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DORSET COUNCIL - CABINET

MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY 8 SEPTEMBER 2020

Present: Cllrs Spencer Flower (Chairman), Peter Wharf (Vice-Chairman), Ray Bryan, Graham Carr-Jones, Tony Ferrari, Laura Miller, Andrew Parry, Gary Suttle, David Walsh and Jill Haynes

Apologies: Cllrs

Also present: Cllr Nick Ireland, Cllr Tony Alford, Cllr Jon Andrews, Cllr Shane Bartlett, Cllr Dave Bolwell, Cllr Cherry Brooks, Cllr Kelvin Clayton, Cllr Susan Cocking, Cllr Jean Dunseith, Cllr Beryl Ezzard, Cllr Les Fry, Cllr Simon Gibson, Cllr Matthew Hall, Cllr Brian Heatley, Cllr Ryan Holloway, Cllr Rob Hughes, Cllr Sherry Jespersen, Cllr Nocturin Lacey-Clarke, Cllr David Morgan, Cllr Mike Parkes, Cllr Val Pothecary, Cllr Byron Quayle, Cllr Molly Rennie, Cllr Maria Roe, Cllr Jane Somper, Cllr David Taylor, Cllr David Tooke, Cllr Daryl Turner, Cllr Kate Wheller and Cllr Sarah Williams

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

Matt Prosser (Chief Executive), Aidan Dunn (Executive Director - Corporate Development S151), Jonathan Mair (Corporate Director - Legal & Democratic Service Monitoring Officer), John Sellgren (Executive Director, Place), Kate Critchel (Senior Democratic Services Officer), Lindsey Watson (Senior Democratic Services Officer), David Bonner (Service Manager for Business Intelligence and Performance), George Dare (Democratic Services Officer Apprentice), Rebecca Forrester (Business Intelligence & Performance), Hilary Jordan (Service Manager for Spatial Planning), Theresa Leavy (Executive Director of People - Children), Antony Littlechild (Community Energy Manager), Jim McManus (Corporate Director - Finance and Commercial) and Lisa Trickey (Service Manager for Digital Strategy and Design)

1. **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 28 July 2020 were confirmed and would be signed by the Chairman at a date in the future.

2. **Declarations of Interest**

No declarations of disclosable pecuniary interests were made at the meeting.

3. **Public Participation**

There were seven questions from the public. These were from Alistair Chisholm, John Calvert, Caz Dennett and Peter Bowyer. The Leader of the Council advised that questions 5 and 6 were a matter for the Dorset Pension Fund Committee and would be reported to its next meeting on Thursday 10 September 2020.

The questions were read out by Matt Prosser, Chief Executive and Jonathan Mair (Corporate Director, Legal and Democratic Services). A copy of the full questions and the responses are set out in Appendix 1 these minutes.

4. Questions from Members

There were four questions from Councillors, these along with the responses are set out in Appendix 2 to these minutes.

5. Forward Plan

The Cabinet Forward Plan was received and noted.

6. Dorset Council Procurement Strategy 2020 - 2022

The Portfolio Holder for Finance, Commercial and Capital Strategy set out a report on the adoption of a Corporate Procurement Strategy. The proposed strategy set out the Council's approach to procurement activity to ensure that it was effective and represented the best value to the residents of the Council's local authority area.

The Portfolio Holder further advised that the strategy supported the focus of the Dorset Council's Corporate Plan to make Dorset a great place to live, work and visit and he recommended its adoption.

Decision

That the Corporate Procurement Strategy, as set out in Appendix 1, be adopted.

7. Dorset Council Plan: Performance Update

The Portfolio Holder for Corporate Development and Change reminded members that the first Dorset Council Plan was agreed by full council at its meeting in February 2020. Shortly after that meeting Cabinet agreed an outline performance framework in order to monitor progress against the Plan's priorities. This was the first performance report presented to the Cabinet which displayed data for April-June 2020 (where available).

The Portfolio Holder advised that both the service delivery and data captured had been significantly affected by COVID-19. However members welcomed the report and agreed with the suggestion that it should be subject to ongoing review by Scrutiny.

Decision

That the progress against the Council's Plan be received and noted.

8. **Digital Platform**

Cabinet considered a report on the Implementation of a digital platform which would be a key enabler for the customer workstream in Dorset Council's transformation programme. A digital platform was core in order for Dorset Council to deliver transformation.

The Portfolio Holder for Corporate Development and Change confirmed that this would help Dorset to join up its understanding for customers, consistently measure service performance and provide a customer account for people to request and receive updates on council services.

Members were advised that initial procurement work had established that a suitable supplier could be sought via the Crown Commercial Services (CCS) G-Cloud 11 framework which would allow the Council to enter into a contract for an initial 1 year period, with provision to extend up to 2 years. The total contract value was a maximum of £540,000 over a potential 3 year term.

In proposing the recommendation, the Portfolio Holder advised that a seminar on this matter would be held in November for all members. In response to questions, the Executive Director for Corporate Development confirmed that the platform would eventually replace Dorset for You, create better disability access and develop a better user experience.

Decision

- (a) That the procurement process be completed;
- (b) That the making of any contract award be delegated to the Portfolio Holder for Corporate Development and Change, in consultation with the Executive Director for Corporate Development.

9. **Extension to Low Carbon Dorset programme**

The Portfolio Holder for Highways, Travel and Environment set out a report on Low Carbon Dorset which was externally funded by the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF); launched in April 2018 to run until March 2021.

The programme provided support to Dorset based Business, Community and Public Sector organisations to identify and deliver energy efficiency and renewable energy projects to reduce their carbon footprint. Support was provided in the form of free technical advice to help identify opportunities and a grant fund providing 40% of the costs of any eligible project.

Dorset Council was the accountable body for the programme and had a contract with the Ministry of Communities Housing and Local Government (MHCLG) to deliver the programme outcomes within a total budget of £6.44million. Delivery of the programme was overseen by an internal programme board.

Further ERDF funding became available in July 2019 and Dorset Council applied for an additional £5.86 million to extend the project to 2023 and expand its delivery. This was a two-stage application process which was now reaching completion and it is anticipated that the application would be successful, and a contract would be received shortly for signature by Dorset Council. Members welcomed and supported the recommendation.

Decision

That an extension of the Low Carbon Dorset programme using European Regional Development Funding, pending contract, be approved.

10. **Sub-National Partnerships**

Cabinet considered a report that sought a strategic view of the current and future sub-national partnerships Dorset Council should be engaged with. This would ensure that these were in line with Dorset's vision, plan and priorities and secure the opportunity of future Government infrastructure funding for Dorset.

Members noted that BCP Council had already agreed to join this partnership and if Dorset joined it would allow the area to be best placed to benefit from future government infrastructure.

Decision

- (a) That the continuation of Dorset Council's membership of the Western Gateway Sub-National Transport Body, be approved;
- (b) That the submission of an expression of interest from Dorset Council with BCP Council to join the Western Gateway Powerhouse be approved and that authority be delegated to the Executive Director of Place to negotiate detailed terms.

11. **Revised Local Development Scheme**

The Portfolio Holder for Planning set out a report to ensure that the council had an up to date Local Development Scheme published online, so that the local community, developers and stakeholders were aware of the programme for local plan preparation. The Local Development Scheme was the published programme for the preparation of local plans. All local planning authorities needed to maintain an up to date local development scheme so that those who were interested in or affected by future local plans know when they would be due to be prepared and have opportunities for involvement.

Dorset Council adopted its first Local Development Scheme in June 2019 and a number of updates needed to be made. The Waste Plan and Minerals Sites Plan had both been adopted. The Dorset Council Local Plan programme remained on track for submission in March 2022 and adoption in April 2023, but the initial consultation had been delayed in order to allow for the completion of some of the necessary evidence based work following the coronavirus pandemic lockdown.

It was hoped that some face to face consultation could take place in January 2021. The Portfolio Holder also reported that the Government had recently published a consultation paper outlining radical changes to the national planning system.

This was likely to affect the preparation of the Dorset Council Local Plan significantly.

Decision

That the revised Local Development Scheme, as set out in the Appendix to the report, be agreed for publication.

12. **Screening Review of the Bournemouth, Dorset and Poole Minerals Strategy 2014**

The Bournemouth, Dorset and Poole Minerals Strategy 2014 (MS) was adopted more than five years ago, and as required by the National Planning Policy Framework 2019 it has been assessed to determine whether a formal full (the whole document) or partial (only selected policies) Review was required.

A number of external factors were identified which were likely to have an impact on the market for minerals and the ongoing use and implementation of the Minerals Strategy. Particularly relevant is the adoption of the Mineral Sites Plan 2019 at the end of 2019. The Mineral Sites Plan 2019 complement the Minerals Strategy, and contributed to delivering the mineral strategies. It was considered that these two Plans needed time to be implemented together, without making any changes to the MS. All policies would continue to be monitored.

It was considered that although the Minerals Strategy was over five years old, the most appropriate action would be to continue monitoring its policies, and to repeat the assessment in 2021.

Decision

- (a) It be noted that following Screening of the Bournemouth, Dorset and Poole Minerals Strategy 2014 for Review, a full or partial Review of the Minerals Strategy will not be undertaken this year. *Officers would continue monitoring the Minerals Strategy 2014 and it would be screened again in 2021.*
- (b) That the Dorset Council Local Development Scheme be updated accordingly to reflect these actions.
- (c) That the 2020 Review of the Bournemouth, Dorset and Poole Minerals Strategy 2014 , as set out in the Appendix to this report, be made publicly available.

13. **Capital funding request to support housing projects**

The Portfolio Holder for Housing and Community Safety advised that Dorset Council had a statutory duty under the Housing Act 1996 as amended by the Homelessness Reduction Act 2018 to provide a number of principle duties to those threatened with or who are homeless, including providing emergency and temporary accommodation.

By increasing the number of properties owned and managed by the Council there would be a reduction of the Council's use of Bed and Breakfast (B&B) accommodation, a direct revenue saving to the Council and an opportunity to generate income – whilst also providing a better service to the residents who find themselves homeless. Members noted that the report The report asks for a total of £4.78m capital funding over 2 years (£3.58m if all grant funding obtained). This investment would result in an annual revenue saving in 2021/22 of £458k but would also generate (after costs) an annual income of £71k from the new property portfolio. Revenue savings for 22/23 would be £643k as the refurbishment of the hostel would provide additional beds.

Members welcomed the purchase of properties by the Council for the use of temporary accommodation ensuring that the Council could have the right type of accommodation to meet safeguarding needs.

Decision

- (a) That the allocation of £3.13m in the 20/21 capital programme and a further £1.65m in the 21/22 capital programme for the purchase and refurbishment of accommodation to support homeless and rough sleeper households, be approved;
- (b) That authority be delegated to the Corporate Director of Housing, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Housing and Community Safety and the Section 151 Officer, the ability to purchase 1-bedroom properties for use as temporary accommodation;
- (c) That authority be delegated to the Corporate Director for Property and Assets, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Housing and Community Safety, the Section 151 Officer, and Corporate Director of Housing the ability to purchase properties for use as hostel accommodation.

14. **Climate & Ecological Emergency Executive Advisory Panel Update**

The Portfolio Holder for Highways, Travel and Environment briefly updated Cabinet members on the work of the Executive Advisory Panel. A report on the Strategy Delivery Plan would be presented to members at its next meeting on 6 October 2020.

15. **Urgent items**

There were no urgent items considered at the meeting.

16. **Exempt Business**

Capital funding request to support housing projects Exempt appendices

Appendix 1 – Analysis of needs assessments

Appendix 2 – Property purchase information and returns.

Appendix 3 - Properties currently owned by Dorset Council

Appendix 4 - Revenue savings from hostel development

**Appendix 1 Public Questions and Answers
Appendix 2 Councillor Questions & Answers**

Duration of meeting: 10.00 - 11.13 am

Chairman

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Public Questions – Cabinet 8 September 2020

Question 1 from Alistair Chisholm

In view of the ongoing crisis in the affordability of housing for younger working people in Dorset, does the cabinet have any plans to build or provide “Council Houses” to meet the growing need for the same ? If not, why not ?

Response from the Portfolio Holder for Housing and Community Safety

Dorset Council is a non-stock holding authority it does not have a Housing Revenue Account and therefore is unable to access finance and borrow money to build houses in the same way Councils with their own housing stock can.

The Council works closely with registered housing providers, for example Aster, Magna and Sovereign to whom the former District Councils transferred their housing stock many years ago. This close working relationship ensures that they are building affordable housing both for rent and purchase.

Registered Housing Providers have the advantage of being able to borrow money with less restrictions than Dorset Council to build houses. They are set up to manage the maintenance and repairs of their properties, something the Council currently does not have the capacity to do on a large scale.

The Cabinet will be considering a report that seeks approval to invest £4.8m over 2 years to increase the amount of accommodation for use as temporary accommodation for homeless households.

The Council is also using its own land through the Building Better Lives Programme to bring forward extra care housing and affordable housing in partnership with registered housing providers. The Council will continue to investigate using the land it owns for affordable housing schemes.

In addition the Housing Enabling Team work with communities to support and develop community land trusts in their local area to bring forward affordable housing for local people. There have been a number of successful projects delivered in the past 18 months. There are also schemes progressing and in development with affordable housing as an offer. The Council's Opening Doors Website <http://www.openingdoorsdorset.co.uk/> gives more information on affordable housing schemes in Dorset as well as information on Community Land Trusts.

Question 2 from Alistair Chisholm

In view of the proposed changes to the Planning System, will the Cabinet consider classifying the DOR 15 site, to the north of Dorchester's water meadows, as a "Protected Zone" which cannot be developed. If not, why not ?

Response from the Portfolio Holder for Planning

The proposed changes to the national planning system have been published for consultation and the Cabinet will be agreeing a response at its October meeting. We do not yet know whether the proposals will be changed as a result of the consultation before they are implemented, and so it would be premature to make any decisions about how areas of land might be zoned.

Should the proposals be implemented as set out, the council will need to meet a binding housing target, and will need to identify sufficient land as 'growth' or 'renewal' areas to meet that target. This land will need to be in locations that minimise the distances that people need to travel to meet their everyday needs. Consultation would take place at the start of the process to enable people to make proposals as to which category they believe certain areas of land should be in.

Question 3 from John Calvert

I was surprised to learn that both our Dorset Council and also Bournemouth Christchurch and Poole Council are presently using outdated government housing figures in their preparation of their Local Plans. We need more affordable housing in Dorset but we should be looking at need not at unreliable targets. It is also particularly important for our Dorset Council to encourage a reduction not only of their own target but also to encourage challenge in the Bournemouth et al figures as they might want Dorset Council to take the greater part of their commitment which could lead to lot more houses being required in our Dorset Council area.

In the light of this and research which I believe shows how inappropriate the government figures are, and the cross party support for planning on the basis of need, will the Cabinet support planning on the basis of need and thereby challenge the government's figures?"

Response from the Portfolio Holder for Planning

The Government has set a standard methodology for working out housing numbers for each council area, and this must be used as the starting point for the housing numbers in local plans. There is a consultation currently taking place on changes to this methodology. The Planning White Paper, also published for consultation currently, proposes longer term changes which would include binding housing targets that councils must meet.

The next stage of the Dorset Council local plan will be a major public consultation and there will be the chance for people to give us their views on the housing numbers. However in developing the proposals, the council will need to use as its starting point the national methodology as amended by the current consultation. The council is also obliged to consider whether it can meet any unmet needs from neighbouring areas.

If the White Paper proposals are implemented as currently set out, the housing number will be a binding target set by Government, with no opportunity for it to be challenged locally. There would however no longer be the requirement to consider meeting adjoining areas' needs.

The council will be responding to both national consultations.

Question 4 from John Calvert

Disabled access to Dorchester

It is still a disgrace that there is no proper disabled access to Dorchester West and to Dorchester South railway stations.

Regardless of responsibility for the necessary changes why is our Dorset Council not pressurising those responsible to move and produce plans to solve the problems?

Response from the Portfolio Holder for Highways, Travel and Environment

Thank you Mr Calvert for the question.

Dorset Council have been working with Network Rail for a number of years now to construct a ramp from Williams Avenue to the northbound platform. Dorset Council have contributed over £200,000 to the scheme and secured contributions from Network Rail, Developers and Town Council and as a result, planning permission was gained earlier in the year and Dorset Council have been working with Network Rail to go through the legal procedures necessary to build the ramp. The works have been tendered and Network Rail have appointed a contractor and will over the construction.

There are some legal aspects that still need to be completed such as land transfers and the "stopping-up" of a small section of highway but we are now looking at detailed programming for a construction start date.

There is funding in place to improve access to the east bound platform only. This won't resolve the issue of crossing between platforms. Successive applications to the Access for All fund to install lifts or ramps on the existing bridge have been unsuccessful to date, but we recognise that the current situation is unacceptable and continue to work with the railway industry to find a solution.

Question 5 and 6 from Caz Dennett (South West Action on Pensions)

Dorset Council's C&EE Strategy outlines how the Council will deliver a realistic and achievable approach to ensuring a carbon-neutral Dorset by 2040, with the aim to reduce the bulk of its carbon emissions before this date. It states to achieve this there will be a need for "imaginative and innovative solutions".

The draft strategy makes no mention of accounting for the carbon emissions produced by Dorset Pension Fund's fossil fuel investments (currently 7.3% of the pension pot).

Question

When will Dorset Council include the carbon emissions from fossil fuel investments made by Dorset Pension Fund in its calculated carbon footprint, to ensure an accurate and truthful measure?

Question

Can Dorset Council imagine divesting the Pension Fund from fossil fuels and adopt this as a solution that helps achieve a net zero-carbon Dorset?

Response from the Leader of the Council

Thank you for these questions. The Dorset County Pension Fund is overseen by the Pension Fund Committee which acts on behalf of 317 participating organisations, not just Dorset Council.

I have therefore referred these questions to the Pension Fund Committee to consider at its meeting on Thursday 10th September.

Question 7 from Peter Bowyer

On 07.08.20 Councillor David Walsh announced at a meeting of the Executive Committee of the Dorset Association of Parish and Town Councils that there would be a "Dorset People's Local Plan". This term cannot be traced to any papers submitted to the Council.

Whilst it is welcomed that the Council acknowledges the importance of having a "Dorset People's Local Plan" it is unclear whether the Council has ever adopted this title or had any meaningful engagement with the residents of Dorset and their communities over the emerging Dorset Plan other than a consultation on the Statement of Community Involvement and two meetings with Parish and Town Councils in January and March 2020.

Can the Council please state how and when the residents of Dorset and their communities will be able to assist in the creation of a vision for the "Dorset People's Local Plan" other than responding to any consultation in late 2020/early2021?

Response from the Portfolio Holder for Planning

The Dorset Council Local Plan will take account of all the input that local communities and organisations have made so far to the preparation of the previous district-wide local plans. There have also been meetings with a range of organisations including the town and parish councils, and a 'call for sites' exercise seeking proposals for development site allocations. There will be a major stage of consultation starting early in 2021, which will be conducted via a variety of communication methods including online, social media, and face to face events subject to any Covid 19 restrictions at the time.

Question 8 from Peter Bowyer

Consultations on the Planning White Paper and the New Planning System. When will the Council be able to make available its draft responses to these important consultations? The residents and communities of Dorset will be more informed by the early sharing by the Council of its draft responses.

Response from the Portfolio Holder for Planning

There are two national consultations taking place currently. One is on interim changes to the current planning system, with a closing date of 1 October: the other is the White Paper that proposes radical changes to the planning system. The council will be responding to both consultations: the Planning White Paper response will be considered by Cabinet at its meeting on 6 October, and the committee papers will be available five days beforehand as usual. The closing date for this consultation is 29 October and so the draft response will be available in good time to enable residents and communities to see it before the final deadline. Later in 2021 the draft plan will be made available for anyone to comment on its 'soundness' before it is submitted to the Secretary of State for independent examination.

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Questions from Councillors for Cabinet 8 September 2020

1. Question from Cllr M Roe

The climate crisis inevitably affects everyone. However, there is a widespread awareness that the impacts of climate change are not distributed equally, and the consequences are likely to be far worse for the most disadvantaged and vulnerable. So, there must be a process in place to identify communities that are at highest risk to the consequences of climate change. One would also expect community engagement to gain a greater understanding of actions needed to mitigate or in terms of adaptation to climate change.

How does the council identify those who are most at risk from the impacts of climate change, and what is being done to assist the most vulnerable?

Response from the Portfolio Holder for Highways, travel and Environment

In order to fully understand the impact of Climate Change in the Dorset area a scoping exercise will be carried out as part of the Climate and Ecological Emergency Action Plan. The scoping exercise will be aimed at investigating the geophysical impacts such as sea level rise and additional flood risk and also the socio-economic implications with particular regard for the disadvantage and vulnerable, for example increased extremes in temperature differences. The results of the scoping exercise will allow the impacts to be fully understood and appropriate actions to be undertaken.

The forthcoming Climate and Ecological Emergency Strategy community consultation exercise will be informed by an Equality Impact Assessment to ensure that disadvantaged and vulnerable groups within our communities are fully included in the consultation exercise. The results of this work will be included in the objectives of the Action Plan.

There are currently various initiatives delivered locally and nationally aimed at disadvantaged and vulnerable groups, examples being the Healthy Homes Dorset program which offers assistance with home efficiency improvements for those on low incomes and the emerging Government Green Homes funds.

2. Question from Cllr Paul Kimber

Future of the High Angle Battery

Many Portlanders were appalled at the vandalising and have requested me to ask what plans Dorset Council has regarding the future of the site.

Response from the Portfolio Holder for Highways, Travel and Environment

We share concern about the graffiti and other acts of vandalism that continue to damage this site which is protected as a Scheduled Monument. And we agree about the site's importance – it is one of Portland's hidden gems and especially when considered with other sites along on the south coast it has much to tell us about Victorian military history. The site deserves to be appreciated by a wider audience.

Dorset Council officers have already inspected the damage as part of a wider discussion about the site's present and future management, ahead of a wider-ranging meeting that is planned for later this month with representatives of Historic England, Natural England and the police to discuss these issues. We are aware that any graffiti removal, if appropriate, needs to be undertaken in a sensitive manner to ensure no additional damage is caused to the Monument, and will be considering how further vandalism can be discouraged.

3. Question from Cllr B Heatley

The Draft Climate & Ecological Emergency Strategy issued on 15 July 2020 refers to Dorset Council 'securing a certified 'green' renewable energy tariff for electricity supply from September 2020' (pg 02).

Could we have some more detail about this very welcome development, such as:

- with what supplier or suppliers this arrangement has been made
- what proportion of Dorset Council's total electricity procurement is involved
- how long the arrangement will initially last
- who has certified the tariff as 'green',
- whether the Council is satisfied that this arrangement creates genuine additionality in the generation of green energy,
- how many tonnes per annum of CO2 emissions this arrangement is estimated to save, and
- an estimate of any price premium that this arrangement has cost?

Response from the Portfolio Holder for Highways, Travel and Environment

- The green tariff is provided by Npower as part of our Energy Procurement Framework with LASER.
- All of Dorset Council's electricity consumption for the period 1st October 2020 to 30th September 2021 will be covered by this tariff (with the option to extend on an annual basis if required).
- There is a 0.065p / kWh price premium associated with this tariff.

- There is currently no standard definition of a “green tariff”. This Green Tariff works in the same way, however, as other Green Tariffs on the market, as regulated by OFGEM, whereby energy supplied to the consumer is backed by Renewable Electricity Guarantee of Origin (REGO) certificates:
 - Npower secure Renewable Electricity Guarantee of Origin (REGO) certificates for the equivalent electricity volume that we consume.
 - These certificates are issued for every megawatt-hour of renewable generation fed into the grid.
 - They will match an equivalent number of REGO certificates that are valid within a Fuel Mix Disclosure (FMD) period to our consumption that also falls within the same period
- In claiming CO₂ emissions savings, we must consider what the reporting guidelines which we must adhere to will actually allow us to report as zero carbon. Whilst other authorities using such green tariffs have made statements about CO₂ savings, Defra UK Greenhouse Gas Emissions reporting guidelines do not allow green tariffs to reduce an organisation’s reported carbon emissions. Instead we must use the UK national average grid emissions which take account of all renewables feeding into the grid.
- It is only through Power Purchase Agreements and/or direct investment in renewable installations that truly additional carbon savings can be generated. The LASER frameworks critically allow flexibility for such an approach, which is something that we are currently investigating. In the short term, signing up to a REGO backed green tariff whilst pursuing more effective longer term solutions, sends a signal of the demand for renewable energy and the need for reform of the regulation of “green energy” and carbon reporting. There has certainly been a surge in demand for REGO backed tariffs following on from recently declared climate emergencies, across the public sector. The following recent article by REGEN SW highlights some of the failings of REGO backed tariffs, how we got here, and how they might yet play a role in achieving net carbon Zero.

<https://www.regen.co.uk/price-transparency-is-welcome-but-can-regos-play-a-material-role-to-achieve-net-zero-carbon/>

4. Question from Cllr N Ireland

The paper detailing the new Corporate Procurement Strategy quite rightly recognises that we, as an organisation with a substantial budget, can make a real impact to our local economy by maximising the 'Dorset Pound' through prioritising spend with local employers and businesses rather than further afield. The impact that this can have in addressing the Climate and Ecological Emergency is also highlighted, although worryingly only amounts to half a page. Phrases such as "procurement is so much more than purchasing of goods, services or works" and "not about minimising upfront prices" give some confidence that this council will take into account many other factors than just the headline cost. The "social value" derived from spending locally cannot be underestimated in our Dorset economy dominated by below-average wages, high rates of temporary and seasonal employment, and above average house prices; therefore it is a concern that the report highlights the difficulty in evaluating or measuring that as part of the procurement process. One criteria to apply would be to recognise the low levels of pay that persists throughout our area – 20% of jobs are paid less than the Real Living Wage - and address this by giving weighting and preference to employers accredited with the Living Wage Foundation.

Will this council recognise the need for all employees to be paid at least the Real Living Wage by ensuring that any business or employer we enter into a contract with guarantee all their employees receive as a minimum the Real Living Wage as defined by the Living Wage Foundation?

Response from the Portfolio Holder for Finance, Commercial and Capital Strategy

I thank Cllr Ireland for this question.

I can confirm that the Council requires all suppliers to comply with legislation and pay the National Living Wage to their employees. However, to be clear, the procurement strategy does not seek to impose further limitations on Suppliers by imposing the 'real living wage'.

Whilst I am new to the Finance and Commercial portfolio, I know from my own experience in business that the imposition of additional costs on small suppliers can make them uncompetitive. Given the fragility of the local economy I do not think we should seek to jeopardise suppliers further. These are uncertain times for local businesses, and with the ending of the furlough scheme job security is already of concern. Universal imposition of the real living wage on all of our suppliers, however well intentioned, could be counterproductive.

I'm grateful that Cllr Ireland is supportive of the emphasis the strategy puts on Social Value, and can assure him that the Council will seek the best value for

Dorset from every pound we spend. How we do that will depend very much on the individual nature of the goods and services we buy, and the Social Value criteria for each procurement will be set on a case by case basis.

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