

BOURNEMOUTH, CHRISTCHURCH AND POOLE COUNCIL
PLACE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of the Meeting held on 21 September 2022 at 6.00 pm

Present:-

Cllr S Gabriel – Chairman
Cllr R Lawton – Vice-Chairman

Present: Cllr S Bartlett, Cllr E Coope, Cllr D Farr, Cllr M Iyengar, Cllr A Jones,
Cllr C Rigby and Cllr V Slade

Present virtually: Cllr A HAdley

Also in attendance: Cllr D Borthwick and Cllr S Moore

20. Apologies

Apologies were received from Cllr A Hadley and Cllr N Brooks. Cllr A Hadley was joining the meeting virtually.

21. Substitute Members

There were no substitute members.

22. Declarations of Interests

Cllr S Gabriel advised for transparency that in relation to agenda item 8, Poole Crematorium fell within his ward.

Cllr H Allen advised for transparency that in relation to agenda item 7, they worked with a team within the NHS which assisted homeless persons.

23. Public Issues

The Committee was advised that 5 questions and 4 statements had been received. Questions and statements were read out by members of the public and the Democratic Services Officer as follows:

Question from Ms Boyce in relation to agenda item 6

1. Can the Portfolio-Holder please tell us, in detail, what is being done to improve bus services to Winkton. The Council's "enhanced partnership" with bus operators, whose draft forms Background Paper 2 to the agenda, looks to "increase the frequency of existing services" and "assess the overall bus network ... to identify any gaps in provision" (p. 48). Such gaps are glaringly evident in the Winkton to Christchurch bus service, which operates just three days of the week, twice-daily. I raise

this as a Christchurch resident, as there is no Christchurch councillor on this committee who can do so on my behalf.

Response from Cllr M Greene, Portfolio Holder for Sustainability and Transport

Winkton is served by the morebus 125 which runs two-return journeys between Ringwood and Christchurch via Winkton on each of Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays.

A new hourly bus service, the 23 route, was introduced in neighbouring Burton at the end of 2021. This is being funded through the DfT Better Deal for Buses programme. Passenger numbers on this service are encouraging and we are hopeful that after three years they will be sufficient to support a long-term commercial route. This service is approximately 500m from Winkton.

The indicative BSIP funding does include a revenue allocation to increase the frequency of some existing bus services. However, this is very much aimed at attracting high numbers of new passengers, and in particular those that would otherwise travel by car. As well as having a positive impact on congestion and air quality, this should also make the bus network more sustainable with a reduced need for subsidy in the future. Very importantly, the Council will also be required to demonstrate value for money with such initiatives.

In contrast to the popularity of the No. 23 Route, the number of passengers boarding the 125 service in Winkton since the start of this year has averaged just over one per week. While an increase in frequency might indeed lead to a corresponding increase in passenger numbers, it is extremely unlikely that increase would be to the extent that it would satisfy the requirements for BSIP funding. So, regrettably, I do not expect any expansion of this service.

Questions received from Mr A McKinstry in relation to agenda items 8 and 9:

2. Why were the reports for Items 8 and 9 on tonight's agenda - respectively, the Bereavement Services business plan (including the future of Poole Crematorium), and an update on the BDC - still not available to the public as of 11.45 p.m. on 13 September, the day of the deadline for public questions?

Responses provided by Officers

The Chief Executive and Deputy Leader/Portfolio holder agreed to defer the BDC LLP business plan from 26 October 2022 Cabinet. This deferment will enable BDC to review the Partnership Business plan work programme and funding strategies in light of the recent 7 September Finance update and the recommendation to that no new financial commitments will be made until such time as there is a balanced budget for 2023/24 other than

with the specific agreement of the Chief Finance Officer in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Finance. Place O&S were due to review the Cabinet report, however as this item had been deferred officers have had to urgently draft a revised report for Place O&S to consider.

Elected Members and Officers wished for the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting on the 21st September 2022 to have sight of the full and final Bereavement Services Business Plan Update and Options for the future of Poole Crematorium due to be presented at Cabinet on the 28th September 2022. The report was receiving final reviews ahead of being issued on Thursday 15th September 2022 which was the deadline for Cabinet report submission.

For clarity the deadline for public questions was extended to allow a clear working day for questions to be submitted following the publication of the associated reports. No further questions were received on these items.

Question received from Mr McKinstry in relation to agenda item 5:

3. Can the Constitution be amended so that public questions can be submitted until these reports are uploaded? I'm still fuming over the KPMG reports being released five weeks after public questions, and likewise with tonight's reports, the lack of a cremator at Poole is an emotive subject and one that several residents might have wished to comment on. There is no harm in updating the Constitution where such shortfalls are apparent - especially as Cllr. Broadhead said, when moving to abolish the OSB on 10 May, that he wanted the voice of residents to come "shining through" at scrutiny sessions.

Response from Cllr Sean Gabriel – Place O&S Committee Chair:

The Constitution Review Working Group is currently undertaking a review on a number of aspects of the Constitution. Public questions and statements is one of the areas that will be considered for potential changes by the group. The Constitution Review Working Group will be reporting into the Audit and Governance Committee in November to consider this matter.

Question received from Mr McKinstry in relation to agenda item 7:

4. These concluding questions relate to the severe weather emergency protocol for homeless people, Item 7 on tonight's agenda. First, can we have an explanation of why SWEP wasn't implemented until 15 July this year, when a Level 3 heatwave alert was issued by the Met Office on 11 July and Dorset Council activated its protocol on 9 July. We *may* have the answer already, because a BCP spokesperson told the Echo on 12 July that "SWEP is activated only when there is a real risk of loss of life" - a remark that shocked and horrified a number of local residents.

Response from Cllr Karen Rampton, Portfolio Holder for People and Homes:

The SWEP response commenced on 11th July, the same day as the MET Office alert. It wasn't initially described as SWEP in case of confusion. There is a misconception amongst some people that the hot weather response means a universal offer of accommodation when that could be or is in fact one of a range of responses. Other responses which were implemented being additional outreach, sun hats provided, sunscreen provided, water provided, shaded area provision, welfare check and safety advice. I emailed all councillors on 15th of July my press statement to correct the misleading and inaccurate version published in the Echo on 15th. I made it clear that SWEP had been triggered and had been so throughout the week. SWEP triggers a review of interventions; some are stepped up and some are left in place as they are considered appropriate. The comms on this occasion could have been clearer, SWEP activation in August was clearer and was very prompt.

Question received from Mr McKinstry in relation to agenda item 7

5. This authority has acquired a reputation for implementing SWEP only grudgingly. This was evident not only in the July heatwaves but also in the failure to activate SWEP on 1-2 April, when temperatures dropped to -3 degrees Centigrade; and on 21-22 February, when wind speeds reached 69 mph across the conurbation. Why does this reluctance exist, and is it legacy thinking from the days of Poole and Bournemouth Borough Councils, who both pursued very hostile policies against the homeless - in Poole's case, even fining homeless people under PSPOs, a policy which was described at the time as "inhuman"?

Response from Cllr Karen Rampton, Portfolio Holder for People and Homes:

SWEP is an emergency response during extreme weather. SWEP has criteria for triggering based on MET office forecasts, in line with government guidance and is consistent with other councils. Temperatures vary and show as different on apps and other sources and forecasts are different for different areas. We use the standard 3 nights of zero or below. Two years ago we made a change so that SWEP is activated if there is Amber or Red Storm Warning. The first one being Boxing Day 2020. As I say SWEP is an emergency response, we want rough sleepers to have accommodation with out needing extreme interventions. SWEP compliments all the other services and is part of a range of interventions in place which we carry out with our partners across the homelessness partnership to prevent homelessness.

The Portfolio Holder expressed her dissatisfaction with the way that this question was worded and pointed out that there was a dedicated and hardworking team across the homelessness partnership.

Statement from Mr Tallamy in relation to agenda item 6

1. Having no transport of my own, I am a regular bus user across the BCP region so I hope that PH Cllr Mike Greene includes rural areas for improved bus services and connectivity in his discussions with providers rather than concentrating on already well provided urban and town centre routes. Many of our outlying areas have already seen reductions in their timetables and others such as Winkton have no fit for purpose

service at all and what is currently in place is an ill thought out gesture which I feel sure he is already well aware of.

Statement from Mr Tallamy in relation to agenda item 6

2. As the bus service improvements being discussed here at tonight's meeting also form an integral and vital part of the Council's Climate Action Plan I hope that PH Cllr Greene will soon be presenting a, in my opinion, long overdue fully substantiated, documented and workable plan to Council and residents alike for scrutiny, a matter I deemed important enough to email the PH about on the 15th August 2022 and as to date have received neither an acknowledgement or other response from him.

Statement from Mr Stretch in relation to agenda item 8

3. Families are unhappy knowing their loved-ones are being transported from Poole to Bournemouth in a van.
Dorset is not served realistically with 9 crematoria, the furthest crematoria Andover is 1.5hrs by motorcar.
One replacement bariatric cremator would be adequate, equivalent to that of New Milton crematorium, Cost £450k, not £2M.
Tapper's have persuaded their clients to migrate to their own, hence the reduction of numbers.
Local Funeral Directors would use Poole if there were a cremator present.
The public wish to continue to use
Poole, <https://savepoolecrem.org/> over 3K signatures
Private companies have offered to purchase the facility.

Statement from Mr McKinstry in relation to agenda item 7

4. An afterthought on SWEP: I'm glad the protocol is being reviewed, and am hoping the "flexibility and discretion" cited in tonight's report might be exercised more readily: activating SWEP across less than three consecutive nightly freezes, for instance, or (as suggested in Paragraph 29) continuing accommodation provision after SWEP is lifted. As homelessness can affect anyone, these would be very welcome revisions to the protocol. My worry now is that non-statutory services such as SWEP may be suspended altogether under the Council's new, beleaguered financial strategy. Hopefully this scenario can be discussed tonight, when Item 7 comes up for consideration.

The Chairman varied the order of business to take agenda item 9 next.

24. Update on the Bournemouth Development Company LLP

The Portfolio Holder for regeneration 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 informed that Bournemouth Development Company LLP ("BDC") was a

joint venture between BCP Council and MUSE Developments Limited a subsidiary of Morgan Sindall Group plc. As a result of the 7 September 2022 Cabinet Finance Update Muse as Development Manager to BDC are reviewing and updating the Partnership Business Plan (PBP) funding strategy and work programme. It is expected that the PBP will be brought to a future Cabinet for consideration. The purpose of the report was to provide an update on current BDC project activity and note the actions which flowed from an independent review of the BDC governance structure conducted by Local Partnership in March 2021. The Committee raised a number of points in the subsequent discussion, which were responded to by the Portfolio Holder and officers:

- The viability of plans for office schemes given the number of people now working from home. Office demand was being looked at including plans of current users for expansion or contraction. Interest was expected in a particular site as it provided good transport links. The Portfolio Holder advised that potential users want to see firm commitments on developments. There would be further detail available in the Business Plan when published.
- The impact of new developments on the demand for older office space. It was noted there was still a demand for grade A office space and there wasn't necessarily a direct causation.
- The effects of permitted development on provision of affordable homes. It was noted that whilst provision of homes was positive there were some unintended consequences to be addressed.
- Concerns were raised about buy to rent on some sites and how this could be addressed. BDC were looking to attract local interest in the homes being built and the number of properties being let out would likely be higher through a private developer.
- The hierarchical relationship between FuturePlaces and BDC. There was not one but there were some areas of common interest. Currently FuturePlaces was doing their own piece of work on the Winter Gardens site which would be investigated in terms of the BDC agreement.
- Whether there were any interim uses being looked into for the Winter Gardens site.
- Reprovision of public parking spaces at Eden Glen development site.
- Whether taking something through the open market could have received better financial returns. It was not always necessarily the best approach to take things through market. The Portfolio Holder undertook to provide a written response to this issue.

It was noted that the Business Plan would be considered in the following month by Cabinet.

25. Update on Bus Services within the Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Area

The Portfolio Holder for Transport and Sustainability provided a verbal update to the Committee on the implications of Yellow Busses ceasing services in the area and the implications of the Bus Service Improvement

Plan Implementation report which had recently considered by Cabinet a copy of which was circulated to Committee members and a copy of which appears as Appendix 'B' to the minutes in the Minute Book. The Portfolio Holder highlighted a number of points including:

- Notification of the final award was still awaited to push forward some of the measures within the Improvement Plan but this was expected in the following few days. It was noted that the report would go forward to Council in November.
- Initiatives highlighted within the paper included, a multi-modal and multi-operational map bringing different providers together, bus priority measures and additional bus shelters.
- Yellow Buses had been loss-making for a few years and covid had a significant impact, with increased home working and home shopping. Despite support from central and local government, passenger numbers had not recovered as quickly as anticipated.
- Go South Coast had not made any attempt to acquire Yellow Buses but had been able to move very quickly to expand their network to cover many Yellow Bus routes. However, there was an issue with sufficient numbers of drivers, and they had set up an emergency recruitment desk. Much of the former network was covered after just one day.
- Yellow Buses was also responsible for three school routes but as they ceased operation during the school holidays additional provision was able to be put in place for the schools' return.
- Routes 18,33 and 36 had been picked up by the Zella Group for a 6-month contract, which was currently being retendered and would be in place from February next year.
- The Council had a duty of regard to the overall bus network and were working with Go South Coast.

Members raised a number of issues which were responded to by the Portfolio Holder, including:

- Bus lane enforcement operation in the BCP area. There was no change to this provision, which needed to be done by camera enforcement. The cost of this needed to be balanced against the outcomes. However, the Council were looking at any less cost intensive options.
- The impact of the national capping of bus fares for the winter and the cost of this to the Council. The Portfolio Holder supported this and advised that it would need to be seen whether a reduction in fares would increase bus use significantly. The Portfolio Holder undertook to share the information on this once it became available.
- The price of school bus fares and impact of new contracts which may lead to people moving away from bus use. It was understood that the prices hadn't increase on school routes. However this was a good point with further consequences beyond school routes.
- Whether it was possible to align bus service fares to BCP areas, parts of BCP were currently outside of Zone 1 making the journey costs very expensive. The meeting was informed that it should be ensured that boundaries were in the right place for everyone.

- Integrated transport links and improvements to pedestrian routes from bus stops. The Portfolio agreed that an enhanced partnership should support this and would like to see Beryl Bikes and trains included within integrated journey planning. The Portfolio Holder also commended officers for the work done on this.
- Whether anything could be done to prevent the loss of some well-established routes with lower usage. Changes to the services and numbering over the last few years had impacted the number of passengers accessing services.

26. Overview of SWEP protocol (Severe Weather Emergency Protocol)

The Lead Member for Homelessness 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 provided with background and a description of the current SWEP arrangements and triggers, the report also discussed the wider offer in place all year round for those verified as rough sleeping in the BCP area. The report also outlined the review process for the protocol which was currently underway. There were a number of points raised in the subsequent discussion and responded to by the Portfolio Holder, Lead Member and Officers, including:

- The trigger for SWEP when there was a severe weather warning in hot weather. It was noted that even if SWEP was not triggered, the outreach team would still be doing a lot of work to help those sleeping rough. However, the hot whether SWEP protocol was being looked at to ensure clarity.
- It was noted that the Met Office weather report was used by the Council to identify when to trigger SWEP. There was a query as to whether there was any flexibility regarding this. It was noted that this would be picked up in the SWEP review this year, the current mandatory trigger for SWEP was 3 nights with temperatures below zero but there was a level of discretion around triggering this. The Council was also looking at other areas and their arrangements for triggering SWEP. Further work would take place with partners regarding the risk and experience of outreach.
- There was now a mandatory trigger in place for amber and red weather warnings and the review of the SWEP protocol was looking to clarify some of the elements of discretion in triggering SWEP
- The Committee was informed that a number of those accommodated remained inside following the SWEP period. These were people who had an offer of accommodation but for whatever reason had not taken up that offer. It was noted that this was not the ideal way for someone to be accommodated. However, sometimes people had not wanted to accept an offer initially but could then be brought in through SWEP if eligible.
- There was a concern raised that the Committee had not been able to see the proposed protocol for the coming year, it was noted that there was still further work to be done to this.

- Whether there was funding available or a possibility that people accommodated during SWEP could be provided with individual rooms rather than, sometimes less satisfactory, arrangements within communal halls.

The Portfolio Holder praised the partnership work that was underway on this issue. The Committee was informed that the comments from members today should help strengthen the protocol moving forward. The Officers working on SWEP were commended and it was noted had always taken the SWEP responsibility very seriously.

The meeting adjourned at 8.38pm and resumed at 8:45pm

27. Bereavement Services business plan phase one update report and options appraisal for the future Poole Crematorium facility

The Portfolio Holder for Environment and Place 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 report sought to ensure the future need for crematoria facilities in Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole was met and provide a progress update on the delivery of Bereavement Services Business Plan 2020 – 2026. The paper set out an options appraisal, data and evidence for the future Poole Crematorium facility. It was noted that the current provision contributed towards the Council's income supporting the Medium-Term Financial Plan. In response to a comment the Committee was informed that the deceased were transferred sensitively via a private ambulance. In the following discussion a number of points were raised and responded to by the Portfolio Holder and Officers, including:

- How the current situation was arrived at and what action had been taken previously to try to address this. Prior to local government reorganisation the cremators required new parts and parts from other cremators were used for this purpose. At the point of entering the pandemic the decision was taken to close temporarily and use the cremators in Bournemouth. There was built in maintenance schedules for other cremators.
- Whether there had there been any consultation with residents regarding the lack of cremation facilities. There were strong public feelings around the issue, and it didn't appear much weight had been given to the community impact. Whilst there had not been any public consultation, there had been consultation with funeral directors.
- How and why all three cremators became unserviceable and what options had been explored for reusing or copying parts. It was noted that the equipment was serviced and maintained whilst operational. However, it was no longer possible to bring them back into use. The last major upgrade was 17 years ago, and the normal lifespan of a cremator was 12 years.
- There was ambition to reinstate the cremators in Poole but the changing technology around this would need to be investigated.

Installing an electric cremator would require demolishing part of the building and installing a gas cremator would not meet the Council's carbon reduction aims. There was a desire to invest in a crematorium which would meet all the needs of the community. It was suggested that there should be a technical report in place to confirm that it was not feasible to bring the equipment back into service. It was noted that the technical report had already been produced and would be shared with members.

- Concerns were raised regarding the implications of delaying instillation of new cremators to investigate emerging technologies and the timescale involved. The knowledge around the new technology was not yet good enough and the Portfolio Holder advised that they wanted to wait for better data on this before deciding on the most appropriate course of action to ensure best use of capital expenditure.
- The impact that direct cremations or unattended cremations were having on the provision of this service. It was noted that only 20 percent of cremations at Bournemouth were direct cremations.
- That there should be a timeframe in place for restating the operation of cremators at the Poole crematorium.
- There was interest in using the facilities at Poole, even though people were aware that no cremations take place on the site. The Council considered the needs of the bereaved and understood that people would want their loved one cremated where the committal took place. The Portfolio Holder offered to arrange a viewing of the hall at Poole for any members interested.

RESOLVED: The Committee recommend to Cabinet that, subject to no further information coming forward from the technical report on the existing cremating equipment, that Cabinet aim for a reopening of cremators at the Poole Crematorium facility by 2025/26.

Voting: Nem. Con.

28. Forward Plan

The Chair presented a report, a copy of which had been circulated to each Member and a copy of which appears as Appendix 'E' to these Minutes in the Minute Book. The Chair advised that he had asked for an update to come forward on the changes in the budget how it may affect services within the remit of the Committee. Which would be an additional item to add to the next meeting but would be intended to provide a quick update

The Chairman advised that he appreciated the feedback from everyone in terms of the work the Committee would be looking at. The Chairman asked to include engagement with O&S for the Cabinet report on Poole Town Quay.

The Chairman advise that he would welcome the Tree Strategy Working Group and the Committee agreed to proceed with this.

A member referred to a paper coming forward in terms of Leisure Services. It was noted that this was in the remit of Corporate and Community O&S Committee and would be scrutinised by that Committee.

29. Future Meeting Dates

The dates for the next meetings were noted.

The meeting ended at 10.12 pm

CHAIRMAN