

**BOURNEMOUTH, CHRISTCHURCH AND POOLE COUNCIL**  
**OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD**

Minutes of the Meeting held on 18 October 2021 at 6.00 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 M Earl,  
Cllr J Edwards, Cllr D Farr, Cllr L Fear, Cllr S Gabriel, Cllr M Howell  
and Cllr D Kelsey

98. Apologies

Apologies were received from Cllrs T O'Neill and C Rigby

99. Substitute Members

There were no substitutions

100. Declarations of Interests

Cllrs L Dedman and Cllr M Cox declared an interest Agenda Item 6 as they were both members of Christchurch Town Council.

101. Public Speaking

One representation had been received in relation to the request for scrutiny.

102. Request for Scrutiny from a Member of the Public

In line with the Council's constitution, the Overview and Scrutiny Board was asked to consider a request that had been received for scrutiny of an issue.

The Chairman of the Board invited Mr Bob Hutchings, Chairman of Highcliffe and Walkford Parish Council to make a brief statement

The Chairman of the Board reminded members that at this point, the Board's role was only to determine whether or not this request should be added to the forward plan, not to discuss the merits of its subject area.

In his address to the Board, Mr Hutchings explained that a report had been commissioned and supplied by the Chairman of Highcliffe and Walkford Town Council, on behalf of the five town and parish councils across the conurbation with the ambition of bringing three separate planning committees across the conurbation to allow planning decisions to be more

“locally”, 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.

Comments from Members included:

- This should go on the Board's Forward Plan, but should not be considered by the Board until January 2022 to ensure that no constitutional rules are broken.
- There was no need to consider this item as it had already been discussed by this council twice and had subsequently been rejected.
- There should be the opportunity to review processes on a regular basis.

Upon being put to the vote, it was:

**RESOLVED that the Board add this item to its forward plan**

Following the resolution being carried, the Chairman highlighted that he was minded group this item with other items relating to Planning due to be considered at the Board's next meeting, although he would discuss this separately with the Vice-Chair outside of the meeting.

The Chairman thanked Mr Hutchings for his contribution and informed him that he would be notified as and when a decision was made on the timing.

103. Forward Plan

The Board noted the forward plan, with the following comments:

- Members expressed a wish for the proposed task and finish groups to commence their work as detailed on the forward plan as soon as reasonably possible, noting that it was likely that the Local Plan Working group would soon come to a natural point at which it could pause whilst the draft Local Plan documents were out for consultation.
- Members expressed a desire to scrutinise 'The Big Plan'.

104. Scrutiny of Skills Commission Cabinet Report

The Portfolio Holders for both Regeneration, Economy and Strategic Planning and Covid Resilience, Schools and Skills presented a joint 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 Holders responded to Board Members' comments and requests for clarification, details included:

- The purpose of this proposal was to create an independent commission, and it was not intended to be what might normally be

described as a 'business as usual' panel of people as this would likely not work. It was highlighted that the panel would need to be drawn from the right talent pool and this was what the council needed to figure out before it can be actioned. It was acknowledged that this may seem a bit "chicken and egg" to some and that there would need to be a call for evidence which was where it would be useful for members to come forward. One of the key ambitions was to ensure that this was about inclusion as well as levelling up.

- Government Funding, in the form of Additional Restrictions Grants (ARG) usually came with restrictions and a large amount had directed been towards skills, to which many businesses and charities had benefitted from. There was already a lot of work being undertaken in this area, but it just needed some extra co-ordination and therefore it was felt that a commission, rather than a strategy was needed to achieve the desired outcome. Working with partner agencies was key to putting achieving this and it was highlighted that the effort and resources already out there and that it all just needed to be brought together.
- The onset of the Covid pandemic had delayed work on this project, but had also provided some great insights. The theory behind this was that this was done every so often rather than as a constant and that all sectors would be approached, including the Bournemouth and Poole College.
- There was no need to reinvent the wheel when undertaking this work and it was more about identifying gaps in sectors, which was traditionally what commissions were good at.
- Whilst this project was hoped to conclude by September 2022 to ensure that focus was maintained, this would be flexible and therefore, if the timescale needed to be extended then it would be. A lot of work had already been undertaken behind the scenes with partners.

The Chairman thanked the Portfolio Holders and officers for their clarifications.

#### 105. Scrutiny of Regeneration Related Cabinet Reports

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 'C' to these Minutes in the Minute Book.

The Portfolio Holder, with support from Officers, responded to Board Members' comments and requests for clarification, details included:

- There was still an ambition to redevelop the former Winterbourne hotel, however it had now become part of a larger plan for the area.
- There were a number of sites identified for delivery and the Council was actively looking for these sites to be taken forward sooner rather than later. Other sites required further consideration and it was

important for the Council and the URC to establish the best method of delivery for each site.

- The URC needed to take a holistic view on sites, including those not necessarily in their remit, including Winter Gardens and Cotlands Road, which were owned by BDC, although there was an opportunity for both the URC and BDC to work together to ensure projects are connected.
- The extra investment in regeneration was not new and the funding request had already been approved by Cabinet in September and the report before Board Members included the details as part of the business plan and would allow the URC to be fully established.
- It was acknowledged that the establishment of the URC may be a cost burden initially, but it would be highly beneficial and it was already growing quickly, which would be rewarding in terms of what it could deliver and was considered to be a very innovative project.
- Other similar organisations were having successes with this type of arrangement and the business model evolved over time and stops being a cost burden.
- The URC was commissioned by the Council to feed back options relating to regeneration/development and its establishment would lead to a level of councillor engagement not experienced in the past.
- Culture would be placed at the heart of what projects undertaken by the URC and its main governance board would be populated with experienced non-exec directors, plus there would be an advisory board which would provide evidence to main board.
- It was felt that the URC was the best vehicle for the Council to promote regeneration across the conurbation and would fit with the council's objectives. A cross-cutting approach was required which was why the council had appointed a director of delivery to look across all departments and act as one point of contact.
- The URC would have its own marketing team to promote sites and national partner as part of a larger branding exercise.
- There was a need to ensure that ambition and drive was active, but robust processes needed to be in place to ensure correct governance and by having this commissioning plan in place, the URC would be able undertake its work and the Board will have oversight. There would be three members on the Executive Board from the local authority and it was expected that this would be the Chief Executive, Leader and Deputy Leader of the Council respectively.

A Member moved the following motion, which was duly seconded:

“To help give confidence to potential developers, investors and residents that the Council has a long-term commitment to regeneration, we request that the URC's board has cross-party councillor representation.”

Before being put to the vote, the Chairman expressed some concerns in relation to the Chief Executive being a member of the URC's Executive Board and invited further comments from Board Members.

The Portfolio Holder, with support from Officers, responded to Board Members' comments, details included:

- The URC was a wholly owned company by the Council, unlike BDC, which was a 50/50 joint venture and, as such, had different governance arrangements.
- The URC was established to provide outside expertise, which the Council would then review and make decisions on. The URC did need the flexibility to be able to operate freely, although checks and balances had been incorporated into the business plan.
- The Overview and Scrutiny Board would be able to call the URC to account, just as it would with any other department or wholly owned subsidiary of the council.
- Before bringing forward the proposal for a URC, many different options for delivery of regeneration were considered and the URC had appeared to be the best vehicle for this.

**On being put to the vote the motion (above) was LOST**

**Voting:**

**For – 6      Against – 6      Abstentions – 1**

**The Chairman used his casting vote.**

Further discussion ensued and the Portfolio Holder, with support from officers responded to additional comments from Board Members, details included:

- The URC was in its infancy but had already achieved a considerable amount in a short space of time and this was a long-term project. The Administration had invested significant time and had injected a large sum of money into realising its regeneration ambitions, and a large part of that was the establishment of the URC.
- Decision-making relating to sites coming from the URC or indeed funding requests would still need to be ratified by Cabinet and/or Council through the usual processes.
- The establishment of the URC allowed the council to utilise the resources it already had available and would save large sums of money by not relying on consultants. Additionally, the URC would allow the Council to deliver projects that have been desired over the course of many years, dating back to those from the preceding authorities.
- There was the opportunity to ensure that consultations were more effective and would align to the needs of the council and its

residents, more so than one undertaken by a different delivery vehicle or an external consultancy firm.

- At this point, there was no ambition to transfer assets to the URC, although if deemed appropriate longer term, this should not necessarily be prohibited.

The Chairman thanked the Portfolio Holder and Officers for the report and for their responses to comments and questions.

106. Future Meeting Dates 2021/22

The Board noted the future meeting dates.

The meeting ended at 8.06 pm

CHAIRMAN