

## **Cabinet 10 September 2024**

### **Questions from Councillors**

#### **Questions from Cllr Mike Parks**

1. With the imminent sale of the former East Dorset District Council offices at Furzehill can it be confirmed that the money from the sale will be spent on capital projects within the East Dorset area, more specifically can a sizable proportion of this money allocated to facilitate the regeneration of Ferndown Town centre?
2. As the 2017 Ferndown regeneration plan was reviewed within the past 12 months please can we have confirmation that the reviewed elements identified under the previous administration will be implemented rather than going to the expense of a further regeneration plan – especially as the town council at the time were part of the plan. May we also have a commitment that the elected members of Ferndown North who have been excluded from recent discussions regarding the Regeneration are included fully in all discussions moving forward.

#### **Response from the Leader of the Council**

1. It's not normal for the income (capital receipts in officer lingo) from the sale of Dorset Council's assets (such as the redundant former council offices at Furzehill) to be earmarked specifically another project or a particular geographic area. Instead, it goes into the pot we use for the Council's capital programme to fund existing and future investment projects. With limited funds available, these projects are of course prioritised and reviewed frequently, and as an example the funding of a new and improved leisure provision for Dorset Council's residents will be considered when the external consultant reports back soon.
2. Following an invitation from Ferndown Town Council to meet with them, the Interim Executive Lead for Place and I recently had a very constructive meeting with councillors and officers of the town council. I understand the invitation wasn't extended to Dorset Council Ward members and that is a matter for them to take up with Ferndown TC; there is no sense in which Dorset Ward Councillors were improperly excluded from that meeting. A clear outcome from our conversation was that the Town Council would like to work with Dorset Council on new plans for the regeneration of the town centre and we understand that the Town Council are planning to consult Ferndown residents on their thoughts and priorities. The recent refresh of the plan does not appear to have sufficiently engaged enough people or the Town Council to provide the basis we need to move forward.

#### **Question from Cllr Craig Monks**

I wanted to follow up on my previous question to Council concerning water quality in Dorset. I welcomed your response of the Council's intention to invite water company bosses and other relevant stakeholders to the Place and Resources Scrutiny Committee. However, I have since learned that this committee has suggested that the matter be debated at Overview Committee, given that it would involve the creation of a new policy.

Could you please provide an update on the progress of this work including a date that this matter has been scheduled for discussion at a future Overview Committee meeting?

### **Response from the Leader of the Council**

Thank you for your question on this important matter.

Place and Resources Overview Committee will be agreeing their forward plan at their meeting on Thursday. This will include the timetable for this work, and I will ensure that you are appraised of the relevant dates.

### **Question from Cllr Louie O'Leary**

"Does this committee still intend to abolish itself as per their promises and actions of the last several years indicated?"

### **Response from the Leader of the Council**

I would like to thank Cllr O'Leary for the opportunity to both remind those councillors who remain from the first term of Dorset Council of, and illuminate those new to Dorset Council to, the current governance arrangements. I'm fairly sure the previous Cabinet never stated an intention to abolish themselves, so I assume the question is about why Dorset Council currently runs under an Executive model.

The order of parliament that established Dorset Council stipulated the leadership model it had to adopt i.e. a cabinet system.

Back on the 15<sup>th</sup> July 2021, a motion was passed at Dorset Council to setup in 2023 a cross-party working group of councillors to examine alternative models of governance.

This was duly constituted and met three times in 2023. The first two were on the 20<sup>th</sup> January and 13<sup>th</sup> March.

At Council on 12<sup>th</sup> October 2023, then then Leader asked for permission to engage in conversations with our neighbouring authorities to investigate a devolution deal and this was given.

At the third, and so far final, working group meeting on the 24<sup>th</sup> November 2023, the members were informed that any devolution deal would require as a governance model a cabinet system and therefore it was agreed to propose a recommendation to Full Council that a decision on the future of governance arrangements of Dorset Council be deferred until such time as a decision on a devolution deal had been made. This was duly passed at Council on the 14<sup>th</sup> December 2023.

Devolution conversations are continuing and until these are finally resolved, no further investigations into a change of governance model will take place.