

DORSET COUNCIL

MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY 14 FEBRUARY 2023

Present: Cllrs Rod Adkins, Tony Alford, Jon Andrews, Mike Barron, Pete Barrow, Shane Bartlett, Pauline Batstone, Belinda Bawden, Laura Beddow, Derek Beer, Richard Biggs, Dave Bolwell, Alex Brenton, Cherry Brooks, Piers Brown, Ray Bryan, Andy Canning, Graham Carr-Jones, Simon Christopher, Kelvin Clayton, Robin Cook, Tim Cook, Toni Coombs, Jean Dunseith, Mike Dyer, Beryl Ezzard, Tony Ferrari, Spencer Flower, Simon Gibson, Barry Goringe, Paul Harrison, Jill Haynes, Brian Heatley, Ryan Holloway, Rob Hughes, Nick Ireland, Sherry Jespersen, Carole Jones, Stella Jones, Andrew Kerby, Paul Kimber, Rebecca Knox, Nocturin Lacey-Clarke, Howard Legg, Robin Legg, Cathy Lugg, David Morgan, Louie O'Leary, Jon Orrell, Emma Parker, Mike Parkes, Andrew Parry, Mary Penfold, Val Pothecary (Chairman), Byron Quayle, Molly Rennie, Belinda Ridout, Mark Roberts, Maria Roe, David Shortell, Jane Somper, Andrew Starr, Gary Suttle, Clare Sutton, Roland Tarr, David Taylor, Gill Taylor, David Walsh, Bill Trite, Peter Wharf, Kate Wheller, Sarah Williams and John Worth

Apologies: Cllrs Susan Cocking, Janet Dover, Les Fry, David Gray, Matthew Hall, Ryan Hope, Bill Pipe and David Tooke

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

Susan Dallison (Democratic Services Team Leader), Jonathan Mair (Director of Legal and Democratic and Monitoring Officer), Aidan Dunn (Executive Director - Corporate Development S151), Matt Prosser (Chief Executive), Hayley Caves (Member Development and Support Officer), Kate Critchel (Senior Democratic Services Officer), Lindsey Watson (Senior Democratic Services Officer), Jennifer Lowis (Head of Strategic Communications and Engagement), Jacqui Andrews (Service Manager for Democratic and Electoral Services), Sean Cremer (Corporate Director for Finance and Commercial), George Dare (Senior Democratic Services Officer), Kathryn Dillon, Katie Hale (Head of Revenues and Benefits), Chris Matthews (Interim Head of HR), Kirstie Snow (Business Partner - External Affairs) and Elaine Tibble (Senior Democratic Services Officer)

46. **Apologies**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Susan Cocking, Janet Dover, Les Fry, David Gray, Matt Hall, Ryan Hope, Bill Pipe and David Tooke.

47. **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 20 October 2022 were confirmed and signed.

48. **Declarations of Interest**

No declarations of interest were made at the meeting.

49. Chairman's Announcements

There were no Chairman's announcements to report.

50. Public Participation - Questions and Statements

Public questions, statements and the responses from the Leader of the Council and appropriate Portfolio Holder are set out in Appendix 1 attached to these minutes.

51. Public participation - petitions and deputations

There were no petitions or deputations.

52. Announcements and Reports from the Leader of Council and Cabinet Members

The Leader of the Council advised councillors that his report would be published following the meeting and the report included the following points:

- Support for cost of living – The Council had an opportunity to reflect upon its responsibilities as to how it can assist those residents most in need and £2M was being allocated from unearmarked reserves.
- The Facebook Live session on the Budget had been viewed 1800 times and provided a unique opportunity for members of the public to engage with the council – The session had been well received and more sessions would take place, covering differing themes.
- Cllr Ray Bryan had participated in a Parliamentary Transport Select Committee to highlight difficulties faced by rural authorities, including Dorset, in relation to transport.
- Levelling Up Bid – The Council had been successful in obtaining £19.4M of funding for investment in Weymouth.
- The outcome of the LGA Peer Review would be reported to Cabinet in February – Feedback had been largely positive.

Cllr Walsh added that he was encouraged by the results of lobbying and that the Government was indeed listening and taking notice of Dorset Council, having recently referred to the work it was undertaking. He added that this was something to be proud of and that the Council must continue its lobbying to ensure that it received the recognition it reserved.

In response to a question relating to the announcement for £2M to be allocated to fund the cost of living support, Cllr Beddow explained that the Council would be working with charities and other organisations to ensure that the funding went to those most in need and it was hoped that it would leave behind a legacy that would benefit people in the years to come.

53. Questions from Councillors

There were five questions received from councillors. A copy of the questions and the responses are attached as Appendix 2 to these minutes.

54. Budget Strategy and Medium-Term Financial Plan

The Finance, Commercial & Capital Strategy Portfolio Holder presented the Budget strategy and medium-term financial plan (MTFP). A copy of his speech is attached as an appendix to these minutes.

The Chairman invited the Group Leaders to present their replies to the budget proposals.

Cllrs Ireland, Sutton and Hughes presented their budget speeches which are attached as appendices to these minutes.

Cllr Ireland proposed an amendment to the budget, which was seconded by Cllr Jill Taylor.

Members debated the amendment as proposed, comments included:

- The proposal was not necessary as a separate piece of work was being undertaken to provide a fund of £2M, which would be considered by Cabinet at its meeting later in February.
- Surprise was expressed that no prior notification of the proposal to offer a £2M fund had been received. It would also be favourable to have allow for both options – i.e. the £2M fund and the sum requested in the amendment.
- There was no information in relation to the item on the Cabinet Forward Plan, with the exception of a report title.

In accordance with procedure rule 19.6 a recorded vote was taken.

Those who voted in favour of the amendment:- 30

Jon Andrews, Peter Barrow, Shane Bartlett, Belinda Bawden, Derek Beer, Richard Biggs, David Bolwell, Alexandra Brenton, Andy Canning, Kelvin Clayton, Tim Cook, Beryl Ezzard, Brian Heatley, Ryan Holloway, Nick Ireland, Stella Jones, Paul Kimber, Robin Legg, Howard Legg, David Morgan, Jon Orrell, Molly Rennie, Maria Roe, Andrew Starr, Gary Suttle, Clare Sutton, Roland Tarr, David Taylor, Gill Taylor, Sarah Williams

Those who voted against the amendment:- 43

Rod Adkins, Anthony Alford, Michael Barron, Pauline Batstone, Cherry Brooks, Piers Brown, Ray Bryan, Graham Carr-Jones, Simon Christopher, Robin Cook, Toni Coombs, Jean Dunseith, Mike Dyer, Tony Ferrari, Spencer Flower, Simon Gibson, Barry Goringe, Paul Harrison, Jill Haynes, Robert Hughes, Sherry Jespersen, Carole Jones, Andrew Kerby, Rebecca Knox, Nocturin Lacey-Clarke, Cathy Lugg, Laura Miller, Louis O'Leary, Emma Parker, Mike Parkes, Andrew Parry, Mary Penfold, Valerie Potheary, Byron Quayle, Belinda Ridout, Mark

Roberts, David Shortell, Jane Somper, William Trite, David Walsh, Peter Wharf, Kate Wheller, John Worth

Those who abstained:- 0

Following a recorded vote, 30 for, 43 against and 0 abstentions the amendment was LOST.

Following the amendment being lost, Members continued to debate the budget as originally proposed.

The Finance, Commercial & Capital Strategy Portfolio Holder was confident that the budget was balanced but still encouraged prudence when committing reserves.

Members were appreciative of the officer work that had gone into producing the budget and the opportunity of attending budget cafes, cross party working and input from the Scrutiny Committees.

Cllr Flower presented his speech as seconder of the budget proposal, attached as an appendix to the minutes.

Proposed by Cllr Suttle, seconded by Cllr Flower.

In accordance with procedure rule 19.6 a recorded vote was taken.

Those who voted in favour of the recommendations:- 59

Rod Adkins, Anthony Alford, Jon Andrews, Michael Barron, Shane Bartlett, Belinda Bawden, Pauline Batstone, Derek Beer, David Bolwell, Cherry Brooks, Piers Brown, Ray Bryan, Graham Carr-Jones, Simon Christopher, Kelvin Clayton, Tim Cook, Robin Cook, Toni Coombs, Jean Dunseith, Mike Dyer, Tony Ferrari, Spencer Flower, Simon Gibson, Barry Goringe, Paul Harrison, Jill Haynes, Brian Heatley, Ryan Holloway, Robert Hughes, Sherry Jespersen, Carole Jones, Andrew Kerby, Rebecca Knox, Nocturin Lacey-Clarke, Cathy Lugg, Laura Miller, David Morgan, Louis O'Leary, Jon Orrell, Emma Parker, Mike Parkes, Andrew Parry, Mary Penfold, Valerie Potheary, Byron Quayle, Belinda Ridout, Mark Roberts, David Shortell, Jane Somper, Andrew Starr, Gary Suttle, Clare Sutton, Roland Tarr, David Taylor, William Trite, David Walsh, Peter Wharf, Kate Wheller, John Worth

Those who voted against the recommendations:- 11

Peter Barrow, Richard Biggs, Andy Canning, Beryl Ezzard, Nick Ireland, Stella Jones, Paul Kimber, Robin Legg, Howard Legg, Molly Rennie, Maria Roe

Those who abstained:- 2

Alexandra Brenton, Sarah Williams

Following a recorded vote, 59 for, 11 against and 2 abstentions the recommendations were approved.

DECISION:

1. the revenue budget summarised in Appendix 1 was agreed;
2. the increase in general council tax of 1.9987% and 1.9987% in the social care precept, providing a band D council tax figure for Dorset Council of £1,905.93; an overall increase of 3.9974% was agreed;
3. the council tax resolution in Appendix 2 was agreed;
4. the council tax base agreed by the S151 Officer earlier in this budget setting process was noted;
5. no change to the current scheme of Local Council Tax Support as set out in this report was agreed;
6. the capital strategy set out in Appendix 3 and note the review in progress around the current capital programme and emerging bids was agreed;
7. the treasury management strategy set out in Appendix 4 was agreed;
8. the assumptions used to develop the budget strategy and Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP), as set out throughout this report and summarised in Appendix 5 was agreed;
9. the recommended balances on earmarked reserves and on general funds, including the minimum level of the general fund, the application of a further £3.5m of reserves to support the safety valve agreement, and the repurposing of £3m of the Council's other reserves for spend-to-save investment in transformation was agreed;
10. the fees and charges policy set out in Appendix 6 was agreed;
11. the responses to the recommendations and comments made as part of the budget scrutiny process (Appendix 7) were agreed;
12. recommendations 1-6 from the 8 December 2022 Harbours Advisory Committee meeting regarding fees and charges, budgets and asset management plans were agreed;
13. the flexible use of £5.3m of capital receipts for the purposes of transforming the Council's asset portfolio over the next three to five years was agreed.

Reason for the Decision

The Council was required to set a balanced revenue budget, and to approve a level of council tax as an integral part of this. A balanced budget is essentially one where all expenditure is funded by income without unsustainable use of one-off or short-term sources of finance.

The Council was also required to approve a capital strategy, a capital programme and budget, and a treasury management strategy, each of which were included with the report.

55. **Community Governance Review - Parishes of the Vale of Allen Group, the Winterborne Farringdon Group, Chickerell and Weymouth - Draft Recommendations**

The Leader of Council presented the report of the Community Governance Review, which set out the draft recommendations to be put forward for public consultation.

Cllr P Wharf seconded the recommendation.

Some Members expressed that they were not able to support sending the draft recommendations as set out in the report for consultation and that the right questions were not being asked of the public.

The Leader explained that there was an opportunity for the community to get involved in shaping the electoral boundaries and that all feedback would be taken on board.

The Deputy Leader confirmed the arrangements that had been in place for the process so far. He highlighted that there was no “perfect solution” and that a degree of compromise would be needed. He further encouraged Members to work with their communities to work up alternative arrangements that satisfied the requirements of the boundary commission, the community and numbers during the consultation stage.

Decision:

1. That the proposals set out in this Appendix be adopted by the Council as Draft Recommendations for the purposes of the Community Governance Review.
2. That the Draft Recommendations be published for consultation purposes for a period of 8 weeks from 20 February 2023 to 17 April 2023.
3. That the results of the consultation, together with proposed Final Recommendations, be reported to Full Council on 11 May 2023.

Reason for Decision:

To ensure that community governance arrangements within the areas specified were reflective of the identities and interests of the community in that area and achieve electoral equality.

56. Calendar of Meetings 2023-2024

In presenting the calendar of meetings for 2023/2024, Cllr S Flower, Leader of the Council proposed its formal adoption.

Cllr L O’Leary seconded the recommendation.

Comments were made in relation to the timings of meetings and a request was made of the Leader to consider that meetings be held in the evenings in the future, as currently it did not allow all members of the public to participate and also

precluded some elected members and also put some who wished to stand as elected members off.

A counter-argument was put forward that reminded members that there were often other commitments in the evening, such as town and parish meetings which they were expected to attend. Additionally, it was highlighted that employers were required to allow employees reasonable time off to conduct public duties.

The Leader suggested that it might be appropriate to discuss establishing a Task and Finish group with the Chairman of the Audit and Governance Committee outside of the meeting.

Decision:

1. That the calendar of meetings for the period May 2023 to May 2024 be approved.

2. That authority be delegated to the Director – Legal and Democratic Services to make any necessary changes, in consultation with relevant Chairmen and Vice-Chairmen, to ensure effective political management.

Reason for Decision:

To ensure effective political management, comply with the Dorset Council Procedure Rules and to put into place appropriate arrangements for council committee meetings.

57. Pay Policy Statement 2023-2024

The Corporate Development and Transformation Portfolio Holder presented the Pay Policy Statement 2023/24.

Proposed by Cllr Haynes, seconded by Cllr Heatley

In the absence of comments or questions, the Chairman went straight to the vote.

Decision:

(i) That the provisions of the Localism Act and content of the Pay Policy Statement for the 2023/24 financial year were noted.

(ii) That the Pay Policy Statement for 2023/24 was approved.

(iii) That the changes to the pay policy for Chief Officers determined by the Cross-Party Working Group in 2022.

Reason for Decision:

The Full Council was responsible for approval of the annual pay policy statement.

58. Urgent items

There were no urgent items

59. **Exempt Business**

There was no urgent business.

Duration of meeting: 6.30 - 9.30 pm

Chairman

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