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CABINET

MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY 17 DECEMBER 2024

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

Apologies: Cllr Ben Wilson

Also present: Cllr Belinda Bawden, Cllr Simon Christopher, Cllr Beryl Ezzard, Cllr Hannah Hobbs-Chell, Cllr Rob Hughes, Cllr Sherry Jespersen, Cllr Paul Kimber, Cllr Craig Monks, Cllr Andrew Parry and Cllr Jane Somper

Also present remotely: Cllr Val Pothecary, Cllr Mike Baker, Cllr Laura Beddow, Cllr Bridget Bolwell, Cllr Ray Bryan, Cllr Barry Goringe, Cllr Jill Haynes, Cllr Sally Holland, Cllr Ryan Holloway, Cllr Stella Jones, Cllr David Morgan, Cllr Steve Murcer, Cllr David Northam, Cllr Jack Jeanes and Cllr Kate Wheller

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

Matt Prosser (Chief Executive), Aidan Dunn (Executive Director - Corporate Development S151), Jan Britton (Executive Director for Places Services), Jonathan Price (Executive Director of People - Adults and Housing), Paul Dempsey (Executive Director of People - Children), Jonathan Mair (Director of Legal and Democratic and Monitoring Officer), Sunita Khattra-Hall (Corporate Director for Quality Assurance and Safeguarding Families), Matthew Penny (Service Manager - Flood & Coastal Erosion), Amanda Davis (Corporate Director for Education and Learning), Nick Webster (Head of Growth and Economic Regeneration), Susan Dallison (Democratic Services Team Leader), George Dare (Senior Democratic Services Officer), Mark Tyson (Corporate Director for Adult Commissioning & Improvement), Andrew Billany (Corporate Director for Housing), Julia Ingram (Corporate Director for Adult Social Care Operations), Kath Saunders (Head of Locality and Strategy (North)), Megan Cameron-Brown (Head of Quality Assurance and Partnerships) and Paul Derrien (Housing Enabling Team Leader)

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

Louise Ford (Strategic Health and Adult Social Care Integration Lead)

85. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 19 November 2024 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

86. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest to report.

87. **Public Participation**

There were no questions or statements from the public.

88. **Questions from Councillors**

There was one question from Cllr Lugg; the question along with the response by the Cabinet Member for Place Services is set out in Appendix 1 to these minutes.

89. **Forward Plan**

The draft Cabinet Forward Plan for January to April 2025 was received and noted.

90. **Coastal Transition Accelerator Programme Project Outline Business Case**

The Cabinet Member for Place Services introduced the report. The project included exploring how to adapt to the effects of climate change on the coast. Funding for the programme would be provided through a £3m grant from the Environment Agency.

Non-Cabinet members raised points around how volunteer expertise could be used, and the impacts of global warming on sewage treatment plants.

Proposed by Cllr J Andrews, seconded by Cllr S Bartlett.

Decision:

That:

1. The Dorset Coastal Transition Accelerator Programme Project Outline Business Case (found in Appendix A), be endorsed.
2. The draw-down of the £3m grant funding, ongoing throughout the project, be authorised.
3. The procurement of the necessary materials, professional & other services and construction contractor(s) for the project be approved and authority be delegated to the Executive Director for Place Services in consultation with the Executive Director Corporate Development and the Cabinet Member for Place Services to award necessary contracts on appropriate terms and subject to a budget being identified and allocated, and that the total value of the contracts within the project should not exceed £3m.

91. **Dorset National Landscape (AONB) Interim Management Plan**

The Leader of the Council introduced the report. The current management plan was due to finish in 2024, however the government gave permission to extend it to 2025 whilst a new plan was developed.

Members asked questions related to local food producers and the economy. The Head of Growth and Economic Regeneration would provide a written response to members on this topic.

Proposed by Cllr N Ireland, seconded by Cllr C Sutton.

Decision:

That the Dorset National Landscape interim management plan be adopted.

92. **Alderholt Neighbourhood Plan 2022-2034**

The report was introduced by Cabinet Member for Planning and Emergency Planning. The Neighbourhood Plan was a statutory development plan for the area. He congratulated Alderholt Parish Council for the work to develop the Neighbourhood Plan.

There were no comments from members.

Proposed by Cllr S Bartlett, seconded by Cllr J Andrews.

Decision:

- a) That the Council 'makes' the Alderholt Neighbourhood Plan 2022 - 2034 (as set out in Appendix A of the report) part of the statutory development plan for the Alderholt Neighbourhood Area.
- b) That the Council offers its congratulations to Alderholt Parish Council and members of the Neighbourhood Plan Group for producing a successful neighbourhood plan.

93. **Blandford + Neighbourhood Plan Minor (Non-Material) Modifications Review**

The Cabinet Member for Planning and Emergency Planning introduced the report for modifications of Blandford Neighbourhood Plan. These modifications would correct an error within the plan. The council was able to make these changes without a public consultation.

The Ward Member for Hill Forts and Upper Tarrant acknowledged the work of Blandford and the surrounding villages for producing the plan. She sought assurance that any changes in the role of Neighbourhood Plans, following a government consultation, would be shared with communities. The Cabinet Member assured that information would be shared with communities and parishes.

Proposed by Cllr S Bartlett, seconded by Cllr J Andrews.

Decision:

That the minor (non-material) modifications, set out in Appendix A to the report, are made to the Blandford + Neighbourhood Plan.

94. **Integrated Care System Urgent and Emergency Care Transformation**

Programme

The Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care introduced the report on the Urgent and Emergency Care Transformation Programme. The local health system had a higher number of acute hospital beds being occupied than the national average. Health and social care partners were delivering a Dorset system-wide transformation programme to improve access to help. The voluntary and community sector was included in the programme.

Members commented on the report and raised concerns about how this work would impact residents who access healthcare or hospitals in other counties. The Cabinet Member said that new ways of working for the council would apply to the whole council area, but the benefits for the NHS may not be felt across the council area. The Cabinet Member for Finance and Capital Strategy suggested starting conversations with Somerset and Wiltshire to make improvements for residents living near the county boarder.

Members emphasised the importance of the voluntary and community sector in being fundamental for the success of the programme. A member suggested that there should be consideration of including the sector in the partnership agreement.

In response to questions about the programme, the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care said it was a 2-year programme, with benefits being seen after 6 months. He said there were strong relationships with the NHS and was confident that there would be good rewards from the programme, due to its success elsewhere.

Proposed by Cllr S Robinson, seconded by Cllr C Sutton.

Decision:

That:

1. The system-wide work, that is being undertaken to transform urgent and emergency care services and to provide better outcomes for the residents of Dorset, be commended.
2. The important role for Dorset Council as 'Lead Partner' and managing the contract with Newton, and the substantial financial benefits to the Council that will be achieved as a result of the transformation, be noted.
3. Authority be delegated to the portfolio holder for adults in consultation with the Executive Director for Corporate Development and the Executive Director People – Adults to enter into the UEC Partnership Agreement on behalf of the Council.

95. Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Strategy 2024-27

The SEND Strategy 2024-27 was introduced by Cabinet Member for Children's Services, Education and Skills. The strategy aimed high for children with special needs. There were delivery plans beneath the strategy which would help deliver and monitor it.

In response to a question on the statutory override for the High Needs Block, the Executive Director for Corporate Development explained the council's current financial position and what would happen to the council's finances if this was not extended. There was a long-term recovery plan to reduce the deficit and conversations with the Department for Education to extend this over a longer period.

Members asked for updates on progress to Osprey Quay school and Mountjoy school. The Corporate Director for Education gave a brief update on these schools and committed to update members regularly on the development of Osprey Quay school.

A member queried the risk assessment being identified as low risk. The Corporate Director for Education assured that the risk of approving the strategy was low, however the financial risks caused by the high needs block were high.

Proposed by Cllr C Sutton, seconded by Cllr S Robinson.

Decision:

That the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Strategy 2024-27 be approved.

96. **Quality Assurance Reviewing Officer (QARO) Independent Reviewing Officer's (IRO) Annual Report 2023-2024**

The Annual Report was introduced by Cabinet Member for Children's Services, Education, and Skills. She outlined the positive developments in the report, such as pre-escalation, and the areas identified where improvements could be implemented.

Members sought assurances that the council was addressing 'edge of care' procedures following the death of Sara Sharif and whether the council had a register of home-schooled children. Officers assured that they worked with families at the earliest point to ensure families do not get into crisis situations. The council issues child protection plans and brings children into care in a planned way when it was right to do. The council had a record of families where children are home-schooled. The council would work with families to understand the reasons for home schooling and a high percentage of families were visited for welfare checks. A change in legislation mandating a register of home-schooled children would be welcome.

In response to a question about data on the setting of children, officers confirmed that this data was included in the quality assurance framework and could be included within this annual report in future years.

Proposed by Cllr C Sutton, seconded by Cllr S Robinson.

Decision:

That the Quality Assurance Reviewing Officer (QARO) Independent Reviewing Officer's (IRO) Annual Report 2023-2024 be received and noted.

97. **Designated Officer Annual Report**

The Cabinet Member for Children's Services, Education, and Skills introduced the report and outlined the key points. A positive part of the report was that length of time from the first contact to an outcome has improved. The role of Local Authority Designated Officer had a positive effect.

There were no comments from members.

Proposed by Cllr C Sutton, seconded by Cllr S Robinson.

Decision:

That the Designated Officer Annual Report be received and noted.

98. **Refurbishment of Hardy House, Portland**

The report was introduced by Cabinet Member for Health and Housing. A priority of council was housing and there was an aim to remove B&B use for temporary accommodation. The proposal was to convert the property to support 5 families on a temporary basis, where 1 flat would be accessible. Some of the funding for the project was provided by Homes England.

In response to a question about whether further development could be done on the site, the Cabinet Member said it could be investigated if it was a large area of land, however it would need to be appropriate and have agreement from the Planning authority.

A member asked whether there was an opportunity to use the Homes England funding to convert empty properties into temporary accommodation. The Cabinet Member confirmed that the funding from Homes England was specifically for this site. She stated that the council was doing other work on bringing empty properties into use and using compulsory purchase orders when necessary.

Proposed by Cllr G Taylor, seconded by Cllr N Ireland.

Decision:

That the award of contract for refurbishment of Hardy House to A Hammond and Sons Ltd (As set out in Appendix 1 of the report), be approved.

99. **Urgent items**

There were no urgent items considered at the meeting.

100. **Exempt Business**

It was proposed by Cllr J Andrews, seconded by Cllr S Bartlett.

Decision:

That the press and the public be excluded for the following item(s) in view of the likely disclosure of exempt information within the meaning of paragraph 3 of schedule 12 A to the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended).

Reason for taking the item in private

Paragraph 3 - Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information).

The live streaming was concluded at this juncture.

101. **Acquisition of land known as “KwikFit site”, Westwey Road, Weymouth - Exempt**

The Cabinet Member for Property & Assets and Economic Growth introduced the exempt report.

Members commented on the report and received responses from the Cabinet Member and officers.

Proposed by Cllr R Biggs, seconded by Cllr S Clifford.

Decision:

That the recommendations as set out in the exempt report be approved.

Duration of meeting: 6.30 - 8.01 pm

Chairman

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Cabinet – 17th December 2024

Questions from Councillors

1. Question submitted by Cllr C Lugg

The Gladelands Park Homes site, in my Ferndown North ward, has for many years provided much need housing and has successfully developed a strong sense of community amongst the residents that live there.

Unlike much of my ward, Gladelands is located on lower ground and managing water ingress and flood risk, has become so challenging that I now receive regular reports from my residents that parts of the site, footpaths and gardens, have become impassable whenever there is heavy rain. On Christmas Eve 2013 the whole site flooded and residents were evacuated, at great personal emotional and financial cost to them, and financial cost to the then County Council.

Officers from the council, environment agency, Highways England, and the water companies have made some progress, clearing ditches, diverting culverts and insisting Berkeley Homes, who own the site, perform regular checks and maintenance. However the properties worse affected have no drainage whatsoever, and flood risk plans and emergency evacuation plans have not been forthcoming. I am able to provide photographs of the almost continuous flooding.

The Environment Agency, Highways and the Water Companies have now fulfilled their obligations. Would the Cabinet Member, together with an appropriately senior officer, meet with me and residents onsite to establish what further measures can be taken and implement an action plan, before we are faced with a site evacuation in the event of the most biblical levels of rainfall, which we are increasingly experiencing?

Response by Cllr J Andrews

The Dorset Council Flood Risk Management team are aware of the flooding issues on site and were involved in the post recovery stage for the December '13 flood event.

The low-lying site is within the floodplain of the Uddens Water main river, for which the Environment Agency has supervisory responsibility. This also prevents the site from discharging surface water run-off when the Uddens Water levels are elevated. The Agency is also responsible for issuing related flood warnings and offers support to communities such as this in assisting in the development of community flood action plans.

I will request that our Flood Risk Manager arranges a site meeting with the Environment Agency, nominated residents and the member to discuss strategic flood risk issues.

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