

**BOURNEMOUTH, CHRISTCHURCH AND POOLE COUNCIL**  
**PLACE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

Minutes of the Meeting held on 24 May 2022 at 6.00 pm

Present:-

Cllr S Gabriel – Chairman  
Cllr R Lawton – Vice-Chairman

Present: Cllr S Bartlett, Cllr L Dedman, Cllr A Hadley, Cllr A Jones, Cllr J Kelly, Cllr C Rigby, Cllr V Slade, Cllr J J Butt (In place of Cllr L Fear) and Cllr J Edwards (In place of Cllr B Dion)

Also in attendance: Cllr N Hedges

Also in attendance virtually: Cllr P Broadhead, Cllr B Dove, Cllr D Mellor and Cllr M Iyengar

1. Apologies

Apologies were received from Cllr B Dion and Cllr L Fear

2. Substitute Members

Cllr J Edwards substituted for Cllr B Dion and Cllr J Butt substituted for Cllr L Fear.

3. Election of Chairman

In accordance with the Constitution Meeting Procedure Rules the Chairman of the Council presided over the meeting for this item.

Nominations were received and seconded for Cllr S Gabriel and Cllr S Bartlett for Chairman. Both nominees addressed the Committee to give reasons why they should be elected Chairman. Following a secret ballot it was:

**RESOLVED that Cllr S Gabriel be elected Chairman of the Committee for the 2022/23 municipal year.**

Voting: 6 in favour of Cllr S Gabriel and 5 in favour of Cllr S Bartlett

4. Election of Vice-Chair

Nominations were received and seconded for Cllr B Lawton and Cllr L Dedman for Vice-Chair. Both nominees addressed the Committee to give reasons why they should be elected Chairman. Following a secret ballot it was:

**RESOLVED that Cllr B Lawton be elected Vice-Chair of the Committee for the 2022/23 municipal year.**

Voting: 6 in favour of Cllr B Lawton and 5 in favour of Cllr L Dedman

5. Declarations of Interests

Cllr V Slade declared that she would be making a reference to a planning review undertaken by the company she worked for. However she worked as a environmental consultant in another section of the company and had nothing to do with the review.

Cllr L Dedman declared for transparency, in relation to agenda item 7, that she was on the Planning Committee of Christchurch Town Council.

6. Public Issues

There were no petitions or public questions received. There was one public statement received from Mr John Sprackling as follows:

The Planning Application APP/22/00538/F - Branksome Chine Cafe (*Erect 2 temporary and removable timber decking areas on the beach opposite Branksome Chine Cafe/Restaurant and Shack*). This application was received and validated on 21 Apr 2022, but the Planning Dept did not post the site notice until last Wednesday (18 May), nearly a month later. I believe this to be an unacceptable delay,, in view of the imminent approach of the Summer season.

7. Planning Service Improvement Update

The Portfolio Holder for Community Safety and Regulatory Services 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 report provided an update on the measures being implemented to deliver change in the reputation and performance of the BCP Planning Service. The report followed a previous report received by the O&S Board in November 2021. The Portfolio Holders for Development, Growth and Regeneration; and Community Safety and Regulatory Services provided information about the report to the Committee. A number of issues were raised in the subsequent discussion including:

- Councillors commented that the service had done a good job getting back on track, especially considering the difficulties in bringing the three legacy systems together.
- How planning improvement fits in with the overall transformation programme. It was noted that the Council was still working with the three legacy systems but was moving towards a single system using the Mastergov software package which would be more efficient and reduce the risk of providing information which wasn't up to date.

- How extensions for applications affected the performance graphs - The report set out both figures. All planning systems across the country used extensions of time. However, the Planning Team wanted to move to a system where this was not needed.
- The reduction in the number of conditions was due to consolidating conditions which were used by the three preceding authorities but with different wording. It was a case of harmonising rather than reducing to make sure the Council was using the best set of conditions.
- Recruitment – The planning improvement journey started with 29 vacancies, thirteen of which had been filled and agency staff were covering a number of the other vacancies. There was a national shortage of planners, which was affecting everybody to some degree. The service was looking to invest in graduates and grow its own officers although it was difficult to find people.
- Target on major and minor applications – It was noted that the service wanted to get to the top end of benchmarking authorities, but a specific target had not been set as this fluctuated significantly. However, it was noted as being something which may need to be defined in the service plan going forward.
- Resilience and staff wellbeing. This issue was linked to the increase in workloads and ensuring that the staff who had been supporting the improvement process were equipped for this. It was acknowledging the fact that work loads were high and supporting staff with this. The Chief Operations Officer advised that the Planning Leadership Team had been impressive in bringing officers together as a team, which was being seen in outcomes.
- Number of Work Streams – It was confirmed that the Performance and Development Management workstream was divided into two but within an overarching framework which created a total of six workstreams.
- Applications backlog – It was confirmed that this was the number of applications which were out of time, but all were being worked on.
- Impact of agency staff – It was noted that there was a financial impact, but agency staff located elsewhere do visit the area to conduct site visits. However, the committee was informed that the new structure for staff should help ease reliance on agency. There was some concern in the number of different staff working on an application, it was understood that this could be an issue but was also needed in some cases to ensure applications were actioned.
- Independent planning review – It was noted that this was expected to be received in a couple of months. The service was also looking into what could be done around Supplementary Planning Documents and what would need to wait for the Local Plan.
- In relation to areas which had been zero rated for Community Infrastructure Levy and whether anything could be done to help local communities, the Head of Planning Advised that CIL was due to be changed in a new Bill which was expected to come in to effect in about 12-18 months and therefore any changes would need to be addressed at this point.

A Committee Member commented that the openness of the report was very much appreciated and really showed that the team had got a grip on the issues.

The Chief Executive commented that there had been good leadership shown by the Head of Planning and good improvements in the Planning team. The Chief Executive acknowledged that there had been several difficult issues to address and thanked all in the planning team and the other services working alongside them.

The Leader advised that this was a priority area for the whole council and expressed his thanks for the staff who were moving this forward.

**RESOLVED: That the Committee's thanks to all the team be recorded and that the measures underway to improve and transform the planning service be noted and endorsed.**

8. Play in Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole

The Director for Environmental Services, the Strategic Lead for Greenspace and Conservation and the Portfolio Holder for Tourism and Active Health (standing in for the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Place), gave a presentation to the Committee a copy of which had been circulated to each member of the Committee and a copy of which appears as Appendix 'B' to these minutes in the Minute Book. Following the presentation, a number of points raised by the Committee were addressed, including:

- Public Consultation – It was suggested that July and August may not be a good time to conduct this as there would be many people away and in addition there would also be lots of visitors to the area, who may not be best placed to engage on this issue. It was acknowledged that the service would be happy to extend the consultation and also to receive any suggestions which Members may have regarding engagement with communities and partners. It was noted that the consultation would be on a broad basis and the service would liaise with children's services. It was also suggested that it should be ensured that the consultation was not purely digital.
- Antisocial Behaviour – A Councillor asked in relation to damage to equipment whether CCTV was in use, in particular whether mobile cameras were deployed in areas with specific problems identified by local communities. It was noted that whilst CCTV could be of use people would take measures to ensure that they could not be identified through it and there was not a particular team to target this. It was noted that a strike camera used in Sherborne skatepark had appeared to address issues there. The Chief Operations Officer advised that there were 14 units which could be deployed on request from the police or Anti-Social Behaviour Team based on documented evidence. A document with information around this was due to be released soon.
- Accessibility – A Councillor commented that there was a need to ensure that play was available for all ages and styles so that nobody would feel

that it wasn't for them. Public spaces needed to be accessible for all and play friendly.

- Funding – It was noted that there was a strong public health benefit to good play facilities supporting people being active and Sport England should also support initiatives to get people active. It was suggested that there may be areas where additional funding may be found. A Councillor acknowledged that the maintenance budget for play equipment was extremely small and it was amazing that the team managed to keep things going. Whilst play areas did not produce their own income, they did help generate income from other areas such as café's and this positive relationship should be encouraged. The Board was advised that the team looked at all potential avenues for funding.
- Play Equipment – It was noted that there had been a number of instances of play equipment being removed recently following failed inspections, most of the equipment had been installed with play builder funding 15 years ago. It appeared that there had been no investment year on year in terms of capital reserves with a view to replacement equipment at the end of the lifespan of the play builder funded equipment. It was suggested that the Councils had dropped the ball with regards to this with an expectation that central government would step in.
- Insurance – A Councillor sought clarification on the Council's position on insurance for play equipment as they were advised that it was insured but then Councillors were also fundraising for replacement equipment following vandalism. The Committee was advised that approaches to play insurance differed across legacy authorities. Poole chose to insure all of its play sites, but this was not the case in Bournemouth. This was currently under review.
- Teenage girls – It was noted that provision for older children was mainly skateparks and multi-use games areas, these were mainly used by teenage boys, officers were asked what provision there was to engage with teenage girls. The Portfolio Holder suggested that design inclusivity was important not just for age and gender but also different abilities and ethnicities. Inclusive play was important and this linked into a number of different strategies supporting outdoor leisure provision.
- Concern was raised with potential suggestions of decommissioning play equipment as there was a strong need for play spaces within walking distance for all children not just the larger flagship play areas across the conurbation. The Portfolio Holder advised that the ethos behind the strategy and moving forward was not just to protect but to enhance neighbourhood play areas as well.
- Map of Play Sites – It was suggested that it would be useful to have an interactive, scalable map available for play sites on the website. Officers undertook to follow up on this – it was thought there may already be one available.
- BCP play strategy – A Councillor commented that there was a need to be careful not to heighten public expectations because this was about developing a play strategy and then it would need to be seen what actually happens once that was in place. The consultation would need to be realistic and would cover a 10–15-year timeframe. The Committee made further suggestions and comments regarding the delivery of the

consultation including ensuring engagement with those who do not currently use play facilities.

The Chairman thanked the Officers in attendance and their team for the work that they had done and providing the update to the Committee.

9. Place O&S Work Plan

The Chairman 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 Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee was asked to consider and identify work priorities for its next meeting pending a wider review of its work plan at a future meeting.

The Chairman proposed a date for the next meeting in-line with the next Cabinet date to ensure that those items previously agreed for scrutiny by the Overview and Scrutiny Board could be considered. There was concern raised that this would mean that two of the committee's five meetings would be very close together.

A number of issues from the current list of items were highlighted by Board members including that there were some working groups which were still standing and the status of these would need to be considered.

The Chairman suggested that it would be useful for the Committee to meet informally to discuss some of these issues in drawing up a Work Plan for the Committee. Some concerns were raised that this should be done within a formal public meeting to ensure full transparency regarding what is placed on the formal public work plan.

The Chairman suggested that the best way to move forward with this was to agree the items for the next meeting from the legacy list and then to move forward with setting items for the remainder of the meetings for the municipal year. There was an issue raised that only looking at two items per meeting may be quite limiting. However, the Chairman explained that scheduling two items would allow for provision of additional items to be added with shorter notice.

**RESOLVED: It was agreed that the Future Places Cabinet Report and a report on the Winter Gardens be brought to the next meeting of the Committee. The Committee would agree further items for the work plan for the remainder of the municipal year at a future date.**

10. Future Meeting Dates

The date for the next meeting was agreed as Thursday 16 June 2022.

Suggested dates for future meetings would be agreed at the next meeting.

The meeting ended at 8.25 pm

CHAIRMAN

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