

**BOURNEMOUTH, CHRISTCHURCH AND POOLE COUNCIL**  
**OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD**

Minutes of the Meeting held on 09 October 2023 at 6.00 pm

Present:-

Cllr S Bartlett – Chairman

Cllr S Aitkenhead – Vice-Chairman

Present: Cllr P Broadhead, Cllr L Dedman, Cllr B Dove, Cllr C Goodall,  
Cllr S Moore, Cllr L Northover, Cllr K Salmon, Cllr M Tarling,  
Cllr T Trent and Cllr M Andrews (In place of Cllr O Walters)

Present virtually: Cllr F Rice

Also in attendance: Cllr V Slade

6. Apologies

Apologies were received from Cllr O Walter and Cllr F Rice who was attending virtually

7. Substitute Members

Cllr M Andrews substituted for Cllr O Walters

8. Declarations of Interests

There were no declarations of interest made on this occasion.

9. Public Issues

There were no public petitions or questions. One public statement was received in relation to agenda item 6 – Carters Quay – Phases 4,5 and 6. The statement was submitted by Mr McKinstry and read out on his behalf by the Democratic Services Officer as follows:

The Carter's Quay story goes deeper than tonight's report for Item 6 suggests. When the sale agreement was signed in 2021, Inland Partnerships Ltd was showing a £1,500,000 loss at Companies House, while the risk of a liquidity crisis in its parent company, Inland Homes, was rated as "high". It appeared that these companies were being bailed out by the Mellor administration to kick-start the "Big Plan" to rejuvenate Poole. The on-line planning correspondence, meanwhile, throws up several surprises, notably a jaw-dropping email from an Inland Homes manager, dated 24 August 2021, stating "the agreement it will be built for BCP has now been confirmed." At that point the proposal hadn't even been put before Cabinet, and full Council was three weeks away. Global

macroeconomics undoubtedly contributed, but the basic lesson of Carter's Quay is "Don't do whirlwind romances with cash-strapped developers."

10. Transformation Programme Update

The Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Transformation and Resources 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 Board was advised of a number of key achievements and milestones which had been delivered since the inception of the programme and the last update. In the each of the principal elements of the programme; Organisational Design, Where and how we work and Supporting our Colleagues. The Board was informed that some of this was now so familiar to staff and Councillors that it was easy to overlook as the Council continued to thrive and operate in the 'new normal'. Significant time and investment had been put in to building the foundations from which the Council could continue to transform as an organisation. It was noted that some of this may not be visible or obvious until such point as they were released for use and then quickly pass into familiarity with expectations and boundaries then pushed to the next improvement. The Cabinet member noted that much of the transformation agenda work was already in place before they took up the post but they would continue to work with officers on this as it develops. In the following discussion a number of issues were raised and responded to including:

A query concerning how hybrid working was operating was raised. It was noted that this was business as normal now and with the development of the civic centre the Council was able to optimise the use of space and ensure desk ratios and working areas were working for everyone.

- The majority of staff were now using the BCP Civic Centre and enjoyed the balance of working from the office and from home.
- It was noted that there were ongoing comments made generally about getting people back in the office and it was questioned whether offering flexibility was the right thing?
- It was raised that there were still levels of uncertainty regarding the funding and savings to be achieved through the transformation programme. It was asked if there was a plan B.
- It was noted that in forecasting the budget gap all unattributed savings had been removed from the Medium Term Financial Plan. Work to identify savings was included within the entire budget gap. The Portfolio Holder advised that they would not offer guarantees on the level of savings which would be realised through the transformation programme and further professional advice was awaited from officer on this. It was noted that the Programme was achieving a lot already and that the savings would be reflected in the final level of savings for the long term.
- The Board highlighted that Councillors were currently uncited on achievements of the programme and it would be useful if some information or demonstrations of these could be shared in order to see how the programme had come.

- A Councillor asked how mature progress on the customer relations interface was and whether it had been tested and when it would be rolled out. Dynamic CE was currently used and the Council was in organisational transitioning to a more modern version. This was a complex programme of work but would provide a tangible benefit to residents, including more options to self-serve.
- It was noted that there was significant upfront costs and investment into the transformation programme and that there was a need to make sure savings were deliverable. It was noted that savings hadn't been realised because these had been overly ambitious previously. The Board was advised that savings would only be put into the budget on what could actually be delivered based on structured plans.
- A request was made that ward councillors be kept updated on estate matters especially when buildings affected had been or were currently being accessed by members of the public.
- The Board asked about progress on the development of the old town hall meeting rooms and in particular the Council Chamber. It was noted that work on this was still in progress and the service was looking at the most cost-effective solutions to see what was possible.
- A concern was raised regarding the depot review and it was noted that this could be a particularly costly issue. The Board was advised that the working group was looking at it and would be happy to update members on this going forward.

The Chair welcomed the establishment of the cross-party working group and advised the Board that they would like to see issues coming back to the Board as and when members sitting on the working group felt that this was appropriate.

It was noted that the Board would also keep track on the financial aspects of transformation in their scrutiny of the MTFP reports to Cabinet and may also consider transformation reports to Cabinet from time to time.

11. Carters Quay Phases 4,5 and 6

The Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Dynamic Places 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 Board was advised that the report set out the background to the Carters Quay scheme phases 4, 5 and 6 and the Council's involvement as well as the challenges currently faced.

It was noted that officers had and continued to review the options for taking forward the development and that recommendation/s will be presented to Cabinet and Council when a clear picture emerges of which option represents the best set of probable outcomes for the Council and residents of BCP. The Board was advised that this was a very live situation and documents had been issued since the start of the meeting to confirm that the company, Inland Homes was in administration. The Leader advised the

Board that the company was financially sound at the time of entering into the agreement.

The site was purchased for build to rent and was at the point where planning permission was due to expire. The land was bought by the Council and was considered to be important for regeneration.

There were questions from councillors around how much due diligence was done around inland homes. At the time the site was purchased interest rates were low, funding was secured with a mortgage on the site which gave security.

In response to a question it was confirmed that FuturePlaces had been involved at one stage in design and finish. The Board was advised that some preliminary work had already been completed onsite and that this work should be fine for sometime.

The Board was informed that it was a developing situation and there would probably be a need to come back to Cabinet and Council in a few months regarding the situation.

Further questions were raised and responded to regarding the financial aspects of the situation and the administration procedures.

A Board member asked about the procedures for the contract and whether there should have been something in place which would allow the Council to take action in this situation. It was noted that no one else could take possession of the land without the Council's permission.

The Chair thanked the Leader for the paper and being informative as it made the position clearer.

## 12. Informal Working Group Report - Blue Badge Service

The Chair of the Board 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 Board was advised that the report contained the findings of an informal Overview and Scrutiny (O&S) working group on the Blue Badge Service. The purpose of the member-led working group was to establish background information on the service in order to determine whether further in-depth scrutiny was warranted. The Chair explained that the group carried out its work on an informal basis but had come up with a number of recommendations following its investigations. recommendations suggested. The Board was advised that one of the issues raised was with the CRM system which would probably lead to further change in the future.

The Board was advised that the service was operating within government guidelines, which was to process applications within 12 weeks. The Service was currently processing applications in approximately 8 weeks. It was important that the public was aware of how long the process would take

and that they should be encouraged to apply early enough to get the badge when required.

It was noted that there was an informal local agreement with the parking team to take into consideration expired badges up to 8 weeks.

It was noted that many people applying for Ble Badges were not online and the public needed to know how to access the service. The Board was advised that library staff were available to offer help.

Following a suggestion it was agreed to add a recommendation that officers consider whether a feedback form could be provided to customers.

With regards to a question as to whether reminders could be sent, it was noted that this was a national issue and the Council were working with the LGA on this.

A further suggestion was made that there should be a facility for training Councillors, in order for them to be able to liaise with residents.

**RESOLVED that**

- 1. The report of the informal working group recommending that no formal, in-depth scrutiny review is required be noted;**
- 2. The Board supplies the following recommendations to Officers for consideration:**
  - a) Officers continue to explore methods and the costs of providing Blue Badge renewal applicants with renewal reminder and make appropriate recommendations to the responsible cabinet portfolio holder;**
  - b) Officers consider the addition of a carers tick box to the application form to indicate the Blue Badge holder receives services from Adult Social Care which may allow verification of the application via data already held by the Council;**
  - c) Officers consult with LGA members on the appropriateness of the Blue Badge fee to determine if an approach to government to increase the fee is desirable and/or warranted;**
  - d) Officers consider producing a Blue Badge service flowchart;**
  - e) Officers consider adding a note on the Council website to explain why an application may take up to 12 weeks to process.**
  - f) Officers consider whether a feedback form could be provided to customers**

- 3. An update to O&S on the matter be scheduled for 12 months-time.**

Voting: Nem. Con.

13. Forward Plan

The Chair of the Board 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 Chair advised the Board that it

needed to consider and identify its priorities for future meetings. The Board was advised that preparations for work programming workshops were underway but would not be completed in time for the next few meetings. The Chair commented that at present the Cabinet FP was not where it need to be but this was being worked on in order to better assist in future planning. A number of items were suggested for the next meeting of the Board including:

- Library Strategy
- Planning Performance
- MTFP update
- Best Value Notice Progress Report

The following items were suggested for the Board meeting in December:

- Local plan draft – critical issue for Council.
- BCP Community Safety partnership
- O&S Function, Plan of action - review and monitor

The Board were reminded that further work was needed to further develop the Board's Work Plan and consider what type of scrutiny body the Board wanted to be.

The Chair also put forward a suggestion for two working groups:

The first being to consider a lack of corporate complaints data collection and how this could be measured and the second was to consider an external assurance review of the business plans of external companies and organisations. Volunteers were requested to put themselves forward for each of the working groups.

The dates outlined for future meetings of the Board were agreed as follows:

13 November 2023  
4 December 2023  
8 January 2024  
29 January 2024  
26 February 2024  
2 April 2024

The meeting ended at 8.31 pm

CHAIRMAN