

PLACE AND RESOURCES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON THURSDAY 10 NOVEMBER 2022

Present: Cllrs Shane Bartlett (Chairman), Andy Canning (Vice-Chairman), Jon Andrews, Barry Goringe, David Shortell and David Tooke

Apologies: Cllrs Mark Roberts

Also present: Cllr Tony Alford, Cllr Ray Bryan, Cllr Graham Carr-Jones, Cllr Brian Heatley, Cllr Andrew Parry and Cllr Jane Somper

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 and Monitoring Officer), Grace Evans (Head of Legal Services and Deputy Monitoring Officer), Dawn Adams (Service Manager for Commercial and Procurement), Peter Hopkins (Corporate Director - Assets and Property), Antony Littlechild (Sustainability Team Manager), Steven Ford (Corporate Director for Climate and Ecological Sustainability), David Bonner (Service Manager for Business Intelligence and Performance), Wendy Carmichael (Corporate Sustainability Officer), John Miles (Democratic Services Officer Apprentice) and George Dare (Senior Democratic Services Officer)

36. Apologies

An apology for absence was received from Cllr Mark Roberts.

37. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 17 October 2022 were confirmed and signed.

38. Declarations of interest

There were no declarations of interest.

39. Chairman's Update

The Chairman asked the Head of Legal Services to provide an update on land charges. The update is attached to these minutes.

The Head of Legal Services responded to questions from committee members and explained how the search times will be monitored and maintained.

Several members thanked the Land Charges Team.

The Portfolio Holder for Highways, Travel, and the Environment updated the committee on car parking. Committee members expressed concern around car parking machines and the loss of revenue from broken machines. A member felt the car parking charges were not competitive and they were too high.

The Chairman would raise the issues with the Chairman of the Audit and Governance Committee.

40. **Public Participation**

There was no public participation.

41. **Questions from Members**

There were no questions from members.

42. **Property Strategy and Asset Management Plan Update**

The Corporate Director for Property and Assets introduced the item and gave a presentation which is attached to these minutes. The purpose and the strategic priorities were outlined. The asset review was on track to be completed by 2024.

The committee asked questions and made comments on the update. The following key points were raised:

- There was sufficient officer resource to meet the date of the asset review.
- The council needs to be confident on the assets it owns because of the money it costs.
- There were assets with limited information due to the information transferred during local government reorganisation.
- The SWAP audit highlighted issues which have been addressed through the property and asset governance arrangements.
- There should be more consultation with local members about assets.
- Members have an opportunity for a 'ward walk' with a senior officer from the place directorate.
- Executive Directors needed to drive development and keep pressure on services to enable the asset review to be delivered on time.

- The asset management plan should have a 'RAG' system to help scrutiny monitor the plan in the future.
- A member felt the officer to desk ratio could create problems in the future.
- The council was not currently seeing a pressure on workspaces but there was a need for more collaboration space. Workspace need was reviewed on a team-by-team basis.
- Employees working from home needed a good level of broadband connectivity.

The committee agreed to create a task and finish group on agile working. It would add value to the organisation through members' own experience of agile working in their role as a councillor and reviewing how other organisations are working.

The Committee noted the intention to develop a new Strategic Asset Management Plan.

43. **Commercialisation Transformation Programme**

The Executive Director for Corporate Development introduced the report and outlined the four themes of the programme. A large number in the budget was for third-party spend. The council aimed to become more commercially minded and there was contract management training course and information available.

A non-committee member felt that there was a wealth of talent among members who had run successful businesses and members should be involved. There was a need for more commercial flexibility in local government.

The committee asked questions and made comments on the commercialisation transformation programme. Officers responded to questions. The following points were raised:

- The council was legally not allowed to make a profit on trade waste.
- Local authorities can create trading companies which are able to make profits.
- Dorset Council was part of a group of councils that look at opportunities for trading, however there were restrictions on trading in other local authority areas.
- The Commercial Board was an officer panel that looked at the implications and pressures of operational decisions. It was not a form of scrutiny.
- Some contract management training was specialist as well as delivered by networks.
- A webinar on contract management training and being commercially minded would be beneficial for members.

- Financial pressures on the council were created by inflation, the pay award, and an increased number of people discharged from hospital into care.
- Although senior officers were on the Commercial Board, they were there because of their commercial expertise.
- There was a further need to understand scrutiny's role in the Commercial Board.
- There was a market element in adult care bed provision, as beds could be bloc purchased or sold to private buyers.

Following the discussion, the committee requested:

1. An all-member webinar on contract management and being commercially minded.
2. That officers review/explore and produce a report on local authority trading companies for SEND and school transport provision.
3. That officers review the impacts of inflation and covid on transformation projects and budgetary requirement. Then provide feedback to the committee.

The committee noted the progress made and proposed future developments under the programme.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 12.48pm and reconvened at 13.00pm.

Upon reconvening, it was agreed to continue the meeting beyond 3 hours.

44. Dorset Council Climate and Ecological Emergency Strategy - Progress report Autumn 2022

The Sustainability Team Manager introduced the progress report and gave a presentation which is attached to these minutes. Key areas of progress included the public sector decarbonisation scheme, developing climate and ecological branding, webpage development, communications support, and partner engagement. The next steps included a refresh of the climate and ecological strategy and action plan.

The Portfolio Holder for Highways, Travel, and Environment felt that this was some of the best climate and ecological work done by councils and it was something to be proud of.

The committee reviewed the progress report and asked questions of the officers and portfolio holder. During the discussion, the following points were raised:

- There was a need to start using measures that had better value for money.
- The refreshed strategy would be used to develop the action plan further.

- There was some data being produced for every local authority area, however there were some elements of data that the council needed to improve at collecting.
- A member asked for the video shown during the presentation to be put on social media and circulated to parish councils.
- Local members were essential for raising climate and ecological opportunities in their wards.
- Wind power was a reliable source of energy.
- There would be a future piece of work on tree planting. There was a need to see what level of priority it would be.
- Grants from funding outside the council were being used for tree planting.
- If the right kind of trees are not planted, then they would not be as effective.

The Chairman asked to receive further information on how the failure to receive grant applications and the loss of experienced officers would impact on achieving the carbon neutral target.

The Chairman asked for the review on tree planting opportunities to be progressed earlier than planned.

45. **Performance Scrutiny**

The committee considered the performance dashboard and highlighted some areas of concern. These included:

- Staff turnover and the reasons for this.
- Quarterly results for RIDDOR reportable accidents.
- Staff sick leave, although this was showing a green direction of travel.
- The number of overdue subject access requests.

A statement would be brought to the committee on the number of overdue subject access requests. The Executive Director of Place would bring a report to the committee on staff sick leave, the causes of it, and what is being done.

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

Members were aware of the forward plan and have informal meetings to discuss it. There were some items raised to add to the forward plan during this committee. There was a need to prioritise items on the plan.

47. **Cabinet Forward Plan**

The Committee reviewed Cabinet's forward plan and identified potential items to review.

The committee would receive a statement on the 20mph policy 6 months after it has been implemented.

The Fees and Charges Policy was identified as a potential item to review.

A member raised the item Updated Children in Care Strategy and Plan which included a proposal to increase fees for foster carers. This would be raised with the People & Health Scrutiny Committee.

48. Urgent items

There were no urgent items.

49. Exempt Business

There was no exempt business.

Duration of meeting: 10.00 am - 2.40 pm

Chairman

.....