

DORSET COUNCIL - PLACE AND RESOURCES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON FRIDAY 11 DECEMBER 2020

Present: Cllrs Shane Bartlett (Chairman), Andy Canning (Vice-Chairman), Rod Adkins, Brian Heatley, Mark Roberts, David Shortell and David Tooke

Apologies: Cllrs Mike Parkes, Maria Roe and Bill Trite

Also present: Cllr Tony Alford, Cllr Pauline Batstone, Cllr Cherry Brooks, Cllr Piers Brown, Cllr Ray Bryan, Cllr Graham Carr-Jones, Cllr Robin Cook, Cllr Jean Dunseith, Cllr Beryl Ezzard, Cllr Tony Ferrari, Cllr Spencer Flower, Cllr Les Fry, Cllr Barry Goringe, Cllr Jill Haynes, Cllr Nocturin Lacey-Clarke, Cllr Andrew Parry, Cllr Byron Quayle, Cllr Molly Rennie, Cllr Jane Somper, Cllr Gary Suttle, Cllr Clare Sutton, Cllr Gill Taylor, Cllr David Walsh, Cllr Peter Wharf and Cllr Kate Wheller

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

John Sellgren (Executive Director, Place), Aidan Dunn (Executive Director - Corporate Development S151), 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), Jim McManus (Corporate Director - Finance and Commercial), David McIntosh (Corporate Director (HR & OD)), Heather Lappin (Head of Strategic Finance), Lee House (Service Manager for Finance), Bridget Downton (Head of Business Insight and Corporate Communications), Andrew Billany (Corporate Director of Housing, Dorset Council), James Potten (Communications Business Partner - Place), Lindsey Watson (Senior Democratic Services Officer) and Megan Rochester (Democratic Services Officer Apprentice)

24. Declarations of interest

There were no declarations of interest.

25. Public Participation

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

26. Budget Scrutiny

The committee was invited to consider the budget proposals for 2021/22 prior to consideration at Cabinet on 19 January 2021 and Full Council on 16 February 2021. The report gave a summary of progress to date on the budget strategy and process, and provided the opportunity for the scrutiny

committees to review further, budget assumptions and actions being proposed to deliver a balanced and sustainable budget for 2021/22.

The Place and Resources Scrutiny Committee had the opportunity to consider the implications of the proposals on behalf of residents of Dorset and to provide constructive challenge to decision makers before a final decision was made. It was noted that the comments made by the committee would be reported to Cabinet on 19 January 2021 and taken into consideration as part of the budget setting process.

The Executive Director of Place and Executive Director of Corporate Development provided a short introduction to their budget areas and following this, councillors discussed the issues arising.

Further to the discussion held, the Chairman provided a summary of the key points raised during the discussion in relation to each area covered by the committee and noted that the points below would be submitted to Cabinet as part of the budget setting process:

Place

- Consideration to be given to developing an approach to increase car parking fees by 5% across the board. This to be flagged up as a direction of travel for officers to undertake more detailed work on.
- There is a need for careful funding plans for any future transition of libraries or tourist information centres.
- Concern expressed with regard to the availability of budget/resources for work identified in the Dorset Council Climate and Ecological Emergency Strategy action plan and the potential issues this may have on the climate and the reputation of the council. The committee wishes to support the Leader of the Council in the continued lobbying of the government for a fairer funding deal for local government and the exploration of additional funding from government.
- Councillors appointed as Dorset Council representatives on outside bodies are encouraged to resist requests for increases in funding for these bodies at this time.
- Concern over the level of resource available for planning enforcement activities. Note – this area to be reviewed by the Place and Resources Scrutiny Committee at the January 2021 meeting.
- There is a need to review the impact of proposed reductions to staff training budgets. The example raised at committee was within the Place budget and a reduction of 20%. As a post meeting note, the Director of Place notes that this review may need to go wider than Place as it is thought that the council is proposing reductions

across the board – therefore this may need to be dealt with as a corporate issue.

Corporate Development

- There is a requirement for increased capacity in the Democratic Services, Team with particular reference to support to overview and scrutiny functions, if resources are available in the budget.
- A concern is raised in respect of capacity within the Legal Services Team in order to ensure that the council can conduct its business requirements.
- Concern raised with regard to the proposed level of council tax increase for residents linked to the current situation with Covid-19 and EU exit and the impact that this may have on the council's collection rates.
- The impact on the council of delays in the valuing of banding for new properties needs to be kept under review.
- A request is made to include scrutiny of the Base Budget in next year's budget scrutiny process.
- Additional information is requested to be included in the appendices provided with the budget report – additional columns are requested in order to set out the current budget for each area and the variance between the current budget and the proposal for the next year's budget.

27. Exempt Business

There was no exempt business.

Duration of meeting: 11.45 am - 2.06 pm

Chairman

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