

BOURNEMOUTH, CHRISTCHURCH AND POOLE COUNCIL
PLACE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of the Meeting held on 01 March 2023 at 6.00 pm

Present:-

Cllr S Gabriel – Chairman

Cllr R Lawton – Vice-Chairman

Present: Cllr M F Brooke, Cllr E Coope, Cllr M Earl, Cllr D Farr, Cllr A Hadley,
Cllr C Rigby and Cllr N Hedges (In place of VACANCY)

Also in attendance: Cllr M Greene

52. Apologies

Apologies were received from Cllrs S Bartlett and M lyengar

53. Substitute Members

Cllr J Butt was a substitute member for Cllr M lyengar but attended virtually.

54. Declarations of Interests

For the purpose of transparency the Chairman advised in relation to the Climate Programme report that he ran a number of Leisure Centres.

For the purpose of transparency Cllr C Rigby advised that he was a Director of a Community Energy and Sustainability consultancy.

55. Public Issues

There were no public statements or petitions. There were four public questions received. All Committee members received a copy of the questions prior to the meeting. Question 1 was responded to at the meeting, the other questions were sent a response in writing.

1. Targets are out of date and the urgency for action before climate collapse is not happening at the breakneck speed required. Media, politics, the law and the police are suicidally, environmentally inactive. The Environment Agency warned 13.10.21 that we must "adapt or die". But citizens are not being educated, incentivised and motivated to Salvage and Survive. Activists are now leafletting a flier, "Should the young just shut up and die?" BCP alleges that "children will flourish" but what is their evidence in view of failure to decarbonise at speed and scale and as the world of nature unravels?

Response: Tackling climate change continues to be an unprecedented global challenge, and through our climate and ecological emergency

ambitions we have a solid foundation from which we are continuing to strive to make a real difference. At this meeting, Members of the Place Overview and Scrutiny Board are presented with a new draft Climate Action Strategy for discussion. This will aim to ensure that the actions being taken will reduce the impact of climate change and its effects on residents, businesses and organisations, as well as our natural environment and biodiversity in Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole.

2. When will the council consider the need to address the possibility and benefits of the '15 minute city'?

Response: BCP Council is not currently looking at introducing 15-minute cities.

While the concept may sound appealing in some ways, the infrastructure is not there to support it and is highly unlikely to be for a long period of time. Our approach is framed by the motto of our Transforming Travel work: "Your travel; your choice", where we try to provide the conditions where residents and visitors have the opportunity to travel quickly and safely by cycle, foot or public transport rather than using a car. This contrasts strongly with other approaches, which actively concentrate on ways to discourage those who want to drive.

Through our Big Plan, we are leading every community towards a cleaner, sustainable future that preserves these outstanding environments for generations to come and helps all residents lead active, healthy and independent lives. This work not only supports the heritage, character and beauty of our unique area, but also encourages dynamic investment and regeneration; meaning residents can enjoy the individuality of their own neighbourhood and everything that the entire BCP region has to offer.

3. When will the council treat the climate programme as the emergency it is and cancel support for the air show?

Response: We have no intention whatsoever of cancelling the Bournemouth Air Festival, which is estimated to bring in around £49 million of economic benefit to Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole. While the Carbon footprint of the Air Festival is considerable - around 7,900 tonnes equivalent, only 240 tonnes of this - around 3% - comes from the display aircraft. The other 97% is generated by those coming to enjoy the Air Festival and activities surrounding it. This shows directly that even if it was possible to replace the Air Festival with an alternative which generated the same number of visitors, bringing the same amount of business to our hotels, shops, restaurants and bars, the Carbon savings would be very small indeed.

4. Under what circumstances would the council review its stance on the dangers of incineration and benefits of wind and solar energy?

Response: The Council is supportive of renewable energy and its use in tackling climate change. Included in the Climate Action Plan, presented to this Place Overview and Scrutiny Board meeting, is the intention to produce a Local Area Energy Plan. This will support the development of the Local Plan and address all issues of energy generation and use in the BCP area. In addition to the many Council-owned homes that already have solar PV panels fitted, we are increasing the number of assets that utilise this technology. Poole Museum recently benefitted from Government funding to install solar tiles, in keeping with this historic building, and business cases are in preparation for solar to be added to leisure centres, Council offices and other buildings in the near future.

56. Confirmation of Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 16 November 2022 and 2 February 2022 were approved as correct records and signed by the Chair.

57. Poole Crematorium: Detailed Options for the replacement of cremators

The Leader of the Council presented a report, a copy of which had been circulated to each Member and a copy of which appears as Appendix 'A' to these minutes in the Minute Book. The Committee was advised that Cabinet in September 2022 had requested a report detailing options for the replacement of cremator(s) be brought to Cabinet in the next 6 months, with the aim of working towards new cremator(s) being installed in the next 18 months. This report provided an up to date crematoria market analysis, data and trends supported by an independent feasibility report as to the options available on the installation of cremators at Poole Crematorium to support a reinvestment decision.

Since April 2020 Poole Crematorium site had been operating as a ceremonial only venue with deceased conveyed to Bournemouth Crematorium for cremation. There were 4 options outlined within the report. The Committee raised a number of issues in the ensuing discussion including:

- Opening up the Crematorium in Poole would also take pressure off at Bournemouth, which would allow improvements to be made. Having the two would benefit bereavement care as a whole across BCP Council and allow the Council to improve resilience.
- It was noted that option 4 would eventually outrun gas cremators by year 18, indicating that option 4 was the cheapest in terms of running costs overtime.
- The Lead Member for engagement advised that over the time that this had been discussed there was now a much better way forward and advised the Committee they supported option 4 based on the information they had received.
- There was currently no UK based electric cremator producer and if the electric options were selected the Council would need to go to suppliers outside of the UK should the new cremators not come forward.

- The Committee enquired about the cremator purchasing options from the available suppliers and how could value for money be ensured for the Council. Consultants had advised of new technology coming on to the market in 2024 which could be retrofitted into older crematoriums. Products currently on the market would require significant work to ensure these were able to be installed.
- The Committee was advised that DFW Europe was the only supplier with installed, operating electric crematoriums. New technology was currently going through regulated testing. The new technology would involve an onsite build.
- It was confirmed that significant structural work would be required if the current market option was preferred which would include reinforcing the floor and alternations to a mezzanine floor.
- The committee sought clarity on the capacity calculations within the report. The number of 1463 cremations was an indicative figure and within industry guidelines. This would be within standard operating times but there would be options to operate outside of these times.
- In response to a query regarding ongoing expenditure in relation to staffing it was confirmed that there needed to be a certain number of trained staff on site when operating a crematorium. The service already actively shared staff between sites. It was also reported that some of the maintenance costs were fairly unknown especially with electric, so these were indicative figures.
- Direct cremations was a growth market and there was potential to grow this in the BCP area. The increasing demand for this seemed to be mainly cost driven. If new cremators were installed in Poole this would allow expansion to this sector of the market.
- Engineers had advised that the life expectancy of the Bournemouth cremators was expected to be up to 10 years.
- A query was raised regarding resomation/water cremations. It was noted that the regulations governing this were currently being explored but the water authorities had raised concerns.

A Councillor initially moved that the committee recommend to Cabinet option 4 as outlined in the report. The timeframe 4 option 4 would only be a little longer than option 3 and would provide a much more sustainable option moving forward. Other Councillors supported this option and whilst noting that there was an element of risk the prospective gains in option 4 far outweighed this. The difference in timeframe between option 3 and option 4 was a matter of a few months between summer 2024 and winter 2024.

Before a vote was taken on the initial motion a second move was made that the committee recommend to Cabinet option 3 as outlined in the report. It was suggested that whilst option 4 was commendable a risk could not be taken on delaying this matter further due to its importance to the community.

Further comments were made regarding the financial and environmental advantages, which, it was suggested would be welcomed by funeral

directors. Option 3 could be adopted as the fall-back option. The motions were then put to the vote.

MOVED: That the Cabinet be recommended to approve Option 4, Commit to bringing forward the reinstatement of electric cremators at Poole Crematorium, subject to a review of new technology and emerging green technologies being made available to the UK market in Summer 2024.

Voting: 3/5 (1 abstention)

RESOLVED: The Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee recommended to Cabinet that it approves option 3, as outlined in the report to invest in two electric cremators.

Voting: 5 /1(3 abstentions)

58. Climate Programme

The Portfolio Holder for Finance, Net Zero and Transport presented a report, a copy of which had been circulated to each Member and a copy of which appears as Appendix 'B' to these Minutes in the Minute Book. The Committee was asked to comment on the following supporting documents:

- Annual Report 2021/22
- Draft Climate Strategy 2023 – 2028
- Draft Action Plan 2023 – 2025

It was noted that a BCP Council Climate Strategy will be forthcoming to a future Cabinet meeting. The Committee raised a number of issues which were responded to by the Portfolio Holder and officers, including:

- Whether targets were going to be missed because we were focused on the wrong things. It was suggested that targets should be realistic and measurable.
- It would be useful to have targeted, impactful training for Councillors.
- The Committee, Cabinet members and officers were reminded of the urgency in reaching the wider 2050 ambition.
- Why diesel use had increase if vehicle use had gone down.
- The Climate partnership was launching in 2023. The Committee sought confirmation of who had been invited and comments on whether these were the right groups and if there was sufficient community involvement. The partnership was bringing together large local organisations and business to see how best to collaborate and share resources. However, it was noted that this was not a comprehensive group of stakeholders. Officers advised that they wanted to open up further to other businesses and special interest groups. In order to achieve there was a need to utilise each other's strengths as much as possible.
- The significant cost of flood improvements and who would lead on this as neither the government nor water companies appeared to have solutions.

- The Committee commented that the Council should ensure that it realises opportunities to catalyse low carbon developments through the Local Plan and Big Plan. The Portfolio Holder advised that they were trying to integrate the green infrastructure design guides into the Local Plan.
- It was noted that a significant amount of information on the Website was no longer up to date and the Committee sought assurance that someone would take responsibility for this.
- The Committee asked about partnership involvement with Trees for Streets. It was noted that over 10,000 trees had been planted in Upton Country Park but more needed to be done in the right streets and a partnership may be helpful.
- It was noted to be on target for carbon reductions further massive reductions were needed. Comments were made that the graph within the report was misleading and needed more data to be able to draw any conclusions.
- Coastal works and sea flooding works. The carbon footprint created by this, including the use of lots of diesel vehicles and whether it was all necessary. The Portfolio Holder acknowledged he comments and advised that they may be work coming through in the future to do this work in a more carbon efficient way.
- The Committee raised concerns that every areas of urban density within the conurbation reached or exceeded the WHO guidelines for air quality.
- Concerned that this wouldn't end up even coming to us in the future. See climate and action on climate as beyond politics. Concerned that someone will come in and change the work which has been done on this.
- Green futures fund – Whether this was for defined projects or was there the possibility it could be used for things which may be required to be done anyway.
- Renewables – There was concern raised about where the Council was sourcing its energy from and the impact this had on suggestions for residents to use renewable energy tariffs. It was noted that residents were generally very supportive of carbon reduction measures.
- Accessing electric vehicles especially for homes without parking spaces. It was noted there had been a significant increase in public charging points.
- It didn't appear that there was anything within the report on food. It was suggested that this should be explored, and it would be useful to have an impact assessment on a move towards the plant based treaty.
- There were some concerns raised regarding consultation and engagement and how this would be followed through. The Portfolio Holder advised that there were references to the report on engagement and the extensive consultations.
- That partnership working was required to resolve issues concerning drainage and flooding. The Portfolio Holder commented that there were lots of issues surrounding this which would need to be considered.
- Issues were raised regarding the carbon footprint of the workforce and the impact of people working from home and also how the Council

operates its own buildings. It was noted that there was a need to think about better ways of addressing this.

The Committee requested a list of those projects being considered for the green futures fund.

The Chairman thanked the officers and Portfolio Holder for their work and enthusiasm for this issue.

The meeting adjourned at 7:52 pm and resumed 8:01pm

59. Levelling-up and Regeneration Bill: Reforms to National Planning Policy and Implications for the emerging Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Local Plan

The Leader of the Council 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 Leader and Officers advised the Committee that the report outlined the implications for the BCP Local Plan of the government consultation on changes to the national planning policy. The proposals strengthen the Council's position in demonstrating that the government's standard methodology figure of 2,800 homes per year is not achievable. The proposed changes to national policy suggest that a lower housing target could be found. The Committee was advised that this report had already been considered by Cabinet but welcomed any comments from the Committee and advised that the intention remained to publish a draft Local Plan in Autumn 2023. The Portfolio Holder and Officers responded to issues raised in the subsequent discussion, including:

- There was new emphasis on place making and protecting the character of places. An up-to-date local plan would provide greater protections to residential areas at risk from speculative high density flatted development as the Council would not be required to demonstrate a five-year land supply. This was welcomed and it was commented that it was important to have the right kinds of housing in the right places.
- The Committee asked about the impact of students in the town and providing accommodation for them. There were issues related to scale and also the number of holiday homes within town centres. Huge developments in town centre either sitting empty or as holiday lets. The Portfolio Holder commented that this was one of the issues with the methodology in that it assumed inward migration, but a significant proportion of students did not remain in the area.
- The Portfolio Holder was pleased that the changes to methodology would allow for planning which could take into account the right kinds of homes to meet local need without over densification or opening up the greenbelt. There was a growing younger population still struggling to get on the housing ladder.
- The Portfolio Holder advised that they felt that more people living in urban areas, with not having to drive as much was the right thing to be doing but that there may need to be a conversation in future regarding

affordable family homes but it was confirmed that greenbelt would be protected as a priority.

- It was noted that there were a number of brownfield sites within the borough and these needed to be developed as a priority to provide homes for local people.

The Chairman thanked the Officers and Portfolio Holder for the update.

60. Work Plan

The Chair presented a report, a copy of which had been circulated to each Member and a copy of which appears as Appendix 'D' to these Minutes in the Minute Book.

The Chairman advised that if anyone had any issues that they wanted the Committee to consider that these should be put forward.

The Committee received a verbal update from the Lead member for the Tree Strategy working Group. The Committee was advised that the group had begun its initial consideration and would be meeting again in late March or early April for the next stage. The group was looking at how the trees were managed and information available to residents. The group also considered how at present there was no shared vision among council departments so there was a lot of work to be completed on this.

The Chairman thanked everyone for their contributions and attendance to the last meeting of the Committee for the municipal year.

The meeting ended at 9.23 pm

CHAIRMAN