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## CABINET

### MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY 18 JANUARY 2022

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

**Apologies:** Cllrs

**Also present:** Cllr Cherry Brooks, Cllr Simon Gibson, Cllr Andrew Kerby, Cllr Nocturin Lacey-Clarke, Cllr Byron Quayle, Cllr Jane Somper, Cllr Jon Andrews, Cllr Matthew Hall, Cllr Andrew Starr, Cllr Tony Alford, Cllr Shane Bartlett, Cllr Susan Cocking, Cllr Jean Dunseith, Cllr Beryl Ezzard, Cllr Les Fry, Cllr Barry Goringe, Cllr David Gray, Cllr Brian Heatley, Cllr Nick Ireland, Cllr Sherry Jespersen, Cllr Stella Jones, Cllr Rebecca Knox, Cllr Molly Rennie, Cllr Maria Roe, Cllr Val Potheary, Cllr Dave Bolwell, Cllr Paul Kimber and Cllr Gill Taylor

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

Matt Prosser (Chief Executive), Aidan Dunn (Executive Director - Corporate Development S151), Jonathan Mair (Corporate Director - Legal & Democratic Service Monitoring Officer), John Sellgren (Executive Director, Place), Kate Critchel (Senior Democratic Services Officer), Vivienne Broadhurst (Interim Executive Director - People Adults), Theresa Leavy (Executive Director of People - Children), Andrew Billany (Corporate Director of Housing, Dorset Council), Heather Lappin (Head of Strategic Finance), David McIntosh (Corporate Director (HR & OD)), Jim McManus (Corporate Director - Finance and Commercial) and Deborah Smart (Corporate Director – Digital & Change)

### WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

The Chairman welcomed all present and advised that virtual meetings were continuing.

Where a decision was required, the appropriate Portfolio Holder would make that decision after taking into account the views expressed by the wider Cabinet membership.

39. **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest to report.

40. **Public Participation**

There was 1 question from the public and this was read out by Matt Prosser, Chief Executive and responded to by the appropriate Portfolio Holder.

A copy of the full question and the detailed response is set out in Appendix 1 to these minutes.

**41. Questions from Councillors**

There were no questions received from Councillors.

**42. Forward Plan**

The draft Cabinet Forward Plan for March was received and noted.

**43. Council Plan: Performance Report October-December 2021**

The Portfolio Holder for Corporate Development and Transformation presented the Council Plan performance report for the period October – December 2021 (quarter 3). Cabinet members were also advised that since the plan was last received in June 2021, the council's performance had been made publicly available and could be found at:

[People and Health Scrutiny Dashboard](#)  
[Place and Resources Scrutiny Dashboard](#)

**Noted**

Cabinet noted the progress made against the council plan for the period October-December 2021.

**Reason to note and receive the report**

To ensure progress towards the Council Plan is monitored.

**44. Financial Management Report Quarter 3 2021/22**

The Portfolio Holder for Finance, Commercial & Capital Strategy presented the quarter 3 financial management report. The document provided information about the Council's forecast performance against its revenue budget in 2021/22 and the impact this could have upon reserves, including the general fund.

**Noted**

- (a) That the senior leadership team's forecast of outturn at the end of Quarter 3, including progress of the transformation and tactical savings incorporated into the budget be noted.
- (b) That the position on the capital programme at the stage and the likelihood of significant slippage into 2022/23, as referenced throughout the budget setting work, be noted.
- (c) That the downgrading of the risk assessment for the financial performance for the final quarter of the current year be agreed.

## **Reason to note and receive the report**

The Council had responsibilities to deliver within its corporate plan and it must do this within the resources made available through the revenue and capital budgets for 2021/22. The report summarised the Council's forecast financial performance for 2021/22 at the Quarter 3 point of the year.

### **45. Budget Strategy Report**

The Portfolio Holder for Finance, Commercial & Capital Strategy set out the Budget Strategy and medium-term financial plan report. The Council had a duty to set a balanced revenue budget and to approve the level of council tax.

The Portfolio Holder set out the headlines of the budget including the proposal to set an increase in general council tax of 1.998% and 0.996% in social care precept, providing a band D council tax figure for Dorset Council of £1,832.67; an overall increase of 2.994%. Additional funds of 10.4 million had been awarded to the council from central government. However, he stated that some of this funding had been ring-fenced and any balance not used or ring-fenced should be used as a contingency fund given the current climate and the ongoing pandemic.

The budget proposals had been built around the priorities identified in the Dorset Council Plan and were considered by the Dorset Council Scrutiny Committees on 10 December 2021 and 7 January 2022. The Chairman also stated that all councillors had the opportunity to attend recent budget café meetings so that they could be part of shaping the budget for the forthcoming year.

The following comments and questions were made by non-executive councillors:

- 3% was the maximum that council tax could be increased without a referendum. We have one of the highest council tax rates in the country and this was likely to continue to be so.
- Concern expressed about future fuel cost increases to residents
- Capital Programme – there is a need to continue to keep the Council's capital programme under review in terms of its affordability and alignment with the Council's priorities.

In response, the Chairman advised that following the scrutiny meeting he had agreed that a fundamental review of the capital programme would be carried out and this would come back to scrutiny at some point.

There were no additional questions from Cabinet. The Portfolio Holder for Finance, Commercial & Capital Strategy read out his 10 recommendations to full council in respect of the budget strategy.

Cabinet confirmed that their "minded to" view was to support the recommendation.

## **Recommendation to Full Council from the Portfolio Holder for Finance, Commercial and Capital Strategy.**

- (a) That the revenue budget summarised in appendix 1, be agreed
- (b) That the increase in general council tax of 1.998% and 0.996% in the social care precept, providing a band D council tax figure for Dorset Council of £1,832.67, an overall increase of 2.994%, be agreed.
- (c) That no change to the current scheme of Local Council Tax Support as set out in the report, be agreed.
- (d) That the capital strategy set out in Appendix 3 and the capital programme set out in Appendix 4, be agreed.
- (e) That the treasury management strategy as set out in Appendix 5, be agreed
- (f) That the assumptions used to develop the budget strategy and medium-term financial plan (MTFP) as set out throughout the report and summarised in Appendix 6, be agreed
- (g) That the recommended balances on earmarked reserves and on general funds, including the minimum level of the general fund, be agreed
- (h) That the addition of £4.4m from the settlement into the contingency budget, until there is clarity around further costs of implementing national reforms and as a hedge against emerging cost pressures, be agreed
- (i) That the responses to the recommendations and comments made as part of the budget scrutiny process, be agreed
- (j) That the concern around the cumulative overspend on the High Needs Block (HNB) and more importantly, the impact that an unmitigated transfer of this deficit to the council will have on its financial position when the statutory instrument falls away, as currently scheduled, on 1 April 2023, be noted.

### **Reason for Recommendation:**

The Council is required to set a balanced revenue budget, and to approve a level of council tax was an integral part of this. A balanced budget is essentially one where all expenditure is funded by income without unsustainable use of one-off, or short-term sources of finance.

The Council is also required to approve a capital strategy, a capital programme and budget, and a treasury management strategy, each of which were included with the report to Cabinet.

The draft budget proposals had been considered by the Place and Resources Scrutiny Committee and by the People and Health Scrutiny Committee and their recommendations were set out in appendix 7 of the report for Cabinet consideration.

46. **Alternative Education Provision tender for implementation from September 2022**

The Portfolio Holder for Children, Education, Skills and Early Help presented a report seeking support to approve the tender of an educational alternative provision delivery model.

Cabinet were advised that the current contractual arrangements would come to an end in August 2022 and local authorities were required to arrange alternative education for children who, because of exclusion, illness, or other reasons, would not otherwise receive a suitable education.

Cabinet members indicated that they were “minded” to support the recommendation.

**Decision of the Portfolio Holder for Children, Education, Skills and Early Help**

- (a) That the procurement process, as set out in the report, be agreed.
- (b) That the further step of making any contract award be delegated to the Portfolio Holder for Children, Education, Skills and Early Help in consultation with the Executive Director of People – Children.

**Reason for the decision**

Cabinet is required to approve all key decisions with financial consequences of £500k or more. The current contractual arrangements would come to an end in August 2022 and local authorities were required to arrange alternative education for children who, because of exclusion, illness or other reasons, would not otherwise receive a suitable education

47. **"ROC" Reducing Repeat Removals of Children into Care Project Procurement Approval**

The Portfolio Holder for Children, Education, Skills and Early Help set out a report to begin the procurement process for a holistic programme for vulnerable women, who had experienced, or were at risk of, repeat removals of children from their care. The programme aimed to give women the opportunity to ‘pause’ and take control of their lives by breaking a destructive cycle that caused both them and their children deep trauma.

Cllr M Rennie, the Domestic Violence Champion spoke passionately in support of the initiative and the Cabinet Lead for health explained the work of the “task and finish” group, in order to get the report to this point. She asked members to support the recommendation.

Cabinet members indicated that they were “minded” to support recommendation.

## **Decision of Portfolio Holder for Children, Education, Skills and Early Help**

- (a) To agree, the procurement process for a holistic programme for vulnerable women who have experienced, or are at risk of, repeat removals of children from their care, "Pause Practice" in Dorset.
- (b) That the further step of making any contract award be delegated to the Portfolio Holder for Children, Education, Skills and Early Help in consultation with the Executive Director of People – Children.

### **Reason for the decision**

Cabinet is required to approve all key decisions with financial consequences of £500,000 or more.

#### **48. Cabinet member update on policy development matters referred to an Overview Committee(s) for consideration**

There were no referrals to report.

#### **49. Portfolio Holder - Lead member(s) Update**

The Portfolio Holder for Housing and Community Safety updated members on the following:

- This was an important year for housing service, as having a decent, safe, and affordable home underpins what Dorset residents need to thrive.
- The emerging Housing Strategy would plot out what Dorset Council expects to achieve linking with other council strategies, such as the Local Plan. Including those driving the council's work with children and adult services.
- The strategy will enable the council to priorities its work, time, and resources. Plus working with others to delivering appropriate housing in Dorset.
- To be an enabling authority
- To become a registered provider
- Reported on the Rough Sleeper project. Including a settled housing programme.
- To continue to work with Local Housing Associations to deliver social housing in the area.

#### **50. Climate & Ecological Emergency Executive Advisory Panel Update**

The Portfolio Holder for Highways, Travel and Environment updated cabinet on the following:

- Decarbonisation of council owned buildings continued

- Low Carbon Dorset was working hard to support applicants who wished to reduce their carbon footprint
- Supportive of a recent application to produce green hydrogen.
- AONB working with the farming community to give advice and financial support. Including woodland management and support on re-wilding projects.
- Highways were continuing to look ways for continuing to reduce their carbon footprint.

51. **Urgent items**

There were no urgent items considered at the meeting.

52. **Exempt Business**

There were no exempt items scheduled for the meeting.

**Public Question and Response**

**Duration of meeting:** 10.00 - 10.46 am

**Chairman**

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### Public Question for Cabinet 18 January 2022

#### Question from Mike Allen

First may I wish the Cabinet and Officers a Happy New Year?

The publication of the Dorset and BCP Local Housing Needs Assessment from Icen, along with the BCP Housing Land Availability Assessment, brings a wealth of new information to the local planning processes in both authorities.

In particular, based on the exceptional circumstance of out-of-date migration data, an important option is offered to BCP Council by Icen in the second volume of the LHNA, to reduce its Standard Method housing target from an unrealistic 2,667 dwellings per annum (dpa) to 1,580 dpa. When spread over the 16 year period of the BCP plan 2022-38, this implies a reduction of more than 17,000 unneeded dwellings, and a new total BCP need of **25,280 dwellings**.

In parallel, the BCP HELAA suggests in Table 4 that there is land available in BCP for 39,164 plots (when higher density is included, with no extra building in Conservation Areas, and no building in Greenbelt). Even allowing for unoccupied stock, and allocations which may not come forward, it is clear that BCP Council does not have to ask Dorset Council to help with unmet need anymore. This has important implications for Dorset.

The first volume of the Icen housing needs study puts Dorset's Standard Method housing target at 1757 dpa, requiring **29,869 dwellings** over the plan period 2021-38.

Figure 2.7 in Volume 1 of the draft Dorset Local Plan tells us that there is land available for **39,285 plots**. Allowing again for unoccupied stock and commercial uncertainty (3% and 10% say) there is headroom for manoeuvre in Dorset as well as BCP.

It's clear that, with the exceptional circumstances option, neither BCP Council nor Dorset Council would have to release new land from their Green belt. No new releases would be needed from AONB areas either.

My question is, may the many thousands of people who enjoy living in or visiting the Greenbelt in both authority areas, along with the plethora of fauna and flora whose home it is, sigh with relief now that the houses the area needs can be built without taking anymore protected AONB or Greenbelt land?

#### Response from the Portfolio Holder for Planning

BCP Council is currently consulting on options for its local plan, including options for the housing requirements. No decisions have been made yet on the requirement figures that will be included in either the BCP or the Dorset local plans.

The next stage of the Dorset Council local plan will be when a revised draft plan is brought to Cabinet and full Council. This will take account of the consultation responses and the completed evidence base.