Incineration Exit Strategy should become UK Government policy as soon as possible.”
 - 4.2 **Waste** is material, it is part of our diminishing resources. DC can incentivise the circular economy by its purchasing power. Dorset manufacturers need support to adapt to use only materials that can be readily reused or recycled.

Today legacy landfill is being rewilded and turned into leisure and nature reserves. Landfill activity has moved to Incinerator with a green wash on the energy generated. DC can lead the way and control about what is fed into an incinerator so that nothing reusable is pushing GHGs into the air. Professor Ian Boyd, Defra Chief Scientist advises *“If there is one way of quickly extinguishing the value in a material, it is to stick it in an incinerator and burn it. It may give you energy out at the end of the day, but some of those materials, even if they are plastics, with a little ingenuity, can be given more positive value. One thing that worries me is that we are taking these materials, we are putting them in incinerators, we are losing them for ever and we are creating carbon dioxide out of them, which is not a great thing. We could be long-term storing them until we have the innovative technologies to reuse them and turn them into something that is more positively valued.”*

Statement from Jasmine O'Hare

Raise the Roof is a partnership between The Arts Development Company, Wessex Community Assets, Common Ground and Bridport Town Council.

Working with experts such as Assemble and local farmers, we are developing practical ways of how we can utilise sustainable local materials such as timber and start re-growing hemp (as it used to be grown in the area), to be processed into hempcrete for local housing materials, as opposed to high carbon materials such as concrete.

The design and build of these will be done by the local artists, designers, architects and builders. We will also be opening up opportunities for the local communities to get involved, so that they can learn practical skills in terms of helping to inform and build their own environments and how we can all make positive changes locally.

We would welcome the opportunity to share our learning with Dorset Council, as we see this as a way forward to address the climate emergency, as well as helping the affordable housing agenda.

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Questions from Councillors for Cabinet 28 July 2020

Question from Cllr J Andrews

In Sherborne we have an up and coming problem in early years education with the possible loss of 16 jobs and the displacement of 72 nursery places. This will have an impact on not only the children but the ability of the parents to go to work. The knock on of which could be enormous for the local economy. Only somebody with an extremely large crystal ball could of seen this coming up in the lift and as a member of the EAP on Economy I know as a group we didn't see it coming.

What impact on growth in Dorset does the cabinet see with possible closures estimated to be 25-30% in Early years(0-5) Provisions? Also can we Lobby the government education department for additional funding nationwide for Early years provision as this is one of the keys to regenerating our economy during this Covid 19 crisis?

Response from the Portfolio Children, Education and Early Help Draft

Within Children's Services we have been working closely with all providers of Early Years Education across Dorset. This comprises child minders, early years setting which are commercial, community and governor run in schools. We have very positive relationships with the sector and maintain good communication.

Dorset Council hold a statutory duty to provide sufficiency of Early Years provision in Dorset as a whole but do not run this provision, in all but 3 instances. To inform our work we have surveyed providers in order to establish their long term viability and whether they need additional support at this difficult time following the Covid infection.

The council, working with schools forum, has a reserve fund available to help support providers who are in short term financial difficulty. At this time we do not anticipate significant numbers of closures but there is a need to support some providers. We will use funds available to make sure that we maintain our duty for sufficiency.

The specific provision in Sherborne highlighted is being financially supported by both the Council, Sherborne Town Council and the associated academy trust in order to ensure as far as possible it remains open and available to families in the Autumn term. The council is in ongoing discussion with the academy trust about securing long term sustainable provision in the town.

Clearly there is a longer term issue which presents itself around the funding for Early Years places, where these attract public funding. The rates of funding nationally are relatively low and we would like to see this at a higher level. Across the country the viability of many nursery providers is challenging at this time because of the recent covid issues. This has exacerbated the underlying low funding issue.

In Dorset we are well placed to respond to the needs of the system in the short term and are actively engaged with providers. We will seek additional funding for places from central government. We recognise the importance of the sector in terms of not only providing for early education but also in their economic impact in the local community as employers and providers of child care for working families. We are totally committed to ensuring sufficiency of provision in Dorset.

Question from Cllr P Kimber

The Dorset Echo put on the front page regarding a bypass around Wyke Regis to assist Portland Port, on last Saturday's edition.

Does the Dorset Council have plans to build this, or is this part of any future plans this will be developed?

Proposed text for the response to Cllr Kimber's question about whether we are developing a Wyke Regis bypass scheme:

Response from the Portfolio Holder for Highways, Travel and Environment

'Funding for new strategic roads must be sought from Government either through the Road Investment Strategy (RIS) or the Major Road Network (MRN) fund. We understand there is no money available for a new road scheme here in the current RIS period 2020-2025. Government does not currently consider the A354 between Weymouth and Portland to be of significance because it did not accept our case for the route's inclusion in the Major Road Network (MRN) in 2018. Dorset Council will be working with the local business communities to lobby Government for infrastructure improvements for Dorset. The next time this network will be reviewed will be 2024 and there are no guarantees it will be included then. Government is very clear that new road schemes must be high value for money and unlock significant numbers of jobs and housing to deliver economic growth.

As part of any bid to Government must demonstrate that we have done all we can to improve the current transport network before bidding for funds for new roads. So we will seek funding from the LEP and other appropriate government sources for a series of related highways improvements along the A354 Dorchester, Weymouth to Portland corridor.'

Question from Cllr N Ireland

It is noted that the Council does have reserves, some of which can be used as a short-term measure to balance the budget, but longer-term use of reserves is not sustainable. It is also noted that unless additional Government funding becomes available, the Council will have to manage this forecast overspend using its reserves, which consist of the General Fund reserve of £28m combined with other previously earmarked reserves, and that they are sufficient to enable the Council to continue to operate throughout 2020/21. Finally, it appears the overspend in 19/20 was met by from the general fund but some reserves have been rationalised and repurposed to put that back to £28m.

My concern is that not all reserves are designed to provide insurance or a required indemnity against shortfalls. Some are there for specific purposes to support policies and aspirations of this council and once spent elsewhere may be lost forever. Also, given the current projected deficit of £43.1m and a general reserve of £28m, it implies an additional raid on our reserves to the tune of at least £15m, assuming we are actually permitted to wipe out our general reserve completely.

The questions are therefore which specific reserves were taken to support 19/20 and the same for those we intend to use to support the projected overspend in 20/21, given that these must be known already from the assertion that they will enable us to be solvent for the rest of the financial year.

Response of the Portfolio Holder for Finance, Commercial and Assets

As you rightly identify reserves will not resolve the financial strain put on the Council by Covid-19. However they do provide us with the time to resolve the underlying issues.

You are correct the forecast shortfall by year end is £43.1m although this has a high degree of uncertainty, how quickly will our income return, how long will our extra cost continue? We are already taking steps to reduce this figure, leaving Princes House and Allenview House being two examples, although the precise savings are still being worked through.

We have a General Reserve of £28m, we anticipate a potentially significant contribution from this reserve.

The latest round of government grant gave us just under £3m. There is an income support scheme announced by Government but the details of which are not yet clear. Our estimate is that this could deliver a further £6m.

At this point can I discuss a policy that I implemented under DCC, carried forward through the Shadow Authority and also at Dorset Council. Under each of these bodies, schools were allocated more money by their financing schemes than was supplied to us by Government. All of these Councils allocated money to support the schools' income shortfall.

There were choices about how this was treated in accounting terms. Many Councils, across the country, allocated money and wrote off the debt at that point. Indeed that policy was recommended to me by various Councils along the way. Although administratively the tidiest option I chose not to follow that route. In the interest of financial prudence we allocated the money to the schools but we kept the charge open and increased our Allocated Reserves every year as the charges accumulated. The basis for my decision was that if the government ever retrospectively resolved this situation we would have a charge for them to settle. I must admit even I didn't think this was a likely outcome and was occasionally tempted by the advice I received. However I didn't and that is exactly the policy the Government selected. Effectively they have taken the accumulated shortfalls off of our books and left us with the Allocated Reserve which is now free for us to release into the General Reserve. A long story but it has made available a further £14.8m of reserves.

We have also recategorised a number of other earmarked reserves. For example, DWP reserves £1.2m, treasury management £5.2m, insurance reserves £2.0m and collection fund risk reserves £5.2m.

We are therefore confident that, with some reduction of the gap from £43.1m, we will be able to manage the shortfall from our reserves and the current level of Government support and there is always the possibility of future Government assistance.

Question from Councillor B Heatley

Climate Change, Ecology and Economic Growth

Cabinet has before it today two papers

one on Economic Growth Strategy (Item 10), and
a Climate and Ecological Emergency Strategy (Item 15).

We need to initiate the difficult conversation between them, rather than simply assert as the Growth paper does that they complement each other.

We have two aims, one which I will call preserving the planet so that it can continue to support human life and civilisation, the other economic growth, that is that the parts of our activities that fall within the definition of GDP should grow. Are they compatible?

Some say we can preserve the planet and continue to grow the economy as a whole. Others, including many environmentalists, say that we can only preserve the planet if the economy stops growing or even gets smaller.

As you'd expect, I'm amongst the Greens, I'm very sceptical that we can both preserve the planet and have overall economic growth, largely because the bigger the economy the bigger are the flows of material through it, and it is this physical flow of material which is threatening the ability of the planet to support us.

But I don't know this for sure, and equally it's impossible to know for sure that continued economic growth and preserving the planet is possible. Therefore I suggest we don't have to have this argument. We can agree instead that we can grow those parts of the economy that are sustainable and reduce those parts that are not. Much of the detail of the Economic Strategy presented here takes that approach. We can be agnostic about whether the overall economy grows or not. Are those of you attached to overall economic growth really arguing that we should *increase* the parts of the economy that damage the planet?

If we adopt as a compromise the agnostic approach, we would as a consequence simply banish the idea of overall economic growth from our economic policy. We can still aim to have an economic strategy, we simply don't commit ourselves to an economic *growth* strategy. And have a Cabinet member for the Economy and Skills.

Now Cllr Suttle is recommending you accept the Economic Growth Strategy today, while Cllr Bryan is recommending the Climate Change and Ecology Strategy should go out to public consultation. The Economic Growth Strategy paper makes no reference to there having been public consultation, although I

accept some business groups have been consulted. So I get to my question, why not repair the omission of public consultation on the Economic Growth Strategy and put both out for consultation together, and ask this question about our attitude to overall growth, in favour, against or agnostic, in that joint consultation?

Response from the Portfolio Holder for Economic Growth and Skills

Thank you for the questions

Firstly the “are we arguing for economic growth that damages the planet”

Economic growth has many facets and the future plan will take into account the environment as a priority in any planned actions.

There are a number of areas in which the economy can be stimulated by investment in environmental projects, it is not a fact that economic growth has by definition a detrimental effect on the environment this occurs where there is failure to consider the future of this planet Dorset council is committed to ensuring that this does not happen.

I urge you to consider the positives of economic growth, to use it as a way in which it can improve the environment whilst giving those who work and reside in Dorset improved wages and living conditions.

Regarding consultation, we have consulted extensively over a considerable period, we have discussed the outcomes at length in our eap and it is time for action now, further delay cannot benefit those who need our help the most particularly in the context of the covid 19 pandemic and the impact that this has had on the economy. People’s income and livelihoods are under threat, it is important that we agree the strategy today to enable us to have the tool to help and to put in place the much needed action plans.

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