



INFORMAL MEETING OF THE PLACE AND RESOURCES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

NOTES OF MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY 11 MAY 2021

Present: Cllrs Shane Bartlett (Chairman), Andy Canning (Vice-Chairman), Rod Adkins, Jon Andrews, Brian Heatley, Mike Parkes, Mark Roberts, David Shortell and Bill Trite

Apologies: Cllr David Tooke

Also present: Cllr Beryl Ezzard, Cllr Tony Alford, Cllr Pauline Batstone, Cllr Ray Bryan, Cllr Jean Dunseith, Cllr Tony Ferrari, Cllr Spencer Flower, Cllr Les Fry, Cllr Barry Goringe, Cllr Matthew Hall, Cllr Rob Hughes, Cllr Nick Ireland, Cllr Carole Jones, Cllr Rebecca Knox, Cllr David Morgan, Cllr Val Pothecary, Cllr Molly Rennie, Cllr Jane Somper, Cllr Andrew Starr, Cllr Roland Tarr, Cllr Gill Taylor and Cllr David Walsh

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

John Sellgren (Executive Director, Place), Jonathan Mair (Corporate Director - Legal & Democratic Service Monitoring Officer), Matthew Piles (Corporate Director - Economic Growth and Infrastructure), Karyn Punchard (Corporate Director for Place Services), Dave Thompson (Corporate Director for Property & Assets), David McIntosh (Corporate Director (HR & OD)), Hilary Jordan (Service Manager for Spatial Planning), Paul Ackrill (Service Manager (Finance)), James Potten (Communications Business Partner - Place) and Lindsey Watson (Senior Democratic Services Officer)

1. Declarations of interest

There were no declarations of interest.

2. Chairman's Update

The Chairman provided the following statement :

At the Annual Meeting of Council on 4 May 2021 it was agreed that all council meetings that are not executive in nature, will continue to be held virtually from 7 May 2021 until such time as social distancing requirements are removed (currently scheduled to be lifted on 21 June 2021). Where a decision is required, committee members will express a 'minded to' decision in respect of recommendations set out in officer reports, with decisions being taken under officer delegated authority in the light of 'minded to' decisions expressed by members in the virtual meetings.

The reports on today's agenda are for review by the committee, to seek comments from the committee and support for the direction of future work and

also provide the committee with information to determine if any additional areas should be added to the forward plan for further review. To confirm, there are no items on this agenda that require a decision to be taken under officer delegation.

3. Public Participation

A question had been submitted from a member of the public. A copy of the question read out at the meeting and the response provided, is set out at Appendix 1.

4. Questions from Members

The Chairman noted that questions had been submitted by Councillor C Jones and would be dealt with under agenda item 6, 'Grid Capacity: Scoping Report'.

5. Grid Capacity: Scoping Report

The committee considered a scoping report, which sought to ensure that the matter of grid capacity was fully considered as part of the preparation of the local plan and that the council was fully aware on the matter, so as to be able to lobby and work with providers to make the necessary improvements.

The Chairman provided the opportunity for non-committee members to ask questions and discussion was held in the following areas:

- C Jones asked two questions which were responded to by the Portfolio Holder for Planning. The questions asked and responses provided are set out at Appendix 2 to the notes
- Need to look at existing grid capacity and the impact of adding related conditions to planning consents
- Support was expressed for the use of a consultant to undertake work in this area
- A request was made to consider the use of domestic solar panels.

The committee considered the issues arising from the report and points were raised in the following areas:

- The timescale for the work would fit in with the timescale for the local plan review
- Financial issues including lobbying for increased investment and how the consultants would be able to assist with this
- Need to consider a wider range of green renewable energies
- The consultants work would assist in understanding how capacity would affect the council's ambitions and how the council could assist

- Need to keep the scope of the review wide. The scope was currently being developed with the consultants and would include a review of energy feeding into the system
- This initial scoping part of the work was about getting a sound and independent assessment of the issues and would establish a baseline to enable the council to engage in debate with all parties in this area
- Dorset Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) had also commissioned a complimentary piece of work through consultants and this could also be reviewed by the committee.

It was proposed by A Canning seconded by J Andrews that the committee support the three recommendations set out in the report and add a fourth recommendation as follows, ‘That the Place & Resources Scrutiny Committee wish to invite representatives of the energy supply industry to a future meeting and to require that the LEP review report of energy supply is also reported to a future meeting, alongside the Dorset Council consultants’ report.’

‘Minded to’ Committee support for the following

- (i) That the response to the Local Area Network Plan consultation be noted;
- (ii) That members support the commissioning of additional consultancy work on grid capacity;
- (iii) That the issues related to local grid capacity as raised at this meeting are fed into the study and notified to the provider;
- (iv) That the Place & Resources Scrutiny Committee wish to invite representatives of the energy supply industry to a future meeting and to require that the LEP review report of energy supply is also reported to a future meeting, alongside the Dorset Council consultants’ report.

6. Property Strategy and Asset Management Plan Quarterly Monitoring Report

The committee received and considered a report of the Corporate Director of Property and Assets, which provided an update on progress on the actions identified in the Property and Asset Management Strategy – Action Plan, and areas that needed to be given priority. The Corporate Director noted that further data would be included in future reports including red/amber/green (RAG) ratings.

Consideration was given to the issues within the report and discussion was held in the following areas:

- Hub office provision in the east of the Dorset Council area
- Financial assistance agreed by Cabinet and increased capacity through restructure of the service gave reasonable confidence in the action plan timetable

- Issues around vacant properties – how these were being dealt with and close work being undertaken with other services
- Potential for work and communications with ward councillors, town and parish councils and communities. An example was provided of work undertaken in Weymouth
- Reference to the process for dealing with low value and high value assets
- Awareness of the current economic situation and how this may impact on timescales in some areas
- It was hoped to be able to include performance information and financial implications in the next report
- Action 11 (Joint Ventures) would need to go through the appropriate governance process.

It was proposed by J Andrews seconded by M Roberts

'Minded to' Decision

That the Place and Resources Scrutiny Committee have reviewed and commented upon progress in achieving the actions identified in the Property & Asset Management Strategy -Action Plan and areas needing to be given priority.

7. Place and Resources Scrutiny Committee Forward Plan

Councillors reviewed the committee's forward plan and noted items to be considered at the next meeting of the committee on 13 July 2021. It was noted that the report 'Dorset Council Scrutiny Committees: Adding Value to Dorset's Covid-19 Recovery Strategy', had been removed from the forward plan and that the chairmen of the scrutiny committees would be considering the role of scrutiny in this area.

In response to a question with regard to the scrutiny arrangements for the St Mary's project, further consideration would be given to the governance arrangements for the project.

8. Cabinet Forward Plan and Decisions

The committee noted the Cabinet Forward Plan and decisions taken at recent meetings.

9. Urgent items

There were no urgent items.

10. Exempt Business

There was no exempt business.

APPENDIX 1 - PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Agenda item 4 - Public Participation

Questions from Rob Smith, Lyme Regis Town Councillor

"The *Grid Capacity Scoping Report* which the *Place and Resources Scrutiny Committee* is due to consider on May 11th should also highlight another issue which is impacting local residents seeking to decarbonise their homes and cars.

The Government's 10 point plan for a green industrial revolution to get us to Net Zero includes installing 600,000 heat pumps by 2028.

Part of Dorset Council's role in helping deliver these aspirations and the aims of its own Climate and Ecological Emergency Strategy is to facilitate these changes which will make a major contribution to cutting carbon emissions. Unfortunately, residents who have installed electric vehicle home chargers and subsequently plan to install an Air Source Heat Pump (ASHP) are increasingly discovering that our electricity infrastructure is insufficient. They find themselves paying them between £300 and £3000 (additional to the cost of these already expensive systems) to upgrade the electricity supply to their homes. This infrastructure is owned and controlled by the Distribution Network Operator (DNO), in our case Western Power Distribution, regulated by Ofgem. Householders who are trying to support the government's environmental targets, should not have to foot the bill for upgrading the DNO's infrastructure.

Surely if the Government wants to encourage domestic users to adopt electric vehicles and renewable heat technology, these extra cost barriers should be removed? Will Dorset Council take a lead and lobby the relevant DNO, and Ofgem, to absorb this cost themselves, to remove this significant financial burden for residents who are already planning to make a substantial investment in support of the government's and the council's targets?".

Response from the Portfolio Holder for Planning

This is a national policy issue, which the government is aware of. The Council understands that the government is currently working with Ofgem, distribution network operators and partners through the Charging Futures Forum, to develop equitable future network charging policies aligned with climate change aspirations and the need for significant increase in electric charging infrastructure and domestic / commercial heat pumps.

The Council will continue to monitor these discussions and act accordingly.

APPENDIX 2 - QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS

Agenda item 5 – Questions from Members

Question from Councillor Carole Jones re: Grid Capacity

1. What is the cost to Dorset Council for the lack of capacity on the North Dorset Business Park and in general for the town if house building is unable to proceed, & can this be clawed back by the provider at all? If not, is the provider not taking their responsibility seriously and can we do anything about it?

Response from the Portfolio Holder for Planning

The limited amount of electricity capacity will act as a constraint on the full development of North Dorset Business Park in the foreseeable future and until such time as additional grid capacity can be made available economically.

The Council is working with all the interested parties that had previously purchased plots of land within the Park from the Council to maximise the development of the site and support the creation of as many local job opportunities as possible given these constraints. The Council has yet to conclude/finalise how best this might be achieved and any associated costs.

Question from Councillor Carole Jones re: Grid Capacity

2. As there are a number of areas with a lack of grid capacity, - does there have to be some sort of priority list drawn up if so, whose responsibility is this and how would this be decided upon.

Response from the Portfolio Holder for Planning

The energy providers will develop their priorities for future investment through the Local Area Network Plans currently in preparation, and we have responded to this consultation in order to inform that process. We can influence their choices through working with them on the development of their plans and our local plan, and the further work should help us to do that more effectively.

Duration of meeting: 10.00 - 11.37 am

Chairman

