

BOURNEMOUTH, CHRISTCHURCH AND POOLE COUNCIL
OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD

Minutes of the Meeting held on 04 January 2021 at 2.00 pm

Present:-

Cllr S Bartlett – Chairman

Cllr T O'Neill – Vice-Chairman

Present: Cllr D Borthwick, Cllr M Cox, Cllr B Dion, Cllr M Earl, Cllr J Edwards,
Cllr D Farr, Cllr L Fear, Cllr M Howell, Cllr D Kelsey, Cllr C Rigby,
Cllr L Allison, Cllr M Andrews and Cllr P Hilliard

117. Apologies

Apologies were received from Cllrs L Dedman, G Farquhar and V Slade

118. Substitute Members

Cllr P Hilliard substituted for Cllr L Dedman, Cllr L Allison substituted for Cllr G Farquhar and Cllr M Andrews substituted for Cllr V Slade

119. Declarations of Interests

None raised

120. Confirmation of Minutes

The minutes of the meetings held on 7 December 2020 (2pm and 6pm) were agreed as a correct record.

121. Action Sheet

The Board's latest action sheet was noted following an update from the Chairman.

122. Public Speaking

There were not public statements, questions or petitions submitted for this meeting.

123. Pay & Reward Update

The Leader of the Council presented 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. A number of issues were raised by the Board in the subsequent discussion, including:

- A Board Member queried whether or not staff would find themselves at equal pay rates at the same time or if there would be prioritisation

across certain service areas. The Leader of the Council explained that there was no definitive date for the implementation of pay equalisation and, in some cases, it was possible that there would be pockets within the organisation where equalisation could occur sooner.

- A Board Member queried whether or not there had been any redundancies made at this point, or if this was still yet to come. The Leader of the Council explained that role mapping had now been completed and that the job descriptions were now all agreed and signed off at director level. No large-scale redundancy programme had taken place at this point, although it was anticipated that such a programme could begin shortly.
- A Board Member queried what the plan was for rates of pay and commented that pay rates should not be reduced in order to save money as this would likely reduce morale amongst staff. The Leader of the Council explained that he was not expecting this part of the process to save a huge amount of money and that as part of the strategy all roles had been re-evaluated.
- A Board Member queried if roles being evaluated were based on BCP Council being a leading council and added that he felt exceptional employees as identified during annual appraisals should be recognised for their hard work. The Leader of the Council assured the Board that by pooling staff into “job families” was an approach that would allow the council to make better use of its resources and would allow the organisation to take a big step forward in its transformation programme. He added that it would also assist the council in becoming more outcomes driven when delivering its services, although he was unsure how the efforts exceptional employees might be recognised and be subsequently rewarded.
- A Board Member queried what form of engagement had taken place with trade unions in producing this strategy and the level of impact that 500-600 job losses would have on the organisation. The Leader of the Council explained that trade unions had responded positively to the Council’s ambition to bring in parity of salary between staff from the predecessor authorities. He detailed that Trade unions were part of a number of different discussions around the pay and reward strategy and played different parts in each depending on the nature of the issue. On top of this, representatives from trade unions had been invited to be part of the senior leadership equalities group. He further added that through the smarter working programme, the impact to the organisation, even though there was the potential for the loss of 500-600 jobs, would be minimised due to the structures that were being put in place that would make better use of resources.

The Chairman thanked Board Members and the Leader of the Council for their input and added that members of staff had seen a number of changes over the past few years, through shared services, local government reorganisation and now transformation so was pleased to hear that trade unions were involved throughout this programme, particularly at executive level. He wanted to recognise that there had been, and would continue to

be some level of uncertainty for staff over these years and looked forward to when this could be concluded in order to provide stability.

124. Scrutiny of Finance and Transformation Related Cabinet Reports

2020/21 Mid-Year Performance Report - The Leader of the Council presented 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. A number of issues were raised by the Board in the subsequent discussion, including:

- A Board Member queried the reliability of the performance indicators and whether they were fit for purpose in terms of reaching desired outcomes. The Leader of the Council explained that performance indicators were used as a way to ensure that organisations 'measured up' to expectations. He added that the council had produced a document which laid out a list of priorities and commitments and so it was important that it measured itself against those commitments to gauge how well it was doing and identify key areas of success as well as key areas where improvements could be made.
- A Board Member agreed that this method of performance reporting was an important tool, particularly when comparing data sets, although he did find some aspects of the report confusing, particularly in relation to why no data had been produced for the first quarter of 2020/2021, as this would have been a helpful comparison. He also raised that some data sets seemed to be measured quarterly and some annually, which could lead to further confusion when reading the report. He added that he had some concerns in relation to the planning department, which had been identified as below target and queried what measures were being taken to ensure that these issues would be addressed promptly. The Leader of the Council agreed that some of the data presentation did appear confusing and would ask that it be rectified ready for when the next report was ready to be presented to the Board. He then moved to explain that the Planning department was in a difficult situation and wanted to ensure that it was recognised that the expertise of officers was not being brought into question and that the difficulties were largely being experienced due to three separate ways of working within teams from the three preceding authorities including; three different pieces of planning software to manage applications as they were received, three separate local plans, each with supporting strategic documents and some with adopted or emerging neighbourhood plans. He acknowledged that there was a great need to fix these issues as a priority and that the portfolio holder was working to ensure that this process was one of the first areas of the organisation, together with children's services, that would benefit from the transformation programme from an early stage.
- A Board Member stated that he was pleased to hear about the work being undertaken within planning and that this was going to be

addressed sooner rather than later. He referred to p48 of the report, which raised the issue of a vacancy within the ASB team, highlighting that it had been vacant for over a year and queried what was being done to fill it and indeed other vacancies. The Leader of the Council explained that a recruitment freeze was not the answer to financial difficulties and that there was a need to invest in the right staff where needed. He further explained that investment areas would be identified in the MTFP item which would be considered at a future meeting. He added that as he did not have a specific answer to the ASB vacant post query, he would respond once he was able to.

- A Board Member commented that there were some significant delays in determining planning applications and queried whether there had been any government intervention relating to planning applications bearing in mind that processing had dropped below national intervention levels, or whether this might be looked at once the covid-19 crisis was over. She further queried if members would be able to see an action plan, as there was for Children's Services, as planning was also a very important part of the Council. The Leader of the Council explained that there had not been any government intervention, but that there needed to be a local intervention in order to turn the situation around, and transformation would assist in doing this. He added that he would appreciate any member involvement, perhaps through the establishment of a working group if deemed appropriate, to assist in addressing the issues raised and welcomed any members to contact him with any suggestions they may have.
- The previous Board Member, having received a response to her queries, suggested that additional staff members be recruited to assist with the backlog of planning applications, even if only on a temporary basis. The Leader of the Council agreed that this was a suitable solution and would be asking for this route to be investigated as it was a priority to fix this issue.
- A Board Member echoed the comments already made, in particular about investment in additional staff and hoped that by resolving the aforementioned issues that it would allow for developers to invest in the area, safe in the knowledge that planning applications would be dealt with in a timely manner.
- A Board Member commented that the past year had been very challenging to all service areas of the Council and that great importance should be given to the management of resources, he therefore queried how the management of resources would be compared with performance of teams to ensure that resources weren't being managed poorly. The Leader of the Council stated that this would largely be managed by service directors, but members would have oversight through the KPI's. In relation to poorly performing teams, he added that it would first be a case of establishing what the issues are behind poor KPI's, before determining what possible actions to take and that transformation was key to the improvement of services.

- A Board Member queried the mandatory training figures, commenting that they did not appear to stack up, in particular noting that the target was 100%, but the actual figure was 2.1% and which was well below the target. The Leader of the Council explained that he had some reservations about the data, bearing in mind that it seemed so far out. The Director of Organisation Development explained that there appeared to be some system issues and that it needed to be modified to send out reminders to staff when mandatory training was due and it was most likely to be 'renewable' training modules that was having such an impact on numbers. He added that he would provide Board Members with detailed information setting out the mandatory training topics.
- A Board Member queried if there was any mandatory training for Councillors. The Leader of the Council explained that he was aware that there were ongoing discussions between Group Leaders, the Monitoring Officer and the Head of Democratic Services as to how to progress Member Training. The Director of Organisational Development Manager explained that he would provide this to Board Members as an additional action.

The Chairman thanked Board Members, the Leader of the Council and Officers for their contributions.

125. Scrutiny of Cabinet Reports from the Tourism, Leisure and Culture Portfolio

Setting up the BCP Cultural Compact - The Portfolio Holder for Tourism, Leisure and Culture presented 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. A number of issues were raised by the Board in the subsequent discussion, including:

- A Board Member queried how the Compact would be set up to work effectively in order to drive the project forward. The Portfolio Holder explained that from a governance point of view, there was not the ability to make any changes, but he agreed with the points that had been raised and felt it important to ensure that the driving force behind ideas for moving this forward, came from the creative industries as opposed to the governance board. In response, the Board Member, having led the compact as in his role within the previous administration, could share some additional information with the Portfolio Holder outside of this meeting. The Lead Member for Cultural Events and Bournemouth Regeneration added that the makeup of the compact would be a cross-section of people and was currently quite fluid, the set up would be the next step.
- A Board Member queried if it was possible to move away from using the word 'culture' to avoid putting a large number of people off from getting involved due to the common interpretation of what culture was over what it could actually mean. The Lead Member explained that it was important that the full range of the word 'culture' was understood, i.e. not just ballet or the orchestra and should be about

recognising the diversity of what this compact could encompass and its potential to transform the conurbation.

- A Board Member commented that town centres across the country were rapidly changing and queried whether the regeneration plans for BCP Council included the provision for its cultural aspirations in order to revitalise town centres and other districts across the conurbation. The Portfolio Holder referred to the proposals for the Lansdown Project, which was originally put forward as a way to encourage the use of open space for open air markets or as performance space. He added that he felt town centres needed to be considered as an experience, rather than just a space for the retail sector, as this had been dwindling in recent years.
- A Board Member agreed with the Portfolio Holder's previous statement and stated the importance of encouraging all promoters of culture, regardless of whether large or small in scale, local or national or indeed what sector, e.g. arts, music or sport, to name a few.
- A Board Member queried how youth and students of the area's universities or language schools would be drawn into contributing to this framework. The Lead Member advised that there was a further piece of work to be undertaken to achieve a greater level of engagement in relation to this subject area. The compact needed to include representation from educational settings to promote the contribution of younger people's views into how talent can be attracted to the area, developed and retained in the area. Barriers need to be removed to ensure all demographics are involved. The Portfolio Holder added that universities and the local colleges had been involved throughout so far, his concerns were more so about getting to the 'unidentified' youth or those unaffiliated with an organisation, to seek their views and contributions.

The Chairman thanked Board Members, the Portfolio Holder and the Lead Member for their contributions and summed up the discussion stating that he felt that every aspect of the Council's corporate plan should be influenced by corporate aspects as it was all about the quality of wellbeing of residents. He added that he was impressed with the work that had been undertaken thus far and thanked all those who had been involved.

126. Scrutiny of Transport and Sustainability Related Cabinet Reports

Concessionary Fares Bus Operator Reimbursement - The Portfolio Holder for Transport and Sustainability presented a report, a copy of which had been circulated to each Member and a copy of which appears as Appendix 'D' to these Minutes in the Minute Book.

Committee Members determined that it was necessary to discuss the report's confidential appendix when conducting their scrutiny of the item and therefore moved the discussions into confidential session for the remainder of the item.

Having discussed the item in great detail, the committee were content that no formal recommendation needed to be submitted on behalf of the Board to the Cabinet meeting due to be held on Wednesday 13 January 2021.

The meeting ended at 4.22 pm

CHAIRMAN