

PLACE AND RESOURCES OVERVIEW COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON THURSDAY 24 NOVEMBER 2022

Present: Cllrs Carole Jones (Chairman), Tony Alford, Toni Coombs, Sherry Jespersen, Val Potheary, Maria Roe, Andrew Starr and Roland Tarr

Apologies: Cllrs Les Fry

Also present: Cllr Cherry Brooks and Cllr Andrew Parry

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

Aidan Dunn (Executive Director - Corporate Development S151), Dawn Adams (Service Manager for Commercial and Procurement) and Lindsey Watson (Senior Democratic Services Officer)

32. Minutes

A question was raised with regard to the inclusion of information in the minutes relating to the discussion of an exempt item. Clarification would be sought and provided to all councillors.

The minutes of the meeting held on 6 October 2022 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

33. Declarations of interest

There were no declarations of interest.

34. Chairman's Update

There were no updates from the Chairman for the meeting.

35. Public Participation

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

36. Questions from Members

There were no questions from councillors.

37. Fees and Charges Policy

The committee received and considered a report and presentation of the Service Manager Commercial and Procurement with regard to the development of a new Fees and Charges Policy to provide a consistent

approach in setting, monitoring, and reviewing fees and charges, and applied to fees and charges for discretionary services and trading activities across the Council.

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

- The requirement to undertake regular price reviews was noted and the assumption that fees and charges would be increased each year based on a reasonable level of inflation. Members considered the definition of 'reasonable' and it was suggested that the wording should be amended to state that increases to fees and charges were made following reasoned and careful consideration
- There was discretion to increase charges above inflation in some service areas and to undercharge in others and this was clearly set out in the policy
- The role for portfolio holders should be clearly stated throughout the policy
- The policy to include reference to fees and charges reflecting officer skills and the provision of high value services
- The issue of fees and charges being used to subsidise other areas and groups of people was considered
- In respect of fees and charges for discretionary services, there needed to be awareness of the range of items that the council charged for in different ways. This should be reflected in the wording of the policy
- Issues around the Equality Impact Assessment were considered
- The schedule of rates allowed for comparison with other councils
- Opportunities for the council to be more competitive in some areas were considered and it was noted that the policy provided the platform to further consider these issues
- Thoughtful communication with town and parish councils around the policy was required
- Each price area was considered on a case-by-case basis and took into account local circumstances
- Support was expressed for a review of the policy by the Place and Resources Scrutiny Committee, after one year of operation, to include a review of the application of subsidies.

Recommendation

That the proposed Fees and Charges Policy be considered and approved by Cabinet (date 23rd January 2023), with the comments of the Place and Resources Overview Committee, as set out above.

38. Place and Resources Overview Committee Forward Plan

Councillors noted the committee's forward plan and items scheduled for the next meeting. In addition, councillors noted the Cabinet Forward Plan.

Items for potential review by the committee, were raised as follows:

- New Strategic Asset Management Plan
- Dorset Council Plan Priorities update: Housing for Local People – a report was to be considered by Cabinet on 25 April 2023 and a question raised as to whether there was a role for the committee in respect of this
- Dorset Council Plan Priorities: One Customer Account and Digital Innovation – a report was to be considered by Cabinet on 28 February 2023 and a question raised as to whether there was a role for the committee in respect of this
- Clarification would be sort in respect of the timing and reporting route for the ‘New Household Recycling Centre for the Eastern Area of Dorset’ item. It was noted that a local councillor briefing was to be held.

39. Urgent items

There were no urgent items.

40. Exempt Business

There was no exempt business.

Duration of meeting: 10.00 - 11.08 am

Chairman

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