

BOURNEMOUTH, CHRISTCHURCH AND POOLE COUNCIL
CORPORATE AND COMMUNITY OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of the Meeting held on 25 October 2022 at 6.00 pm

Present:-

Cllr L Williams – Chairman

Present: Cllr L Allison, Cllr M Andrews, Cllr S Bartlett, Cllr M Davies,
Cllr J Edwards, Cllr M Earl, Cllr S Gabriel (In place of Cllr H Allen),
Cllr N Hedges, Cllr M Iyengar and Cllr D Kelsey (In place of Cllr R
Rocca)

Also in Cllr M Cox, Cllr B Dove, Cllr B Dunlop, Cllr G Farquhar, Cllr M
attendance: Greene, Cllr J Kelly, Cllr D Mellor

35. Apologies

Apologies were received from Cllr H Allen and Cllr R Rocca.

36. Substitute Members

Cllr S Gabriel substituted for Cllr Allen and Cllr D Kelsey substituted for Cllr Rocca for this meeting.

37. Declarations of Interests

The following declarations were made:

In relation to various references contained in the Cost of Living Pressures report, Cllr M Earl declared that that she was employed by Bournemouth Foodbank, voluntarily co-ordinated the Branksome and Rossmore community fridges and chaired the management committee, both organisations being members of the Access to Food forum, and she was also a member of Dorset and Wiltshire Fire and Rescue Authority (DWFRA).

Cllr M Davies, in respect of the same report, also declared that he was a member of DWFRA

Cllr S Gabriel, during the discussion on the Work Plan, declared that he managed two leisure centres,

38. Confirmation of Minutes

The minutes of the meetings held on 13 June, 20 July and 2 September 2022 were confirmed as an accurate record, subject to the following amendment to Paragraph 1, Clause 24 of the 20 July meeting which was agreed by the Committee:

“A Committee member highlighted that there was no report available for consideration. There was therefore little which could be discussed around this issue. The Committee member moved that the meeting be adjourned. The motion was duly seconded.”

39. Public Issues

The following public questions were submitted by members of the public who were in attendance to ask their questions:

Question 1 from Mr Alex McKinstry:

“The draft minutes of the 20 July meeting - Item 4 on tonight's agenda - will have been dealt with by now, but do contain inaccuracies. At paragraph 24, the chair, on introducing the beach-hut item, did not mention the lack of a report, or that no report was going to July's Cabinet; nor did he say there was 'little to discuss'. In truth, he immediately took a point from Cllr Kelsey, who proposed adjourning. The lack of a report was only mentioned later; and July's Cabinet wasn't mentioned at all. How did these significant inaccuracies end up in the draft minutes?”

Response from Chairman:

“The Committee has noted the points raised by Mr McKinstry, which were a result of an inaccuracy in the minutes of the meeting held on 20 July 2022, and this has been addressed by an amendment to these minutes agreed tonight under Item 4 on the agenda – ‘Confirmation of Minutes’.”

Question 2 from Mr Alex McKinstry:

“Finally, were FuturePlaces involved at any point in the drawing up of the list of assets that appends Item 7; if so, what was the scope of their work, how much are they likely to be paid, and what will be the source of any such fee?”

Response provided by Cllr D Mellor, Portfolio Holder for Finance and Transformation, and read out by Chief Executive in his absence:
“No.”

Question from Mr Daniel Parkin (on Item 7):

“I appreciate that assets to be sold listed as confidential in the appendix, need to be confidential for commercial reasons. However, as we have seen there appears to be a lack of confidence and trust with the current leadership. Please could you therefore confirm how these assets would be sold, ie auction, open or closed bids, or an estate agent sale and who will oversee the sale to ensure fair value has been paid and not handed to any local property developers at below market value and not available to anyone else?”

Response provided by Cllr D Mellor, Portfolio Holder for Finance and Transformation, and read out by Chief Executive in his absence:

“As is established practice, our professional estates officers will be overseeing the sale of any assets to achieve the best values. A mixture of sale methods will be used. All disposals above £500k are decisions for Full Council as per our constitution and more information will be available as part of that Full Council process.”

40. Seasonal Response Review 2022

The Portfolio Holder for Tourism, Culture and Vibrant Places 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 provided with an overview of successful activities within the seasonal response programme and some of the challenges experienced, particularly during periods of peak demand. Following a review of the summer season, actions were being developed to address these challenges in time for next year's season. The Portfolio Holder and Director of Communities responded to questions and comments on the following issues, with input from the Portfolio Holders for Community Safety and Regulatory Services, and Sustainability and Transport, and other Officers in attendance:

- A potential Public Spaces Protection Order (PSPO) could enable the Council to be more agile and prescriptive in responding to enforcement issues such as unpermitted overnight stays, for example in issuing on the spot fixed penalty notices (FPN) rather than relying on current byelaws. A PSPO could also manage other behaviours identified over the last two years. A PSPO would be subject to public consultation prior to any adoption.
- The identification of a site for permitted overnight stays might enable stronger enforcement of those who parked in unpermitted areas.
- The multi agency command centre (MACC) was highlighted as a key success and it was confirmed that the Police had been very supportive.
- Temporary Traffic Regulation Orders (TTROs) had proved very effective in addressing traffic congestion and poor parking and suggestions for more permanent solutions, such as boulders on open spaces, could be explored.
- Discussions were ongoing with Government regarding the use of parking fines as a deterrent, including an option to introduce larger fines in certain designated areas with the surplus provided to the DfT.
- Some car parks were underutilised during busy periods. The scope to develop the Beach Check app was discussed and it was noted that as this was now a shared app any changes would need the agreement of all parties.
- Public toilets were a top priority for visitors and there was investment to improve infrastructure for next year. Additional cleaning schedules

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and temporary toilet cubicles had been introduced over the summer period to cater for increased use.

- Litter enforcement was very difficult as issuing an FPN required an officer to witness the litter being left and obtain the litterer's name and address. This was resource intensive and hard to spot especially during busy periods. There had also been a shift towards more negative behaviour since the pandemic.
- The Council was looking into the possibility of including a tracking chip in the kid zone wrist bands for parent/carers to use and funding options for this were discussed.
- Options for additional CCTV coverage around Bournemouth Pier during peak times were being considered, to help address anti social behaviour. It was noted that it may now be possible to use CIL money for schemes which result in revenue expenditure.

There was a general consensus of support among Committee members and thanks to the team for the success of the seasonal response this year and an acknowledgement of the learning points being addressed in the development plan for next year.

41. Scrutiny of the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) Update Cabinet report

This item was restricted in part by virtue of Paragraph 3 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

Exempt information – Category 3 (Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information))

The Leader and Portfolio Holder for Finance and Transformation 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 Leader and Officers responded to questions and comments from members on a number of issues, including:

- Base budget staff costs apportioned to Transformation related to core staff, not redundancies.
- Concerns that the £42.6m of total savings and efficiencies required to achieve a balanced budget for 2023/24 were unrealistic. The Leader outlined the current administration's approach to those savings already achieved and the level of confidence in those to be delivered. It was clarified that £12m of the £27m scheduled service-based savings for 2023/24 related to Adults and Children's services.
- Whether Future Places should be suspended temporarily until the Council's position was back on track. The Leader explained why this was not considered necessary financially or in terms of ambition of place. It was clarified that Future Places was not directly funded from reserves and that funding would only become an issue should Council not accept the business cases.

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- Questions on the rationale for avoiding a Capitalisation Direction (CD). The Leader reported that the purpose of a CD was to fund transformation, it had no direct impact on the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP). The consequences of accepting a CD could/should be avoided if alternative funding methods became available.
- It was noted that there was a balance of pros and cons between funding via the CD and the sale of non strategic assets.
- Concerns at the lack of detail in how the figures contained in the report would be delivered and the difficulty this presented for effective scrutiny. The Leader reported that the required level of detail was now being worked up in conjunction with Cabinet, CMB, senior officers and a December budget café prior to the budget report in January 2023.
- The Section 151 Officer advised that it was reasonable to include assumed government funding streams in resource level figures, although this was not without an element of risk.
- Whether there were plans to drop projects approved but not yet implemented, for example the funding of lifts at Pokesdown Station. This would be considered on a case-by-case basis and may depend on the level of commitment already made. The Section 151 Officer agreed to make enquiries with regard to Pokesdown Station and include a response in the minutes, as follows: “I can confirm that the proposed budget for 2023/24 as currently drafted continues to make provision for the financial implications of the contribution Council agreed to make towards the lifts at Pokesdown Station”.
- It was confirmed that there were no plans to stop non statutory services but efficiencies would be explored as part of service rationalisation.
- Questions about the sale of assets and whether the timetable for 2022/23 was achievable. The Leader reported that as a short term measure the sale of non-core assets was the right thing to do to address the budget position. There was confidence in meeting the timescales but the CD could meet any shortfall if required.
- It was noted that the Council’s external auditors did not share the same confidence in the Council’s ability to achieve a balanced budget.
- Although not detailed in the report, it was confirmed that the service-based savings below the sub total line in Figure 3 had been ‘identified’. It was hoped to avoid taking these more challenging steps.
- The Section 151 Officer agreed to seek clarification from the Director of Children’s Services on the detail of the £1.9m transformation costs charged to Children’s Services.

RESOLVED that under Section 100 (A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the meeting for the following item of business on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 3 of Schedule 12A of the

Act and that the public interest in withholding the information outweighs such interest in disclosing the information.

The Committee referred to Appendix B of the report which provided a schedule of non-strategic asset sales. The Committee was advised that the schedule did not constitute a final list but rather gave notice of options being considered. Once finalised, the list of assets for sale would require full Council's approval. Committee members had the opportunity to ask questions and make comments on the contents of the appendix.

The meeting then resumed in public session

The Committee agreed to retain the proposed date of 21 November 2022 for a further special meeting to consider the next Cabinet budget report, with the most suitable representation attending to respond to questions should the Leader no longer be available as now indicated.

There were no formal recommendations from the Committee to Cabinet on this report.

42. Scrutiny of the Cost of Living Pressures Cabinet Report

The Portfolio Holder for Communities presented a report, a copy of which had been circulated to each Member and a copy of which appears as Appendix 'C' to these Minutes in the Minute Book.

The Committee was given an overview of the impacts which the cost of living pressures were having and an outline of some of the Council's responses, working with key public and private sector partners to support communities. Many of these actions were set out in sections 29 to 64 of the report. As the Council was also suffering from the same pressures, it was also faced with a need to increase fees and charges to mitigate the impact. The Portfolio Holder and Officers responded to questions and comments on the following issues:

- An introduction of overnight parking fees could have implications for those residents in flats without allocated parking. This may necessitate a review of the Council's Parking SPD.
- There was a need to harmonise fees across the Council which was acknowledged in the report.
- Retrospective repayment of the energy rebate by second homeowners was necessary because fewer second home owners were known to the Council since the abolition of the associated council tax discount.
- There was concern about the unsustainable pressure being placed on the charitable sector, about how the Council was preparing for the serious consequences and whether a local welfare assistance mechanism for those in crisis could be reintroduced.

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- The Council had managed to ensure that the second round of the Household Support Fund was spent, with help from partners to identify qualifying pensioners. It was welcomed that the third round would not be ringfenced in the same way.
- In response to concerns that the Council was not doing enough, it was explained that the actions being taken by the Council and its partners, as set out in the report, was specifically to address the reality of the current situation. It was reported that there were additional new staff in the Community Development team to help identify people needing support.
- The Portfolio Holder agreed to report back to the Committee regarding the BCP Affordable Warmth Partnership, specifically that the Council's local provider Ridgewater Energy was advising residents that it had no funding available.
- There was concern that the Council was looking to increase fees and charges in the same report which detailed the pressures and actions being taken to support the hardest hit. The Portfolio Holder reported that fees and charges applied to all whereas the support provided to mitigate cost of living pressures was targeted.

There were no formal recommendations from the Committee to Cabinet on this report.

43. Work Plan

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

The Committee was asked to consider how it wished to manage the number of items listed for its next scheduled meeting on 12 December 2022. Having considered alternative options, the Committee concluded that all items listed warranted inclusion in the December cycle and that an additional meeting would be required to facilitate this. The O&S Specialist asked members to contact Democratic Services by the end of October to request any data sets or specific information to be included in December reports.

The Committee discussed a request for a scrutiny working group to look at emergency procedures and civic commemorations. As one of the members submitting the request, Cllr M Earl summarised the reasons for the proposed review as set out in the report. It was noted that emergency planning was an officer led function which reported to the Audit and Governance Committee. The Committee was advised that the Charter Trustees for Bournemouth and Poole had already identified a need to set up a working group to jointly discuss as members how BCP and the three towns should deal with civic events and commemorations going forward. It was agreed to hold the first meeting of this working group, engage with Cllr Earl and then report back to the Committee.

RESOLVED that the Work Plan as set out in the report be approved with an additional meeting scheduled in December to accommodate some of the items currently listed for 12 December meeting.

The meeting ended at 9.19 pm

CHAIRMAN