

BOURNEMOUTH, CHRISTCHURCH AND POOLE COUNCIL
OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD

Minutes of the Meeting held on 01 April 2021 at 2.00 pm

Present:-

Cllr S Bartlett – Chairman

Cllr T O'Neill – Vice-Chairman

Present: Cllr L Allison, Cllr D Borthwick, Cllr M Cox, Cllr L Dedman,
Cllr B Dion, Cllr M Earl, Cllr J Edwards, Cllr D Farr, Cllr L Fear,
Cllr M Howell, Cllr D Kelsey, Cllr V Slade and Cllr K Wilson

172. Apologies

Apologies were received from Cllr C Rigby

173. Substitute Members

Cllr K Wilson for Cllr C Rigby

174. Declarations of Interests

A number of Members declared an interest in respect of Agenda Item 8 –
Management and Development of Sports and Leisure Centres:

Cllr S Bartlett declared a local interest as he was a director of BH Live and
BH Enterprises Ltd.

Cllr V Slade declared a local interest as she was a member of Poole Sports
Council and her spouse worked at St Aldhelm's Academy.

Cllr J Edwards declared a local interest as she was a director of BH Live
Enterprises Ltd

Cllr M Earl declared a personal interest as she was member of Rossmore
Leisure Centre.

175. Confirmation of Minutes

The minutes of the previous meetings held on 1 March 2021 were
confirmed as a correct record to be signed.

176. Action Sheet

The Board noted the action sheet

177. Public Speaking

There were no public speakers registered.

178. Scrutiny of Planning Related Cabinet Reports

The Future of Planning in Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole

The Portfolio Holder for Regeneration, Economy and Strategic Planning 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. The Portfolio Holder outlined the key issues within the report. The Portfolio Holder and Head of Planning responded to comments and requests for clarification, details included:

- Significant work had been undertaken to make changes to processes within the planning department and, in particular, the implementation of one IT system would make a huge difference to the team as a whole. This would then avoid the unintentional siloing of the team and build resiliency which was not currently possible with three different IT systems.
- Significant time and effort was going into ensuring the provision of real-time data that would measure the performance of the planning team, and this would be made readily available when it could be presented most effectively.
- A priority service for major applications was being explored, however, there would most likely be restrictions and it was imperative that the core service was robust before introducing a fast-tracking system.
- There were ambitions to improve the pre-applications process through a major projects forum.
- In terms of recruitment to the planning service, there was a national shortage of planners so it was therefore important to ensure that salaries were competitive in order to attract the best.
- The Planning department were going to be one of the first areas of the Council to undertake the 'Smarter Structures' programme which would review how each department, (in this case including development management, planning policy and enforcement etc.), worked as a whole.
- The council was currently undertaking its local plan process, which would bring together the existing planning policies into one updated document that would be utilised across the conurbation, including issues such as affordable housing, height and scale of developments etc – a large piece of work was being undertaken by the local plan working group to look at the emerging issues and being fed back into the plan's development. It was important to look at what other local authorities were doing as there were already some innovative ideas being used that BCP Council could adopt or adapt.
- The definitions of the different types of applications were set out:

- Major Applications were any development of 10 units or above in terms of residential use, 1000sq meters of commercial space/non-residential floor space or a site over 1 hectare;
- Minor Applications were small scale developments (under 10 units);
- Other Applications were householder extensions or advertisements.
- Obtaining planning permission could be a complicated procedure, particularly in the case of large scale applications where a great deal of consultation was required, and this would often mean that delays were inevitable, which the required the use of time extensions to be agreed.
- The council often challenged figures provided by the District Valuer on large scale developments and this could sometimes this can be the cause of delay.
- The allocated money was dedicated to support the transformation of the service and would support the service in delivering the required improvements.
- Time extensions for planning applications had to be agreed by all parties and the Portfolio Holder did not have current the number of applications that had been given extensions to hand, although as a rule 60-70% of applications did not need extensions. The Planning service needed to get to a point where there was a useful pre-application process that will reduce need for elongated applications.
- Extensions were a national mechanism for all councils to use and therefore not uncommon.
- The Planning Improvement Board was proving to be a really positive tool to demonstrate areas for improvement within the council's planning processes and the portfolio holder was confident that organisation could turn the existing situation around, which he acknowledged had been in a bad place thus far.
- The Council's Strategic Implementation Partner (SIP) would be working closely with the department to aid its transformation.
- The majority of staff within the council's planning department were permanently employed by BCP council although some agency staff (not exceeding 10% of the workforce) were used to clear the existing backlog. As part of the smarter structures programme those agency staff currently being utilised would be eligible to apply for any identified vacancies.
- The Planning Improvement Board has worked with the planning services to establish what they thought was needed in terms of budget and other resources to resolve the issues already identified and, if required, will not hesitate to provide additional funding.
- Data was produced which set out performance of individual staff and it was highlighted that all staff were incredibly dedicated to their roles.

Planning performance would be closely monitored

The chairman stated that prior to the debate, he had been concerned that the recommendations to cabinet would not be adequate, however he was now far more encouraged by the work to date and the commitment that had been made by the Portfolio Holder and the Head of Planning that the service would be provided with the resources it needed to make the necessary improvements. He requested that an update report be presented in six months to allow the Board to monitor the progress.

179. Scrutiny of Community Safety Related Cabinet Reports

Harmonisation of Regulatory Services and Licensing Enforcement Policy

The Portfolio Holder for Community Safety 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. The Portfolio Holder outlined the key issues within the report. The Portfolio Holder and Head of Safer Communities responded to comments and requests for clarification, details included:

- The purpose of this item was to harmonise policies of an operational nature and, as such, had not been presented to the Licensing Committee for consideration.
- This document had not significantly changed from what was included in the policies of the documents from the three predecessor councils, as all councils had to remain in line with a regulatory code anyway, meaning that all three policies had already been virtually identical in terms of what would be done in terms of enforcement and how, this merely consolidated it all into one document for BCP council.
- A separate piece of work was about to commence that would look at other areas of enforcement, including the issue of dog fouling.

The Chairman welcomed the new document and indeed the work to be undertaken in relation to other enforceable activities.

180. Scrutiny of Tourism, Leisure and Culture Related Cabinet Reports

Our Museum: Poole Museum Redevelopment

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. The Portfolio Holder outlined the key issues within the report. The Portfolio Holder and the Poole Museum Manager responded to comments and requests for clarification, details included:

- Part of the cultural compact was to get a board/wider forum in place to ensure that there was a fluid and diverse mechanism to uplift the cultural scene across the conurbation.

- A series of public engagement sessions had recently concluded and the national lottery heritage fund had congratulated the council on the inclusiveness of these sessions.
- Traditionally, Scaplen's Court had been an immersive schools experience for many years and the same advantage had not been taken with the museum to date, which would be addressed as part of these proposals to bring a 'wow factor' to the museum and there were plans for immersive digital interaction and opportunities for play activities as part of this project.
- The history centre would be moved out of the Town Cellars and relocated to the museum to allow this historic building to be shown off to members of the public.
- Officers were confident that moving the café from the main museum to the Scaplen's Court building would not cause any harm and would in fact bring the space that it currently occupies into community use, whilst creating more 'covers' for the café in its new location.
- There was no intention to charge for entry into the museum, although it was acknowledged that there would need to be a review of the museum operation policies across the conurbation and possibly harmonise them in the future, although it was highlighted that the various museums have different offerings, so this would need to be addressed carefully.
- It was an ambition for hireable community spaces to remain as inexpensive as possible to ensure that local groups were not outpriced of being able to use the facility.
- One of the main opportunities that these proposals provided was to increase the dwell time of visitors and therefore increase revenue raised by, catering, donations and retail etc. As the proposals were not actually increasing the footprint of the existing buildings it was projected that the revenue created from increased visitor numbers would offset the additional costs of the operation.

Management & Development of Leisure Centres

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 'D' to these Minutes in the Minute Book. The Portfolio Holder outlined the key issues within the report. The Portfolio Holder and the Head of Leisure responded to comments and requests for clarification, details included:

- The project to review the management of leisure centres was due to commence imminently (within the next few months) and whilst it would have been preferable not to undertake these short-term extensions, circumstances had made this unavoidable.
- It was important that when undertaking engagement with members and members of the public as part of the review exercise that it was wholly inclusive and the Portfolio Holder welcomed any forthcoming advice and discussions as to how this might be undertaken. There was an opportunity for the council to think differently and comments

would be taken on board in relation to the inclusion of niche groups to reflect the changes to sports and recreation over recent years.

In order to discuss the information contained within the confidential appendices, the Board passed the following motion:

“RESOLVED that under Section 100 (A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 3 in Part I of Schedule 12A of the Act and that the public interest in withholding the information outweighs such interest in disclosing the information”

- Contracts differed between SLM and BH Live, but both companies had been in receipt of financial support from the council over the past year due to covid.
- The Council needed adequate time to undertake the review of sports and leisure services and therefore the short contract extension as proposed was considered appropriate to ensure that credible and stable management in place.
- The Café at Rossmore leisure centre would be reopened as soon as safe and viable to do so.
- Incentives for members of the public to return to leisure facilities would need to be carefully considered due to cost implications.

Following the discussion on this item, the meeting returned to public session.

181. Update from the Local Plan Working Group

The chairman provided the board with an update on behalf of the Local Plan Working Group and explained that it had recently met again to discuss the issue of housing targets and had identified that there was a shortage in available sites based on current planning policies. To counter-act this, the Working Group had looked at the possibility of increasing the height of developments in certain areas to overcome the identified shortfall. The group had concluded that a moderate increase in height would reduce the expected overall shortfall, but this would still remain at 4300 and it would therefore be necessary to review other available options.

The Chairman and Head of planning responded to comments and request for clarification, details included:

- CIL structures had not yet been discussed.
- Tall buildings were defined as 6 storeys high and there was a need to establish where it might be acceptable utilise tall buildings, if some areas could accommodate buildings taller than 6 storeys and if so, how tall.
- It was hoped that the council would be able to launch a consultation exercise during the summer.

- The Working group was not providing recommendations to officers at this point, as it was a consultative body that reported back to O&S.

The meeting ended at 5:07pm

CHAIRMAN

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Overview and Scrutiny Board – 1 April 2021 – 2.00pm

Response received from the Portfolio Holder for Tourism, Leisure and Culture with regards to the following action: “The Portfolio Holder for Tourism, Leisure and Culture to provide clarity in relation to museum operation processes for council owned museums. Portfolio Holder to liaise with the Chairman of the O&S Board as to how this is dealt with”.

- There is a varied ecology of Council and independent museum and heritage venues in BCP, just as in most other large localities. Their different and distinct settings, collections and facilities suit and attract differing audience profiles and numbers, and they operate most successfully with business models that suit these characteristics and audiences. It is common for local authorities to offer a mix of charging and non-charging museums and heritage venues, as is be seen in Southampton, Bath and Hampshire, for example.
- In BCP the business model for Poole’s local and community heritage museum is engaging large local and tourist audiences with a free offer and secondary spend opportunities, whereas Russell-Cotes historic house and art collection provides a destination offer for more specialist audiences, willing to pay an entry fee. We know from experience that entry charging can work well at destination type attractions, whereas at community orientated venues it can significantly reduce visitor numbers and consequently value for money.
- It is important for BCP’s cultural offer to be understood and appreciated by residents and visitors and it will be the role of the Cultural Compact to provide a cohesive narrative for entry pricing and box office across the Council and independent sectors, including our museum and heritage attractions.

It means that the whole issue of pricing will be a mixed-picture linked to each of the offerings from our venues and their development under the Cultural Compact.

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