

BOURNEMOUTH, CHRISTCHURCH AND POOLE COUNCIL
OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD

Minutes of the Meeting held on 02 November 2020 at 6.00 pm

Present:-

Cllr S Bartlett – Chairman

Cllr T O'Neill – Vice-Chairman

Present: Cllr M Cox, Cllr M Davies, Cllr B Dion, Cllr M Earl, Cllr J Edwards,
Cllr G Farquhar, Cllr D Farr, Cllr L Fear, Cllr P R A Hall,
Cllr M Howell, Cllr D Kelsey, Cllr C Rigby and Cllr V Slade

Also in attendance: Councillor Philip Broadhead
Councillor Robert Lawton
Councillor Drew Mellor

82. Apologies

Apologies were received from Councillor D Kelsey

83. Substitute Members

Cllr B Dunlop acted as substitute for Cllr D Kelsey

84. Declarations of Interests

A Councillor queried whether a Councillor appointed as a Cabinet Lead Member could sit on scrutiny bodies. The Monitoring Officer advised that there was nothing in legislation to prevent Councillors with this role from taking part in Overview and Scrutiny

Provided that their portfolios did not cross over with the content of the meeting agenda there was nothing to prevent Cabinet Lead Members from participating in a meeting and even where portfolios crossed over that Councillor would need to consider their position and declare an interest where this might be relevant.

Other Councillors also raised concerns and objections to the Cabinet Lead Members participating in Overview and Scrutiny Bodies.

85. Public Issues

There were no public questions, statements or petitions.

86. Scrutiny of Homes Related Cabinet Reports

Housing Allocations Policy - The Portfolio Holder for Homes introduced the report, a copy of which had been circulated and which appears as Appendix 'C' to the Cabinet minutes of 11 November in the Minute Book. A

number of issues were raised by the Board in the subsequent discussion, including:

- A Board member commented that merging three policies would always be a challenge. However, they raised concerns regarding the loose and vague wording used in several instances throughout the document. The Portfolio Holder advised that each case would be decided upon by its merits and that he didn't want a document which would constrain officers too much, however he took on board the comments from the Councillor. An officer advised that this policy also applied to social landlords and the Council had no legal control as to whether they may undertake particular proceedings and therefore this was the reason for some of the wording.
- A Councillor commented that he was pleased to see hospital discharges included in the emergency band for accommodation. The Councillor also asked how the legacy policies came together in terms of tenancy lengths and successions. It was noted that everybody was being reassessed but the plan for this was still being finalised. There was a concern that Bournemouth residents had been on the register longer but most people across the whole of BCP had been reassessed in the last five years.
- In response to a question regarding Councillor engagement in the appeals process. It was noted that there was a need to be very careful how this process was handled but the Portfolio Holder advised that he would discuss this issue with officers. The process for reviews was set out in law and is always conducted by a senior officer.
- A Councillor raised concerns about anti-social behaviour and felt that there should be stronger measures to deal with this. The Portfolio Holder advised that this was taken seriously and appropriate measures would be taken to deal with anti-social behaviour. It was explained by an officer that the behaviour on anti-social behaviour was covered in a completely separate policy.
- In response to a question regarding sanctions for those in the emergency band who refuse a direct let, the Board was advised that there should be no reason for someone to turn down an offer but if someone unreasonably turned down a property which met their needs, they would be changed to a band which would next best reflect their needs.
- A Councillor commented on a section on sanctions within the draft which had been removed. There was concern that the sanctions outlined in the bidding process were putting off some older residents from bidding. The officer advised in managing the restrictions previously they had only written three warning letters and had not had to restrict anybody.
- Check on last section.
- A Councillor raised concerns about paragraph 8.1, which allowed for a minor amendment by head of housing and portfolio holder. The five percent outlined could affect 350 people and didn't consider this minor. The Portfolio Holder explained that each case would be decided individually on its own merits and he could consider it if an amendment was put forward.
- Concerns were raised regarding item 33 in which a family was expected to downsize when a child reaches 18. The officer explained that no one

was expected to downsize. Adult children would not be taken into consideration when applying if they could be accommodated elsewhere. This was because in the past adult children had moved out shortly after people had been offered a property. This wouldn't affect adult children in full time education, with caring needs or in the armed forces living in barracks but the circumstances of each case would be looked at.

- It was suggested that there should be protection for people who lose their residency in BCP for a short-term period due to circumstances outside of their control. The Portfolio Holder advised that he could understand the point raised in circumstances such as domestic violence and would consider this.
- In response to a question regarding housing for homeless and rough sleepers having a connection to three towns the Portfolio Holder advised that a connection to BCP for rough sleepers was paramount, most homeless people would have that connection and would be picked up by the housing service.
- A Board member asked about what was considered a local connection for the purposes of housing related to where your family live within BCP. The Portfolio Holder advised that this was an issue which would be dealt with on a case by case basis.
- In response to a question regarding whether Housing Associations were bound by the same laws that BCP Council work to and a number of housing associations did have tenancy support officers.
- A Member asked about recent legislation regarding people who have been rough sleeping but were not British citizens. The Portfolio Holder advised that he was not familiar with this particular piece of legislation and agreed to come back on this issue if he was provided with the details of this statement of change (see action sheet).

Following the discussion two motions were put to the Board and the Board

RECOMMENDED:

1. That paragraph 8.1 of the Housing Allocations Policy document be amended to include the following wording:

“...will be able to approve minor technical amendments to the allocations policy. Where a change will negatively impact on any single tenant group or any group covered by the Equalities Act this should be referred back to cabinet for approval?”

2. That section 18 of Appendix C to the Housing Allocations Policy be amended to include the following wording:

“You currently live in the BCP council area and have done so for at least two years continuously prior to the application. Where there is a break in occupancy during this time of up to 6 months due to enforced family move this can be considered on a case by case basis where the household has been a long term (10yrs plus) resident in the BCP Council area.”

Voting: Nem Con

87. Scrutiny of Regeneration Related Cabinet Reports

Cllr B Dunlop advised that she would not take part in the discussion of any subsequent vote on the next item due to her position as Cabinet Lead Member for Bournemouth Regeneration not taking part in the next item on regeneration

Lansdowne Programme - The Portfolio Holder for Regeneration, Economy and Strategic Planning introduced the report, a copy of which had been circulated and which appears as Appendix 'D' to the Cabinet minutes of 11 November in the Minute Book. A number of issues were raised by the Board in the subsequent discussion, including:

- A Board member commented that the difference between this scheme and the scheme inherited from the previous administration was that cars would be allowed through on Holdenhurst Road, to try to mitigate congestion in this area.
- The Portfolio Holder was asked how confident he was on the deadline being achieved. The Portfolio Holder advised that it was his priority to make decision as quickly as possible and he would not be making any changes which would cause problems with the programme meeting the deadline. However it was identified as a risk within the programme but the Portfolio Holder was confident that it would be achieved within the timeframe available.
- A Board member raised concerns that the scheme would not be able to meet the originally intended aims and questioned whether there was any scope to get greater flexibility in the time frame in order to allow further thought as to whether through traffic was necessary or if something different could be initiated to create a better outside space. The Chairman commented that the lead in time for road orders and any changes to road networks would take a very long time and a lot of the prep work had already been done which would make further changes to the scheme difficult
- With reference to the recommendation D within the report on equalities a Board member asked for confirmation that there would have been appropriate consultation on shared spaces and assurance that issues concerning shared spaces would be considered. The Portfolio Holder advised that he would liaise closely with the lead member for equalities on these issues. Traffic measures would curb traffic, and this would be part of the process but that he would certainly promote the issue raised.
- A Board member raised concerns about the options outlined in the report and that the previous administration's preferred option was not included with the report, noting that the purpose of the paper was for Cabinet to take a decision and not for a political decision to be taken in advance of the paper. The Portfolio Holder advised that he would not normally expect to see the previous administrations option to be included within a report to Cabinet, and that the previous option would

cause congestion. The Chief Executive advised that he expected all options to be included within the report and would take this away for consideration in consultation with the Monitoring Officer. The Director of Development undertook to review the paper and include the previously agreed option. (See Action Sheet)

- A Councillor commented that the scheme should be considered in line with Cotlands Road car park plans. The Portfolio Holder noted that these issues were separate but related. Cotlands was a little further behind but they would be joined together appropriately in order to start to progress a real vision for this area in a more holistic manner.
- A Board member expressed their disappointment with the way the scheme had ended up and noted that there could have been a scheme which completely changed the way Bournemouth looked. They explained that they would have liked to have seen permanent weekend road closures as an option for residents to use the space for social and leisure purposes.
- A Councillor raised concerns with the consultation on the programme and requested that the outcome of the consultation be made available prior to the Cabinet meeting and also questioned how the decision could be taken prior to the conclusion of the traffic regulation order consultation. The Board was advised that the report requested delegated authority to the Portfolio Holder and senior officers to take the next steps subject to the Traffic Regulations Orders consultation outcome.
- A Board member queried why there was no reference to children in terms of equalities, particularly as children will be accessing the new Livingstone Academy. The Portfolio Holder assured the meeting that issues concerning the school would be taken into consideration.
- The Portfolio Holder was asked if he could ensure that when the development takes place infrastructure is put in place under the roads to allow the roads to be closed off in future. The Portfolio Holder responded that it was certainly something they would look at.
- In regards to a query regarding the pooling of Neighbourhood CIL money for improvements the Portfolio Holder confirmed that he was keen to work with all members and not just ward colleagues in the future as there were some very positive options available with the distance of the train station from the town centre. However, there wasn't any funding in place to deliver stage two at present. The Portfolio Holder advised that he had seen details on plans around the bear pit improvements and agreed that he would respond to the Councillor who raised this issue. **(See action sheet).**
- The Chairman raised a concern that the drawing provided didn't actually reflect the proposal outlined in the report and also the risk management didn't show what the probability was of any particular scenario or outline any mitigation measures.
- Members raised concerns about the project and public perception on this issue and asked whether the public were aware of what is proposed and stated that whilst he wouldn't want to see the Council loose out on funding he also wouldn't want it to deliver something the public does not want.

- A number of Board members commented that it would have been good to have had some further information within the report on the response to consultation and how people would be impacted. Board members also suggested that a copy of the risk register which was referred to in the report should be made available.

Following the debate on this item the Board RESOVLED that:

- 1. Officers be requested to review the cabinet report and amend it accordingly in light of concerns raised by the Board regarding the inclusion of all options for the programme within the report.**
Note: The board also raised further concerns regarding the accuracy of Appendix A to the report and that there wasn't further detail included with the report on the risk register.
- 2. The administration be urged to publish the results of the consultation in advance of the Cabinet meeting on November 11 broken down to reveal the views of respondents including business and local stakeholders.**

Voting: Nem. Con.

88. Scrutiny of Transformation Related Cabinet Reports

Estate and Accommodation Project - The Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Transformation and Finance introduced the report, a copy of which had been circulated and which appears as Appendix 'I' to the Cabinet minutes of 11 November in the Minute Book. A number of issues were raised by the Board in the subsequent discussion, including:

- A Councillor raised the issue that the original figure of £29million was agreed cross party before the pandemic and the way that the Council responded to it and that the figure for the project three or four months ago had already reduced to about £10million pounds and clarified that the reduction from the original figure to the now £6million figure did not happen overnight.
- A Board member asked about the decoupling of the civic space from the office space with no indication of what the cost, timeline and impact would be of this work. The public entrance and mayor's parlour was part of the commitment to make the whole site fully disabled friendly and the Leader of the Council was asked how this would be impacted. The Leader advised that Councillors would be consulted on about this space and a hybrid option would be developed. The Leader also confirmed that disabled access was being championed and he would be working on solutions to this issue.
- A Councillor queried what would be happening to the annex as it was referred to in one area of the report and then seemed to be omitted in others. It was expected that all staff would fit into the town hall footprint while this is being considered he Town Hall Annex would be retained.
- The Portfolio Holder was questioned on the choices provided to staff for where people may choose to work, originally there was an intention that staff could work from hubs, at home or in the new civic centre. The Board was advised that the Council would be developing a hybrid option

for working with. There was still very much an ambition to have drop in areas for staff within the libraries.

- A Board Member raised concerns about the financing for the project to borrowing and that a lot of this did not appear to be investment but was in fact restructuring and change. The Leader advised that this deliver a £700k net benefit largely due to maintenance costs.
- In response to a query about the disposal of the sites the Leader advised that the disposal of the sites was not already decided and there were a number of different options for how the sites could be taken forward at present.
- A Councillor commented that he welcomed a considered view on the development of the strategy and that a quick sale of the sites may not release best value and that these issues need to be looked at carefully. The Leader agreed with this and commented that he didn't feel that a quick sale would be best value and want to get long term value for the assets.
- A Councillor raised concern with line in the report regarding disposal of the whole of the civic centre as this was never previously approved by Cabinet or the agreed intention. Disposal of the site figures previously used were purely on principle and whatever route which the previous administration would have gone down would also have delivered best value as this was a legal requirement. The Corporate Director advised that the paper had been in development for some time. The language in paragraphs 54 / 54a regarding the release or repurposing of some sites had evolved over 12 months and through two different administrations. The original paper quoting £29million costs to redevelop the town hall would have required the disposal of assets, the June paper was update to reflect that the sites may be disposed or repurposed and the latest paper reflects the most recent changes.
- A Councillor raised concerns that there was practically no mention within the paper of the environmental impacts of the proposed decision or anything relating to the impact of the improved IT systems. The Portfolio Holder advised that the IT issues would be covered within the transformation paper which would be coming to the following Cabinet meeting. The Corporate Director of Resources advised that he would be happy to provide a written response to the Councillors comments which could be shared with the Board. **(See Action Sheet).**

The meeting ended at 8.51 pm

CHAIRMAN