

## JOINT OVERVIEW COMMITTEE

### MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY 29 OCTOBER 2024

**Present:** Cllrs Beryl Ezzard (Chair), Louise Bown, Andy Canning, Sherry Jespersen, Carole Jones, Stella Jones, Cathy Lugg, Steve Murcer, David Northam, Jon Orrell, Andrew Starr, Roland Tarr, David Taylor and Andy Todd

**Present remotely:** Cllrs Simon Gibson

**Apologies:** Cllrs Jindy Atwal, Will Chakawhata, Richard Crabb and Mike Parkes

**Also present:** Cllr Jon Andrews, Cllr Matt Bell, Cllr Richard Biggs, Cllr Shane Bartlett, Cllr Alex Brenton, Cllr Simon Clifford, Cllr Peter Dickenson, Cllr Nick Ireland, Cllr Louie O'Leary, Cllr Andrew Parry, Cllr Steve Robinson, Cllr Jane Somper, Cllr Clare Sutton, Cllr Gill Taylor and Cllr Kate Wheller

**Also present remotely:** Cllr Belinda Bawden

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

Matt Prosser (Chief Executive), Lisa Cotton (Corporate Director for Customer and Cultural Services), Matthew Piles (Corporate Director - Economic Growth and Infrastructure), Jennifer Lewis (Head of Strategic Communications and Engagement), Jan Britton (Executive Lead for the Place Directorate), Amanda Davis (Corporate Director for Education and Learning), Paul Dempsey (Executive Director of People - Children), Andrew Billany (Corporate Director for Housing), Mark Tyson (Corporate Director for Adult Commissioning & Improvement), Julia Ingram (Corporate Director for Adult Social Care Operations), George Dare (Senior Democratic Services Officer) and Antony Nash (Senior Democratic Services Officer)

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

Steven Ford (Corporate Director for Strategy, Performance and Sustainability) and Bridget Betts (Environmental Advice Manager)

1. **Appointment of Chair for the Meeting**

Proposed by Cllr A Canning, seconded by Cllr S Jones.

**Decision:**

That Cllr B Ezzard be appointed as Chair for the duration of the meeting.

2. **Apologies**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Will Chakawhata, Jindy Atwal, Richard Crabb, and Mike Parkes.

Apologies were also received from Cabinet Members Cllr Hope and Cllr Ryan Holloway.

**3. Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

**4. Public Participation**

There was no public participation.

**5. Questions from Councillors**

There were no questions from councillors.

**6. Urgent Items**

There were no urgent items.

**7. Draft Council Plan 2024-2029**

The Leader introduced the Council Plan 2024-2029 and set out the vision for the future Dorset. It was still in draft and outlined the vision and strategic priorities, and set the council's direction for the next 5 years. It would be amended to encompass the statutory responsibilities, and it was important to keep ambitious and specific targets.

Cabinet Member for Health and Housing introduced Council Plan Priority 1 - Provide High Quality Housing.

Access to affordable, high quality and safe housing was essential for residents to be able to live and thrive and was a cornerstone of the future success of Dorset. The introduction covered the gap between pay and house prices, the shortage of affordable and quality housing and the approach being taken to work with partners and registered providers to solve these issues. There was an emphasis on the potential impact of the Chancellor's budget announcement and the approach to be "grant ready" to utilise central government funding streams as much as possible.

Members discussed the priority and suggested the following areas of consideration and recommendations:

- Include more on improving the quality of housing by working with landlords in the private rented sector.
- Work with landowners to renovate / reintroduce housing stock in an affordable way.
- More emphasis on community land trusts and housing co-operatives.
- More content on improving quality and standard of homes, especially private rented and the suggestion of a public facing campaign for people in sub-standard private rented accommodation to get support.

- Lobby government to review Planning law and the impact of the value of land in viability negotiations, ensuring that affordable housing is delivered as agreed in planning applications.
- The need for a visible performance dashboard to show progress against target measures
- Change the title of the housing priority to include the word “affordable.”
- The role that the council could take in housing support for key public sector roles like teachers, NHS, social workers.
- Action to address stigma of living in social housing.
- Important to retain ownership of council assets and lease to registered providers.

Cabinet Member for Property & Assets and Economic Growth introduced Council Plan Priority 2 - Grow our economy

A strong economy underpinned everything the council wanted to achieve. It would increase wealth, create more opportunities for people, improve living standards, and boost funds for public services. The council would encourage growth, foster innovation, support businesses and help create new jobs. Reporting the difficulties that Dorset face and the current position and the intention of the priority to support the development of digital, infrastructure, business and skills to grow the economy of Dorset.

Members discussed the priority and made suggestions and recommendations for areas of the priority that could be developed:

- The difference in Dorset’s productivity in relation to its neighbours and the need for more granular explanation of Dorset’s productivity gap, including developing understanding on how many people of working age in Dorset are not economically active.
- Need to improve educational attainment in Dorset and should incorporate apprenticeships
- Instead of targets to increase the number of visitors to Dorset, there should be a focus on visitors staying additional nights, with an aim to increase the amount of money they spend. Aim for a higher quality of tourism.
- A suggestion of expanding the Enterprise Zone in Weymouth (rather than a Dorset Innovation Park focus) and highlighted the importance of not focusing on one area or industry.
- The disparity of average earnings in East and West was discussed.
- The potential to set up a Dorset Investment Office to attract inward investment into the county.
- The use of sustainable tourism as a key offering from the region.
- The importance of developing engineering and highly skilled jobs alongside tourism.

Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Cabinet Member for Children's Services, Education and Skills introduced Council Plan Priority 3 - Communities for all

The aim was to improve the lives of residents, from the youngest to the oldest. The council wanted to create communities where everyone can thrive, where essential services were accessible, where people can enjoy life at any age and where people look out for each other. Strong communities fostered social support, enhanced well-being, and created a sense of belonging, which contributed to a more resilient and cohesive society.

The discussion that followed covered the following key topics and recommendations:

- The need to add in target measures for this priority. Several target measures were suggested, which included educational attainment, internships and apprenticeships.
- Change the sentence on social mobility – South Dorset is the least socially mobile in the country (rather than Dorset is one of the least).
- The spend on SEND and the results of this.
- Recognising the low level of education investment in Dorset and the importance of lobbying the government for fairer funding for Dorset schools.

The Leader and Cabinet Member for Climate, Performance and Safeguarding introduced Council Plan Priority 4 - Responding to the climate and nature crisis.

The priority would address the climate and nature emergencies for current and future generations: to protect lives, livelihoods, and ecosystems. This global and national challenge would have many local solutions. Dorset had a role to play in helping to tackle climate change and support nature recovery. It would strengthen community resilience and stimulate economic growth. This priority was underpinned by other strategies aimed to focus the council's efforts.

The Committee discussed the priority and noted the role the council has in addressing the climate crisis. The following comments and recommendations were made:

- A need for more targets for the whole Dorset area, rather than Dorset Council focus in the targets, and to be ambitious with those.
- Inclusion of eco-tourism in the plan
- A correction to wording in the plan: only natural world heritage site in UK.
- The role of the council in managing climate in balance with other needs.
- Some found the current verge management approach was not attractive for visitors or businesses.
- Strengthen the content on what the council would do to support communities, towns and parishes to deal with the impacts of climate change. In particular, flooding but also droughts and wildfire, recognising the severity of weather patterns.
- A suggestion to add something on how the council works with water companies to address contamination and pollution rivers and the sea.
- The importance in emphasising the role of the individual and that everyone in Dorset can make a difference.
- Recognising the nature of the county and the opportunities to utilise alternative energy, such as solar and wind, in a sensitive way.

Following consideration of the priorities, the committee discussed the remainder of the draft Council Plan. The following points were made:

- Include the role of elected members, and town and parish councils, within the plan.
- Ensure there was enough prominence of the council's 450 services within the plan.
- There should be more specific emphasis on highways and better public transport.

The table of the recommendations for Cabinet is attached to these minutes.

**8. Exempt Business**

**Duration of meeting:** 6.30 - 9.00 pm

**Chairman**

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