

STOUR VALLEY AND POOLE PARTNERSHIP JOINT COMMITTEE

MONDAY, 23RD DECEMBER, 2019

Present:

Councillor Andrew Kerby in the Chair

**Councillors Cllr D Brown (Vice-Chairman),
Cllr M Haines and Cllr T O'Neill**

16 Apologies

No apologies were received on this occasion.

17 Declarations of Interests

There were no declarations received on this occasion.

18 Confirmation of Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 26 September 2019 were agreed and signed as a correct record.

Actions: Item 15(b) to be reported to the Scrutiny Panel on 26 February 2020 and the SVPP Joint Committee on 16 March 2020.

Voting: unanimous

19 2019/2020 Performance and Budget Review

The Head of the Stour Valley and Poole Partnership submitted a report, a copy of which had been circulated to each Member and a copy of which appears as Appendix 'A' to these Minutes in the Minute Book.

The following main points were highlighted:

- Scrutiny reviewed this information on 18 December 2019
- Benefits were performing as expected
- Council Tax collection was slightly down, which was a national trend, effect of 20% LCTS scheme. Indicator is in year collection but still look to achieve ultimate collection rate of 99.5%

A Councillor asked how SVPP validated requests for arrangements outside the current year and an explanation of the recovery process was given. Concerns were raised over bankruptcies and liquidations in Business rates.

In response to a query regarding the collection rates for Q3 it was explained that everything was already being done, that could be. Year on year increases set for the Enforcement Service but staffing issues has led to a variance. A robust procedure will be in place to ensure admin issues do not recur.

For the Budget 2019/20 there was a forecasted underspend of £239k of which £100k would go back to the sovereign Councils, which had been agreed by the Scrutiny Panel. As set out in the Collaboration Agreement the split of returned money was now 65% BCP, 35% Dorset. Reserves currently held separately and used as the Joint Committee approve.

£50k was set aside from reserves for Enforcement Agency to mitigate variation. The Budget to be reviewed again in March by this Committee. There was a view from a Councillor that the budget for enforcement should be allowed to stand as it is and the £50k could be used better elsewhere and would be reviewed in March anyway.

A Councillor asked if any other parts of BCP were expected to use SVEA. It was explained that SVPP had asked but with limited success. Parking would be an option, but Enforcement Services were currently out to tender. A Dorset Councillor added that consideration should be given for services for Dorset Council as well.

It was RESOLVED that:

- (a) the performance and budget of the Stour Valley and Poole Partnership be noted;**
- (b) the Partnership declare an in year £100,000 underspend on the 2019/20 budget;**
- (c) any additional underspends for 2019/20 be set aside to SVPP reserves as detailed in item 26 of this report; and**
- (d) the proposed allocation of reserves for SVPP be brought to the next meeting of Joint Committee for consideration.**

Voting: unanimous

20 Proposed Budget 2020/2021

The Head of the Stour Valley and Poole Partnership submitted a report, a copy of which had been circulated to each Member and a copy of which appears as Appendix 'B' to these Minutes in the Minute Book.

The Head of the Stour Valley and Poole Partnership outlined the budget for 2020/2021. The budget of £5,093,000 allows for a pay award of 2%, a 2% increase for superannuation and a saving of £165k being SVPP's 60% share of the £275k savings.

A Councillor asked about various individual items within the budget, the responses to which are in brackets:

- Increase in agency related staff – (use of Civic Temps)
- Car mileage – (not an increase on previous budget – actual is low)
- Conferences and use of Skype – (Skype is being used – cost of conferences is mainly attendance at IRRV annual conference and staff development opportunities for those studying)
- Absconder tracking – (now elsewhere in budget)
- ICT Network – (charge will be reviewed)
- Printing and Stationery – (forming part of annual reduction on costs by CFH mail)
- Cheques and Bank Charges – (budget remains constant)
- Securicor – further update to be provided at next meeting

It was asked if 20/21 budget was based on 19/20 budget as a robust base and it was advised the previous year's budget was always used as basis and remains unchanged principles.

It was questioned whether it would be useful to show FTE budget i.e. headcount? Agreed this could be provided and is used on all budget monitoring on a monthly basis.

The budget was based on a full head count, based upon full staffing levels.

It was RESOLVED that:

(a) the draft budget for Stour Valley and Poole Partnership (SVPP) for 2020/2021 be set at £5,093,000;

(b) the income expectation for the Stour Valley Enforcement Agency (SVEA) for 2020/21 be set at £175,000; and

(c) any amendments to these budgets that may be required be delegated to SVPP Board and presented to the next meeting of Joint Committee for approval.

Voting: unanimous

21 Revenues and Benefit Services - Options Appraisal

Monday, 23rd December, 2019

The Head of the Stour Valley and Poole Partnership gave a verbal update on the options appraisal and provided revised savings figures for a Pan-Dorset service of £2.4m. The set-up costs of a Pan-Dorset service could come from reserves otherwise they would be shared.

If the partnership ended BCP Council would have a budget pressure of £900k in year one before achieving savings from year two.

Cllr Kerby said he would take the proposal to Dorset Cabinet members with a second action to seek support from officers and members of BCP.

Cllr Brown commented that the impact on Dorset Council of either option is not significant but would be far more for BCP.

A councillor suggested this be taken forward by the Head of the Stour Valley and Poole Partnership giving a presentation at the regular meeting he has with Dorset Council Cabinet leads.

The Head of the Stour Valley and Poole Partnership advised members that Julian Osgathorpe, Strategic Director - Corporate Service for BCP supported the proposal if there was a 'compelling business case' reason for doing so. Also the proposal was not on the forward plan for Dorset Council.

Members unanimously agreed to continue to support the proposal for a Pan-Dorset Revenues and Benefits Service.

22 Forward Plan

The Head of the Stour Valley and Poole Partnership submitted a report, a copy of which had been circulated to each Member and a copy of which appears as Appendix 'C' to these Minutes in the Minute Book.

The next meeting of this Committee would be held on 16 March 2020.

Duration of the meeting: 2.00 - 3.15 pm

Chairman at the meeting on
Monday, 23 December 2019