

PLACE AND RESOURCES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON THURSDAY 26 MAY 2022

Present: Cllrs Shane Bartlett (Chairman), Andy Canning (Vice-Chairman), Jon Andrews, Piers Brown, Mark Roberts, David Shortell and David Tooke

Apologies: Cllrs Rod Adkins, Barry Goringe and Bill Trite

Also present: Cllr Tony Alford, Cllr Matthew Hall, Cllr Brian Heatley and Cllr Nocturin Lacey-Clarke

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

John Sellgren (Executive Director, Place), Aidan Dunn (Executive Director - Corporate Development S151), Jonathan Mair (Director of Legal and Democratic), Graham Duggan (Head of Community & Public Protection), Lisa Cotton (Head of Customer Services, Libraries & Archives), Antony Littlechild (Sustainability Team Manager), Steven Ford (Corporate Director for Climate and Ecological Sustainability), Lindsey Watson (Senior Democratic Services Officer) and John Miles (Democratic Services Officer Apprentice)

1. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 25 April 2022 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

2. Declarations of interest

There were no declarations of interest.

3. Chairman's Update

The Chairman gave an update on the Land Charges Service, as set out below, which had been provided by the Head of Legal Services:

“We received a report about the Land Charges Service, at our March meeting, explaining action taken by the service and improved search response times.

I have received a further and progress update, as follows:

- At the March meeting the February search response times were reported as an average of 26 working days.
- During March response times continued to improve reducing to an average of 16 working days.

- During April the response times remained at an average of 17 working days, due to the Bank Holidays and Easter holiday staff absence and a few days planned system down time for the final migration.
- The response time published on the Dorset Council website remains at 20 average working days and this continues to be updated fortnightly.
- The number of search requests received during March and April increased significantly from search numbers in January and February 2022. In February they were 721, by March they had increased to 1029 and in April we received 857. These search numbers remain higher than pre-pandemic and are at a similar level to the number of search requests made in the same months in 2020, when the stamp duty holiday was in place.
- With continued effort of the team and target setting the rate of improvement experienced to date is expected and planned to continue in the coming months.”

4. **Public Participation**

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

5. **Questions from Members**

There were no questions from councillors.

6. **Plans for Summer Operations in Dorset**

The committee received and considered a report of the Head of Community and Public Protection, which set out the plans for Summer 2022 operations in Dorset, being put in place to assist the Council and its partners to manage the implications of expected high visitor numbers. The Head of Community and Public Protection provided an overview of the key issues in the report and made reference to feedback from a survey of partners that had been undertaken.

The Chairman welcomed Jane Biscombe, Town Clerk for Weymouth Town Council, who provided her views of the experiences in Weymouth during Summer 2021. Councillors thanked the Town Clerk for attending and providing information.

The committee considered the issues arising from the report and discussion was held in the following areas:

- Learning points from the experiences from Summer 2021 and the recent May bank holiday weekend, including the need to take a broader approach and taking into account activities in both coastal and rural areas, providing information and key contact points to town and parish councils including linking through the Dorset Association for Parish and

Town Councils (DAPTC), focusing resources in priority areas and effective communication processes

- Recognition of the positive benefits to the Council and its partners, working together to manage resources, to deal with issues. Work was also being undertaken with Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Council (BCP)
- The implications of cost of living issues would need to be monitored at regular Operations Group meetings
- Planning issues around camping provision were considered and particular reference made to the Chesil beach area
- Consideration of ways to achieve a balance between the focus on coastal and rural areas/market towns and promotion of all that Dorset had to offer and the competing demands linked to tourism
- Funding associated with Summer demand services was primarily focused on Weymouth and other towns although some resources could be moved as required in response to the associated risk assessment
- Highways issues in respect of the Dorset Steam Fair and Weymouth Park and Ride were considered
- Further work by officers and partners to build on lessons learnt would be undertaken following Summer 2022 and a blueprint for future operations established
- Funding issues should be considered by the committee during the forthcoming year's budget process
- The situation with resilience planning by town and parish councils was raised.

The following action points were requested in respect of the report:

- Investigation of potential planning issues associated with securing permission for campsites
- To check the provisions concerning licensing on short term camping – the additional provisions made during the Covid19 pandemic and the ongoing situation
- Further information requested with regard to current works in the Ringwood area (bridge replacement) and the coordination of traffic management with National Highways and BCP (or other neighbouring highways authorities) in such situations
- To check the arrangements in respect of traffic management relating to the Dorset Steam Fair and specifically, provision made for other traffic to pass slow moving steam vehicles on the highway
- Weymouth Park and Ride – did this require a dedicated bus service or could the existing service bus provision meet the need?
- A list of retailers within the council area that had banned the sale of disposable barbeques to be made available to councillors
- To check the situation with regard to resilience planning by town and parish councils including liaison through the DAPTC
- To ensure that there are out of hours contacts available to all town clerks
- A list of major events in the Dorset Council area with risk rating to be reviewed and made available to all councillors.

The following further activities to be undertaken by the Place and Resources Scrutiny Committee:

- Funding issues for summer operations work – committee to consider as part of next year’s budget setting process
- Further report to be considered by the committee to review Summer 2022 operations and learning points – suggested for January 2023
- The committee to scope a wider review of the Council’s support to tourism.

It was proposed by M Roberts seconded by J Andrews that the recommendations as set out below together with the action points set out above be agreed.

Decision

That the Place & Resources Scrutiny Committee:

- (i) note the progress made on actions contained in the Improvement Action Plan which was produced as a result of experience of summer 2021.
- (ii) has reviewed the proposals for managing high visitor numbers to Dorset during summer 2022.
- (iii) support the proposals as outlined.
- (iv) That the requested actions set out above and further activities identified to be undertaken by the committee as set out above, be supported.

7. Post implementation review for Alternative Service Delivery of Tourist Information Centres in Dorchester, Sherborne and Wareham

The committee considered a report of the Head of Customer, Libraries and Archives, which provided an update and summary of the alternative service provision following the closure of Dorchester, Sherborne and Wareham tourist information centres in 2021.

The Chairman welcomed Steve Shield, Town Clerk of Sherborne Town Council, who provided information on the town council’s tourism activities. Councillors thanked the Town Clerk for attending and were impressed by the activities being undertaken.

Councillors considered the issues arising from the report and points were noted in the following areas:

- The support that Dorset Council was able to provide to town councils with their tourism activities. This could be considered as part of a wider

review of the implementation of the council's tourism and economic development strategies

- A review was being undertaken of how information and advice could be provided within libraries and this included tourism information
- Further feedback and data could be sought from Dorchester, Sherborne and Wareham as the season progressed
- A further review of tourism could look at how the council collaborated across Dorset, including Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole and link in with the Dorset Tourism Association, Visit Dorset Team, links to regional and national bodies and Central Government support available.

The following action points were requested in respect of the report:

- The committee requested an update on the tourism activities in Wareham at an appropriate time.

8. Dorset Council Climate and Ecological Emergency Strategy - progress report Spring 2022

The committee received a report to provide a review of progress made in delivering the Dorset Council Climate and Ecological Emergency Strategy and Action Plan. The committee welcomed Steven Ford, newly appointed Corporate Director Climate and Ecological.

Councillors considered the issues arising from the report and during discussion the following points were noted:

- How the Council measured performance against the action plan and the development of key performance indicators and reporting against a RAG (Red Amber Green) rating so that performance on specific actions and the overall programme could be assessed
- Reference to County farms and the Dorset County Pension Committee and ensuring that the Council was a leader in the area for ways of working
- Resources available for work in the area was discussed and it was noted that climate change work was a Council priority and there was a direct team who worked with teams across the whole council. There was flexibility to be able to bring in external expertise if required.

In accordance with the Constitution, at this point in the meeting it was proposed by J Andrews seconded by P Brown that the meeting continue beyond 3 hours. This was supported by the committee.

At 1.00pm, the Chairman announced that the committee would adjourn for 5 minutes.

The committee reconvened at 1.07pm.

Discussion continued with points raised as follows:

- Issues around communications and engagement with partners and communities were considered
- The use of alternative technologies / sustainable energies including tidal technologies and hydrogen were being looked into, working with partners
- The links to grid capacity issues were highlighted and information provided on discussions that had taken place on these issues
- The internal governance for the strategy was being strengthened
- A request was made for further information on comparison work with other local authorities, to be provided in future reports
- Vehicle provision in the council was being considered and the potential future use of electric and/or hydrogen. The risks in this area were noted
- Links to the Local Plan were raised and discussed.

The following action points were requested in respect of the report:

- Ensuring there was performance monitoring of measures linked to the Climate and Ecological Emergency Strategy – further information to be included on progress with actions in order to assess overall progress. A RAG rating was also requested as part of this
- Additional information to be provided in future reports as provided to councillors at a recent Planning webinar
- Comparative information from other councils to be included in future reports
- Further investigation of the use of wave and tidal power
- A report relating to sustainable energy supply in Dorset and grid capacity to be made available to councillors.

9. **Place and Resources Scrutiny Committee Forward Plan**

Councillors reviewed the committee's forward plan and noted items to be considered at forthcoming meetings.

10. **Cabinet Forward Plan and Decisions**

The committee noted the Cabinet Forward Plan, which the committee could use in order to identify potential areas for post decision review.

11. **Urgent items**

There were no urgent items.

12. **Exempt Business**

There was no exempt business.

Duration of meeting: 10.00 am - 1.58 pm

Chairman

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