

BOURNEMOUTH, CHRISTCHURCH AND POOLE COUNCIL
OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD

Minutes of the Meeting held on 18 May 2020 at 2.00 pm

Present:-

Cllr P Broadhead – Chairman

Cllr M Haines – Vice-Chairman

Present: Cllr M Anderson, Cllr S Bartlett, Cllr M F Brooke, Cllr M Earl,
Cllr G Farquhar, Cllr L Fear, Cllr M Greene, Cllr N Greene,
Cllr M Iyengar, Cllr R Maidment, Cllr D Mellor, Cllr P Miles and
Cllr C Rigby

Also in attendance: Councillor Lesley Dedman
Councillor Sandra Moore
Councillor Vikki Slade
Councillor Kieron Wilson
Councillor Lewis Allison
Councillor David Brown

158. Apologies

Apologies were received from Cllr R Maidment and Cllr P Miles.

159. Substitute Members

Cllr R Burton was a substitute for Cllr R Maidment

160. Declarations of Interests

Cllr M Brooke declared a local interest in agenda item 10 - Children's Services Capital Strategy as he was a Board member of the Castlemain academy trust.

161. Confirmation of Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 20 April 2020 were approved as a correct record.

162. Action Sheet

The action sheet was noted.

163. Public Speaking

There were no public questions, statements or petitions.

164. Chairman's Update

The Chairman advised that the Chairmen of the Children's Services and Health and Adult

165. Scrutiny Between Board Meetings

The Chairman advised that since the last meeting of the Board the working group on Personal Protective Equipment had met and its findings had been circulated to the Board and would be published on the Board's webpage following this meeting.

The Chairmen of the Health O&S Committee explained the Scrutiny process undertaken by the working group and briefly laid out the findings of the group. A Board Member asked about the care home staff and feeling unsafe and what this could be attributed. The Board was advised that this was due to personal feelings of concern rather than deficiencies in PPE.

166. BCP Council's Response to Covid-19 Pandemic

Overview – The Board were advised that as part of the consideration of this item the Board was asked to look at the associated Cabinet report which was attached at appendix A to the Cabinet minutes of 27 May 2020 in the Minute Book. The Chief Executive provided a summary of the current situation with particular updates on changes since the situation was last reported to the Board. It was noted that there had been a good community response in the local area and the Council had been working with the Police and Public Health Dorset. The profile of BCP Council had been raised through the Chief Executives role as one of three Chief Executives representing local Councils in the south west region with the Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government (MHCLG), this included direct calls with policy staff in central government. A number of services were beginning to resume including household recycling centres, green waste and car parks. The Leader of the Council explained that less staff were now being redeployed and were moving back into their normal roles. The Leader had also been undertaking regular live Facebook Q&A sessions. The Leader emphasised the importance of maintaining democratic engagement in a 'new' normal along with community engagement through the Q&A and community hub and use of apps and AI to help with community engagement. Work with town Centre business and the hospitality industry was underway. She advised that the unitary Councils network were now regularly included on fortnightly calls with the MHCLG. Local MPs had been supportive of the issues raised by the Council in terms of this engagement. Work on the Discretionary Business Grants scheme was also taking place following the issuing of guidance.

A number of issues were raised by the Board including:

- In paragraph three of the report there was reference to an initial recovery impact assessment report. The Chief Executive advised that this was something that they were still working on with the Local Recovery Forum. South West Councils were also appointing consultants to work on the overall economic impact across the area.

- Car Parking - A Councillor asked about the main pros and cons of reopening. The leader advised that conversations had taken place. Conversations had taken place with the police which concluded that the police had no powers to prevent anyone from travelling anywhere they chose to with a day. However, the message from the Council being promoted was to 'come back later' and locally if it was busy to think again and return home. Therefore, as it seemed apparent that as people would travel anyway the Council wanted to reduce the impact on local residents and illegal parking.
- In paragraph 9 of the report referred to testing for Covid-19 at Creekmoore Park and Ride. There were relatively low numbers of staff needing to be tested and questioned if this was the same across the area and asked about contact tracing and tracking. The Chief Executive advised that the numbers reflected the low infection rates across Dorset. The aim was for sites to be within 40 minutes driving time. The Chief Executive commended the response of staff from all organisations in getting the site opened quickly.

Public Health - The Director of Public Health advised that we were moving from the acute phase of response towards recovery. A national plan for recovery was underway which included the testing sites which had been set up. The track and tracing services was in the process of being developed and would be up and running using the contact app in the next few weeks. The Public Health Team was supporting the complex contact tracing for the local area. There had been relatively low numbers of cases in the community but there had been outbreaks in care homes. More support was being put in place to help manage these outbreaks, working closely with Adult Social care and Care Homes. Asymptomatic testing for residents of care homes was being rolled out and larger care homes would be able to request comprehensive testing for all residents.

Children's Services – The Portfolio Holder reported that the levels of contacts to Children's Social Care remained stable with 223 referrals up to the 10 May. However, there were some emerging themes from the referrals including food poverty and domestic abuse. Regular contact was being maintained with care leavers through a number of different means including those away at university. There was also weekly contact with young people in care. In terms of numbers of vulnerable children attending school 22% of children on a Child Protection Plan were at school and 30% of under 5's on a Child Protection Plan were attending an early-years setting. These figures were broadly in line with those reported nationally. The LA was working closely with schools on mental health issues. There was also support for those with SEND including a weekly newsletter. Information was available on the BCP family information directory. Work was underway on supporting schools and early years settings with plans for opening for years R, 1 and 6. A number of issues were raised by the Board including:

- Whether the Council could take any action regarding schools which were not intending to reopen after half term. The Director for Children's Services advised that they would be working with partners to assist them with reopening preparations and were conducting influencing conversations where possible. However direct

communications would be through the Regional Schools Commissioner;

- The Chairman of the Children's Services O&S Committee asked about the criteria defining vulnerable young people. It was noted that as far as possible the figures being used were like for like but there may be different criteria used in different areas. The department for Education's national average was approximately 14 percent of vulnerable children in school;
- The Board questioned the number of new referrals to Children's Social Care. It was reported that there was a spike as lockdown measures were beginning to be lifted. Contacts had remained steady over the period and the Corporate Director was confident that there was sufficient capacity with a good multi agency system in place should a spike be experienced;
- A Councillor sought clarity on whether the local authority would be issuing fines for children who were able to go but did not attend;
- There were some concerns raised regarding the number of children on the child protection register who were not attending school. It was noted that most schools were still maintaining some contact with more vulnerable children.
- There were also concerns raised around those who may be struggling with accessing home learning due to their economic situation and the support that less affluent families were receiving. It was agreed that further information on this and how vulnerable children were being supported would be brought to the next meeting.

Adult Social Care – The Portfolio Holder for Adult Social Care outlined the current key points of activity from her portfolio area. It was noted that a range of online activities were being provided which had received positive impact. It was noted that the charging for services was currently being addressed and most would not be charged. Beds had been blocked booked in care homes to ensure capacity. There had been 55 deaths in care homes due to Covid-19 and 29 percent of care homes had experienced an outbreak which was significantly lower than the national average. Every care home had PHE training and were being offered support. In the ensuing discussions a number of points were raised including:

What support was being provided to care homes where an outbreak had occurred in terms of enabling self-isolation measures. All outbreaks were notified to PHE. There was a need to ensure continuity of staff for particular groups of patients. Recruitment support and advice was being provided. A Councillor raised the issue of loneliness and depression affecting those having to isolate, particularly as visits were not allowed. Much support was being provided in this regard and care partners were sharing best practice.

Tourism, Leisure and Community – The Portfolio Holder provided a brief update on what was happening within his portfolio. It was noted that the hospitality sector had taken a huge hit and a considerable loss of income. It was noted that grants had been provided to help support the industry but there was of course concern for the impact as financial support would not continue. It was noted that the Air Festival had been formally agreed for

2021 but there was no final decision on the event after this date. It was also noted that approximately 20,000 people had been assisted. Work around the wider economic impact was being led on by the Director of Development.

Housing – The Portfolio Holder for Housing provided an update of the impact of the Covid-19 epidemic on the areas within his Portfolio. It was reported that there was no noticeable increase in homelessness. The Council were current housing vulnerable tenants and there had been positive outreach from officers to support those in housing difficulties. However, a Councillor raised concerns about the impact when the Government end their financial support and what we would do to help people stay safe if they had to return to the streets or help people to stay in accommodation.

167. BCP Council's Recovery and Reset Phase in response to Covid-19

The Chairman advised the Board that as part of this item they were also asked to consider the BCP Financial Update Cabinet Report a copy of which is attached at Appendix B to the Cabinet minutes of 27 May in the Minute Book. The Portfolio Holder for finance introduced the report and explained that Appendix 1 outlined how the first tranche of finance had been used. Three different scenarios were outlined. It was noted that for financial management purposes there was an assumption based on a 24-week period. A full budget review would be taken to the Cabinet meeting in June.

A Board member asked whether there were sufficient reserves to carry the Council through. The Portfolio Holder responded that the current financial situation would be addressed in a number of ways. It was noted that the adequacy of reserves would need to be reviewed and there may be a need to consider releasing the budget contingency.

Questions were raised regarding the modelling exercise and whether a more nuanced exercise was needed. The Portfolio Holder advised that the situation was obviously very fluid, and all estimates were based on professional advice but the number would change with the situation. The current modelling provided a good target to aim for in terms of savings and contingencies. A Board member commented that consistent and detailed review of modelling was needed on a regular basis and asked that this be shared outside of the Cabinet group.

There was a concern raised that there was nothing to respond to on the recovery phase at the present time.

A Councillor asked if the finance paper expected in June would cover both 24 week and 48 week budget scenarios. It was confirmed that the paper was anticipated to outline the 24 week scenario. It was felt that this was a fairly prudent approach. This would mean £31million budget gap but it was acknowledged that it was a changing situation. A Councillor asked about how the 48 week figures were arrived at as it looked almost like a doubling across all areas. Some would have been based on a straight line assumption but some were more nuanced based on the income receipt and impacts throughout the year.

The Chief Financial Officer commented that the 24 week scenario was based towards the end of August through to transition in September. This would still need to be kept under review as the year goes on due to the level of uncertainty and take action accordingly.

A Councillor requested further information on the science behind the report and asked if this could be shared wider. It was noted that some of the baseline information was contained within Appendix 2 of the report.

168. Scrutiny of the Children's Services Capital Strategy Cabinet Report

The Chairman asked the Portfolio Holder for Children and Families to introduce the report a copy of which had been circulated and which appears as Appendix J to the Cabinet minutes of 18 March 2020 in the Minute Book .The Portfolio Holder advised that the report set out the capital strategy for 2020-23. The report outlined the capital projects currently approved and proposed funding allocations for new projects. The Board raised a number of issues with regards to the report including:

- The repurposing of the Bournemouth Learning Centre into a school for SEND pupils as announced today. The Director of Quality and Commissioning advised that information on this proposed project was provided to ward Councillors today and would be going out to further consultation. A Councillor expressed their disappointment that ward councillors had not been notified of this previously
- A Councillor asked if there was already a significant shortage of places where were pupils currently. It was noted that the Council had turned to private providers to supply the additional places required which has an impact on both costs of provision and the costs of transportation to schools.
- A comment was made regarding the cost of the feasibility study for Linwood School. It was noted that this did appear to be fairly excessive at an estimated cost of £100k. The Director explained that considerable invasive investigative work was required for this site. However, the cost provided in the report was considered to be the worst case scenario and that these costs would be minimised where ever possible.
- A member of the Board commented that this was a three year strategy but the only financial details provided were for the first year of the strategy with no further figures suggested for future projects. The Capital funding shown in appendix B of the report was that had been currently allocated to the Council but future forecasts were not being made at present due to issues with changes to funding formulas and potential reprioritising of resources by the DfE and therefore historic allocations may not be appropriate. However more detailed funding would be brought back when appropriate.

The Board asked about the impact of home to school transport provision. In line with the SEND policy a school would be named on the EHCP and more local provision would help the options available. Pupils with EHCP may be travelling to schools further away and additional local provision should help reduce journeys.

The meeting ended at 4.32 pm

CHAIRMAN