

PLACE AND RESOURCES OVERVIEW COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON THURSDAY 11 JULY 2024

Present: Cllrs Andy Canning (Chair), Andrew Starr (Vice-Chair), Simon Gibson, Sherry Jespersen, David Northam, Mike Parkes, Roland Tarr and David Taylor

Also present: Cllr Jon Andrews, Cllr Carole Jones, Cllr Cathy Lugg and Cllr Steve Murcer

Also present remotely: Cllr Ray Bryan, Cllr Ryan Hope, Cllr Nocturin Lacey-Clarke, Cllr Clare Sutton and Cllr Gill Taylor

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

Jan Britton (Executive Lead for the Place Directorate), Aidan Dunn (Executive Director - Corporate Development S151), Anna Eastgate (Corporate Director - Place Services), Tim Hulme (Corporate Director of Assets and Regeneration), Matthew Piles (Corporate Director - Economic Growth and Infrastructure), Laura Cornette (Business Partner - Communities and Partnerships), Jennifer Lewis (Head of Strategic Communications and Engagement), Lindsey Watson (Senior Democratic Services Officer) and Kate Critchel (Senior Democratic Services Officer)

1. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 23 January 2024 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

2. Declarations of interest

Councillor C Jones declared a non-pecuniary interest in relation to agenda item 7 - Cost of Living Support 2024-25 – and in particular relating to potential funding to Local Alliance Groups, as Chair of the Northern Locality Local Alliance Group and also as she ran a charity that dealt with food poverty. She indicated that she would participate in the meeting.

Councillor C Lugg declared a non-pecuniary interest in relation to agenda item 7 – Cost of Living Support 2024-25 - as Chair of the East Dorset Local Alliance Group.

3. Chair's Update

There were no updates from the Chair on this occasion.

4. Public Participation

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

5. **Questions from Councillors**

There were no questions from councillors.

6. **Cost of Living Support 2024-25**

The committee received and considered a report of the Business Partner – Communities and Partnerships, which set out a proposed programme of funded activity to support those residents hit hardest by the ongoing cost of living challenge. This followed on from the agreement by Cabinet for a further £2m of spending from reserves and the request by Cabinet that the committee consider and make comments and recommendations on the proposed programme. This would enable the Cabinet Member for Customer, Culture and Community Engagement and the Executive Director for Corporate Development (S151) to undertake their authority as delegated by Cabinet.

The Business Partner – Communities and Partnerships, provided an overview of each proposed project and councillors provided comments as follows:

1. Adult Services – Housing – Homelessness prevention

- Comments regarding contact arrangements were raised, including contact for councillors and would be passed to the appropriate manager in the area
- There would be regular reporting back to scrutiny
- Councillors were content with the proposal

2. Place – Economic Regeneration – Healthy Homes Dorset

- A point was noted that the allocated funding should sit within the service budget to ensure a sustainable footing moving forward. The Cabinet Member noted that elements of the proposals would be considered as part of the forthcoming budget setting process
- Councillors were supportive of the proposal

3. Citizens Advice

- Councillors supported the proposal and recognised the support available through Citizens Advice
- It was noted that monitoring of the outcome of investment generally was undertaken as part of each grant agreement
- The need for investment in the provision of debt support was noted.

4. Corporate Services – Revenues and Benefits – Discretionary Housing Payment Allowance

- Councillors supported the proposal.

5. Adults Services – Housing – Disabled Facilities Grant

- Clarification would be sought as to whether this applied to private rented housing
- It was noted that this would support those people already working with the referral team
- Any changes in Government approach in this area would need to be considered
- Quarterly monitoring by scrutiny would be undertaken
- Additional funding could be provided later in the year if required.

6. Adults Services – Housing Standards – Investment in Lendology

- Assurance was given that Lendology worked closely with individuals and that there was a full financial background process undertaken
- A question was raised as to the scrutiny of the scheme to date and the need for scrutiny moving forwards, including through the budget process. The committee requested that this item be looked at by the scrutiny committee
- The Cabinet Member noted that the funding could be ring-fenced in the budget following a satisfactory scrutiny of the scheme
- Full information could be provided to the scrutiny committee for their review.

7. Corporate Development – Communities and Partnerships & VCS – Emergency and Affordable food security

- A discussion was held regarding the use of a referral-based model in the proposal and there was a recognition of the different types of food support available
- The ambition was to move people from emergency food into sustainable and affordable food provision through social supermarkets
- Contact with local ward councillors was important to identify areas of greatest need
- Support was expressed for the changes proposed and it was noted that this could be reviewed after a period of time.

8. Corporate Development – Communities and Partnerships & VCS – Food security – wider sustainable and affordable projects

- A list of projects to be funded was to be worked up alongside communities.

9. Children’s Services & VCSO

- A request was made that other referral agencies be considered in addition to Citizens Advice. This could include family hubs.

10. People First Dorset

- It was noted that this proposal and the next two proposals targeted different cohorts and therefore needed to be considered separately.

11. Age UK NSW

- A discussion was held regarding the areas in Dorset covered by Age UK NSW
- There was support for the principle of making funding available to support older people in this area but that this should form a pot of funding for bids to be invited by a range of appropriate organisations working in the area and to take out specific reference to Age UK NSW. This would ensure distribution of funds and support across the whole Dorset Council area. This was proposed by S Jespersen seconded by D Taylor and supported by the committee.

12. Island Community Action – Helping Hands Support programme

- There was general support for the proposal, but a comment made as to whether other groups were aware that a request could be made to the council for funding
- It was noted that there was a core grants programme separate to this support, where funds were available to constituted local voluntary groups.

13. Dorset Community Action – Support for village/community halls sustainability

- A point of support was noted that village and community halls could provide accessible activities to those who could not travel into nearby towns
- A concern was noted that some of the proposals were more at the front end of tackling cost of living issues than others
- A request was made that church/faith halls were included in the offer.

14. Place – Community Transport & VCSO – Community Transport

- Councillors supported the proposal.

15. Customer Services – Libraries

- A point was made that the proposal was a core activity of the council and therefore should be covered by the service budget allocation
- The Executive Director of Corporate Development confirmed that the additional funding would allow the council to do more in the area and was therefore a legitimate use of reserves.

16. Children’s Services & VCSO

- Support was expressed for the proposals and discussion held as to whether the amount of funding to be allocated should be increased
- It was noted that the Holiday activities and Food (HAF) Programme would continue to run until the end of the year. If HAF funding continued to be provided by the Government, then the amount of funding available for the projects could be reviewed
- Further officer discussions would be held following the meeting and monitoring undertaken through the scrutiny committee

- Links with the local alliance group were noted.

In accordance with the Constitution, at this point in the meeting it was proposed by D Northam seconded by D Taylor that the meeting continue beyond 3 hours.

17. Economic Regeneration – Digital Place – Digital Doorway Project

- It was felt that the use of reserves for the proposal was not appropriate as this was considered a business as usual activity
- Councillors expressed the view that the allocation should be put back into the overall pot of funding and used for other cost of living priorities. This was proposed by S Jespersen seconded by S Gibson and supported by the committee.

7. Draft Place and Resources Overview Committee Work Programme

Councillors noted the committee's draft work programme for the forthcoming year and in particular, items to be considered at the next meeting in September. A point was made that the committee needed to be involved in the policy making process at an earlier stage in order to be an effective part of the decision making process.

8. Urgent items

There were no urgent items.

9. Exempt Business

There was no exempt business.

Duration of meeting: 10.00 am - 1.20 pm

Chairman

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