

STOUR VALLEY AND POOLE PARTNERSHIP JOINT COMMITTEE

MONDAY, 8TH FEBRUARY, 2021

Present: Councillor Andrew Kerby (Chairman)

Councillors Cllr M Haines (Vice-Chairman),
Cllr D Brown, Cllr L Dedman, Cllr T O'Neill,
Cllr A Brenton and Cllr A Starr

Apologies: Cllr M Parkes

9 Election of Chairman

It was RESOLVED that Councillor Kerby be elected until the first meeting of the new municipal year.

Voting: unanimous

10 Election of Vice Chairman

It was RESOLVED that Councillor Haines be elected until the first meeting of the new municipal year.

Voting: Unanimous

11 Apologies

Apologies for absence have been received from Cllr Mike Parkes.

12 Declarations of Interests

There were no declarations of interest on this occasion.

13 Confirmation of Minutes

Confirmation regarding a point under item 8 – reserves: S151 money, a total of £440,174 was returned, with £152, 652 to Dorset Council. The actual reserve total remained the same.

The minutes of the meeting held on 16 March 2020 were agreed and as a true record.

Voting: unanimous

14 Budget and Performance Monitoring 2020/21

The Collection Services Manager SVPP 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 Committee was asked to review the budget, processing and collection performance of the Stour Valley and Poole Partnership (SVPP).

Since the report had been published, the calls centre had moved over to a new telephony system, so future reporting will move to that system.

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The Committee felt that compared to other Councils, SVPP figures were looking good, during a challenging time.

In relation to a question regarding what percentage of Business Rates would never be paid because of closures, it was explained that having never been in this position before, it was hard to project. However, SVPP would normally collect in a total of 99.5%. Provisions for bad debt were made. There are reserves, if it was necessary to allocate staff to debt recovery, details on this would be brought to the April meeting.

The Committee agreed that acknowledgement of the immense impact on the Team, should be recorded and needs to be passed on to the Teams.

RESOLVED that:

- (a) acknowledged the performance of the Stour Valley and Poole Partnership to end of Quarter 3 of 2020/21 as detailed in Appendix 1;**
- (b) noted the budget position of the Stour Valley and Poole Partnership to 30 November 2020; and**
- (c) requested Scrutiny Panel produce a Risk Assessment for review alongside Business Plan objective in Quarter 1 on 2021/22.**

Voting: Unanimous

15 The future delivery of Revenues and Benefits Services in Dorset

The SVPP Partnership Manager 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 Committee was asked to acknowledge that Dorset Council will be presenting an options report to their Cabinet on the future direction of Revenues and Benefit Services.

Members of the Committee shared their frustration that the work of SVPP on this matter appeared to have come full circle, from the position of two years ago. Some Dorset Councillors did not wish to see the Partnership come to an end. However, some officers from Dorset Council had been asking what the Council would get from a 'divorce', this was not positive, there would need to be some relationship rebuilding.

In response to a question regarding who which authority would pay the costs of breaking up the partnership, it was explained that the Collaboration Agreement document states that the authority giving notice, would bear the costs. Dorset have asked for an amicable separation.

The Committee was advised that Dorset Council wanted to be aware of all the facts before they make any further progress. It would need to be a detailed piece of work and would be taken to their Management Team.

It was asked that figures and future reports be circulated also to the Dorset Council People and Health Scrutiny Committee also, as the matter concerned people, and a people facing service.

It was advised that any future reports would be brought back to this Committee.

The Committee agreed that the inclusion of a Cabinet meeting date in recommendation A would not be appropriate, due to the legacy of Covid, the intended Quarter one timeline could slip. Therefore any mention of a date be removed.

RESOLVED that:

- (a) acknowledged that Dorset Council was intending to decide upon the future direction of Revenues and Benefit services at a meeting of Cabinet;**

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- (b) noted that BCP Council and Dorset Council chief executives have agreed (as detailed in items 28 to 32 of this report) that work be undertaken on the option of an amicable separation from SVPP as from 1 April 2022;
- (c) requested the Section 151 officer for BCP Council (as Responsible Council) to allocate resources to provide corporate support to evaluate the impacts of ending SVPP;
- (d) noted the SVPP Pan-Dorset Review (as detailed items 56 to 61 of this report) and be mindful of its proposals for efficiencies; and
- (e) requested a full risk assessment be carried out by Partnership Manager for consideration at next meeting.

Voting: Unanimous

16 Proposed Budget 2021/2022

The SVPP Partnership Manager 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 Committee were asked to agree the Stour Valley and Poole Partnership (SVPP) operational budget for the 2021/2022 financial year.

RESOLVED that:

- (a) the draft budget for Stour Valley and Poole Partnership (SVPP) for 2021/2022 be set at £4,951,000;
- (b) the income expectation for the Stour Valley Enforcement Agency (SVEA) for 2021/22 be set at £175,000; and
- (c) any amendments to these budgets that may be required be delegated to SVPP Board and presented to the next meeting of Joint Committee for acknowledgement.

Voting: Unanimous

17 Partnership Business Plan, Collaboration Agreement and Delegated Functions 2021/22

The SVPP Partnership Manager 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 Committee were given details of the Business Plan of the Partnership for 2021/22 Financial Year and delegations to officers to administer accounts in accordance with the Collaboration Agreement between BCP Council and Dorset Council.

The Committee shared concerns that requests from officers may direct the SVPP officers to do work outside of this Committee. Requests for substantial work/time to be spent by SVPP officers, needed to come via this Committee. The Chairman and Vice Chairman should have delegated authority, in the first instance, unless it was a large piece of work, then the Committee would be involved.

These arrangements to be reviewed at the next meeting.

RESOLVED that:

- (a) The Partnership work to the objectives detailed within item 7 of this report for the 2021/22 Financial Year and that a full timetable be presented to the next meeting of Scrutiny Panel and Joint Committee for review and endorsement;

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- (b) the Collaboration Agreement/Delegated Functions Proforma for 2021/22 be passed to each Council Partner for adoption;
- (c) the updated Scheme of Delegation for 2021/22 be adopted for the Partnership and reviewed in line with each Council's Constitution and Scheme of Delegation;
- (d) Section 151 Officers of each Council can instruct the SVPP to undertake "delegated roles" as necessary for the delivery of legislative changes; and
- (e) Material requests for work from either sovereign Council, be passed before the SVPP Joint Committee, with delegated authority passed to the Chairman and Vice Chairman. These arrangements to be reviewed at the next meeting.

Voting: Unanimous

18 Date and time of next meeting

The next meeting of the SVPP Joint Committee be held on 17 May 2021, 2pm.

Duration of the meeting: 2.00 - 3.15 pm

Chairman at the meeting on
Monday, 8 February 2021