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CABINET

MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY 11 JUNE 2024

Present: Cllrs Nick Ireland (Chair), Richard Biggs (Vice-Chair), Jon Andrews, Simon Clifford, Ryan Holloway, Ryan Hope, Steve Robinson, Clare Sutton and Gill Taylor

Apologies: Cllrs Shane Bartlett

Also present: Cllr Simon Christopher, Cllr Peter Dickenson, Cllr Beryl Ezzard, Cllr Les Fry, Cllr Carole Jones, Cllr Paul Kimber, Cllr Craig Monks, Cllr David Northam, Cllr Louie O'Leary, Cllr Andrew Parry, Cllr Val Pothecary, Cllr Gary Suttle and Cllr David Taylor

Also present remotely: Cllr Laura Beddow, Cllr Ray Bryan, Cllr Jill Haynes, Cllr Nocturin Lacey-Clarke, Cllr Emma Parker, Cllr Jane Somper, Cllr David Tooke and Cllr Kate Wheller

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

Andrew Billany (Corporate Director for Housing), Laura Cornette (Business Partner - Communities and Partnerships), Jan Britton (Executive Lead for the Place Directorate), Sean Cremer (Corporate Director for Finance and Commercial), Kate Critchel (Senior Democratic Services Officer), Amanda Davis (Corporate Director for Education and Learning), Alice Deacon (Corporate Director for Commissioning and Partnerships), Paul Dempsey (Corporate Director - Care & Protection), Julia Ingram (Corporate Director for Adult Social Care Operations), Theresa Leavy (Executive Director of People - Children), Jennifer Lowis (Head of Strategic Communications and Engagement), Jonathan Price (Executive Director of People - Adults and Housing), Matt Prosser (Chief Executive), Lisa Reid (Corporate Director for Quality Assurance & Safeguarding Families), Terry Sneller (Strategic Planning Manager), Mark Tyson (Corporate Director for Adult Commissioning & Improvement) and Lindsey Watson (Senior Democratic Services Officer)

1. **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 12 March 2024 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

2. **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest to report.

3. **Public Participation**

There was one question from the public. A copy of the question and the detailed response is set out in Appendix 1 to these minutes.

4. **Questions from Councillors**

There was one question from Councillor Kimber; this along with the response is set out in Appendix 2 to these minutes.

5. **Forward Plan**

The Cabinet forward plan for July 2024 was received and noted.

6. **Cost of Living Support**

The Cabinet member for Customer, Culture, and Community Engagement set out a report asking Cabinet to note the programme of activities developed to complement and enhance the support provided by central government and Dorset Council in the financial year 2023-24. The paper also proposed to earmark a further £2m from reserves for a targeted programme of work to support the most vulnerable residents in the Dorset area for the remainder of this financial year.

Cabinet was advised that the detail of targeted programme of work would be agreed by the Cabinet member in consultation with the Executive Director Corporate Development (S151) following consideration of the programme by the Place and Resources Overview Committee. It was also proposed that any further financial support to the cost-of-living should be considered as part of the budget setting process.

The Business Partner for Communities and Partnerships confirmed that any future programme developed would be a mix of assisting with gaps in government provision and supporting our voluntary organisations. She also highlighted that the data set out in the report indicated that many of the organisations the council currently supported were struggling to keep up with demand.

Responding to questions, the Cabinet member understood the concerns expressed around delivery, community fridges and larders. However, details around food security, framework of the programme and how it should be delivered would be discussed at the meeting of the Place and Resources Overview Committee on 11 July 2024. The Leader of the Council confirmed that the £2m from reserves was a one-off payment with any future funding to be embedded as part of the annual budget setting process.

In response to questions around which overview committee this report should be referred to, the Monitoring Officer confirmed that Article 7 of the Constitution and the identification of a primary responsibility did not prevent either of the overview committees considering any matter that may cut across different theme areas (except for education functions). So, for reasons of expediency and as the matter was cross cutting, it was acceptable for this issue to be considered by Place and Resources Overview Committee. The Leader of the Council confirmed that he would ask the Chair of Place and Resources Overview Committee to invite

members of the People and Health Overview Committee to attend the meeting to participate in the discussion.

Following questions and discussion by Cabinet members, the Chief Executive confirmed that the most appropriate committee for Appendix 1 of the report to be reviewed would be People and Health Scrutiny Committee should that be requested.

It was proposed by Cllr R Hope and seconded by Cllr S Robinson

Decision

- (a) That the funded activity for 2023-24 and the outcomes achieved, be noted.
- (b) That Cabinet agree to earmark a further £2m from Council reserves to support the continuation of a targeted programme of work to support our most vulnerable residents and to complement and address any gaps in other national and local support programmes.
- (c) That authority be delegated to the Cabinet Member for Customer, Culture and Community Engagement, to agree the targeted programme of work in consultation with the Executive Director Corporate Development (S151) and having regard to any views and recommendations of the Place and Resources Overview Committee.
- (d) That financial support for the cost-of-living agenda be considered as part of the Council's annual budget setting process.

Reason for the decision

Extensive support had been provided to Dorset Council residents over the last 12-18 months as outlined in the Cabinet report of 28 February 2023 and section 2 of this report. A proactive, targeted, and flexible approach to supporting Dorset's communities with the cost-of-living challenge in both the short and medium term, based on evidence and data sets would enable Dorset Council to continue to identify gaps in local and national support initiatives and target support to our most vulnerable residents.

7. SEND (Special Educational Needs and Disabilities) Inspection Outcome and Plan

In presenting the report, the Cabinet member for Children's Services, Education & Skills advised that Dorset Council was the first unitary council in the region to get the best achievable outcome of "(1) *that children and families have typically positive experiences and outcomes*". The Cabinet member welcomed the findings which reflected the council's culture and values. She further recognised the efforts of the team. This was a partnership inspection involving the Care Quality Commission and focused on the lived experiences of children and families within the council's area.

The Cabinet member also highlighted the self-evaluation document, which found areas of improvement that had also been identified by the inspection process. She further advised that actions to deliver these were already underway and were added to the revised SEND Strategy that would be reviewed later in the year.

Cabinet members welcomed the report.

It was proposed by Cllr C Sutton seconded by Cllr G Taylor

Decision

- (a) That the findings of Ofsted and the Care Quality Committee be welcomed and noted.
- (b) That the action plan be approved for publication.

Reason for the recommendation

To welcome the sharing of the inspection findings, not least with our children, young people and families who were at the front and centre of our continuous improvement. The Council was required to publish an action plan following inspection to ensure appropriate accountability.

8. Children's Safeguarding Partnership Review

The Cabinet member for Children's Education and Skills presented the report on the review of the Pan-Dorset arrangements for the delivery of the Children's Safeguarding Partnership.

Considering the distinct operational approaches of the two local authorities within the Pan-Dorset structure, agreement had been reached that the two local councils should separate creating two new partnerships of Dorset Safeguarding Children's Partnership and a BCP Safeguarding Children's Partnership. The NHS and Dorset Police partners were supportive of this new approach.

It was proposed by Cllr C Sutton seconded by Cllr R Holloway

Decision

To meet the needs of two separate Local Authorities and enable the effectiveness of the partnership arrangement moving forward, the separation of the Pan-Dorset Safeguarding Children arrangements and the creation of a Dorset Safeguarding Children's Partnership and a BCP Safeguarding Children's Partnership, be agreed.

Reason for the decision

To address the significant disparity between the two local authorities within the existing partnership. Acknowledging that the two local authorities operate differently, and their approaches to safeguarding and working practices often

diverged. By transitioning to a Dorset Safeguarding Partnership and a separate BCP Safeguarding Partnership, both councils could adapt their structures and procedures seamlessly to align with the revised guidelines. This would enable them to fulfil their safeguarding responsibilities independently and effectively across the region.

9. **Quarter 4 Outturn report 2023/24**

The Cabinet member for Finance and Capital Strategy presented the information report on the Council's draft unaudited financial performance for the year ended 31 March 2024, and the financial position at that date. He took this opportunity to thank staff for their hard work and effort in managing the budget but acknowledged the high residual risk affecting all local councils in respect of the economic conditions. Pressures also continued to build in the Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP) and around the High Needs Block of the Dedicated Schools Grant.

Looking ahead to the medium-term, the budget was set with a future gap of £50m across the life of the MTFP and members acknowledged that there was a need to find £8.6m from transformation work.

The Cabinet member responded to questions regarding future council tax setting and any further decision to be made in relation to car parking charges; and in this respect, he advised that an announcement would be made in the coming days.

It was proposed by Cllr S Clifford seconded by Cllr R Biggs

Decision

- (a) That the draft revenue and capital outturn and the financial performance for the year ended 31 March 2024 be noted.
- (b) That the use of un-ringfenced reserves to support the 2023/24 final outturn in addition to increasing the general fund balance in line with financial strategy document, be approved.
- (c) That a transfer of £4.4m reserves to a ring-fenced reserve to support the Dedicated Schools Grant Safety Valve program and realignment of existing earmarked reserves as set out in section 11.6 of the report, be approved.

Reason for the decision

The report set out the outturn, the financial performance for the year and the financial position as of 31 March 2024 were important aspects of financial management as they marked the start of the next medium-term financial plan update and budget strategy development for 2025/26. An opportunity to consider areas where it wished to make strategic investments and/or to repurpose and prioritise its reserves to facilitate these aims.

10. **Bournemouth, Christchurch Poole Council Local Plan consultation response**

The Strategic Planning Manager advise Cabinet that the consultation period ran during the pre-election period. So, an officer response was prepared and sent to BCP by the close of the consultation date. The report before members sought Cabinet's endorsement of the response that had already been made.

BCP's Local Plan was at an advanced stage and neighbouring authorities were obliged to engage with each other during the production of a Local Plan under the Duty to Cooperate. The Strategic Planning Manager confirmed that officers from Dorset and BCP Councils had met regularly during the process.

In respect of the housing numbers, BCP Council's Local Plan proposed to meet a housing requirement of 1,600 homes over the plan period. This delivery rate was below the Local Housing Need figure calculated using the Standard Method, but this was because of the specific characteristics of population growth in the BCP area. Members were advised that if, during the examination, it was found that BCP was not meeting their requirements of housing, they may need to look at the figures again. Alternatively, they could come to Dorset Council, under the duty to cooperate and Dorset would need to decide whether it was appropriate to meet some or all this unmet need.

The response submitted to the consultation supported the use of a lower housing requirement for the BCP Local Plan, but it also raised concerns about the deliverability of the strategy for delivering housing. BCP would need to demonstrate that they had thoroughly examined all opportunities for meeting their housing need before Dorset Council would consider whether there were opportunities for any unmet need to be met within the Dorset area.

In response to questions and comments regarding housing, the Strategic Planning Manager advised that jointly with BCP Council, Dorset had produced evidence which looked at the demographics that underlie the housing numbers using the standard methodology. If during examination BCP was successful in convincing the government that the lower number was correct that could potentially be to Dorset Council's advantage.

The Strategic Planning Manager responded to several other questions around the Standard Method and the Duty to Cooperate with neighbouring councils, and as a result the Leader of the Council agreed that an all-member briefing should be arranged to address these detailed concerns.

It was proposed by Cllr N Ireland seconded by Cllr J Andrews

Decision

Cabinet endorsed the submitted officer responses made to the recent consultations as the official view of Dorset Council:

- (i) The BCP Council Local Plan consultation, as set out in appendix 1 of the report to Cabinet of 11 June 2024.

- (ii) The BCP Council Community Infrastructure Levy Charging Schedule consultation as set out in Appendix 3 of the report to Cabinet of 11 June 2024.

Reason for the decision

It was important that Dorset Council engaged with BCP Council to help shape their Local Plan and to ensure that any cross-boundary effects were identified and managed through joint working. This engagement alongside the continued engagement that had taken place during the production of the Local Plan, ensured that the Council's obligations under the Duty to Cooperate were fulfilled.

11. Urgent items

There were no urgent items considered at the meeting.

12. Exempt Business

There were exempt items to report.

Appendix 1 - Public Question and Response
Appendix 2 - Councillor Question and Response

Duration of meeting: 6.30 - 7.57 pm

Chairman

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Public Questions for Cabinet 11 June 2024

Question from David Redgewell

What provision is being made in Dorset bus services improvement plan which has to be submitted to Department for Transport by 12th June 2024 to improve bus and coach services across the county including replacement of the rural route bus service Network, the provision of Saturday and Sunday services, Especially on Key Bus corridor Such as CR4 Yeovil bus and coach station to Yeovil pen mill station Sherborne Town Sherborne Railway station ,Sturminster Newton and Blandford Forum, CR5 Yeovil bus and coach station to Yeovil pen mill station Sherborne Town Sherborne Railway station and Dorchester, CR6 Yeovil bus and coach station to crewrence Beaminster and Bridport bus and coach station/ Hospital, Blandford Forum to Shaftsbury and Gillingham Railway station corridor, the provision of Evening bus service and investment in county bus and coach stations and interchanges Bridport, Weymouth, Swanage, Dorchester, Blandford Forum, Wimborne minster Lyme Regis, Wareham Town centre and Railway station, bus and coach stop throughout Dorset including rear time information displays and at interchanges cctv,

And interchanges with the Department for Transport funded fully accessible scheme at Dorchester South station operated by Network Rail wessex and First group plc MTR Southwestern Railway company,

The provision of Electrification of the county bus and coach Network

Response from the Cabinet Member for Place Commissioned Services

The council is preparing its third Bus Service Improvement Plan. This refreshed plan will build on the progress that's been achieved over the last two years and sets out our longer-term aspirations to improve local services that are attractive to government funders. The plan includes a vision for improving our socially necessary 'core routes', enhancing these routes to form the spine of the bus network and working to develop interconnecting feeder routes using community transport or demand responsive services to improve accessibility for more of our rural population. We will work closely with our local bus operators within an Enhanced Partnership to deliver these improvements. This plan will be published and made publicly available on the council website in accordance with timescales agreed with the Department for Transport.

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Cabinet
11 June 2024
Questions for Councillors

Question from Cllr P Kimber

Question to Cabinet on Housing

- A recent report put 10,500 people on the waiting list in Dorset for housing from the CPRE.

Could we confirm the numbers of families needing Social Housing to rent, and Families in Bed and Breakfast.

- The need for affordable homes is paramount and a major concern for local families.

Soaring house prices, the cost-of-living crisis and wages have failed to assist many Dorset families.

Given the fact we are starting a new 5-year term, are we ready to meet the Challenge on housing and could you give us indicators how and where we plan to build to meet this challenge.

Response from the Cabinet Member for Public Health, Environment Health, Housing, Community Safety and Regulatory

We have seen the figure quoted in the CPRE report and would advise that this is the combined housing register data for both Dorset and BCP Councils. As at 6 June there are 5,962 households on the Dorset Council Housing Register. These are households who have an unmet housing need and have expressed a wish to move to social housing. It is important to note that social housing is often not the only housing option open to those who join the housing register, and we actively encourage all applicants to consider every suitable option available to them. The Housing team are making good progress in reducing the number of families in Bed and Breakfast emergency accommodation, which is intended only for short term emergency respite from homelessness. At 6 June, there were 21 families in Bed and Breakfast, with intensive work in place to find settled solutions and to deal with the initial circumstances which brought about the homelessness. Our overall numbers of people in bed and breakfast has reduced over the past year, against the national trend, and I am committed to build on this strong work to prevent homelessness as well as finding and providing homes for those who need them.

Registered Providers of Social Housing, or Housing Associations, manage almost 25,000 homes in our area and the Dorset Council teams work closely with them to support and enable many hundreds of new homes provided each year. However, as

a Council and Housing Authority, we recognise that the demand for housing that is affordable for our residents, both to rent and buy, far outstrips supply. We are working up our plans setting out how we intend to accelerate and deliver on the actions outlined in the Housing Strategy. This work is already exploring all feasible and cost-effective ways to increase access to housing and how Dorset Council will act, enable or influence gaps in housing supply. Whilst it is too early in the project to present recommendations, we are working to provide some initial options in the Autumn.