

BOURNEMOUTH, CHRISTCHURCH AND POOLE COUNCIL
OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD

Minutes of the Meeting held on 18 May 2020 at 6.00 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 D Mellor, Cllr P Miles, Cllr C Rigby and
Cllr M Andrews

Also in attendance: Councillor John Beesley
Councillor David Brown
Councillor Andy Hadley
Councillor Mark Howell
Councillor Sandra Moore
Councillor Dr Felicity Rice
Councillor Vikki Slade
Councillor Kieron Wilson

169. Apologies

No apologies were received.

170. Substitute Members

There were no substitute members.

171. Declarations of Interests

Cllr M Broke declared a local interest in agenda item 7 with regards to the reports on Bournemouth Development Company 5 Year Business Plan and Bournemouth Town Centre Vision (TCV) Winter Gardens Site as he was a Board member on the BDC.

Cllrs S Bartlett, M Greene and N Greene declared for the purpose of transparency that they had disclosable pecuniary interests in housing companies operating within the town. However, these interests were not directly related to items on the agenda being considered;

172. Public Speaking

There were no public questions or petitions for this meeting.

A public statement had been received from Michael Hancock, BCP resident in relation to agenda item 7, Scrutiny of Regeneration Related Cabinet reports, Holes Bay Site, Poole. A copy of the statement had been published

on the Council website and the link sent to all members of the Board. The statement was read out at the meeting.

173. Chairman's Update

The Chairman reminded the Board that there were two reports on the agenda which included non-public appendices and asked the Board to where possible keep discussion to the public issues. If there was a need to discuss anything within the non-public reports the meeting would need to resolve to exclude the press and public.

174. Scrutiny of Housing Related Cabinet Reports

Seascope Group Limited 5 Year Strategic Plan (2020-25) - The Portfolio Holder for Housing introduced the report, a copy of which had been circulated and which appears as Appendix D to the Cabinet minutes of 27 May 2020 in the Minute Book. A number of issues were raised by the Board in the subsequent discussion, including:

- The employment status of those working for seascope. The Board were advised that there were no direct employees of Seascope South, they were employed by the parent company, Bournemouth Building and Maintenance Limited. It was noted that the £100k investment for additional staff was likely to be Council employees.
- Regarding the financial risk borne by the companies it was noted that this would fall to the shareholder for the companies, BCP Council. In response to a question regarding the purpose of having a limited company it was confirmed that there were certain activities that the Council could not engage in and the Council could, through seascope trade externally.
- It was noted that the profit margin outlined was only 2% after tax and a Councillor question how it would get the investment of £100k. It was noted that the strategic plan for the company was moving forward and rescaling the company into something much larger.
- A Councillor noted that the company was mainly involved in private house building and questioned the purpose. The Portfolio Holder advised that in part the purpose of the company was to generate profit which could be reinvested back into the Council and the report was proposing a step change in the company to see how it could develop. The Leader of the Council advised that Seascope represented a different way in which the Council could influence the local housing market. Historically profit margin were small but there had been little ambition over the past couple of years and the developing capacity for small construction projects was exciting.
- In response to a question regarding social housing and adding properties to the Council it was explained that any properties would be added to the portfolio of the company rather than sit within HRA stock.

Officers offered to discuss any issues concerning Seascope with Councillors outside the meeting should they require any further information.

175. Scrutiny of Regeneration Related Cabinet Reports

Holes Bay, Poole (former power station site) Acquisition Strategy –

The Portfolio Holder for Regeneration and Culture and the Portfolio Holder for Housing introduced the report, a copy of which had been circulated and which appears as Appendix H to the Cabinet minutes of 27 May 2020 in the Minute Book. A number of issues were raised by the Board in the subsequent discussion, including:

- In response to a question concerning borrowing for the purchase and the long-term vision for the site the Portfolio Holder for Regeneration advised the Board that there was an exciting opportunity to do something different and up to date which would deliver somewhere people would want to live. The planning application which had been in progress had stalled. There was support from Homes England for the development and the time appeared right to progress. Although the Covid situation introduced risk the private sector had been in possession of the site for a number of years and was struggling to develop it. Members would be fully involved with a cross-party member advisory panel on Poole regeneration.
- A Councillor commented that this was a positive opportunity but asked about the long wait for the non-design specific remediation. The Board was advised that in general the Council wanted to pursue this scheme as quickly as possible and was prepared to work with partners on this. There was a former power station and large concrete slab on site and there was further work to do to see where the issues lied with the site but there was a need to be realistic in the timescale for how long this would take.
- It was noted that there was now an opportunity with the site to deliver significantly more units than were outlined in the current planning application.

Bournemouth Development Company LLP Business Plan - The Portfolio Holder for Regeneration and Culture introduced the report, a copy of which had been circulated and which appears as Appendix C to the Cabinet minutes of 27 May 2020 in the Minute Book. In the subsequent discussion Board members raised a number of issues including:

- It was noted that the Durley Road site was within the initial options agreement and was still proposed to proceed. There was a degree of opposition towards the development of the site and was previously turned down by the Bournemouth Borough Council Planning Board. The Portfolio Holder advised that it was the policy of the administration to make all decisions as a Cabinet rather than as individual portfolio holders and he wouldn't want to comment further on the decision at this stage.
- There was a further concern raised that this was in the business plan of the BDC as the BDC was supposed to reflect the wishes of the town in its developments. It was suggested that the Board should recommend that the business plan should not be approved with Durley Road included. It was noted that this issue would certainly be discussed in due course.
- A Board member commented that the company should be driving improvements for the town and not just focused on profits and the Durley Road site in particular was not an underutilised car park. There

was also a concern raised about the fact that this site had been taken to the Planning Inspectorate for appeal. The Portfolio Holder commented that only a year since the formation of BCP Council and he did not think the direction of BDC had been changed overall in this time. It was also noted that the decision was made by the Local Planning Authority rather than the Council.

- A Councillor commented that not being aware of the history of the BDC and the previous situations there was a difficulty in making appropriate recommendations on this issue. It was noted that the Council had officer and Councillor representatives on the Board of BDC and there was awareness of the controversy of this particular development. However, there were also advantages with the development to the school in the locality.

RECOMMENDED that:

1. **Cabinet considers carefully whether the proposed BDC Business Plan continues to reflect the Council's ambitions for the future of Bournemouth Town Centre as a whole.**
2. **Specifically, before approving the BDC Business Plan, Cabinet confirms that profits achieved from projects such as the former Winter Gardens site are allocated to developments such as Pavilion Gardens / Bath Road where the driver for development centres around cultural and other public benefits rather than profit.**
3. **Cabinet recognises that Bournemouth Council's Planning Board (unanimously) rejected BDC's application for Durley Road Car Park and considers whether this project should be deleted from the programme.**

Voting: For: 13, Against: 0, 2 abstentions

Note: The Area Action Plan only referred to Bournemouth, if sites in Poole were being considered a plan to cover this area should be considered. Also given the impact of Covid-19 the Cotlands Road site may need to be revisited.

Bournemouth Town Centre Vision (TCV): Winter Gardens Site Regeneration Opportunities - The Portfolio Holder for Regeneration and Culture introduced the report, a copy of which had been circulated and which appears as Appendix I to the Cabinet minutes of 27 May 2020 in the Minute Book. There were a number of questions raised by the Board in the subsequent discussion including:

- There was a concern raised regarding the assumption of an increase in parking charges of 50 percent per annum as outlined in paragraph 56 of the report. It was suggested that this should be reviewed. It was noted that the 50 percent was an initial uplift in the first year and then based on inflationary increases after that. It was a concern raised that an increase in pricing would reduce occupancy and this needed to be reflected.
- It was noted that there was a councillor briefing scheduled for 2 June which would provide further detail on the finance and legal issues

concerning the development. The development was critical to supporting the local economy.

- A Councillor commented that there were potential benefits to the development. It would be beneficial for the site to deliver some good quality public space. There was also an intention for there to be a supermarket on site which had been changed to a convenience store. Furthermore, there was concern with the amount of public car parking proposed. The Portfolio Holder advised that there were only a few days each year when town centre car parks reached capacity and therefore a reduction of spaces would not have a great impact at present. There was also a desire to reduce car movements in the town centre and increase cycling and public transport use. With regards to public space this was still in the development plan with facilities for seating and was tied into the garden walk element. The aim for the convenience store was to have a local business rather than a chain.
- A Councillor commented on the significant amounts of public money required for the development and there was a need to focus on the finances for this project further. Money would need to be borrowed for additional investment into the project amounting to an expenditure of approximately £1.1million. The car parking would be reduced, and further investment would be needed, in addition there would not be any additional land value from the site and the affordable housing contribution had been reduced. It was suggested that there should be an independent assessment of the project and the long-term financial cost to the Council. The Portfolio Holder confirmed that the request was for up to an additional £6.7 million from Council finance. This reflected the scale of the development which was scheduled to make a surplus.
- A Councillor asked about whether the projected demand for rental properties was still realistic given the Covid-19 situation. It was noted that things were uncertain but current indications were that there was no change in demand in the private rented sector. It was also noted that this was a long-term investment as reflected in the business case. The Council would receive 50 percent of any profit in the scheme.

RECOMMENDED that:

- 1. Before approving the requests for Council Finance, Cabinet should confirm that it believes the projected revenue from car parking as outlined in the report is realistic.**
- 2. Cabinet should consider whether the public benefits offered by the proposed scheme genuinely reflect the Council's ambitions for the Town Centre.**

Voting: For: 13, Against: 0, 2 abstentions

176. Scrutiny of Environment Related Cabinet Reports

Whitecliff Recreation Ground - Pavilion Redevelopment - The Portfolio Holder for Environment and Climate Change introduced the report, a copy of which had been circulated and which appears as Appendix G to the Cabinet minutes of 27 May 2020 in the Minute Book. In the ensuing

discussion Board members raised a number of points for consideration including:

- A Councillor asked why the Council was not taking on this project itself. It was noted that over the parks estates there were a number of projects that needed to be delivered and due to capacity and needs this would result in a mix of projects delivered in house and others which would be done in partnership with external providers.
- In response to a question it was noted that for some projects grant funding or borrowing was able to be utilised but in this instance no funding was able to be identified. The project had been consulted on prior to BCP and the decisions arising from this were being followed through on.
- An issue was raised concerning the ward Councillor involvement and how much they had been consulted on. There was a great deal of sensitivity around this project and there was a need to ensure that this was done correctly with ward member engagement.

Recommended that:

Recommendation B of the report should be amended to read "Members delegate authority to officers, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder and Ward Councillors, to award ..."

Voting: For 15, Against 0

177. Scrutiny of Transport and Infrastructure related Cabinet Reports

Transforming Cities Fund (TCF) Programme - The Portfolio Holder for Transport and Infrastructure introduced the report, a copy of which had been circulated and which appears as Appendix E to the Cabinet minutes of 27 May 2020 in the Minute Book. Following the Portfolio Holders introduction a number of points of discussion were raised by the Board including:

- A Councillor suggested that some of the implications of the corona virus could be harnessed and turned into a positive for the area before everyone returned to their cars and asked if the board would look at this. The Portfolio Holder advised that this was a three-year programme looking at major routes. There was a separate government grant which would allow the council to look at measures on separate routes. The Portfolio Holder had also urged that segregated protected space should be looked into particularly around the hospitals which were both on TCF routes.
- There was a concern raised that neither the leader nor deputy leader of the Council had a presence on the CGB, and it was suggested there should be a change in the Councillor membership. The Portfolio Holder advised that ecological were highly important which was why the Portfolio Holder for Environment was on the Board. The structure would also report back to full Cabinet and important decision would be taken as

a Cabinet. It was also confirmed that the Leader was very much behind this. A Board member commented that the administration had the environment as a golden thread running through all decisions.

RECOMMENDED that:

To better reflect the importance of the programme and its effect on the conurbation's development, the two BCP councillors appointed to the CGB should be the Portfolio holder for Transport and Infrastructure and the Leader or Deputy Leader of the Council.

Voting: For: 9, Against 6

Cllr Farquhar asked to be recorded as voting against this decision.

178. Forward Plan

The Board noted the current forward plan and agreed that the Chairman and Vice-Chairman would make any updates as required in consultation with the relevant officers.

179. Future Meeting Dates 2020/21

The dates for future meetings were noted. A member commented that where appropriate significant events should be the driver for meeting dates.

The meeting ended at 8.32 pm

CHAIRMAN