

BOURNEMOUTH, CHRISTCHURCH AND POOLE COUNCIL
OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD

Minutes of the Meeting held on 14 June 2021 at 2.00 pm

Present:-

Cllr S Bartlett – Chairman
Cllr V Slade – Vice-Chairman

Present: Cllr L Allison, Cllr M Cox, Cllr L Dedman, Cllr B Dion, Cllr J Edwards,
Cllr L Fear, Cllr S Gabriel, Cllr M Howell, Cllr D Kelsey, Cllr T O'Neill,
Cllr C Rigby and Cllr D Brown (In place of Cllr M Earl)

Also in attendance: Councillor Philip Broadhead
Councillor Beverley Dunlop
Councillor Drew Mellor

22. Apologies

Apologies were received from Cllr M Earl and Cllr D Farr

23. Substitute Members

Cllr D Brown substituted for Cllr M Earl

24. Declarations of Interests

There were no declarations of interests for this meeting.

25. Confirmation of Minutes

The minutes of the meetings held on 17 May 2021 were approved as a correct record.

25.1 Action Sheet

The Chairman reported on an outstanding action on the action regarding closed toilets at Poole Quay and advised that he had written to the Planning Department on this matter and would report back on any response received.

26. Public Speaking

There were no public petitions, statements or questions

27. Scrutiny of Finance and Transformation Related Cabinet Reports

Financial Outturn Report 2020/21 – The Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Transformation and Finance introduced the report. A copy of which had been circulated to Board members and a copy of which

can be found at Appendix A to these minutes in the minute book. The Leader outlined the key points from the report and the Board discussed a number of issues including:

- Potential problems for the future in adult social care which were not being provided for. There was a changing profile of risk, the cost of expenditure going forward would be different from that seen recently. The Portfolio Holder indicated that the Council was in better position to deal with issues coming forward and further detail was included within the Medium Term Financial Plan Paper. The Chief Financial Officer advised that with the impact of Covid it was quite difficult to see in comparison to what would have been spent originally.
- Part of the reason Council was in a good investment position was that the previous administration had provided sound foundation. The Leader noted that the previous administration had been more cautious, and the political preference of the current administration was that it was a good time to invest.
- The previous year was unprecedented due to Covid. The impact of grant funding had meant a positive surplus at year end. However, there was lots of uncertainty around a number of issues, e.g. car parking. Board Members expressed their hope that this was being monitored and that future plans were being implemented for uncertain times. The investment strategy for the Council was part of the big plan.
- The solutions that were being planned to deal with the overspend in care home placements as this was an issue which would continue. Adult Social Care was being more interventionist in the market and technology would also be part of the solution. The Care Homes and Older People Strategy would be taken through Cabinet in September. Investment was also being made to help people live in their own homes for longer.
- It was noted that the core part of the Poole Civic Centre would be retained. The Council would be looking to retain ownership as well. There were no plans to dispose of either asset.
- East Cliff Lift was not included in the Town Fund spending as outlined in the report. It was suggested that this could be looked into further via the Futures Fund.
- In response to a query the Chief Financial Officer advised that in relation to the collection of council tax and business rates, whatever the Council precepts for the year, this was received from the collection fund. However, this could put the collection fund into deficit which would then be adjusted. It was confirmed that the £40 million referenced in the report was part of the Council's share of relief, this would need to be paid back into the collection fund to account for deficit. As well as the deficit caused by retail relief, there was also deficit caused by reduced collection rates.

The Chairman thanked the Chief Financial Officer and the finance team for their management of the finances and the position the Council was in. It was noted that nevertheless there were some uncertain times moving forward.

Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) Update – The Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Finance and Transformation introduced the report, a copy of which had been circulated to Board members and a copy of which could be found at Appendix B to these minutes in the Minute Book. During consideration of the item a number of points were raised including:

- A Board member questioned some of the investment choices of the administration, including installation of beach barbecues and coast festival live.
- Although BCP had a low level of debt compared to most councils this didn't mean it should be near the level of any of the councils with high debt. BCP should decide for itself on an appropriate level of debt not follow what other councils were doing. The administration wanted to invest in the local area. The Government had already severely restricted what Councils could borrow for investment. Borrowing would not be undertaken without a
- The level of unearmarked reserves was questioned and it was noted that this provided greater flexibility in terms of the capacity of the financial strategy to respond to emerging issues. The level of best case and worst-case planning was based on a prudent assumption and experience.
- In response to a question the Leader advised that this was money that can be invested not necessarily money that would be invested. The urban regeneration company would be judged on its record of delivery.
- A Board member queried the assumptions on underlining figures future government funding for local authorities. There had been years of austerity for government funding and it was not helpful to only receive one-year spending plans. However, it was expected that government funding would be more restrictive over the coming years.
- In relation to the paragraph on appropriate services for the vulnerable and assistive technology for ongoing personal care. It was confirmed that this was not intended to stop personal visits but was about providing better support to enable a better outcome if people can stay in their own homes. There would be investment rather than cuts in the adult social care budget.
- In relation to a local government pay settlement it was noted that a 1% contingency had been put in place and that if the agreed increase was greater this would need to be factored in for following years.
- The purpose of the outlined investment in adult social care was questioned as to whether it was to facilitate the purchase of a nursing home, which would be an investment in property rather than in social care. It was clarified by the Leader that the Council was providing investment according to what was set out in the budget.
- A Board member questioned whether the cap on exit pay may have a material impact on the transformation programme. It was noted that redundancy provisions were in place.

The Chairman thanked the Portfolio Holder and Officers for the report.

28. Scrutiny of Regeneration, Economy and Strategic Planning Related Cabinet Reports

Approval of the Rolling 5-year BDC Business Plan -

The Portfolio Holder for Regeneration, Economy and Strategic Planning introduced the report a copy of which had been circulated to Board members and a copy of which appears as Appendix C to these minutes in the Minute Book. In the ensuing discussion a number of issues were raised, including:

- A Board member questioned why the BDC was not being expanded to take on further development instead of the new urban regeneration vehicle. It was noted that they were different entities and vehicle for regeneration in BDC. The previous authority was asset rich and resource poor in terms of both finances and people but there was more of a mixed model approach in terms of regeneration options and there were more in-house assets.
- Whether the property and investment requirements for the winter gardens were changing due to changes in the property market and whether there was a fundamental change required in the overall strategy. It was noted that the options agreement was now 10 years old, previously the intention was to take surplus land which Bournemouth had, predominately car parks, and develop these with a partner.
- The Board questioned how the decision was taken to add or remove sites from the options agreement and what the consequences were if no further sites were added. The Portfolio holder advised that this was a decision which needed to be taken by the Cabinet. Any decision would need Cabinet or Council approval as they would involve the transfer of land. If no further sites were to be added, then the company would be wound down. The Business Plan outlined how this would be done, this would also require Council approval.
- A Board member noted that the sustainability section was weak and should be made stronger to include, excellence targets and commitments brought into BDC's future development plans. The Portfolio Holder responded that improvements could be made on the sustainability agenda. However, this was focused on a project by project basis but may need more development to be embedded in.
- A Board member raised concerns with viability issues on the Cotlands Road and Winter Gardens developments, if these were not able to be delivered it would bring into question viability of the partnership itself. This was an important issue and it was also important to be providing housing for the local people. The Portfolio Holder confirmed that it was less about financial viability but what was proposed in the development for the Cotlands Road site needed to be considered. It was noted that finances for the Winter Gardens Site had not changed since October 2020 but suggested that a member briefing on this may be of benefit
- In response to a question it was noted that external developers look at models which have been used elsewhere, targeting people who are

able to access finance and maximise profit. None of which help address issues within the local area.

- It was suggested that the format of the business plan should be changed as currently it was more in the form of an annual update.
- in relation to a question about the Town Hall Annex site it was noted that this would only be released if it was not required for office accommodation and only developed in accordance with the estate strategy.
- A Councillor commented that moving forward a solid review was required on what BDC was developing. The Portfolio Holder responded that people were also moving into urban centres but there would be a need to do some more work on this in future, although the market was directing things.
- In response to a query it was confirmed that the Business Plan was written in combination between Council officers and Muse. The Business Plan itself comes from the BDC and was approved by the BDC Board Members.
- **An issue was raised in relation to affordable housing in developments and it was noted that the BDC had made contributions to affordable housing. The Portfolio Holder advised that he would seek clarification on this point and respond.**

High Street Strategy – The Portfolio Holder for Regeneration, Economy and Strategic Planning outlined the key elements of the report, a copy of which had been circulated to Board members and a copy of which appears at Appendix D to these minutes in the Minute Book. During consideration of the report the Board raised a number of issues including:

- It was noted that the survey could not be replied on completely. In relation to input on the Christchurch area the Portfolio Holder advised that he wanted to work with Christchurch Town Council. There was concern that development proposals had been shared within the administration but not more widely with ward councillors. It was noted that the email referred to was a private email with suggestions for the area and was not anything which had been agreed. A number of the ideas may be taken forward, but this would be with wider member engagement. The Portfolio Holder advised that he would encourage others to do the same.
- A Board member asked about street trading and how this was being monitored, how pavement space was being utilised for it and what provision was being made for it. There may also be provision of space for people to dwell on the street scene.
- A query was raised about areas spending their own money on things when a number of the areas outlined in the report also supported other areas, for example Broadstone. It was noted that significant infrastructure was not expected to be funded in this way. It was confirmed that funding would be based on need.
- A Councillor advised that with regards to the empty shops' strategy feedback had been received that landlords and agents hadn't been

asked about this. Further information was requested on what could be expected from officers in terms of this work. It was noted that something was being put together so that Councillors with district centres in their wards could consider what would be beneficial to them.

- A Board member suggested that there should be more engagement with the Lead Member for Retail Strategy and ward Councillors, particularly when the Lead Member was looking at the 19 different high streets within BCP.
- There was no mention of public transport within the report. Issues concerning the Bus station and development of an electric bus network were discussed. The Portfolio Holder advised that there had been discussion with central government about being a trial area for an electric bus network as there were more than half a million people in the travel to work area.
- It was suggested to set aside some time in the Board meetings to invite Lead Members to address Board.
- It was noted that the survey was online and part of the reason for undertaking the survey was to test the technology which meant that the survey results were self-selecting.

The Chairman closed the discussion by thanking the Portfolio Holder for presenting both reports.

29. Forward Plan

This item was deferred to the 6.00pm meeting.

The meeting ended at 5.06 pm

CHAIRMAN