

PLACE AND RESOURCES OVERVIEW COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON THURSDAY 9 FEBRUARY 2023

Present: Cllrs Carole Jones (Chairman), Tony Alford, Toni Coombs, Sherry Jespersen, Val Potheary, Maria Roe, Andrew Starr and Roland Tarr

Present remotely: Cllrs

Apologies: Cllrs Les Fry and Ryan Hope

Also present: Cllr Jon Andrews, Cllr Belinda Bawden, Cllr Alex Brenton, Cllr Ray Bryan, Cllr Simon Gibson, Cllr Jill Haynes, Cllr Brian Heatley, Cllr Nocturin Lacey-Clarke, Cllr Jane Somper, Cllr David Walsh and Cllr Peter Wharf

Also present remotely: Cllr Laura Beddow and Cllr Cherry Brooks

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

Aidan Dunn (Executive Director - Corporate Development S151), Jonathan Mair (Director of Legal and Democratic and Monitoring Officer), Steven Ford (Corporate Director for Climate and Ecological Sustainability), Katie Hale (Head of Revenues and Benefits), Laura Cornette (Business Partner - Communities and Partnerships), Antony Littlechild (Sustainability Team Manager), Carl Warom (Climate and Ecological Policy and Project Manager), Sara Hardy (Senior Planning Officer (M&W)), Christopher Lee (Planning Policy Officer), Alison Turnock (Service Manager for Conservation), Hilary Jordan (Service Manager for Spatial Planning), Steven March (Team Leader Standards East) and Lindsey Watson (Senior Democratic Services Officer)

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

APPOINTMENT OF VICE-CHAIRMAN FOR THE MEETING

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

It was proposed by S Jespersen seconded by T Coombs

Decision

That V Potheary be elected Vice-chairman for the meeting.

STATEMENT FROM THE MONITORING OFFICER

In respect of the agenda item 'Council tax premiums on second homes and empty properties', the Monitoring Officer advised that any councillor who owned property in Dorset in addition to their main/home address should withdraw from the meeting and not take part in the item of business.

41. **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 24 November 2022 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

42. **Declarations of interest**

T Coombs declared an interest in agenda item 7 'Council tax premiums on second homes and empty properties' and indicated that she would leave the room during discussion and voting on the item.

43. **Chairman's Update**

There were no updates from the Chairman for the meeting.

44. **Public Participation**

A statement had been submitted from a member of the public. A copy of the statement received is set out at Appendix 1.

45. **Questions from Councillors**

There were no questions from councillors.

T Coombs and D Walsh left the meeting for the following item of business
46. **Council tax premiums on second homes and empty properties**

The committee received and considered a joint report of the Corporate Director – Climate and Ecological Sustainability and the Head of Revenues and Benefits regarding proposed changes to allow councils to place a council tax premium on second homes and permit a 100% premium on empty properties at an earlier one-year commencement point. The proposals were part of the Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill which was currently at the report stage of Parliament and the report included recommendations on next steps for the Council.

Councillors considered the key issues arising from the report and discussion included the following areas:

- Recognition of how the matter linked to housing issues in the Dorset Council area, including the number of people on the housing register, people living in temporary accommodation and bed and breakfast accommodation and the need for additional housing, including affordable rent
- The impact that second homes could have on communities and services provided within communities
- This was national legislation and therefore the rules would be the same across the country
- If the recommendations were agreed by Full Council, the premiums would be enacted with effect from 1 April 2024 or as soon as possible thereafter, subject to the required legislation being in place

- Issues raised regarding the position for chalet and caravan owners in Lyme Regis and Charmouth
- Suggestion that Cabinet review the council tax premiums for second homes and empty properties after two years of implementation
- Suggestion that a proportion of additional income raised through the premiums could be used to support affordable housing projects, if the Council had a balanced budget
- Recognition of the wider impact on communities of the issues.

It was proposed by C Jones seconded by S Jespersen

Recommendation to Cabinet (28 February 2023)

1. That Full Council approve the following additional council tax premiums to be applied from 1 April 2024, or as soon as possible thereafter, subject to the required legislation being in place. That approval is given to:
 - a) 100% premium for dwellings occupied periodically;
 - b) 100% premium for properties which have been empty and unfurnished for a period of between 1 (previously 2) and 5 years
2. That Cabinet review the council tax premiums for second homes and empty properties after two years of implementation
3. That consideration is given to using a percentage of the additional income received through the premiums to support affordable housing projects, if the Council has a balanced budget.

47. T Coombs and D Walsh returned to the meeting Consultation and Engagement Policy and Protocol

The committee considered a report of the Business Partner – Communities and Partnerships, which presented a new Consultation and Engagement Policy and Protocol for Dorset Council, to outline and embed consistent standards across the organisation. The committee had the opportunity to provide comments and recommend the adoption of the policy to Cabinet.

The committee considered the issues covered by the report and the new policy and protocol and points were noted in the following areas:

- A request was made for the wording around the collection of evidence and data to be firmed up within the draft documents
- Resources available within the council to ensure that the policy and protocol would be kept at the heart of the organisation and be consistently applied throughout the council
- Links to the new Data and Business Intelligence Strategy and work being undertaken with the Data and Business Intelligence Team to create a central depository of corporate documents to improve access across the council and promote the ability for self-service across all council areas

- Encouraging engagement with under-represented groups and how this could be measured, and work being undertaken in the equality and inclusion part of the team
- Consideration should be given to the potential creation of a database of community groups and individuals that were frequently in contact with hard-to-reach groups, in order to promote consultation and engagement
- The Equality Impact Assessment would be appended to the report to Cabinet
- The policy and protocol aimed to ensure that all consultation across the council were conducted to a baseline standard, but provided for options for response by residents
- It was suggested that the policy and protocol should be reviewed by the Place and Resources Scrutiny Committee, 18 months after implementation.

It was proposed by S Jespersen seconded by V Potheary

Recommendation to Cabinet (28 February 2023)

1. That the Consultation and Engagement Policy be approved
2. That the Consultation and Engagement Protocol be adopted as a baseline standard for all consultations and engagement activity delivered to Dorset Council residents, with any minor adjustments to be authorised by the Portfolio Holder for Corporate Development and Transformation
3. That consideration be given to the potential creation of a database of community groups and individuals that are frequently in contact with hard-to-reach groups, in order to promote consultation and engagement
4. That the Place and Resources Scrutiny Committee be asked to undertake a review of the effectiveness of the Consultation and Engagement Policy and Protocol, after 18 months of implementation.

48. Natural Environment, Climate and Ecology Strategy, 2023 - 25 Refresh

The committee received a joint report of the Climate and Ecology Policy Officer and Sustainability Team Manager, which presented the draft Climate and Ecology Strategy 2023 and provided the opportunity for the committee to forward comments to Cabinet.

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

- Discussion on the level of information provided within the strategy and particular reference to the information in the 'Next Steps: Priority delivery for 2023-25' and a proposal to develop a Local Nature Recovery Strategy for Dorset
- The strategy was a living document and the wording could be reviewed as required moving forward
- Encouraging the involvement of town and parish councils, community groups and networks.

The committee considered the missions set out on the strategy and comments were made as follows:

Mission 1 – Renewable Generation

- Investigation of the use of rivers for renewable energy generation

Mission 2 – Heat Decarbonisation

- The role of the council's Housing Team working to support housing providers, including accessing available funding

Mission 4 – Road Transport Decarbonisation & Modal Shift

- Need to establish a Dorset-wide policy on charging points to assist planning committees
- Work being undertaken and funding secured to investigate opportunities for charging points across Dorset

Mission 5 – Sustainable Development & Construction

- Issues around the placement of affordable housing and links to accessibility of public transport, and support for lobbying being undertaken in this area

Mission 6 – Sustainable Consumption, Waste & Circularity

- Need to encourage greater sorting at source for bins dealt with by town and parish councils
- Clarification of the area covered by the phrase 'wider Dorset'
- Further information provided on the objective to become a low waste Council by 2040

Mission 7 – Sustainable Food Production & Consumption

- Request to review elements of the wording included in this part of the strategy
- Noted council support to local organisations such as pantry models

Mission 8 – Natural Assets & Nature Based Solutions

- Encouragement for town and parish councils to have a greenspace champion

Mission 9 – Resilience & Adaptation

- Information provided on how flooding issues were being dealt with
- Regular updates were provided to both Cabinet and the Place and Resources Scrutiny Committee
- Encouraging town and parish councils to work with Dorset Council in this area and the role for ward members and the Dorset Association of Parish and Town Councils.

Recommendation to Cabinet (on 28 March 2023)

That the Dorset Council Natural Environment, Climate and Ecology Strategy be approved.

ADJOURNMENT OF MEETING

49. At this point in the meeting, the committee adjourned and returned at 12.19pm.
Planning for Climate Change: Interim Guidance and Position Statement, Sustainability Checklist and Listed Buildings Guidance

The committee received and considered a report of the Senior Planning Officer, which set out an Interim Guidance and Position Statement that had been prepared to assist in decision making for planning applications. The position statement provided commentary on the weight that could be given to climate change in decision making. In addition, a sustainability checklist had been prepared for completion by applicants to ensure that all relevant matters were considered. The report also presented a document, 'Listed Buildings – what you can do for climate change'.

The committee considered the issues arising from the reports and comments were made in the following areas:

Interim Guidance and Position Statement and Sustainability Checklist

- Councillors welcomed the guidance and checklist which would assist both applicants and planning committee members
- Training requirements were discussed, and it was noted that training would be provided for councillors and officers. Briefings would also be provided for town and parish councils and agents and there would be a public consultation
- Viability issues were considered
- The documents provided guidance ahead of the Council adopting a new Local Plan
- Links to neighbourhood plans were discussed
- Issues around sustainable travel were raised.

At this point in the meeting, it was proposed by S Jespersen seconded by A Alford and agreed by the committee, that the meeting continue beyond the 3-hour limit as set out in the Constitution.

Listed Buildings Guidance

- The checklist and guidance were welcomed, and it was felt that the information was presented in a positive way
- It was suggested that a welcome document could be produced for people buying or considering the purchase of a listed building
- Reference was made to the use of thatch, and it was noted that further consideration was required.

Recommendation to Cabinet (28 March 2023)

1. That the Interim Guidance and Position Statement, Sustainability Checklist and Listed Buildings – what you can do for climate change documents be agreed for the purpose of a six-week consultation

2. That the Portfolio Holder for Planning be given delegated authority, after considering the results of this consultation, to approve use of the documents (Appendix 1, Appendix 2 and Appendix 3 to the report) to aid decision making on planning applications.

50. **Place and Resources Overview Committee Forward Plan**

Councillors noted the committee's forward plan and items scheduled for the next meeting. In addition, councillors noted the Cabinet Forward Plan.

51. **Urgent items**

There were no urgent items.

52. **Exempt Business**

There was no exempt business.

APPENDIX 1 - PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Agenda item 5 - Public Participation

Statement relating to agenda item 7 – Council tax premiums on second homes and empty properties

Statement from Tony Tuck – Secretary of the Lyme Regis Beach Hut, Caravan and Chalet Owners' Association

As the Secretary of the Association for chalet owners in Lyme Regis I write in response to this Dorset Cabinet Paper asking you to ensure that you exclude from your consideration of the 200% surcharge on 'second homes' the wooden chalets around the Cobb and Monmouth Beach in Lyme Regis.

I particular, I suggest that you must find a definition of "second home" better than that contained in your Paper, which defines a "home" in terms of being "home" i.e.

*"a second **home** is defined as a privately-owned habitable accommodation that is not occupied by anyone as their main residence. It may be occupied occasionally, for example as a holiday **home**....."* (My **bold** highlight)

The wooden chalets on Monmouth Beach can never be used as a home for they all have **an obligatory period of non-occupation**, as recognised by your council tax department. Most chalets can only be occupied between the 1st of March and the 7th of November in any one year, though a few do have extended leases enabling occupation until the 7th of January following.

Moreover, any concept of 'home' has to include an element of permanence. The chalet site is subject to a rolling 5 year temporary planning permission – which could be rescinded at any time.

By definition a 'home' must be a residence in which occupation can be experienced continuously without any obligatory and legal period of non-occupation.

I ask you to ensure that any decision that you take makes it crystal clear that these wooden chalets are excluded from the coverage of any proposed surcharge on genuine second homes.

By way of background information you should be aware that the Monmouth Beach chalets have traditionally been owned by local people. Many are in third or fourth generation ownership and a genuine community has prevailed over the years. They are traditionally heavily occupied during summer months and, because they are mainly akin to wooden sheds and rarely, save only when rebuilt, conform to any semblance of building regulation, are not habitable during the winter months, even were it to be permitted.

Also, these chalets do not in any way detract from the local housing stock, because of the obligatory period of non-occupation, they do not take homes away from local people, they do not impact on the external pressure to increase the price of genuine homes in the area, and they cannot be used as a short term solution for homeless families.

The recent tendency following a sale of a chalet has increased the number of chalets that may become 'buy to let'. This not only degrades any sense of community, but would be counterproductive for Dorset Council in that owners would cease to be council tax payers and instead be business rate payers, a lesser or zero amount of income.

I do hope that you agree that any definition of "second home" must exclude any dwelling where there is an obligatory period of non-occupation, such as the wooden chalets at Monmouth Beach.

Duration of meeting: 10.00 am - 1.11 pm

Chairman

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