

PLACE AND RESOURCES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY 25 JANUARY 2022

Present: Cllrs Shane Bartlett (Chairman), Jon Andrews, Brian Heatley, Mark Roberts, David Shortell and David Tooke

Apologies: Cllrs Andy Canning and Bill Trite

Also present: Cllr Tony Alford, Cllr Pete Barrow, Cllr Ray Bryan, Cllr Spencer Flower, Cllr Les Fry, Cllr Simon Gibson, Cllr Barry Goringe, Cllr David Gray, Cllr Ryan Holloway, Cllr Rob Hughes, Cllr Nick Ireland, Cllr Carole Jones, Cllr Rebecca Knox, Cllr Nocturin Lacey-Clarke, Cllr Laura Miller, Cllr David Morgan, Cllr Andrew Parry, Cllr Byron Quayle, Cllr Molly Rennie, Cllr Jane Somper, Cllr Andrew Starr, Cllr Gary Suttle, Cllr David Taylor, Cllr Kate Wheller and Cllr John Worth

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

John Sellgren (Executive Director, Place), Jonathan Mair (Corporate Director - Legal & Democratic Service Monitoring Officer), Marc Eyre (Service Manager for Assurance), Jack Wiltshire (Head of Highways), Matthew Piles (Corporate Director - Economic Growth and Infrastructure), Wayne Sayers (Transport Planning Manager), Tony Bygrave (Senior Assurance Officer - Complaints), Peter Hopkins (Corporate Director - Assets and Property), Bridget Downton (Head of Chief Executive's Office), James Potten (Communications Business Partner - Place) and Lindsey Watson (Senior Democratic Services Officer)

CHAIRMAN'S INTRODUCTION

The Chairman provided the following statement:

‘In the light of the situation with Covid-19 case rates, Dorset Council's Chief Executive - Matt Prosser has exercised his delegated powers to continue to hold virtual informal committee meetings.

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. Any decisions or recommendations required will be confirmed by the appropriate officer at the conclusion of the committee’s debate on an agenda item.’

APPOINTMENT OF VICE-CHAIRMAN FOR THE MEETING

The Chairman noted that the Vice-chairman had sent his apologies and therefore the committee would need to elect a Vice-chairman for the meeting.

It was proposed by S Bartlett seconded by J Andrews

Agreed

That D Tooke be elected Vice-chairman for the meeting.

60. Declarations of interest

There were no declarations of interest.

61. Chairman's Update

There was no update from the Chairman at this time.

62. Public Participation

There were no questions or statements from members of the public or local organisations.

63. Questions from Members

There were no questions from councillors.

64. Information Compliance

The committee considered a report of the Service Manager for Assurance which set out the position on Freedom of Information (FOI) compliance and noted the actions taken to improve compliance with Subject Access Requests (SARs).

Councillors considered the issues arising from the report and during discussions the following areas were covered:

- Issues around vexatious requests
- Resources available for dealing with requests and targets for responding
- Work being undertaken with service areas to identify common requests and where information could be made more readily available
- Measuring performance in this area
- Opportunities to make initial discussions on SARs more efficient.

Councillors noted the improved position on Freedom of Information request compliance and the actions that were being taken to improve compliance with Subject Access Requests. The committee were content with the work that had been undertaken and the plan that was in place. A request was made for a further report to be provided, when the council was closer to meeting compliance rates.

65. **Post-scrutiny review of plans for summer 2021 tourism in Dorset**

The committee received and considered a report of the Head of Highways, which provided information for the committee to undertake a review of the actions taken by the council to respond to the increased visitor demand in 2021, that was generated by pandemic guidance and the increase in 'staycations'.

During discussion, points were noted in the following areas:

- Further detail provided of how the Council worked to maximise commercial opportunities
- Detail was provided on the role of the Dorset Council Operations Group and in particular, issues around camping on beaches
- Regular briefings were provided to the relevant portfolio holders and lead members
- The success of partnership working between the council and other agencies
- Further information provided on the items listed in the table at 11.1 of the report (additional services provided)
- Further consideration of parking issues was required
- Detail of work undertaken through the Local Resilience Forum and work with partners including town and parish councils
- Reference made to trigger points for the escalation of alert levels
- Plans were being put in place to manage visitor numbers during 2022, which would include learning from 2021
- Funding issues were being reviewed with the Executive Director of Place and Executive Director of Corporate Development
- A particular request was made for continued funding for the communications campaign in this area
- In addition, there was a request for a further report on progress with planning for 2022 tourism, to include an invitation to representatives of the emergency services.

It was proposed by M Roberts seconded by D Tooke

Decision

- i) That the committee have reviewed the response by the council to increased visitor demand during 2021 as set out in the report and summarised in the notes above
- ii) That the committee have tested and challenged any assumption or proposed course of action as part of the scrutiny role and summarised in the notes above
- iii) That the committee understand the gaps that remain at this stage in terms of the expectations for the response to anticipated increased visitor demand in 2022 and the risks this represents

- iv) That the committee request that the Director of Place consider securing proposed funding requirements for Summer Operational planning 2022 including funding for the Communication Strategy
- v) That a report is provided to the committee following the February Half-term and Easter holiday periods, on the progress of Summer Operations and an invitation be extended to representatives of the emergency services to provide their perspectives and future response plans.

The Executive Director of Place, having heard the debate, confirmed the 'minded to' decision, under delegated powers on behalf of the informal meeting of the Place and Resources Overview Committee.

66. Transforming Cities Fund update

Further to a request from the committee, a report was presented by the Transport Planning Team Leader, which provided an update on the significant Transforming Cities Fund programme. Councillors considered the information provided in the update, and points were discussed in the following areas:

- A desire to see similar opportunities for towns and villages across the Dorset Council area
- Work being undertaken by the Highways and Greenspaces teams on cycleways
- Linking up projects between the Dorset Council and BCP Council areas
- It was aimed that work would be prioritised for completion by March 2023
- Ensuring effective communications in this area to highlight the benefits
- Detail of the 'Beryl' Bike scheme.

It was proposed by D Shortell seconded by D Tooke

Decision

That the committee notes the progress that has been made on the significant Transforming Cities Fund programme.

67. Corporate Complaints Team Annual Report 2020-21

Councillors received a report of the Senior Assurance Officer Complaints, which provided the committee with the opportunity to scrutinise the Annual Complaints report for 2020/21.

Councillors discussed the issues arising from the report and points were raised in the following areas:

- Issues around vexatious complaints
- The 'single point of contact' list was available for councillors to view
- Lessons that could be learnt through the complaints process
- How information could better be shared with councillors

- In response to a request, an overview of complaints regarding the Place area was provided.

At this point in the meeting it was proposed by D Shortell seconded by D Tooke, that the meeting continue beyond the 3-hour limit as set out in the Constitution. This was agreed by the committee.

- Resources available for dealing with complaints
- Issues around Code of Conduct complaints.

The Chairman, on behalf of the committee, thanked officers for their work in this area.

It was proposed by M Roberts seconded by D Shortell

Decision

That the committee have scrutinised and noted the Annual Complaints Report for 2020/21.

68. Place and Resources Scrutiny Committee Forward Plan

Councillors reviewed the committee's forward plan and noted items to be considered at the meeting of the committee on 8 March 2022.

The Chairman asked the committee if there were any issues they wished to flag in respect of their review of the performance dashboard. The following points were noted in respect of their targets in the dashboard; repairs on principal and minor roads; reference to a RIDDOR accident report; the number of homes being built. These would be reviewed following the meeting.

69. Cabinet Forward Plan and Decisions

The committee noted the Cabinet Forward Plan and decisions taken at recent meetings, which the committee could use in order to identify potential areas for post decision review.

70. Urgent items

There were no urgent items.

71. Exempt Business

There was no exempt business.

Duration of meeting: 10.00 am - 1.10 pm

Chairman

.....