

BOURNEMOUTH, CHRISTCHURCH AND POOLE COUNCIL
OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD

Minutes of the Meeting held on 19 July 2021 at 6.00 pm

Present:-

Cllr S Bartlett – Chairman
Cllr V Slade – Vice-Chairman

Present: Cllr M Cox, Cllr L Dedman, Cllr M Earl, Cllr J Edwards, Cllr L Fear,
Cllr S Gabriel, Cllr M Howell and Cllr S Bull (In place of Cllr C Rigby)

Also in attendance: Councillor Nigel Hedges
Councillor Richard Burton
Councillor Nicola Greene
Councillor Robert Lawton
Councillor Drew Mellor

50. Apologies

Apologies were received from Cllr L Allison, Cllr C Rigby, Cllr T'ONeill, Cllr D Kelsey, Cllr D Farr and Cllr B Dion.

52. Declarations of Interests

There were no declarations of interests made.

53. Public Speaking

There were no public questions, statements or petitions.

54. Project Management - Expansion of the Longspee Special School at the BLC Review

The Chairman introduced the item and outlined the reasons why the report, a copy of which had been circulated to Board members and a copy of which appears as Appendix A to these minutes in the Minute Book was included on the agenda. The Portfolio Holder for Covid Resilience, Public Health and Education outlined the key issues related to the Expansion of Longspee and addressed some of the issues for the O&S Board requesting that this item be added to its agenda. There were a number of issues raised in the ensuing discussion including:

- There was now a Children's Services Capital Programme Board in place which had a clear line of site for projects.
- A Councillor commented that costs overall were increasing in the realm of 25% for contractor fees and supplies and asked whether that had been factored into the budget. It was noted that this was included within the paper which went to Cabinet in April and costs were currently running as expected.

- A Board member commented that it was great that this was moving forward so quickly and that there were some excellent outcomes to the project.
- The Chairman advised that he felt that this would be a great asset to the Council and had delivered in terms of value for money. However, he raised concerns that the effect of the issues with project management of this project was that the Chief Executive had to take a decision on this in a fairly short space of time.
- A question was raised as to why the appropriate project management procedures were not in place and how the expenditure was monitored throughout the project. The Portfolio Holder assured the Board that the budget outline in the April Cabinet paper was correct and considerable work had gone into ensuring that this was a robust decision.
- A Board member asked about the confidence in project management that when estimates were provided, they were realistic. It was noted that the original estimate included a 15 percent contingency for Covid related issues.
- In response to whether the formal funding agreement had now been agreed it was confirmed that this had not yet been signed-off but was with lawyers for the Council and the Academy for the final decision which concerned the length of the lease in place. In a normal process the funding agreement would not had taken place at this stage.
- A Ward Councillor advised that he only became aware of the scheme progress once it was well advanced after being advised by the previous Portfolio Holder. There was a concern raised as to how the condition of the building could not have been known to the Council or that the Council was so uniformed on the work required. However, he confirmed that he was pleased that the work was now in place and of a high specification.
- The Ward Councillor asked about the provision of the Multi Use Games Area (MUGA) and the work on fencing. The Chairman advised that a planning application for the MUGA had only just been put in. The Chairman had also received assurance on the specifications and competitive tendering process for the fencing. It was noted that there were specifications for a special school which may not always be necessary in a mainstream school. Although the school was due to open in September there was not an expectation that absolutely everything would be finalised by this point and there had been some significant pre-submission discussions with the planning department.
- There was a concern raised that there was no signed funding agreement for this project and a Councillor outlined a similar situation had occurred with Christchurch Town Council and in this instance workmen had walked away from the site following advise from the legal department. **In response to this the Chairman advised that he would write to the S151 Officer to ascertain what processes should be in place and specific information on the project in question.**
- The Chairman raised concerns that planning consent for the fencing had a condition to retain planting, but that this may now not be possible with the planning consent required for the MUGA. The Board was advised that it was not uncommon to move ahead with elements which would

allow the school to open rather than wait for issues which may be more contentious.

- The Vice-Chair commented that everyone was supportive of the scheme and it was exactly the sort of scheme which should be undertaken. A question was raised as to how robust project management was within Children's Services and the wider Council. The Portfolio Holder responded that the new structure had a great deal more transparency than there was in the past. A paper was due to come to Cabinet on capital investment in schools which would provide an opportunity for questions to be asked and answered. There was now a clear understanding of the capital available in one place. There was a requirement for good information on needs in terms of what provision was likely to require.
- There was a question as to whether there was a project management blueprint for how the Council worked on capital projects. The Chairman advised that he would take forward discussions with the Vice-Chair to feed into a broader look at project management in general.
- The Chairman advised that the report mentioned initial funding of £500k for the project and referred to two phases which were not referred to in the previous paper. It was felt that this was not appropriate as it gave a misleading impression.
- The Chairman of the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee advised that he had visited the site when children were already in place and spoke of his regret that process had hidden a good news story. If the budget had gone through as required initially it would still have been supported as a good project.

The Chairman thanked everyone for attending and providing answers to the Board's questions and reiterated that it was recognised that this was a good project for the children.

55. Scrutiny of Homes Related Cabinet Reports

Housing Management Model Review – The Portfolio Holder for Homes introduced the report, a copy of which had been circulated to members of the Board and a copy of which appears as Appendix 'B' to these minutes in the Minute Book. The Portfolio Holder outlined the key issues within the report and responded to a number of issues raised by Board members in the subsequent discussion including:

- Whether the report applied in anyway to Christchurch as the housing stock within the Christchurch area had been outsourced to a housing association. It was noted that at present the models proposed within the report would not apply to any of the housing stock in Christchurch but it was possible that it would, should new Council housing be built within Christchurch.
- It was confirmed that there was no criticism for the way housing services were run in any of the preceding authorities, but the review was required to pull together the housing function for BCP.
- There would be a comprehensive consultation to find out how residents would want to see the housing function delivered. A Councillor

commented that they supported putting residents at the heart of decisions on services moving forward.

- It was highlighted that the table within the report did not list specific disadvantages to either of the models. It was confirmed that the intention of the table was that the reverse of the advantages was the disadvantages but a Councillor commented that this did not fully explain the situation, for example there could be a disadvantage in the in-house model of officers' time being divided with other issues as opposed to dedicated staff in a housing management organisation. Officers felt that this would not be a significant consideration. The table outlined what the Council working group considered to be the main advantages and disadvantages. However, there would be further work on this in the future.
- It was acknowledged that sometime the focus of the whole Council could be distracted and not focused enough on housing management. It was envisioned that there would be some kind of advisory board or panel with a particular focus on issues that mattered to residents.
- It was noted that there were currently two Housing Revenue Accounts covering the area with a single housing model it would be possible to combine these.
- The focus on the consultation would be on the recommended model to test and challenge and would be focused on current tenants in Poole and Bournemouth. There would also be a wider stakeholder engagement which would include residents on the waiting list.
- How would the proposals affect the different salaries between those employed by Poole Housing Partnership and the Council. The Portfolio Holder advised that there would be some synergies, but this would not always mean pursuing the lowest values. It was questioned that this would mean increased overhead costs but confirmed that this particular situation referred to company overhead costs related to audit, company secretary, etc. For whatever delivery model was selected there would be staff pay protection.

The Chairman summed up that overall the Board broadly supported the recommendations as outlined within the report. Cllr M Howell requested that it be placed on record that he did not support this summary.

56. Scrutiny of Finance and Transformation Related Cabinet Reports

2020/21 End of Year Performance Report – The Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Finance and Transformation introduced the report, a copy of which had been circulated to members of the Board and a copy of which appears as Appendix 'C' to these minutes in the Minute Book. The Portfolio Holder outlined the key issues within the report and responded to a number of issues raised by Board members in the subsequent discussion including:

- Whether the waste figures provided in the paper were cumulative. There were other areas within the paper which also appeared to be cumulative, including anti-social behaviour and if this were the case it may be easier if these could be looked at on a quarterly basis.

- Numbers of Anti-Social Behaviour cases were not heading in the right direction.
- The numbers on waste were also not heading in the right direction and whether this should be considered as amber rather than green. It was noted that this was based on certain criteria and if it were green it meant that the figures had met that particular criteria. Whether the criteria should be changed could be considered depending upon the reasons for that.
- The Leader invited anyone who was interested in a one to one session to look at the figures in terms of how they were best presented and whether this was clear for members of the public to get in touch with him.
- It was questioned whether the data in the report should be considered by the other Overview and Scrutiny Committees in order for them to review the Key Performance Indicators for their Committees. The Chairman advised that he could contact the Chairman of the other two Committees regarding placing this on their agendas at a future meeting.
- There was some information included with the report which didn't appear to be very useful – such as the number of website views which was huge but didn't provide a lot of information.
- There were a number of areas which were blocked out within the report. A Board member questioned the reasons for this and whether it was due to a lack of data related to the current situation. The Leader advised that areas which were light grey indicated that there was no RAG rating but the areas in dark grey were due to a lack of data and acknowledged that this could have been made clearer.
- A Board Member questioned the low level of staff completing mandatory training which was reported as due to lack of capacity and the Leader was asked how it was expected to be resolved. There had been a new and significant on completing the training and there should be improvement seen in this next quarter.

The Leader of the Council placed on record his thanks to everyone involved over the busy weekend period. Everyone had been working hard at the start of a busy summer period including partners. The Chairman gave his support the Leader's comment.

57. Future Meeting Dates 2021/22

The dates of future meetings were noted.

The meeting ended at 7.31 pm

CHAIRMAN