

BOURNEMOUTH, CHRISTCHURCH AND POOLE COUNCIL
OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD

Minutes of the Meeting held on 27 August 2024 at 6.00 pm

Present:-

Cllr S Bartlett – Chairman

Cllr S Aitkenhead – Vice-Chairman

Present: Cllr P Broadhead, Cllr J Beesley, Cllr C Goodall, Cllr S Mackrow,
Cllr L Northover, Cllr K Salmon, Cllr T Trent and Cllr O Walters
Present Virtually: Cllr F Rice and Cllr C Weight
Also in attendance: Cllr R Burton and Cllr M Earl
Also in attendance: Cllr M Cox and Cllr P Canavan
Virtually:

23. Apologies

None were received

24. Substitute Members

There were no substitute members.

25. Declarations of Interests

There were no declarations of interest made on this occasion. Cllr K Salmon advised for transparency that they had a potential interest in the DSG in relation to the Council Budget Monitoring Report 2024/25 at Quarter One.

26. Confirmation of Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 16 July were agreed as a correct record.

27. Public Issues

None were received for this meeting

28. Council Budget Monitoring 2024/25 at Quarter One

The Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Finance 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 the quarter one 2024/25 projected financial outturn information for the general fund and housing revenue account (HRA).

The February 2024 approved general fund budget for 2024/25 was balanced on the assumption of £38m in savings, efficiencies, and additional resources. The quarter one budget monitoring position for 2024/25 demonstrated the ongoing financial challenges from increasing demand and cost pressures, not dissimilar to those faced by all upper tier local authorities. The Council's robust financial governance and proactive management of its budget had enabled significant mitigation.

The Board was informed that Services were expected to implement mitigation strategies to address emerging operational pressures identified within the first quarter.

The expenditure on the Special Educational Needs and Disability Service (SEND), continued to exceed the government grant made available as part of the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) and reflected the rising demand for services in this area. This position had significantly worsened from the position assumed in the budget for 2024/25. Conversations for an urgent solution were continuing with the Department for Education (DfE) and the Ministry of Housing, Communities, and Local Government (MHCLG). The Board raised a number of issues, including:

- Carparking Overspend and Cost of Collection Charges – The Board sought clarification as to whether this was due to transactional charges by Credit Card Companies being considerably more than budgeted. The reasons for this were being examined along with mitigating measures to address this.
- Charges per transaction had increased but numbers using the car parks had reduced. The Portfolio Holder was asked if charges had reached a point which deterred people from using the car parks. It wasn't believed that this was the case and different factors around this were being looked into.
- **Action: It was suggested that the O&S Board should look into parking charges further and undertake a more in-depth look into whether the current policy was suitable.** The Board was advised that the Chief Operations Officer was carrying out an in-depth look into this.
- The Board raised issues regarding wellbeing concerns at points 21, 22 and 23 of Appendix A1 to the report for Children's Social Care. There was a strong oversight of the Children in Care Overspend which was addressed though Gateway Meetings.
- Costs of agency staff and whether it was realistic that this could be reduced. A significant recruitment drive had changed the position to around a mix of 30 percent agency staff and 70 percent permanent staff. There was clear support for remuneration for social workers in children's services in order to support this agenda.
- The reduction of the Adult Social Care Budget by £5.1million. An amount had been budgeted for mental health support which had not been required. This was an ongoing budget issue which was proposed to support the ongoing budget pressures with Children's Social Care. The saving had no impact on the adult social care service provision.
- Element of Challenges - Parameters were being put in place which would hopefully reduce the £3.1 million current forecast. Additionally, there may be a saving which has not been brought down. It was noted that the initial contingency was part of the budget which had been set by

Council. It was suggested that the rate of the use of contingency may be concerning depending upon the degree of confidence in the mitigating measures being taken.

- Optimism Bias Contingency – The Portfolio Holder was asked if there was any regret in putting this in place as there was then a very real opportunity to use this without giving it further consideration. The Board was advised that the risk should be balanced with contingency, and it was thought that this was being done well. Although the contingency money was spent but this was ok as this was part of the budget.
- Notice periods to realise savings as part of transformation – Clarification was sought regarding savings reduced due to notice periods it was noted that this would have an impact on savings as the period of savings would be reduced by the length of the notice period.
- Children's Services Delivery Model – It was noted that parts of the new service delivery model were on hold until spring 2025 due to a potential Ofsted visit during 2024. In addition, changes needed to be made in conjunction with the pay and reward work.
- DSG – It was noted that paragraph 24 of the report outlined that the DSG budget deficit had increased by 57 percent. A comment was made that it was difficult to understand why it had increased at this rate over a short period. Children's Services had turned around the backlog situation with EHCPs and with more in place this had contributed to the increase in this period.
- DFE sector led improvement was scrutinising all decisions around placements and the service had been successful at reducing costs quite significantly. The Board was reminded that Recommendation C of the report set out that a separate report should go through to the October Cabinet meeting.
- It was noted that part of the Safety Valve support would have been for two new provisions for children with ASD which needed to be addressed. The capacity within secondary schools was not there currently there to provide places but this would become available in the future. A Councillor commented that unless there was full reform around SEND the Council could still experience difficulties as external providers costs impacted
- Savings by SEND provision in local schools – The Board asked how many children could be accommodated and the impact of this on savings. It was noted that this was work which needed to be undertaken, there was some complexity depending upon the numbers of children within cohorts and also their geographical location.

Action: The Board requested that a report on Capital - as part of Q2 report be brought to the Board – to remain on tracker until achieved.

29. Shared Vision for Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole - Overview and Scrutiny Utilisation of the Performance Dashboard

The Leader introduced the item which included 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 Director of Marketing Communications and Policy provided further information to the Committee

on the utilisation of the performance dashboard within a presentation attached as an Appendix to these minutes. The Board was informed that BCP Council adopted the corporate strategy, 'A Shared Vision for Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole 2024-28' in May 2024. A set of measures of progress for achieving the vision, priorities and ambitions were incorporated. The first quarterly performance monitoring report for the Vision, presenting an update on the progress measures was outlined to the Board. The Board was advised that the vision could also be monitored through a new performance dashboard which was available on the Council's website providing up-to-date real time information on the progress measures. The Board received a presentation and demonstration of the dashboard through the website. In the following discussion number of points were raised including:

- **Violent crime and sexual assaults were combined on the monitoring tracker and the Board asked if these could be separated out.**
- **It was noted that the measure for Anti-Social Behaviour monitoring was by reports to the police. A Councillor advised that it appeared to be nearly impossible to report at the moment and asked if there was another measure which could be used.**
- In response to a query the Board was advised that the development of the performance dashboard had considered what other authorities already had. Research with the LGA had taken place and the service had looked into those Councils' which were highlighted as having best practice.
- The Board asked if BCP could sell to other authorities. It was reported that this had been considered and would be investigated further.
- The organisation was using Power BI, this was positive, and it was really good to be transparent with the public moving forward. However, it was important to ensure that with the information being publicly accessible that it was presented in an appropriate way. **For example, the target for more Fixed Penalty Notice and the potential public perception of these statistics.**
- **Consideration should be given to replacing the target regarding waste diverted from landfill with a more appropriate target on recycling.**
- **It was also suggested that a target around wealth inequality should be considered.**
- The Board questioned whether it had been tested for accessibility by the public or if it was going through an appropriate test group. It was noted that it was already live, but it was not thought to have gone through the suggested testing as yet.
- The Board asked about the frequency of updates to the data. It was explained that data came from the scorecard which was updated daily. At present this was manually entered but the ambition was to have it be able to link into systems data.
- The Board asked about the ease of changing the measurements which were being used. It was noted that a lot of the underlying data would probably stay the same but would be evaluated through a different lens.

Amendments could be made relatively easily but it would also depend on how the data was being store by services.

- **It was suggested that the targets on footfall should be measured on a yearly basis for the quarter rather than consecutive quarters as this would be a more sensible measure as not season dependent.**
The Leader confirmed that footfall was up in June year on year.
- In response to a query around the target for rough sleeping being to maintain the current position rather than to bring the numbers down, **the Leader advised that she would look into this further to find out what action was being taken and bring back a fuller response on this issue.**
- In response to a query on the Planning Improvement Board it was confirmed that this would not be closed down until the backlog was cleared. Planning updates would be brought through Scrutiny.
- An issue was raised regarding ensuring all targets were in Plain English – The particular issue at Item 14, had already been noticed and the service was being worked with to improve this, but it needed to be balanced with the need to ensure that services with their expertise understand the target as well.
- Some of the measures appeared to be predictable and inward looking. The measures should be about what people were not happy with, e.g. street cleaning was a measure, but pothole repair was not, neither was cleaning up of Graffiti and clear up of litter and overall cleanliness.
- In response to a query, the Board was informed that some of the measures were from LG Inform, which was a benchmarking tool which could be used to see how BCP Council's performance meets with others' performance.
- **Action: 1. The Chairman welcomed any feedback from the Board on the dashboard to be passed to the Performance Team and Democratic Services. 2. The Performance Team would feedback to the relevant service areas the issues raised by the Board**
- The Chairman thanked officers for the demonstration and asked the Board to consider a whether there should be a rapporteur to monitor the performance scorecard.

The Board RESOLVED that:

1. **The Board recognises the value of the newly introduced Dashboard, in terms of providing a mechanism for monitoring the progress of the council against its corporate plan ambitions, and in providing a horizon scanning tool to inform overview and scrutiny work planning.**
2. **The Board notes that the live Dashboard will be available for all councillors to review on the council's public website, and that Board members will actively undertake their own independent monitoring.**
3. **The Board will circulate quarterly performance monitoring reports as 'for information' items on its agendas, for matters to be raised by exception.**

- 4. The Board will take account of the Dashboard when undertaking annual work planning activity.**
- 5. Officers be requested to work with all O&S committees to implement similar arrangements as those agreed by the Board, in order to utilise the Dashboard across the function to drive evidence led scrutiny.**

The meeting adjourned at 8:16pm and resumed at 8:24pm.

30. Progress update on the 'Best Value Notice'

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 'D' to these Minutes in the Minute Book. The Board was asked to note the good progress made against the Best Value Notice action plan. The Council was issued with a 'Best Value Notice' by the Department for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities (DLUHC) on 3 August 2023. This followed an assurance review that was commissioned in response to the Council's July 2022 request for a capitalisation direction under the Exceptional Financial Support programme. The Chief Executive also carried out an internal assurance review prior to this, with the conclusions supported by the external review. In response to receiving the 'Best Value Notice', an action plan was agreed by Cabinet and has been monitored and updated regularly since. The 'Best Value Notice' expired on 2 August 2024. The report outlined the progress made against the action plan. A number of issues were raised in the discussion, including:

- That it may be useful to have an updated communication to Councillors to remind them of what actions were appropriate and noting that there had been lots of changes on the Council since that time. It was noted that the first four years were challenging which was partly due to the tight political balance and there were now measures in place to address those issues. New Councillors coming on board had an induction programme which would cover this but an annual reminder to Councillors would be beneficial.
- The Chief Executive advised that BCP Council had gone through several points to ensure these were reflected within the Constitution. The report went back one year since the notice, and this was served sometime since the review was completed. There was confidence that measures were in place to address issues that it was not thought would happen now.
- An issue was raised regarding the Councillor/Officer relationship, especially considering staff pressures and job changes. It was noted that many officers were great at engaging but there was sometime officer reluctance to engage with Councillors. The Board asked how confident officer felt in dealing with Councillors. The Chief Executive wanted to make sure that all officers were aware of what the rules were and were confident in dealing with issues in this regard. It was noted that officers were being asked to find ways of making savings to services which was a difficult position for them but there was a need to

have rules in place to create a more open culture of trust within the organisation.

- A Councillor asked about the initial training for Councillors and there being a need to help Councillors understand the 'corporate' business. For example, use of different IT systems. It was suggested that it would be a good idea for there to be a cross-party buddy system in place for new Councillors.
- It was noted that the progress which had been made was positive, the initial review being triggered by government changing the rules on Capital Receipts. The Government's external assurance review was inline with the Chief Executives internal review.
- A concern was raised regarding the Council demonstrating Best Value with regards to asset disposal and regeneration. A Councillor commented that from information received from developers it appeared that the Councillors were not being made aware of conversations the Council were having with developers on various projects. It was noted that a report on regeneration would be coming through Cabinet which would set out where the Council was in terms of key regeneration projects. It was also expected to have a report from Lead Cabinet members on projects they had been working on. It was noted that the cross-party regeneration working group had been disbanded and it was felt that this was probably due to Future Places winding down, but it was felt that the cross-party group was needed to give better Visibility on regeneration. The Leader advised that she was not aware of any deals having been made.

It was RESOLVED that:

The Board was pleased to see progress made in delivering the Best Value Notice Action Plan.

Voting: Nem Con

Issues were raised regarding Member/Officer relations and what it meant to be a member led Council. It was explained that expectations around this were set out in the Member/Officer relations report. **A copy of which would be circulated to the Board Members**

The Chief Executive advised that he was happy with the way things were moving forward and was pleased to have a strong Corporate Management Team in place. The Leader thanked Officers and Members who had embraced changes, and this could be seen in behaviour of Councillors in how they act. The Leader was confident that BCP was a transparent Council that was accountable to local residents.

31. 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 'D' to these Minutes in the Minute Book. The Overview and Scrutiny (O&S) Board was asked to consider and identify work priorities for publication in a Work Plan.

The Chairman noted that the regeneration report would be moved to the relevant meeting depending on when it was considered by Cabinet. The Chair asked the Board for any comments on the Work Plan.

An issue was raised regarding devolution and what conversations and plans were taking place concerning this in relation to a request from central government. It was noted that an expression of interest, including high level details needed to be submitted to the secretary of state by the end of September to include other partners. The Council was currently exploring what would be the best outcome in terms of what we want was wanted for the area. It was suggested that an item on this in September would be a good idea if possible.

RESOLVED: That the Work Plan as circulated be noted subject to the amendments outlined above.

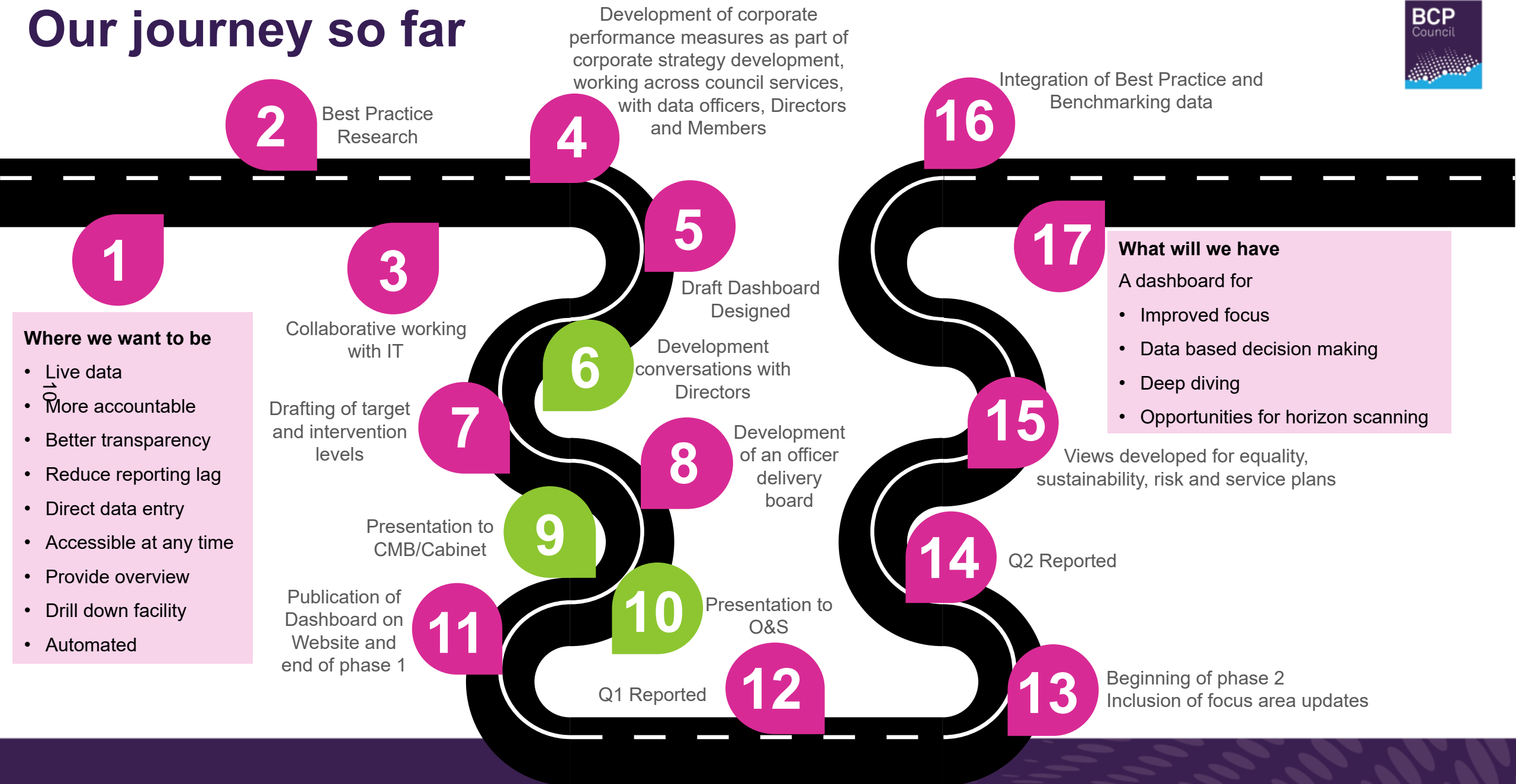
The meeting ended at 9.30 pm

CHAIRMAN

A shared vision for Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole

A new performance dashboard

Our journey so far



Quarterly Performance Reporting

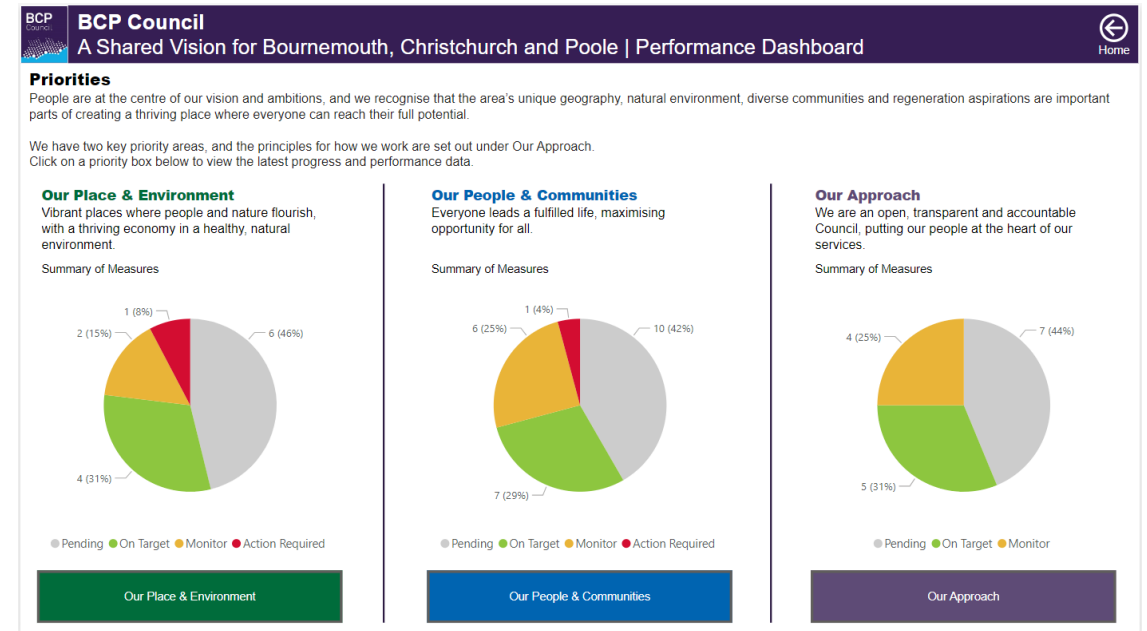
- Q1 report is one-off
 - Q2 will be generated directly from system
 - Q2 will include focus areas
- ⇒ Snapshot reports at a moment in time
- Phased approach to progress and development
 - Allows different ways to view data



The role of O&S

How can the dashboard help

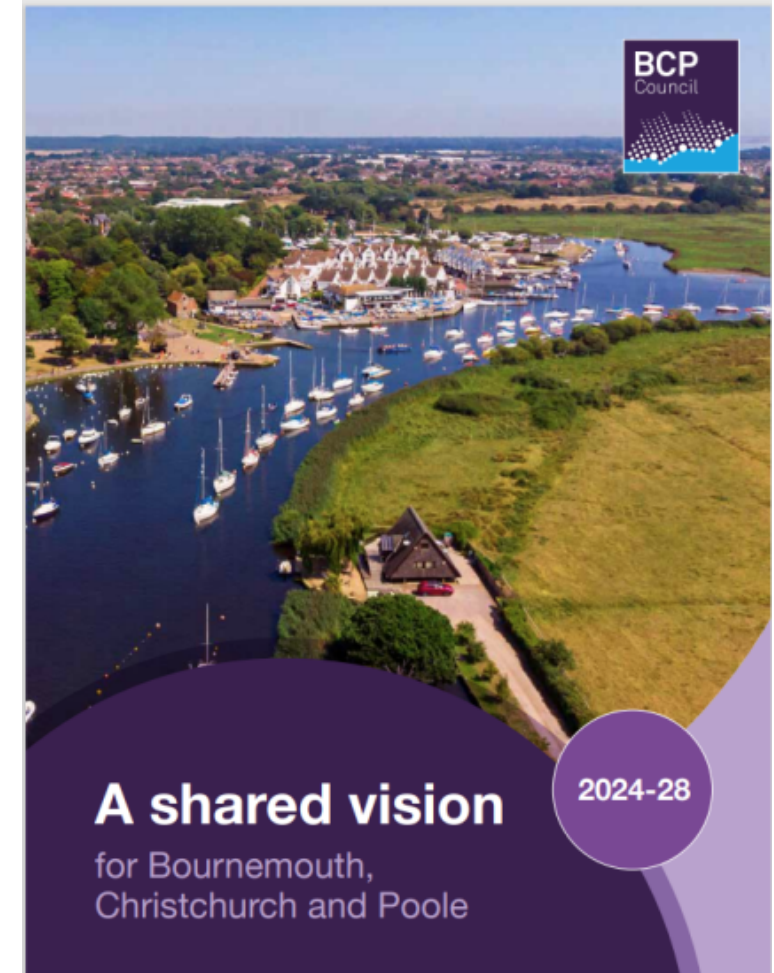
- Proactive approach – how best can scrutiny support moving into proactive
- Will help with setting agenda for performance scrutiny
- Best practice – use to support decision making
- Horizon scanning – influence work streams
- Deep diving



Key areas for O&S feedback

- Quality of the measure (data, intervention levels & targets)
- Quality of the performance commentary
- Areas of underperformance – deep dive?
- Forecasting and trend data
- Accountability
- One of a set of tools that O&S can use to support decision making
 - call in
 - task and finish groups
 - workshops
 - challenge sessions
 - spotlight focus
 - petitions and lobbying

13



Added Value and Benefits

- Built In house model with IT
- Reports a month earlier
- Real time information
- Data available to public - open and transparent
- Data-based decision making
- Develop to our own future needs
- Delivering on digital ambitions

