

PLACE AND RESOURCES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY 8 MARCH 2022

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

Apologies: Cllrs Piers Brown and Bill Trite

Also present: Cllr Nocturin Lacey-Clarke

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), Grace Evans (Head of Legal Services and Deputy Monitoring Officer), Janet Moore (Service Manager Environmental Protection), Graham Duggan (Head of Community & Public Protection), Rebecca Forrester (Business Intelligence & Performance), Lindsey Watson (Senior Democratic Services Officer) and Kate Critchel (Senior Democratic Services Officer)

72. Minutes

The minutes of the meetings held on 25 March 2021, 11 May 2021, 12 May 2021, 13 July 2021, 21 September 2021, 16 November 2021, 7 January 2022 and 25 January 2022 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

73. Declarations of interest

D Tooke indicated that as a dog owner, he had received a dispensation in respect of the item on 'Post Implementation Review of the Dog-related Public Spaces Protection Order' and therefore would be taking part in consideration of the item.

M Roberts and D Shortell indicated that they were also dog owners and following advice from the Monitoring Officer, also requested a dispensation to enable them to participate in the item.

B Heatley indicated that as a former dog owner, he did not feel that consideration of the item would have an effect on his well-being and he would therefore take part in consideration of the item.

74. Chairman's Update

An update with regard to the Planning Advisory Service Peer Review had been provided by the Head of Planning and was read out by the Senior

Democratic Services Officer. The update is included at Appendix 1 to the minutes.

75. Public Participation

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

76. Questions from Members

There were no questions from councillors.

77. Local Land Charges Service Update

The committee received a report of the Head of Legal Services which provided information about the current Local Land Charges service, improved search response times and further action to be taken. It was noted that significant progress had been made by the land charges team, who had reduced response times, details of which were provided in the report.

Councillors considered the issues covered in the report and during discussion, the following points were noted:

- Current fee levels would continue for now but could be reviewed once the service was back to a steady and sustained position
- Staffing issues and associated costs were noted
- Further efficiencies would be made as part of work on the Planning Transformation Project and updates would be provided to members as appropriate
- It was hoped to reduce search times to the Government set target of 10 working days within the next couple of months
- Customer contact methods with the team were noted
- Support was expressed for the work undertaken by the team and the progress that had been made.

78. Post Implementation Review of the Dog-related Public Spaces Protection Order

The committee received and considered a report of the Service Manager Environmental Protection which provided a post-implementation review of the Dog-related Public Spaces Protection Order (PSPO). In January 2021, a single Order had come into force within the Dorset Council area and the report provided a review of the first year of the Order's implementation and identified key issues and recommendations for the committee's consideration.

As set out in minute 73, D Tooke, M Roberts and D Shortell, as dog owners and on the advice of the Monitoring Officer, had requested a dispensation for the item so they could participate in the debate.

A short video was shown to the committee which provided information on the role of the dog wardens.

The committee considered the issues arising from the report and during discussion the following points were raised:

- It was suggested that reference to 'agricultural stock' should read 'livestock'
- It was suggested that reference to 'waste stream' should read 'waste bins'
- Consideration should be given to restricting access for dogs to the working areas of the Cobb in Lyme Regis
- Dorset Council and BCP Council could work together in order to have a comprehensive approach to beaches across both areas
- Appropriate signage had been provided and authorised officers could provide information where available
- Working with town and parish councils in this area was considered and where councils had opted out from applying the orders in their area, further discussion would be held to understand their reasons for doing so, as part of the review to be undertaken in 2023
- Issues around Lyme Regis front town beach were considered and a point noted that the additional dog restriction may be required due to the number of users. Officers were asked to continue to liaise and investigate further options for this area
- Further consideration was required of enforcement issues
- Issues around new developments would form part of the consultation for the review of the PSPO in 2023
- Opportunities to bring together a residents' panel to help develop the consultation for the next review was being considered
- The positive relationship with town and parish councils was noted and the importance of getting information from the local areas.

It was proposed by M Roberts seconded by D Tooke

Decision

That the Place and Resources Scrutiny Committee support the following recommendations with the comments as set out in the minute above:

Recommendation 1 - Lyme Regis

To review the issues and availability of dog exercise areas in this locality. Officers to continue to work with the Town Council and other interested parties to explore options.

Recommendation 2 - Enforcement

To improve the effectiveness of enforcement, officers will continue to work with partner organisations and identify/authorise appropriate officers to assist with enforcement duties.

Recommendation 3 - Enforcement

To obtain improved local information which will help ensure a more targeted approach to patrolling and enforcement. This may include local surveys and directed community engagement.

Recommendation 4 – Public awareness

The Council's website gives locations where restrictions are in place but does not give information about alternative locations where dog walkers can exercise their dogs without restriction. Officers should look to address this.

Recommendation 5 – Monitoring

For officers to encourage and monitor further feedback about the Order which will inform the statutory review in 2023.

79. **Performance Scrutiny**

The committee considered issues arising from the Performance Dashboard that had been set up for the monitoring of performance for areas covered by the remit of the committee. A link to the performance dashboard is provided below for information:

[Place and Resources Scrutiny Committee Performance Dashboard](#)

The following points were noted:

- The committee noted a performance indicator relating to 'Overall – Number of homes built in Dorset Council area' and noted that the overall delivery of homes across Dorset did not meet the adopted local plan targets. Questions were raised as to whether sites that had received planning permission could be identified, the number of properties per site that had not yet been built and how far past the grant timescale they were and whether there was anything the council could do to encourage more homes to be built
- Targets relating to 'Percentage of principal roads requiring urgent attention' and the 'Percentage of non-principal roads requiring urgent attention' - questions were raised as to what options the council had to improve the figures. A report could be produced to provide information on the approach taken by the council for the maintenance of principal and non-principal roads and the approach to funding in this area
- Performance indicators relating to staff sickness days were to be looked at by the People and Health Scrutiny Committee
- Information on the council's approach to reporting 'staff near misses' was provided.

80. **Place and Resources Scrutiny Committee Forward Plan**

Councillors reviewed the committee's forward plan and noted items to be considered at the forthcoming meetings of the committee on 25 April and 26 May 2022.

81. 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.

Reference was made to 'Bus Back Better' provision and it was noted that a decision on funding was awaited. A review of this could be undertaken at an appropriate time. In addition, it was noted that the Leisure Services Review was to include wider member involvement and the potential role for scrutiny would be clarified.

82. Urgent items

There were no urgent items.

83. Exempt Business

There was no exempt business.

APPENDIX 1 - CHAIRMAN'S UPDATE

Update on Planning Advisory Service Peer Review provided by the Head of Planning

- A peer review of the planning service was undertaken between November 2019 and January 2020, seven months into the life of the new council
- It was led by the Planning Advisory Service (PAS) which is part of the Local Government Association (LGA)
- Its key findings were that:
 - Operational detail was needed to flesh out the service's transformation plans and ambitions
 - A single software system and consistent approach to performance management was urgently needed in the development management service
 - The council would need to keep a tight grip on the Local Plan to ensure delivery by 2024, given the huge challenges of arriving at a sustainable and supported development strategy
 - The service needs additional resource and information technology that is 'fit for purpose'
- The review, which took place before the pandemic, initially made 10 recommendations. An additional one was added to review the service in light of COVID-19
- Progress has been made in all 11 areas, and several completed. In particular:

- A review has been completed of the entire service (new structure, additional posts in under-resourced areas)
- The new structure has been implemented, with appointments made to the majority of posts
- 4.3 million records from 5 of the 6 legacy authorities have now been converged onto a single software system, with only the former county council records to migrate (taking place this month)
- Progress on the emerging local plan has taken place with significant amounts of evidence-gathering and wide-ranging public consultation. We are now considering the consultation responses and taking stock of the future direction of strategy choices, including conversations with Government. This may have implications for the timescales which need to be reviewed.
- A comprehensive package of initiatives has been introduced to address a combination of pressures on the development management service which had resulted from a significant uplift in planning casework, impact of Covid 19 and backlog of applications. This has included streamlining of validation processes, new consultation protocols, skills development, effective use of the new software system, and effective use of additional interim resource. This has resulted in a complete reduction in the backlog of applications awaiting validation from a peak of 10 weeks delay in August 2021. Applications are now being validated within the same week of receipt. This has shifted additional pressures onto case officers and consultees, but the service is now determining between 500-600 applications per week (over 100 higher than those being received on average).
- Some challenges remain, including recruitment across the service. This has proved particularly difficult in relation to more experienced planning officers as well as in other expert roles such as conservation and minerals and waste.
- Committee is asked to note that Planning Service invited PAS to provide some targeted assistance and guidance, aside from the peer review, on development management. This has provided some helpful and constructive suggestions. PAS noted that the authority has adopted a range of procedures that are widely accepted as being good practice and accord with the advice in the PAS DM Challenge Toolkit.
- This was one of three LGA peer reviews that have been conducted since the council was created – a corporate review took place in October 2019, and a finance peer review in October 2021
- The council is keen to consolidate the learning from the three reviews – check-ins are being organised with finance in March and planning in the summer, both of which will contribute to a wider, corporate review in September/October
- A report will be produced for the scrutiny committees on the outcome of this

Duration of meeting: 10.00 - 11.54 am

Chairman

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