

BOURNEMOUTH, CHRISTCHURCH AND POOLE COUNCIL
OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD

Minutes of the Meeting held on 29 March 2022 at 6.00 pm

Present:-

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

Present: Cllr L Allison, Cllr L Dedman, Cllr M Earl, Cllr J Edwards, Cllr D Farr,
Cllr S Gabriel, Cllr C Rigby, Cllr M Haines (In place of Cllr D Kelsey)
and Cllr Dr F Rice (In place of Cllr M Howell)

Also in attendance remotely: Cllr H Allen, Cllr K Rampton and Cllr D Mellor

175. Apologies

Apologies were received from Cllr M Howell and Cllr D Kelsey

176. Substitute Members

Cllr F Rice substituted for Cllr M Howell and Cllr M Haines substituted for Cllr D Kelsey.

177. Declarations of Interests

Cllr J Edwards informed the Board that in relation to recommendation 'C' as outlined in the Cabinet Decision Sheet – they would not wish to partake in the delegated consultation on this issue as she would not want to preclude herself from participating in future scrutiny on this issue as Chair of the Health and Adult Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Cllr M Haines advised that, in the interest of transparency, they were a member of the Cabinet at the point of the Cabinet decision in May 2021 as referred to in the report

Cllr H Allen advised that, in the interest of transparency, they were employed by the NHS in a post which involved the care of those experiencing homelessness.

178. Public Issues

There were no public petitions, questions or statements submitted for this meeting.

179. Call-in of Decision - Homeless Health Hub

The Chairman introduced the item and associated report, a copy of which had been circulated to each member of the Board and a copy of which appears as Appendix 'A' to these minutes in the Minute Book. The Chairman explained that the Board was required to consider the reasons submitted in the request for call-in, review and scrutinise the decision of the Cabinet against these reasons, and determine whether to offer any advice to Cabinet.

The Chairman advised that appendices 2-4 of the report had been circulated to Board members as exempt due to their inherited status but that following discussions with Officers and the Deputy Monitoring Officer it had been determined that these documents did not need to remain exempt apart from some minor redactions to the minutes from the previous Board meeting. For transparency all these documents were republished as accessible to the public and the Chairman read out the recommendations from the O&S Board to Cabinet. The Deputy Monitoring Officer briefly outlined the issues concerning the consideration of the call-in

The Chairman asked the Vice-Chair as one of the parties to the call-in request to introduce the report and explain the reasons for the call in which were outline in the report. The Leader of the Council was then asked to provide his response to the call-in.

The Leader advised that they had been actively working with partners to determine the most appropriate option and the recommendations from the Overview and Scrutiny Board were taken into account. The Leader outlined the response to the reasons for the call-in as follows:

1. Advice was sought and was included within the paper which was presented to the O&S Board and Cabinet.
2. The decision did represent value for money, the £800k envelope would provide the Council with a permanent asset which communities would benefit from. The decision was proportionate to the issues affecting our communities.
3. The debate of Overview and Scrutiny was listened to and a new recommendation was formulated through an amendment at Cabinet.
4. The Cabinet conducted as much of the debate as possible in public and ensured that as much information as possible was published with the agenda.

The leader also noted that the decision was to delegate the final decision to proceed dependent upon information received from partners.

It was clarified by the lead member for Homelessness that the facility would be not just those experiencing street homelessness but also for those who may be falling into the trap of homelessness.

In the ensuing discussion a number of points were raised and responded to including:

- The mechanism for moving the project forward if the £800k cap was reached. Partner agencies would be asked for their delivery proposals within this budget framework. Having a partner deliver it would open up other opportunities for grants and access to other options such as pro bono work from companies. The Council would only proceed with partner organisations if confident they would deliver within the budget framework.
- It was confirmed that the budget covered the purchase and refurbishment.
- The budget was to take forward the property, with services then being offered by a third party. If it could not be completed for this cost it would not proceed. The Council would acquire and retain ownership of the current building with associated risks.
- It was confirmed that the decision on whether it would progress through a licence, or a long-term lease would depend on the tenders which come through.
- It was confirmed that, in relation to the retaining wall it was Council land behind the building, so it was already the Council's risk.
- There were concerns raised regarding the whole costs falling on the Council and it was suggested that this should have been previously discussed with partners. The Board questioned what work had already taken place with potential delivery partners. The Leader advised that significant work had gone into this with the partner agencies, the NHS and Police over several years but there was a need to give clarity to the partnership and address the issues in a way not done previously.
- Grant Funding - It was noted that this would take time to obtain and queried the expected timescale. It was hoped that the multi-disciplinary team would be launched around Easter 2022, and it was hoped to have the building available as soon as possible. It would be possible to work virtually until facilities were available.
- Location - Board members questioned why the project needed to proceed in the St Stephen's Church Hall building and questioned what work had gone into investigating other potential sites, including whether any commercial agents had been approached about available buildings. The Board was advised that there was a need to provide services where they were already being delivered from and the building was able to provide the facilities needed in the right location.
- Board members noted the higher costs outlined in the Cabinet report and the revised costs appeared to be significantly more. A Councillor questioned what had changed in order to allow the project to go ahead within this budget. The Board was advised that if the project could proceed within the budget then this would represent value for money, the Council would have a refurbished asset to provide the services but if the budget was to increase the value for money would need to be reconsidered. It was suggested that a third party would have access to different opportunities to the Council and would be able to bring the project in at a different amount. The Board raised concerns that this would be possible.

- It was suggested that funding and a partner should be acquired and then an additional report be brought back with known costs before proceeding.
- Numbers accessing services. A Board member suggested that non-street homeless would be more likely to access services through a GP. It was thought that there were more people who were street homeless than the numbers picked up in the street count. This population of people, some of whom the Council were not aware of, were people with chaotic/complex lifestyles who could take a long time to access services and permanent housing.
- Trial Service. Services were being delivered from this location very successfully. There were lots of good examples of similar provision around the country. It was noted that health, housing, social care and hospital-based services would be able to be in place immediately to put on clinics. A Board member noted that the community interest company offering a similar hub in Brighton was not partnered with the Council.
- A Councillor questioned what impact this would have on the Health Bus service. It was noted that the health bus was a stand-alone charity but could be operated alongside the services provided by the hub.
- Barriers to accessing health care – St Stephens Hall was still a bus fare away for a lot of homeless people.
- Leasing the building. It was confirmed that the Church was looking to sell. However, this option was discussed with the Church earlier in the process. It was also clarified that no down payment arrangements had been made with the Church.
- Alternative Sites - It was confirmed that the estates team looked at the Council's own assets but there was nothing identified and there was some consideration of commercial sites earlier on in the process.
- A Board member felt that the proposed location for the Homeless Health Hub was ideal and suggested that this should be moved forward as soon as possible.
- It was suggested that this was a good example of the community and Council working together and with the homeless people already using this area it seemed like a good proposal. There were also safeguards in place through the recommendations which would address the risks highlighted by the Board. The Councillor advised that they understood the reasons for the call-in but did feel that the hub needed to progress.

There was further discussion regarding the overall costs outlined within the report and whether the recommendations agreed represented value for money. A Board member suggested that a business case for this option should be made and brought back to the O&S Board. The Leader advised that the capped funding for the project would address the value for money concerns. There were concerns raised that delaying the Cabinet decision would cause additional issues with moving the project forward.

The Chairman proposed that:

- a. on the basis that the acquisition and refurbishment works will not commence until an operator has been selected and the total costs to the

Council will not exceed £800,000 that no advice be offered to Cabinet at this time;

- b. upon the completion of the competitive selection process to appoint an operator of a health hub service, a report detailing the delivery plan including all project costs be submitted to Cabinet and Overview and Scrutiny Board for consideration.

A Board member requested an additional recommendation to the Portfolio Holder, that the Overview and Scrutiny Board recommend asking the Council property team to explore alternative location options during the selection process.

Following discussion of the above proposed recommendations and noting practical considerations alongside advice provided by the Chief Executive the recommendations were amended. The Board then:

RESOLVED that:

- A. on the basis that the acquisition and refurbishment works will not commence until an operator has been selected and the total costs to the Council will not exceed £800,000 that no advice be offered to Cabinet at this time;**
- B. the Portfolio Holder be requested to ask officers of the estates team to investigate alternative locations during the selection process;**
- C. upon the completion of the competitive selection process to appoint an operator of a health hub service, a report detailing the delivery plan including all project costs be submitted to Overview and Scrutiny Board for consideration.**

Vote: 7 for, 1 against, 3 abstentions.

The Deputy Monitoring Officer advised that as no formal advice had been offered the Cabinet decision could progress.

The meeting ended at 8.43 pm

CHAIRMAN