

**BOURNEMOUTH, CHRISTCHURCH AND POOLE COUNCIL**  
**COUNCIL**

Minutes of the Meeting held on 10 January 2023 at 7.00 pm

Present:-

Cllr N Hedges – Chairman

Cllr T O'Neill – Vice-Chairman

Present: Cllr H Allen, Cllr L Allison, Cllr M Anderson, Cllr S C Anderson, Cllr M Andrews, Cllr S Baron, Cllr S Bartlett, Cllr J Beesley, Cllr D Borthwick, Cllr P Broadhead, Cllr M F Brooke, Cllr N Brooks, Cllr D Brown, Cllr R Burton, Cllr D Butler, Cllr D Butt, Cllr J J Butt, Cllr E Coope, Cllr M Cox, Cllr M Davies, Cllr L Dedman, Cllr B Dion, Cllr B Dove, Cllr B Dunlop, Cllr M Earl, Cllr J Edwards, Cllr L-J Evans, Cllr G Farquhar, Cllr D Farr, Cllr L Fear, Cllr A Filer, Cllr D A Flagg, Cllr S Gabriel, Cllr M Greene, Cllr N Greene, Cllr A Hadley, Cllr M Haines, Cllr P R A Hall, Cllr P Hilliard, Cllr M Howell, Cllr M Iyengar, Cllr C Johnson, Cllr T Johnson, Cllr A Jones, Cllr J Kelly, Cllr D Kelsey, Cllr R Lawton, Cllr M Le Poidevin, Cllr L Lewis, Cllr A Martin, Cllr C Matthews, Cllr S McCormack, Cllr D Mellor, Cllr P Miles, Cllr S Moore, Cllr L Northover, Cllr S Phillips, Cllr M Phipps, Cllr K Rampton, Cllr Dr F Rice, Cllr V Ricketts, Cllr C Rigby, Cllr R Rocca, Cllr V Slade, Cllr A M Stribley, Cllr T Trent, Cllr M White, Cllr L Williams and Cllr K Wilson

1. Apologies

Apologies were received from Councillors J Bagwell, R Maidment and S Bull.

2. Declarations of Interests

Councillor D Mellor declared an interest in Minute No. 6(a) and 6(b) and left the room for the discussion and voting thereon.

3. Confirmation of Minutes

A query was raised in relation to the length of the minutes with a request that consideration be given to providing more detail within the minutes particularly in relation on this occasion to the submitted petition. The minutes of the meeting held on 8 November 2022 were confirmed as a correct record.

4. Announcements and Introductions from the Chairman

The Chair informed Council of the recent passing of four former Councillors, former Councillor and Mayor of Poole Les Burden, former Bournemouth Councillor Roger West, former Bournemouth Councillor Barbara Smith and former Bournemouth Councillor David Clutterbuck.

Following members relaying their personal experiences working with the former Councillors Council was upstanding for a period of respectful silence.

5. Public Issues

**A – Public Questions**

**Public Question from Sean Mills**

BCP Council has declared a climate emergency and committed to transition the entire region to zero carbon by 2015. Buildings and constructions account for around half of our emissions and fuel bills are rarely out of the news. Many authorities set planning policy to ensure new buildings are zero carbon which London has been doing since 2016. Government research confirms that this does not deter house building nor add significant costs, instead it avoids the far greater expense of improvement later on. 85% of local plan consultation respondents last year agreed BCP should “set a local standard how soon will this happen?”

**Response by the Deputy Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Development, Growth and Regeneration, Councillor Philip Broadhead**

We are currently exploring the policy options surrounding sustainability and zero carbon for new building through our BCP council's new local plan which will be hopefully agreeing later on this year. I wholeheartedly agree with Mr Mills that new buildings along with retrofitting existing buildings is a huge part of ensuring that we meet our carbon reduction aspirations. Our job is to make sure that we get these policies right especially for something this important, we understand and Mr Mills has mentioned that there are wide-ranging support from the community and that this would indeed help meet our sustainability objectives we've also heard concerns from others that pursuing a zero carbon building ahead of National Building regulation targets has concerns for them as well. Therefore we in order to properly explore and consider in the round with a number of other development outcomes we'd like to see such as affordable housing and infrastructure delivery we've commissioned our own study to explore the impacts of all of these issues on development viability, this will then provide evidence to support the resulting policies for that draft local plan later on this year which will be worked up cross party.

**Public Question from Frank Ahern**

In July, the revised Local Development Scheme and amended timetable were unanimously approved by Cabinet, who stated: “We are keen to continue to engage our communities and stakeholders in the BCP Local Plan in order that they can influence the plan. Appropriate time is therefore set out within the LDS to continue to actively engage our communities before the draft of the Local Plan is published.”

The BCP Local Plan Update states that “face-to-face engagement will be an important component of our ongoing approach” (para 26) and identifies Autumn 2022 for the “Further engagement”.

Correction: '2015'  
should read '2050'

This has not happened. Why not?

**Response by the Deputy Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Development, Growth and Regeneration, Councillor Philip Broadhead**

We received a large amount of incredibly useful feedback to the response to the comprehensive issues and options consultation which ran from January to March last year and indeed it was one of the largest and most successful consultations ever done by this Council.

Since July the Cabinet have been engaging with stakeholders and other communities through targeted sessions undertaken in conjunction with futureplaces and specific meetings with the community groups keeping that work going and these events are all face to face and continue to add to our knowledge of the various issues and views of our communities across different parts of the BCP area.

However we're also aware of potential changes that government were proposing in relation to plan making consultation of these has now been published and these changes would have some significant implications I think positive implications for our local plan. Undertaking consultation in the Autumn would therefore be in abortive given the nature of the changes proposed at National level in particular and after much work directly with government on this issue I'm delighted the proposed changes to the levelling up and regeneration bill now mean that our new local plan can formally protect our precious green belt from inappropriate residential development something which I was determined to ensure in our local plan despite the challenges in doing so but something which is now much easier to facilitate.

I therefore can now give the firm pledge that this Conservative administration will protect BCPs Greenbelt from residential development safeguarding it for the future.

Now that we have some certainty around these issues we'll be stepping up the engagement process ahead of that work on the draft local plan something which again is being done cross-party through our Local Plan Steering Group we have a tremendous amount more work to do on this and plan to have further face-to-face events in only the next few months and as I mentioned earlier on Mr chairman the draft of the local plan will then be published in the Autumn.

**Public Question from Julie Redman**

In June 2021, the Bounce Back Challenge Fund was supposed to provide grants for innovative long-term economic development and future growth projects.

The Bournemouth 7's was already a successful festival and made more than half a million pounds profit in 2021. Dorset Growth Hub initially assessed their project and recommended a grant of £15,000.

Why did you go against the Dorset Growth Hub and increase their grant to £70,000 when their social media pages announced 80% of tickets to the festival had already been sold before the Bounce Back scheme was announced?

It looks like the extra £55,000 has just increased their profits.

**Response by the Deputy Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Development, Growth and Regeneration, Councillor Philip Broadhead**

As I have mentioned many times when talking about the Councils support throughout the pandemic I am really pleased with our response we delivered over about a quarter of a billion pounds of support to keep businesses, organisations and charities across BCP not just afloat through the pandemic, not just enabling them to survive but to also thrive. And of that quarter of a billion pounds the Bounce Back Challenge Fund (BBCF) was a very small part of that but an innovative scheme for ARG funding in response to the pandemic. As we have said before the scheme was open in Spring 2021 (18 months ago) and as mentioned it was competitive, and proposals were scored against 4 criteria – Innovation, Deliverability, Helping the Economy Bounce Back and Pride in Place.

The Award Panel agreed that applications must be assessed on the basis of the applications as submitted – and the award the full amount applied for or nothing there was no ability for re-negotiated revised or reduced schemes they simply were not possible.

Therefore, the Bournemouth 7s proposal scored high enough to be awarded by the panel the full amount that they applied for it was either that or nothing. The grant was not increased, and this indeed has been explained on a number of occasions.

**Public Question from Alex McKinstry**

December's announcement - that people attending meetings "must remain seated at all times" in the gallery - removes two-thirds of the Council chamber from public view. This prevents attendees from reporting, or even witnessing, significant events: applause, objurgations, or the sudden arrival of councillors mid-interval. It also prevents the public seeing how two-thirds of councillors vote - including entire groups (such as Poole Engage), and Independent members. How is this compatible with transparency, and the Council's duty to facilitate the reporting and photographing of meetings by the public (a statutory requirement under Section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972)?

**Response by the Chairman of the Council, Councillor Nigel Hedges**

The right of members of the public to be admitted to the public meetings of primary councils in England is contained in a number of statutes and regulations and has also been the subject of interpretation by the courts.

In all instances a person attending such a meeting in person must so far as practicable be afforded "reasonable facilities for doing so" the council must balance the right of members of the public to be admitted to the place where the meeting is to be held against consideration of health and safety according to the physical nature of the place and circumstances at the time I consider the measures that have been put in place to be reasonable.

### **Public Question from Stephen Chappell**

With critical information being withheld from public scrutiny, it is difficult to assess the full implications of this far-reaching proposal.

One nagging and unanswered question is this:

- The Council, now freed from its Trustee obligations to fund the Art Gallery & Museum, cuts its grant to this ‘outside body’.
- The promise of external funding does not materialise.
- The new body becomes insolvent.

In this scenario, can the Portfolio Holder please tell me what would happen to the Art Gallery & Museum, and to its staff, if the new body was wound up?

### **Response by the Portfolio Holder for Tourism, Culture and Vibrant Places, Councillor Beverly Dunlop**

The governance change is contingent on a mutually acceptable financial settlement being agreed between BCP Council and the new Trustee. In recognition of the major risks both parties will ensure that the arrangements:

- Satisfactorily address the legacy of maintenance issues that the new Trustee will inherit
- Deliver a long-term commitment by BCP Council to provide revenue funding – ideally 10 years (in 5 year settlements), recognising from experience elsewhere that such changes in governance take time to deliver benefits
- Be based on a robust business plan building on the Museum’s long-standing track record of income generation to date
- Focus on Board development and fundraising strategy and skills to support success
- BCP Council will maintain a close relationship with the new Trustee through an SLA, regular reporting and by appointing members to the Board (though true independence must be maintained)

A risk assessment has been undertaken of this complex change and will be updated through the process of transition.

The Council recommendations provide for a financial settlement to be negotiated in the transition years. The new Trust will not take on liability for the museum unless they are satisfied that they can deal with the short and medium risks

In the unlikely event of insolvency legal advice has recommended that whilst the Council will not wish to give carte blanche to the new charity that it will back the trusteeship of the charity in any circumstances, it is anticipated that the Council would contractually agree to take the trusteeship back in certain extreme circumstances.

I would like to add that rather than the Council being free from its obligation to the Russell-Cotes it is the museum and the art gallery that would be freed from an outdated restrictive governance arrangement that prevents it operating as a modern independent charity in control of its own destiny and allowing the experts that make up the management to make those informed decisions and this is evidenced by the many independent charities that operate museums such as the Russell-Cotes with great success with a fair and medium-term settlement, the same could be achieved of Bournemouth's flagship cultural offer.

**Public Question from Daniel Parkin read out by Alex McKinstry**

There are reports circulating of formal complaints being "lost" by the Officer responsible for administering them.

There are also reports of complaints being severely delayed. In one case a complaint remains outstanding since May 2022.

Notably, many of these unresolved complaints are about the conduct of administration councillors.

How many complaints are still outstanding, and how many of those have not had a response within 20 working days?

And will you commit to writing to all complainants to confirm receipt and a timeline for progress of their complaints?

**Response by the Portfolio Holder for Community Safety and Regulatory Services, Councillor Bobbie Dove**

We are aware of two complaints submitted by a member of the public via our online system which had not been received by the team that manages these. In this instance we have advised the complainant and arranged for the complaint to be re-submitted and we are also checking the system to establish whether the complaint was directed elsewhere within the Council's departments.

The process for a Standards Board complaint is included within the Council Constitution and as such may require that several stages of assessment are completed, including on occasion, an investigation, investigations by an external body and reports to Standards Board Committee.

And it is right therefore that the process is thorough and robust to ensure that any investigation into the complaint is fair and equitable to all parties involved.

Therefore, that does mean understandably that there are occasions when some complaints cannot be resolved within a 20-day time frame all complaints are acknowledged upon receipt and due to the various routes a complain to the standards board can take we a commitment to give an indication of timeline would have to be very carefully considered. This simply is because this could result in providing incorrect information and despite best endeavours timescales may subsequently have to be adjusted depending on the nature of the investigation.

## **B – Public Statements**

### **Statement from Bob Lister (Chair of Poole Beach Association) (read out by the Chief Executive)**

The Beach Hut proposal, taxes the Beach Hut Owner/tenants by 2.5 times the rate of inflation for the next year and by as much as 130% over five years.

This is totally unacceptable, we urge the Council to reject the Motion by The Cabinet.

With Rising Energy, Fuel, Mortgage & Food prices, these proposed increases condemn pensioners & young families to rescind their huts to affluent Out of Towners!

Sadly, with Local Elections a few months away, 8000+ Beach Hut votes will cause the Cabinet to lose some seats!

### **Statement from Alan Cook (Chair of Friar's Cliff Beach Hut Owners Association) (read out by the Chief Executive)**

I urge the Council to review the Provision of Beach Huts proposal approved at the recent Cabinet Meeting. This proposal unfairly taxes the Beach Hut Owner/tenants by 2.5 times the rate of inflation for the next year and by as much as 130% over five years.

There is no clear commitment in the proposal for specific projects for improvement of the seafront other than a vague promise of 'extra funding' for maintenance.

Please do not underestimate the anger this proposal has engendered in your constituents with this dictatorial plan to extract the maximum income from hut owner/tenants.

### **Statement from Darren Pidwell (Chair of Mundeford Sandbank Beach Hut Association) (read out by the Chief Executive)**

Even though we presented an equitable alternative which would have still delivered the MTFP objectives and allowed both Officers and the various BHA's to build a detailed harmonisation plan over the course of the next 12 months, this was ignored by Cabinet, and we are now faced with significant above inflation price increases with the vague promise of improved facilities, details of which have not been established or presented to us. The plan as approved is flawed in its argument, our input has been ignored, and we urge the Council to review again our alternative proposal and to engage meaningfully.

### **Statement from Ann Gerrard and Debbie Dowsett (Chair and Vice-Chair of Bournemouth Beach Hut Association) (read out by the Chief Executive)**

We question both the business acumen and morality of BCP when it comes to increasing the profitable contributions made by beach hut license fees, in real terms, to the Council Budget. Everyone is facing steep cost of living rises that have severely hit or decimated disposable income of beach hut families who BCP rely on for income. There have been vague suggestions of improvements to seafront services because of the licence fee increases

but these will, if they actually come to fruition, be mainly for the benefit of day trippers who are attracted to boost the local economy.

**Statement from Adam Sofianos**

2022 saw increased public interest in (and scrutiny of) Council policies and performance. Subsequently, there were complaints that the way some councillors dealt with the public on social media was inappropriate.

Then, during November’s meeting, we witnessed extraordinary behaviour here in this chamber.

And residents have complained that afterwards, they experienced continued personal intimidation on social media.

Meanwhile measures have been proposed which could restrict public participation, which feel anti-democratic.

Surely the public has the right to participate, and scrutinise, without intimidation.

Scrutiny is democracy.

Any other outcome threatens the reputation of this council, and the public’s trust in it.

**Statement from Ian Redman (read out by the Chief Executive)**

At the last Council Meeting, Cllr Broadhead was asked:

What tangible value did a Bounce Back Challenge Fund grant of £70,000 given to Limetools Limited deliver?

Cllr Broadhead failed to identify any value or benefit.

He also said “recent independent analysis ... had been highly positive”, but when asked, could not provide any evidence to back up this statement.

Working Live was 1 of 14 grants awarded against Dorset Growth Hub advice. It looks like all 14 failed to help the economy bounce back, almost £0.5 million wasted.

Check [workinglive.co.uk](http://workinglive.co.uk) and judge for yourself.

6. Recommendations from the Cabinet and Committees

The Chairman advised that it was proposed that items 6a and 6b be taken together.

**Item 6a – Cabinet 23 November 2022 – Minute No 79 – Finance Strategy Update Report**

Councillor Philip Broadhead, the Portfolio Holder for Development, Growth and Regeneration presented the Finance Strategy Update Report and outlined the recommendations as set out on the agenda. In doing so the Portfolio Holder advised that a proposed amendment to the recommendations had been circulated to all members by email and requested that this be taken as the substantive recommendation.

**It is RECOMMENDED that Council: -**



- (d) approves the disposal of Non-Strategic Asset Sales as set out in confidential appendix A, subject to achieving the estimated sales value for each lot, with the decision delegated to the Director of Finance in consultation with the Leader or Deputy Leader of the Council as appropriate;
- (e) agrees that, in respect of the properties listed as a), b) and c) in the confidential Appendix A to this report, that the sales of these properties proceed by way of sealed bids to be opened in the presence of the Monitoring Officer and observed by Group Leaders;
- (f) approves the establishment of a cross-party Councillor Working Group to review the Council's capital disposal strategy for 2023-2024 with an initial item of business to review the current process for capital disposal with a view to strengthening public trust and transparency in the process; and
- (g) approves a pooled budget arrangements in relation to section 117 aftercare as set out in appendix B.

Note – resolutions (a), (b) and (c) were resolved matters by the Cabinet.

A proposition to move the meeting into exempt session was made, this was seconded but fell upon being put to the vote with only 14 members in favour.

Councillor Farquhar requested that his vote against the proposition to move into exempt session be minuted.

The meeting adjourned at 9.07pm and reconvened at 9.26pm.

At the request of the required number of members Council then took a recorded vote collectively on recommendations (d), (e) and (f) which was carried as follows:

For – 37

|                       |                     |                        |
|-----------------------|---------------------|------------------------|
| Cllr Hazel Allen      | Cllr Bryan Dion     | Cllr Toby Johnson      |
| Cllr Mark Anderson    | Cllr Bobbie Dove    | Cllr Jane Kelly        |
| Cllr Sarah Anderson   | Cllr Beverly Dunlop | Cllr David Kelsey      |
| Cllr Steve Baron      | Cllr Duane Farr     | Cllr Bob Lawton        |
| Cllr Stephen Barlett  | Cllr Laurence Fear  | Cllr Susan Philips     |
| Cllr John Beesley     | Cllr Anne Filer     | Cllr Karen Rampton     |
| Cllr Derek Borthwick  | Cllr Sean Gabriel   | Cllr Roberto Rocca     |
| Cllr Philip Broadhead | Cllr Mike Greene    | Cllr Mike White        |
| Cllr Nigel Brooks     | Cllr Nicola Greene  | Cllr Lawrence Williams |
| Cllr Daniel Butt      | Cllr May Haines     | Cllr Tony O'Neill      |
| Cllr Judy Butt        | Cllr Peter Hall     | Cllr Nigel Hedges      |
| Cllr Eddie Coope      | Cllr Mohan Iyengar  |                        |
| Cllr Malcolm Davies   | Cllr Cheryl Johnson |                        |

Against – 29

|                      |                         |                       |
|----------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------|
| Cllr Lewis Allison   | Cllr David Flagg        | Cllr Sandra Moore     |
| Cllr Marcus Andrews  | Cllr Andy Hadley        | Cllr Lisa Northover   |
| Cllr Mike Brooke     | Cllr Paul Hilliard      | Cllr Margaret Phipps  |
| Cllr David Brown     | Cllr Mark Howell        | Cllr Dr Felicity Rice |
| Cllr Richard Burton  | Cllr Marion Le Poidevin | Cllr Vanessa Ricketts |
| Cllr Mike Cox        | Cllr Lisa Lewis         | Cllr Chris Rigby      |
| Cllr Millie Earl     | Cllr Andy Martin        | Cllr Vikki Slade      |
| Cllr Jackie Edwards  | Cllr Chris Matthews     | Cllr Tony Trent       |
| Cllr L-J Evans       | Cllr Simon McCormack    | Cllr Kieran Wilson    |
| Cllr George Farquhar | Cllr Pete Miles         |                       |

Abstentions –

|                    |                   |
|--------------------|-------------------|
| Cllr Diana Butler  | Cllr Andy Jones   |
| Cllr Lesley Dedman | Cllr Ann Stribley |

Voting on recommendation (g) – Unanimous

Councillor D Mellor declared an interest in this item and left the room for the discussion and voting thereon.

**Item 6b – Cabinet 14 December 2022 – Minute No 90 – 2022/23 Budget Monitoring and Financial Strategy Update**

Councillor Philip Broadhead, Portfolio Holder for Development, Growth and Regeneration presented the 2022/23 Budget Monitoring and Financial Strategy Update Report and outlined the recommendations as set out on the agenda.

**RESOLVED that Council agree the acceptance of general fund revenue grant for adult social care as set out in paragraph 64.**

Voting: Unanimous

Councillor D Mellor declared an interest in this item for transparency purposes and left the room for the discussion and voting thereon.

Councillors H Allen, A Filer, M Howell and M White left the meeting at 9.52pm.

**Item 6c – Cabinet 14 December 2022 – Minute No 98 – Externalisation of the Russell-Cotes Art Gallery & Museum**

Councillor B Dunlop, Portfolio Holder for Tourism, Culture and Vibrant Places presented the report on the Externalisation of the Russell-Cotes Art Gallery & Museum and outlined the recommendations as set out on the agenda.

**RESOLVED that Council agrees: -**

- (a) that the future of the Russell-Cotes Art Gallery & Museum, for which it is sole trustee, would be best served by externalisation

- in the form of the transfer of Sole Trusteeship to a new corporate entity (CLG or CIO) to operate and manage the charity;
- (b) as Sole Trustee of the Russell-Cotes Art Gallery & Museum to make a formal application to the Charity Commission for a change of governance under Section 73 of Charities Act 2011 to replace the Council as sole trustee with a new corporate entity (CLG or CIO) acting as sole trustee and for the modernisation of governance articles;
  - (c) to establish a Corporate Entity (CLG or CIO) and appoint a Shadow Board of 5 nominees to oversee the transition to independence, provide continuity and stability and to maintain an on-going supportive relationship with the new CLG/CIO;
  - (d) to negotiate, during the transition phase, future years grant support for the new Trustee, along with the transfer of assets, lease arrangements etc with an expected vesting day of 1 April 2024 at the earliest; and
  - (e) To delegate authority to the Director of Finance, Director of Law & Governance and the Chief Operations Officer to determine the best financial model in consultation with the Portfolio Holder.

Voting: Unanimous

7. Highcliffe & Walkford Neighbourhood Plan

Councillor Brooks, Lead Member for High Street Renaissance 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.

Members were advised that the Highcliffe & Walkford Neighbourhood Plan had been subject to independent examination between November 2021 and July 2022, and that the examiner's report concluded that subject to modifications, the neighbourhood plan meets basic and legal conditions. Cabinet on 26 October 2022 agreed the examiner's report and modifications, together with the council's decision statement and modified neighbourhood plan and approved the plan for referendum.

In relation to this Members were advised that the Council held a referendum on 15 December within the Highcliffe & Walkford Parish Council area, and that the referendum question had asked:

'Do you want BCP Council to use the Neighbourhood Plan for Highcliffe & Walkford to help it decide planning applications in the neighbourhood area?'

The turnout for the referendum was 1,955 (representing 16.89% of the electorate in the Highcliffe & Walkford Parish area), and of these voters, **86% voted in favour of the plan** and the council must now bring the plan into force so that forms part of the statutory development plan for the Highcliffe and Walkford neighbourhood area.

Members were advised that the plan will be used alongside the Christchurch Local Plan to determine planning applications in the Highcliffe & Walkford Parish Council area.

**RESOLVED that Council: -**

- (a) **Note the results of the Highcliffe & Walkford Neighbourhood Plan referendum held on 15 December 2022 (Declaration of Result of Poll - Appendix 1 and Ballot Box Verification Record – Appendix 2);**
- (b) **Agree to make the Highcliffe & Walkford Neighbourhood Plan (Appendix 3), that was subject to referendum on 15 December 2022, part of BCP Council’s statutory development plan so that it can be used alongside the Christchurch Local Plan to determine planning applications in the Highcliffe & Walkford neighbourhood area.**
- (c) **Approve the Local Planning Authority’s Decision Statement (Appendix 4) and delegate publication and circulation of the Decision Statement to the Interim Director of Planning in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Development, Growth and Regeneration.**

Voting: Unanimous

8. Notices of Motion in accordance with Procedure Rule 10

The Chairman advised Members that there had been no notices of motion submitted on this occasion.

9. Questions from Councillors

**Question from Councillor Andy Martin**

The Local Plan Issues and Options document published earlier this year says the council plans to be proactive about supporting a change of character in a number of specific areas including the central part of Highcliffe from Lymington Road to the seafront.

Given that the document also outlines a commitment to preserving the character of, I quote “our locally valued coastal areas” could the deputy leader outline what the document is referring to as a change of character for Highcliffe in the context of planning for urban intensification, or what he thinks it might be referring to?

**Response by the Deputy Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Development, Growth and Regeneration, Councillor Philip Broadhead**

The local plan issues and options consultation document formed part of a huge consultation setting out the issues for the new BCP local plan alongside ideas from residents as we move forwards to the next stage of creating a draft plan. Its purpose was to gather views about idea rather than present any definitive proposals. I’m proud of the impact of this consultation

and its focus on asking the public for their views before we do the bulk of any work – very different to how many authorities prepare their local plans.

The option for considering potential areas of change in the urban area sought people's opinion about whether our future policies should be more proactive about supporting a change in character in these locations, especially as some of these changes are already occurring, for such characteristics such as urban form, type of development and the scale of development. As set out in the document this could involve proactively supporting modest increases in scale in some of these areas, for example from two storeys to four or five storeys along key retail streets. Some of these changes have already been happening in an ad hoc manner and this approach would allow it to be properly planned for.

If we took this idea forward, we would seek to bring forward design codes for these areas to explore the options in more detail. While we wouldn't want to prejudge this process for Highcliffe, it could explore things like setting maximum building heights for Lymington Road, where intensification has already been occurring, or considering options for higher density proposals in highly sustainable locations within proximity to the range of services and facilities within the shopping area, instead of more residential areas.

It is important to note that the areas of change were included as one option to respond to the many issues we face to ensure enough homes are built as currently there are significant issues with housing supply, including providing affordable and family homes, and homes that in turn support the economic growth of the area. More people living in these kinds of areas could help support the vitality of our high streets and centres, placing people near facilities and services, and help secure the infrastructure needed to support growth.

As is set out in the consultation document the reference to preserve the character of our locally valued coastal and countryside areas was set out in relation to the seafront, shoreline and coastline, not the urban areas referred to in the areas of change section. They are therefore two separate issues.

### **Question from Councillor Lesley Dedman**

On 14th December 2022, BCP council cabinet discussed draconian changes to the provisions and charges of the council beach hut estate. The changes had been prepared without adequate engagement with the Beach Hut Associations. Despite representations against the plans and process from those most affected and ward councillors, this was passed unanimously as a cabinet decision with no discussion at council.

It is clear that when Central Government in September 2022 forbade BCP council administration from creating a Special Purpose Vehicle to commercialise the Beach Hut Estate asset in what they termed the dodgy deal, alternative proposals have been rushed through to still allow the sweating of this asset.

Does the Leader of the Council not agree with me, and the thousands of beach hut owners and representatives, that this decision to approve

swingeing increases of 2.5 times inflation and up to 130% over 5 years, as well as changes to established terms, is inequitable, unjustified, and unfairly targets one section of our community in a bid to recover just some of the money which this administration has wasted on vanity projects?

And would he further agree that a much fairer approach would be a 10% increase across the board, followed by a proper and inclusive consultation with the stakeholders, and a review for the following 4 years?

**Response by the Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Finance and Transformation, Councillor Drew Mellor**

We have been clear on a number of occasions that we believe that what is equitable for all residents of BCP, our Council Tax payers, is that we look to be commercial with all of our assets and services that people choose to purchase from us as to do otherwise would be to ask the council tax payer to subsidise services people choose to buy. That would not be equitable.

What this decision also does is seek to harmonise beach hut fees that varied widely which again is not equitable and to just put a flat rise across all beach huts would be the wrong approach for equity and fairness across BCP, it would have compounded inequity and increased the disparity in pricing. Also 50% of the values of the beach huts were inflationary rises as well.

Additionally, a significant part of any income raised is directly linked to beach hut maintenance and investment in the seafront that beach hut associations have been calling for for years. our seafront in some areas and our beach hut stock in general, across the conurbation, has received inconsistent maintenance and investment and we are much more ambitious about what residents and visitors alike can expect from what is one of the jewels in our crown.

**Supplementary Question from Councillor Lesley Dedman**

The Council produced a report to validate this decision and it suggested, and it was repeated in Cabinet by a member that these beach hut owners are rich and I would just like to ask the Leader if he is aware that the huts especially in Christchurch where these charges are really going very very high are much used by pensioners, disabled folk, those that are ill and can't travel, families with youngsters, grandparents, myself although I don't have a hut. Does the Leader really think that these hutters are a privileged few as was said in Cabinet, who it is fine to fleece?

**Response by the Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Finance and Transformation, Councillor Drew Mellor**

I refute the assertion that we have said that people who have beach huts are rich that's absolutely not the case. We have got the Mosaic data; we've got the map that shows who currently take these and it isn't all around some of the most wealthy areas of our conurbation. And also, what I would say is if we actually look at where people take these beach huts what we are now doing through these changes is that these are just largely for local people, we have put that in there are have been more strengthened on that and so I would just refute the assertion.

**Question from Councillor Andy Hadley**

Council voted overwhelmingly to act on mitigating the Climate and Ecological Emergency. Since then, whilst the team has been strengthened, I understand a number of the interim measures have fallen by the wayside; two being the use of Renewables Tariff for electricity, and the use of Hydrogenated Vegetable fats in place of diesel in the Councils fleet operations. The job is becoming harder and more difficult as time goes by.

Can the PFH please advise what measures have been explored to bolster energy use reduction, renewable energy production/purchase, and accelerate use of alternatives to Diesel in the fleet, by the Council?

Can he advise what proportion of the "Green Futures Fund" has been committed, and on what projects.

Is the forthcoming Climate plan update on track for March, will it be more ambitious in addressing urgent actions, and will any of these be in place by May 2023?

**Response by the Portfolio Holder for Sustainability and Transport, Councillor Mike Greene**

The renewables tariff that was used by the council did not in fact use energy from new renewable sources, instead it involved paying for certificates called rigos or egos which are traded instruments obtained by energy generators for their production of renewables in their activities, so although demand for those certificates helps encourage generators to produce renewable energy they do not actually translate to any real carbon savings.

The autumn spike in energy prices led to a distortion in this market which meant the certificate costs rose by almost 1000% and given that they are effectively an accounting adjustment with no direct link to carbon savings at this level we believed it did not represent good value for the council taxpayer.

The case with HBO is very similar, when we made the decision to use it the difference in price between Diesel and HBO was around 10 to 15 pence per litre, with the energy crisis the extra amount we would now have to pay is 49 pence per litre and no longer represents a good use of council taxpayers' funds.

A very significant amount of work has been and continues to be done by the climate team on reducing energy use and increased renewables generation to keep us on track with our ambition to be Net Zero by 2030, for example we've now identified all our council energy demand and supply requirements across the whole corporate estate, business cases are now being prepared for each of our top 10 high energy sites to reduce energy demand and increase supply of renewables and we are looking at how we might group together smaller sites to overcome the structural barriers to greener energy supply. We're recruiting a programme manager to work with our asset and facility management teams to incorporate energy costs and opportunities for our buildings and land and develop a prioritised portfolio of

capital works and we're looking for a longer-term energy partner who can help us to deliver our ambitions.

I'd also like to take this opportunity to thank the cross-party members of the Energy and Buildings Portfolio Holders Support Group Climate Change for their role in these achievements.

Second question - so far the council's Infrastructure Board has passed the following Green Futures Fund projects for approval by CMB and Cabinet £150,000 contribution to unlock £1.8million of Central Government funding for energy efficiency measures across our estate including the Russell Coates Museum and Bournemouth Town Hall, £480,000 to upgrade the 2Riversmeet plantroom including control systems to allow energy efficiency measures to be implemented and the integration of renewable energy, £300,000 for geothermal feasibility studies across three sites and in addition £3million has been earmarked for generating renewables predominantly solar carports across our estate the climate action. Pioneer update is indeed on track for March and will be presented as a package together with the annual report and a new overarching climate strategy necessarily it will be more ambitious as ambitions will need to grow year on year to keep on our trajectory towards net zero for 2030.

I do expect some items to be in place by May this year but I'm sure that Councillor Hadley will agree that our actions in fighting the effects of climate change really shouldn't be governed by electoral cycles.

#### **Supplementary Question from Councillor Andy Hadley**

At the time I spoke specifically against the renewable obligations certificates because I didn't think it was real green energy and I am interested in when you said about the energy production partners, but I am wondering if you are looking actively at community owned renewables in terms of working with those people in our own community that are very keen on renewable energy and on being a part of the solution.

#### **Response by the Portfolio Holder for Sustainability and Transport, Councillor Mike Greene**

When it comes to the renewable obligations, like Councillor Hadley I also feel that there are a bit of a SOP and a way out of it, however they do have some use in overall encouraging the reduction in carbon and that's why when there was a small difference in price in doing so I felt it right for the council to pay it but once it gets to a large difference and we do actually hope that that spike is going to be short term, I think we agree that it is not a sensible way of sending money which could be used in other ways to reduce carbon emissions.

As far as the community owned renewable generations we are looking right the way across at how we might be able to do so and I certainly am taking an interest indeed at looking at the community owned regeneration projects as we do so. Some of them potentially will be the way forward, potentially the way forward will be to partner with somebody else who is involved in a much larger scale, but I think there is probably room for both of those together as we pursue that target.



**Question from Councillor Vikki Slade**

Last year, the 2022/23 budget was predicated on the sale of the beach huts to generate income. Now the rents of the beach huts are being increased by up to 127% over five years to help subsidise the budget for 2023/24.

We were told that the now banned beach hut sale would include full consultation with all beach hut owners and tenants but in reality there was only minimal engagement with the chairs of the 4 associations.

The new plan which will price out many existing beach hut tenants and most likely lead to many members on the waiting list abandoning their place has had brief engagement with the beach hut associations but no full consultation and the specific amendments suggested by those associations have not been included in the proposals.

How does this meet the high standards of consultation that were promised by this administration and what involvement did the lead member for consultation have with the associations?

Now that the local government settlement has given more breathing space on the finances and there is a suggestion that some cuts can be delayed to 2024/25 will the leader confirm that he will rethink the increases in beach hut rents?

**Response by the Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Finance and Transformation, Councillor Drew Mellor**

This administration has sought to dramatically improve the engagement and I'm proud that we've delivered an extensive and new public engagement exercise in relation to the budget that goes far beyond the engagement levels we inherited, we've installed a lead member for engagement, supported BCP FuturePlaces in a the wide ranging "Big Conversation", an extensive local plan issues and options consultation. To maximise engagement, we have used a variety of methods as well as using our digital engagement hub, we have held focus groups, face to face drop in events and have been active in the community. Engagement is alive and well in BCP.

The process for setting annual beach hut fees has always included the beach hut associations as the means for collating feedback from that group as is absolutely right. It would be entirely inappropriate to attempt to circumvent the beach hut associations to do differently. It is also incorrect to state that all suggestions from those conversations were not included in the agreed proposals, there are a raft of alterations made to these plans directly following from feedback received.

In relation to the last part of your question I'll refer you to the answer I have made previously to Cllr Dedman. We are increasing equity across our beach hut pricing, increasing investment in our beach hut stock and seafront infrastructure and we are, as has always been the case with this administration, increasing ambition for and delivery across BCP.

**Supplementary Question from Councillor Vikki Slade**

Can he please confirm what involvement the Lead Member for consultation had with the associations I don't think the Lead Member was involved and can I also request details of how those proposals were changed because I wrote my question in consultation with the beach hut associations who confirmed that they were completely ignored, so I would like to see a record of what changes were made as a direct result of those meetings.

**Response by the Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Finance and Transformation, Councillor Drew Mellor**

In terms of the Lead Member for Engagement there is a huge amount of work and a whole raft of things that we are now doing differently that we weren't doing before, so the Lead Member is doing a fantastic job.

In terms of how we negotiate and get stakeholder feedback about the beach hut rents that is not a full engagement that is a discussion with beach hut associations which is exactly the same as it was when you were the Leader of the Council and is exactly what we are delivering now.

In terms of the beach hut associations, we've agreed with them the general principle of harmonising we're spreading the pricing structure over 5 years to help reduce the impact. Following their feedback we did clarify a range of points in the report, amended the pricing structure, strengthening the commitment to reinvestment and focus further on areas of particular importance to beach hut associations, including maintenance, we've amended proposals for transfer fees and opened the door for further engagement on licence terms and conditions and we also limited the eligibility for waiting lists to BCP residents only, so we had a significant impact from those discussions and to state otherwise is incorrect.

**Question from Councillor George Farquhar**

Street lighting in Woodland Walk, Boscombe East and Pokesdown Ward

Can an explanation be given to why the faults and failures of 21 out of 24 Street Lamps in Woodland Walk have not yet been rectified? Despite being reported as being passed to a contractor on the 14th October 2022?

I'd like to take the opportunity to thank the Portfolio Holder for Public Safety, the Manager and team of the Towns Fund, and the Neighbourhood Policing Team Inspector for their efforts to expedite these works. However public safety should not be at the gift or scheduling of a third party contractor.

**Response by the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Place, Councillor Mark Anderson**

I would like to thank Cllr Farquhar for his question.

The street lighting in Woodland Walk was installed approximately 10 years ago and is some of the 1st generation of LED fittings used for footpaths used in the UK and have served the residents in the area very well. Unfortunately, these are sealed units, which means that they cannot be repaired by replacement of components. We have discovered that due to the exceptional service provided, and improvements in the design and

efficiency this type of LED street lighting are no longer being manufactured and therefore cannot easily be replaced.

Following the identification of the condition of the existing street lights and discovering that replacement stock was not available, the Street Lighting Team has been working with colleagues in the Parks Team and the Bournemouth Towns Fund Project, to identify suitable lighting units and funding so they can replace the current street lighting with more up to date fittings, these fittings will be able to be better maintained in the future, and will fully restore lighting along the Walk.

I will ensure Ward Members are fully informed.

### **Supplementary Question from Councillor George Farquhar**

It is disappointing that the working life of the original LED lamps is only 10 years, I anticipate that the working life will be longer for the new technology, my question relates to the fact that I am getting a perception that all unnecessary spending is being paused at this precise moment in time. Can we have some reassurance that because these street lights are identified by not only the Neighbourhood Police Team but the local councillors and the Towns Fund Team as being a matter of public safety that these works will be expedited, and would the Portfolio Holder be able to give an indication of how quickly these new lamps will be actually identified and installed.

### **Response by the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Place, Councillor Mark Anderson**

I can confirm that it is not a case that works have been postponed or suspended on this it is unfortunately the case that these were very modern at the time and I would agree that 10 years doesn't seem to be a very long period of time for a street light to work but as I said originally they were some of the first in the UK. And I remember when we discussed them in the previous Bournemouth Borough Council Environment Committee how excited we were to be introducing these and the things we could do with them.

It is a shame that the lights no longer work and that they have failed and that they are sealed units, it wasn't something that was mentioned or considered when we were looking at this at the time, but as soon as we get something and some times I will promise yourself and Councillor Jones that I will inform you both of the situation.

### **Question from Councillor Tony Trent**

Having submitted a well-intentioned question on the subject almost two years ago, and sadly got a less than helpful answer, about the pressure that was put on certain open space footpaths during the main Covid-19 lockdowns, I would like to ask

- (a) Is there a plan to sort these footpaths out, thinking in particular the ones on Talbot Heath, so that if a future lockdown occurs, that they will be better able to withstand the increased footfall and remain useable.

- (b) Having walked some of these areas over the recent Christmas break, I note that the area of the two to three footpaths between the field, the Langside Avenue/Talbot Drive footpath link, and the 1980s Talbot Village development, and leading on to the heath – which I used to cycle daily to work for many years, has become almost impenetrable and overgrown. Is there a plan to restore these links to their former usefulness? Or are they being left for a proposed future development to sort out?

I also note lots of examples of disrepair, and will be taking these up individually, as I have others.

**Response by the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Place, Councillor Mark Anderson**

I would like to thank Cllr Trent for his question, I always welcome questions from him.

The Covid pandemic had wide ranging impacts and our green spaces were crucial in supporting people and this affected a lot of our sites. The impact of greater footfall and resultant impact on all aspects of green space maintenance – paths, viewpoints, benches, steps, bins, dog fouling, wildlife disturbance, camp fires etc – has been felt across a lot of our spaces with no change in budget position for maintenance.

Currently there are no specific plans to future proof sites in the event of a similar pandemic. However, work programmes will try and improve spaces where budget and resourcing allows and countryside sites will have annual winter works to manage fire risk as a priority, but also accessibility and for habitat improvements.

BCP Council is legally required to maintain all our Public Rights of Way and this maintenance is shared in Environment services between the green spaces and highways teams. In addition, some spaces are managed by the Countryside Team where Rights of Way pass across nature reserves. There is currently no planned maintenance of paths across Talbot Heath or in the vicinity by the Countryside Team, however any specific requests or issues that are raised will be considered for health and safety and accessibility.

The footpaths referenced in Talbot woods are not public Rights of Way and are informal paths. These will be inspected to assess the need for any improvement or clearance works.

**Supplementary Question from Councillor Tony Trent**

I am a little bit confused by the mention of Talbot Woods because we are talking about a heathland footpath but at least one footpath was available as far back as I can remember and I am going back 60 plus years and it appears to apart from about a 3-metre length of it to have not been touched for a while, its growing over and getting harder and harder to traverse. Is there a plan to start to do something here or when finance is available to do something here as it is a historic footpath whether it was registered or not. There are about three footpaths that merge into one but I am talking about

having at least one footpath that is accessible and useable as has been the case for 60 plus years.

**Response by the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Place, Councillor Mark Anderson**

In answer to Councillor Trents question I refer him to my previous answer in that the only footpaths that we are regulated to maintain are the rights of way footpaths, the other ones have developed as desire lines and officers will look at doing those to see whether they need to be cleared back and they will be cleared back as and when it is deemed necessary. We can't guarantee that there will be any specific routes that aren't rights of way being cleared.

**Question from Councillor Andy Jones**

The Government recently announced a £654 million funding package for Councils to enable them to target support for those who need it most including vulnerable families and those at risk of rough sleeping. Can the Cabinet Member advise how much BCP Council will be receiving and how exactly this money will be spent to ensure maximum impact on helping those who most need it across our communities?

**Response by the Portfolio Holder for People and Homes, Councillor Karen Rampton**

This government had committed to continue to provide local authorities with the homelessness prevention grant for the following two years BCP council's allocation will increase from £1.8 million in this year to £1.9 million 2324 and £2 million in 2425.

The increased funding allocation reflects the council's strong reputation in homelessness partnership collaboration and emphasis on preventing homelessness and where this does occur making it rare brief and non-recurring the grant also takes into account the use of temporary accommodation and the competitive private sector housing market which provides many with solutions to homelessness but also remains the highest cause of homelessness in our area.

The package of measures announced in December alongside grants received for rough sleepers initiative the Rough Sleeping Drug and Alcohol Treatment Grant, the Accommodation For Ex-Offenders Grant the Domestic Abuse Support Grant enables the council and its partners to provide a comprehensive package of accommodation and support which is critical to achieving the priorities in our co-produced Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy and delivering the BCP homelessness partnership vision of ensuring everyone has a safe place to live that they can call home.

Specifically the Homelessness Prevention Grant provides temporary and specialist supported accommodation provision for families for young people and for those with more complex needs the grant provides many support services, amongst them being a landlord support incentive scheme to encourage local private landlords to provide homes for those threatened

with homelessness it match funds our successful housing first scheme it provides early housing support workers dedicated to support families homeless social worker for single homeless and rough sleepers, bespoke training and development for housing options team it provides opportunities for over 20 housing apprenticeships and personalisation and prevention fund for one-off payments to keep people in their accommodation, housing officers focus on ex-offenders leaving prison and for care experience young people, supported housing with St Mungos with pivotal and BCHA over 2000 households each year in BCP are helped to remain in their homes or supported to find new ones thanks to the dedicated work of our housing team and many other committed partners who make up the BCP homelessness partnership.

### **Question from Councillor L-J Evans**

The adequate provision of free-to-access public toilets should be a priority for BCP Council. The lack of toilets is a threat to residents' and visitors' hygiene, health, mobility, dignity and equality.

In the past 6 months in Poole Town we have gone from planning for up to 3 new toilets, to one site being selected, to zero toilets actually being installed, with no clear idea as to when this will happen. Those in Dolphin Quay remain resolutely shut.

We desperately need an overarching strategy for toilet provision.

I would therefore like to know in relation to Poole Town:

- How many public toilets are available?
- How many publicly accessible toilets are available, in supermarkets, cafes, shopping centres etc?
- How many of those toilets are available at any hour; of those that are not, what times are they not accessible?
- How many of these toilets are suitable for and accessible by disabled people?
- How many of these toilets are suitable for and accessible by parents needing to take small children, especially if the parent has a pushchair or pram and is the only adult of the group?
- Do you consider the above to be adequate for the needs of the population?

I look forward to hearing the Portfolio Holders' comments on the above (actual figures can be provided in writing)."

### **Response by the Portfolio Holder for Council Priorities and Delivery, Councillor Nicola Greene**

Thank you to Councillor Evans for her question and for her interest in this area; as she points out the provision of adequate toilets for our residents, businesses and visitors is immensely important. While not mandated as a statutory service, the provision of public toilets in the BCP area is a Council priority and there are currently 79 owned, maintained and operated by the Council at an annual cost of over £1m.

I'm pleased to confirm that there is an ongoing trial in Poole town centre of an innovative, modern self-cleaning facility which come from Europe but are less familiar to us in this country. We identified three possible sites for these, with funding allocated for the first two; since they are a new model it was decided to pilot the scheme by installing one and evaluating the results of that trial. This new facility is in Old Orchard but unfortunately has encountered difficult ground infrastructure from the legacy facilities which has caused a delay. However I am pleased to inform Council that we anticipate it being installed by the very beginning of March this year. Following on from that, and evaluation of the trial, we expect others to follow.

There are Council and private public toilets situated in Poole town centre, with the large Council facility near the old lifting bridge being refurbished and re-opened in October 2019, and which is now open 24 hours per day. In addition there is a public toilet beneath the Dolphin Quays development that is operated privately under a Planning Obligation and after the intervention by the Council Planning Enforcement team in 2021 and 2022 this has been opening during the days and early evening, although Councillor Evans may have highlighted an issue with this in which case we can take it up together with the Enforcement Team. There is also a large private public toilet managed by the Dolphin Centre which is also a Changing Places toilet with facilities for people with disabilities and their carers.

The Council also operates a Community Toilet Scheme where a contribution is made to local organisations and businesses to make their toilet facilities available to the public without the need for a purchase. There are 5 facilities in Poole town centre which include Sainsburys who have an easy to access toilet outside their main shop, the Lighthouse, The Spire, Poole Museum and the Slug and Lettuce.

All Council supported Community Toilet Scheme facilities, and the larger private facilities, are suitable for access by people with disabilities and pushchairs; with the Council's facility on the Quay having separate disabled and family rooms; and the Dolphin Centre being a nationally recognised Changing Places toilet. There are signposts throughout the area towards the nearest facility, with the Council's toilet on the Quay having direction signs attached to most litterbins in the main tourist area near the Fish Shambles.

The provision of public toilets is a non-statutory service for Councils, and the soon to be four public toilets, along with the Council supported Community Toilet Scheme compares favourably to the provision by other like sized Councils and populations, some of whom have completely ceased providing this non statutory service and have left provision to the private sector. However, BCP Council remains resolutely committed to providing good quality and accessible facilities for residents and visitors alike.

**Question from Councillor George Farquhar**

Repairs and preventive maintenance to cliff fencing along the Boscombe Overcliff.

Can an explanation be given to why maintenance and repairs to the cliff fencing in the Ward's eastward of Boscombe Pier do not appear to be prioritised for reasons of public safety.

In some cases the fencing has failed completely and does not offer any protection or safety barrier to children, residents, visitors or pet dogs from the dangers of the cliff face, which in places is approximately 100 feet high.

Despite following the correct reporting procedures, neither myself or my ward colleague Cllr Jones are getting swift progress from the appropriate Council teams. We are reporting these concerns on behalf of local residents and dog walkers.

In one case (PBF-001441) the repairs for a collapsed section of fence reported on the 3rd January 2022 have been outstanding for over a year. Further damage has been caused by trespass onto the clifftop itself despite frequent enquiries for progress on this repair and resolution.

Would the appropriate Portfolio Holder be willing to review the situation with Seafront Services to ensure preventative maintenance and swifter repairs are made. And to ensure public safety is a higher priority in future for clifftop fencing?

**Response by the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Place, Councillor Mark Anderson**

The Seafront Service maintains over 20 miles of fencing across the coastline, and it is often damaged due to extreme weather conditions, misuse, accidents and vandalism. It is costly to maintain, and we spend around £ 50k on staff, contractors and fence materials each year.

Our officers work hard to ensure that it is maintained to the necessary standards and the Seafront Rangers inspect the fencing on a weekly basis. Faults are also often reported directly via the Councils Customer Service.

Each area of damage or failure is logged, reviewed, risk assessed and prioritised. Assessment criteria for prioritisation include location, footfall, severity of risk, presence of secondary barriers to access or harm such as goat fencing or foliage, etc.

Some repairs also take much longer than others and often contractors are required to support the in-house teams and are subject to availability. Some areas are damaged or vandalised again almost immediately and East Cliff, Boscombe and Southbourne are amongst the most affected areas and issues are often reported to the Police.

May I reassure Cllr Farquhar that public safety in all areas of the seafront is our top priority, and we continually review our approach to the provision of fencing, reporting, prioritising, and maintenance.

I have asked the Head of the Seafront Service to look into the specific case raised by Cllr Farquhar (PBF-001441) and will be happy to share the response in due course.



10. Urgent Decisions taken by the Chief Executive in accordance with the Constitution

The Chief Executive advised that there were no urgent decisions to be reported on this occasion.

The meeting ended at 11.10 pm

CHAIRMAN