

Shadow Dorset Council

Executive Committee

**Minutes of meeting held at South Walks House, Dorchester
on Monday 11 FEBRUARY 2019.**

Present: Cllrs R Knox (Chairman), G Suttle (Vice-Chair), A Alford, S Butler, G Carr-Jones, S Flower, M Hall, J Haynes, C Huckle, S Jespersen, A Parry, M Penfold, B Quinn, D Turner, D Walsh and P Wharf.

Officers present (for all or part of the meeting): Keith Cheesman (LGR Programme Director), Jason Vaughan (Interim Section 151 Officer), Jonathan Mair (Corporate Director - Legal & Democratic Service Monitoring Officer, Designate), Sarah Parker (Executive Director of People - Children), John Sellgren (Executive Director, Place) and Lee Gallagher (Democratic Services Manager - Dorset County Council).

In accordance with the Overview and Scrutiny procedure Rules of the Shadow Dorset Council, the decisions set out in these minutes will come into force and may then be implemented on the expiry of five working days after the publication date.

19. **Apologies**

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs Pauline Batstone, Jeff Cant, Tony Ferrari and Simon Tong.

20. **Declaration of Interests**

There were no declarations by members of disclosable pecuniary interests under the Shadow Dorset Council's Code of Conduct.

21. **Minutes**

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 14 January 2019 were confirmed and signed.

22. **Public Participation**

There were no public questions or statements received at the meeting in accordance with Standing Order 28.

23. **Shadow Executive Forward Plan**

The Committee received the latest draft Forward Plan, which included all decisions to be taken throughout the Shadow Dorset Council period until 1 April 2019. A new Forward Plan for Dorset Council would be reported to the next meeting of the Committee on 11 March 2019.

Noted

24. **Programme Highlight Report**

The Committee considered a report by the Programme Director which provided an overview of the Local Government Reorganisation Programme including workstream

activity, an update on the red risk related to the safe transfer of social care data and contingency arrangements, programme milestones, and the progress on the independent assessments which formed part of the Gateway review on overall operational readiness and on confidence from a customer perspective.

In relation to social care data migration, it was reported that although it was disappointing that the ICT arrangements would not be in place for 1 April 2019, the most important thing was keeping people safe and plans were in place to ensure that was the case.

A request was made for further information to explain the issues in relation to the pressures on the Dedicated School Grant, particularly in relation to special educational needs. It was confirmed that more information would be shared outside of the meeting and a budget briefing was also due to be held on 12 February 2019.

A further request for information was made about transitional structures and a possible in-depth review and validation of the structures. It was noted that more information would be shared outside of the meeting.

Acronyms were also highlighted throughout the report and the need for text to be written clearly in a public report.

In relation to elections, it was explained that different types of election, and scenarios were being monitored closely. The Chief Executive (designate) confirmed that resources would be put in place if required.

Noted

25. Local Council Tax Support Scheme

The Committee considered a report by the Lead Member for Finance on the Local Council Tax Support scheme for Dorset Council. The Shadow Overview and Scrutiny Committee consideration of the report was acknowledged, which recommended that Option B be adopted, with the amendment that the maximum support provided to those that are not protected be limited to 91.5%.

The recommendation of the Shadow Overview and Scrutiny Committee had been considered by the Budget Working Group who confirmed that the maximum support at 90% was appropriate. Cllr Colin Huckle proposed that the level should be 91.5% but the proposal was not seconded. However, it was confirmed that this would be reviewed again periodically.

On being put to the vote the recommendation detailed within the Lead Member's report was agreed.

Decision

That Shadow Executive recommend to the Shadow Authority that Option B (aligned scheme with a maximum support for those of working age (not protected) limited to 90%) be adopted as the Local Council Tax Support scheme for Dorset Council.

Reason for Decision

To help ensure that the Dorset Council Local Council Tax Support scheme treats claimants consistently, was clear to understand and was easy to administer.

26. **2019/2020 Budget**

The Committee considered a report by the Lead Member for Finance on the proposals for the 2019/20 Revenue and Capital Budgets, Capital Strategy and Treasury Management Strategy. It was noted that a detailed budget briefing would be held on 12 February 2019 before consideration by the Council at its meeting on 20 February 2019.

Clarification was provided that the Public Health budget was a ring-fenced budget, which was not expressly shown within the Lead Members' report, and that the level of funding in comparison to the Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole area was linked to population and levels of deprivation. It was also anticipated that the Joint Public Health Board would continue to serve the Pan-Dorset area after 1 April 2019.

Members recognised the significant value for money that Dorset County Council had delivered through Public Health funding since the transfer from the NHS in recent years.

A question was asked regarding the date and timescale for the commencement of a base budget review of Children's Services, to which the Interim Chief Financial Officer confirmed that the budget was due to be set on 20 February 2019 and that the review would start after this date. He also confirmed that it would take as long as needed to get it right as a priority area for the new Council.

Recommendations

That the Shadow Dorset Council be recommended to approve:

1. The 2019/20 Revenue budget as set out in Appendices 2 and 3 of the Lead Member for Finance's report;
2. The fees and charges for regulatory services in Appendix 4 of the report;
3. That for fees and charges that usually increase by inflation they increase by 2.4% for 2019/20;
4. That £700,000 is set aside for the costs of the local elections from the council tax surplus and that the balance is added to general reserves;
5. The 2019/20 Capital Programme set out in Appendix 5 of the report;
6. The Band D council tax charge is £1,629.75 for 2019/20 and that the full resolution on council tax is set out in the budget report to the Shadow Council;
7. The 2019/20 Capital Strategy set out in Appendix 6 of the report;
8. The 2019/20 Treasury Management Strategy set out in Appendix 7 of the report;
9. That £13.5m of capital receipts be used to fund the LGR implementation costs in accordance with the governments flexible use of capital criteria; and,
10. That the minimum level of general reserves be set at £14.5m and the maximum set at £29m for 2019/20.

Decisions

1. That a Base Budget Review of Children's Services be undertaken with the new Executive Director People – Children.

2. That a Review of Capital is undertaken and reported to the September 2019 meeting of the Cabinet.

3. That a review of Reserves be undertaken and reported to the September 2019 meeting of the Cabinet.

Reason for Recommendations and Decisions

To enable the 2019/20 revenue and capital budgets to be set.

27. Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS) Employer Discretions Policy Statement

The Committee considered a report by the Lead Member for Finance regarding the pension discretions policy statement for Dorset Council from 1 April 2019, which covered a range of areas for existing scheme members and deferred beneficiaries which included flexible retirement, additional pension contribution arrangements and early access to deferred benefits.

Decision

That the implementation and publication of the pensions discretion policy statement for Dorset Council be approved.

Reason for Decision

To comply with the requirements under the LGPS regulations and to ensure that a consistent approach was taken in consideration of all cases.

28. Timeline and Resources for Producing the Dorset Council Local Plan

The Committee considered a report by the Lead Member for Planning in relation to the production and adoption of a Local Plan, in accordance with the Consequential Order for Dorset Council.

The significance of accelerating the timetable to prepare a Local Plan by 2023 instead 2024, due to elections being held, was explained. The Council would need to prioritise the new Plan over those plans which were currently being reviewed, and there was an imperative to retain an appropriate level of professional Planning Policy Officers to facilitate the creation and development of the Plan. The importance of joint working with Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole was also highlighted. It was noted that a report would be brought to the Cabinet of Dorset Council in due course with a detailed overview, assessment, gap analysis, staffing and costings to deliver the Plan for 2023.

Members supported the report and the approach, highlighting that the process would provide a guide for investment to enable the new Council to maintain control of its own destiny and have a sound Local Plan as early as possible. Although it was recognised that there was an inherent risk with not progressing with current plans which were under review, this was outweighed by the need to have a new Plan, and have an 'emerging' Plan in place. Support for ensuring appropriate staffing levels was also given.

Decisions

1. That Dorset Council progresses with a Dorset Council Local Plan in line with the high-level project plan set out at the end of the Lead members' report with the intention of adopting the Plan by April 2023.

2. That a member task and finish group be set up to oversee the work of the Dorset Council Local Plan, reporting to the Cabinet.

3. That all existing work carried out to date for current district local plan reviews be used where possible to shape the new Dorset Council Local Plan.

Reason for Decisions

To ensure that all the necessary work to produce the Dorset Council Local Plan was completed to enable adoption in Spring 2023.

29. **Emergency Planning Work Package - Emergency Response Plan**

The Committee considered a report by the Lead Member for Emergency Planning and Regulatory Services on the requirement for Dorset Council to be able to fulfil its emergency planning duties as a Category One responder under the Civil Contingencies Act 2004 from 1 April 2019.

The draft Emergency Response Plan was commended by the Committee, and officers were thanked for their hard work. Recognition was also provided in relation to the significant role of emergency planning officers to keep services running in the face of substantial and challenging events.

Decision

That the draft Emergency Response Plan be approved.

Reason for Decision

To ensure the new council could respond to an emergency incident from 1 April 2019, to fulfil its obligations under the Civil Contingencies Act.

30. **Call to Account - Transfer of Assets**

The Committee considered the minutes of the Shadow Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 3 January 2019 to consider a call to account regarding the Transfer of Assets from sovereign councils to town and parish councils during the shadow period until 1 April 2019.

Noted

31. **School Admissions Arrangements 2020-2021**

The Committee considered a report by the Lead Member for Education and Skills on the consultation undertaken to determine the proposed admissions arrangements for Dorset Council.

Members welcomed the report and particular reference was made to the excellent arrangements in place for military families in relation to passport schemes to enable children to change schools quickly and easily. Clarification was also provided in relation to the application of the policy on placement of children outside of their year group.

Decision

That the Admissions Arrangements including the Co-Ordinated Scheme and the Admissions Arrangements for Community and Voluntary Controlled Schools in Dorset 2020-2021; Armed Forces Policy 2020-2021; Guidance on the Placement of a Pupil Outside His or Her Normal Age Group 2020-2021; 6th Form Admissions Policy 2020-2021; Nursery Admissions Policy 2020-2021; and Guidance on Consulting on Admissions Arrangements 2019 be approved.

Reasons for Decision

1. To determine admissions arrangements in accordance with statutory requirements including the Schools Admissions Code December 2014.
2. To ensure compliance with the latest legislation and subsequent regulation/statutory guidance.

32. **Former Weymouth & Portland Borough Council Offices, North Quay, Weymouth**

Decision

That the item be withdrawn from the agenda and be reconsidered at the Committee meeting on 11 March 2019.

33. **Urgent Items**

There were no items of urgent business pursuant to section 100B (4) b) of the Local Government Act 1972 considered at the meeting.

Duration of meeting: 4.00 - 5.05 pm

Chairman

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