

BOURNEMOUTH, CHRISTCHURCH AND POOLE COUNCIL
PLACE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of the Meeting held on 16 November 2022 at 6.00 pm

Present:-

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

Present: Cllr S Bartlett, Cllr M F Brooke, Cllr N Brooks, Cllr E Coope,
Cllr D Farr, Cllr A Hadley, Cllr M Iyengar, Cllr C Rigby and
Cllr S Moore (In place of Cllr M Earl)

Also in attendance virtually: Cllr D Mellor, Cllr M Anderson and Cllr B Dove

30. Apologies

Apologies were received from Cllr M Earl

31. Substitute Members

Cllr S Moore substituted for Cllr M Earl

32. Declarations of Interests

There were no declarations of interest made on this occasion.

33. Confirmation of Minutes

The minutes of the meetings held on 16 June and 21 September 2022 were approved as a correct record.

34. Public Issues

There were no public questions or petitions received. There was one public statement received from Mr McKinstry in relation to agenda item 6, and read out on his behalf by the democratic services officer as follows:

“Doubtless, Lord Kerlake knows what he's taken on in accepting the chairmanship of FuturePlaces. The company is controversial; many say its work could be done by the Council in-house, at significantly lower cost (no need for loans or bonus schemes). The main problem however is the company's opaqueness: no minutes published since March, no outline business cases produced - not even for the three small car park sites in Poole (despite the company existing for eighteen months now). Greater visibility, and more widespread consultation - plus discarding the term 'charette' as a synonym for consultation - would benefit this company immeasurably.”

35. Future Places - Introduction from the new Independent Chairman

The Committee considered a verbal update on the FuturePlaces company from the new Chairman. The Chairman of FuturePlaces explained their reasons for taking on the position and that the BCP area had great potential but there were things which could be improved, including ensuring that there was housing accessible to everyone. The Committee was also advised that the Chairman had experience of establishing external companies as Chief Executive of a local authority. The Chairman of FuturePlaces went on to highlight some of the priorities and issues for the company. It was noted that the last year had been a year of setting-up but it was expected that a number of business cases would be coming through in the next few months. It was hoped that local Councillors would be brought in ahead of any future consultations and this would be strengthened going forward. The Chairman of FuturePlaces expressed a hope that the company would come to a position where it was seen by all as something of great value for the area. Further plans for improving accountability and transparency were also highlighted.

The Chairman thanked the Chairman of FuturePlaces for bringing this introduction and update to the O&S Committee and advised that the Committee looked forward to seeing the future business cases as they were coming through. A number of issues were raised by the Committee which included:

- A Councillor commented that the public meeting which took place in Christchurch the preceding day was welcomed, and it was good to see engagement taking place with people feeling that they could express themselves on future direction. The Councillor also commented that they could appreciate the process and the somewhat lengthy gestation period for schemes to come forward.
- A Councillor commented that it would be useful to have wider Councillor engagement in any schemes with a potential community impact and not just the local ward Councillors.
- A Councillor welcomed the information received regarding transparency and governance arrangements. It was discussed that, in the lead up to the business cases coming forward, there would need to be more dialogue rather than less.

The Chairman thanked those present for attending and providing information.

36. Impact of Budget on Services within the remit of Place O&S Committee

The Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Finance and Transformation, and the Chief Operating Officer introduced a report a copy of which appears as appendix A to these minutes in the Minute Book and a copy of which had been circulated to each member of the Committee. The

Committee were reminded that the focus of this item was to consider the impact of budget issues on services within the remit of the Place Committee. In the following discussion a number of points were raised by the Committee and were responded to by the Leader and Officers including:

- The capitalisation direction and the impact of the change in Prime Minister and Cabinet. It was noted that the transformation programme of approximately £60m was originally intended to be funded through the SPV but the Council had now received a minded to letter which meant the capitalisation direction was approved in principle. There was also the option to utilise the flexibility of capital receipts.
- Commercialisation of services – Whether there was any intention to charge for delivery of services which people were not charged for at present. It was confirmed that this was not the case, but for ‘charged for services’, there would need to be an increase due to current inflationary pressures.
- How the consultation would be carried out and if it would ask about cuts to services or payment for services. The consultation would be asking about priorities and would be conducted in a wider way than normally, in order to ensure that the residents voice was at the heart of the choices to be made.
- The lack of engagement and consultation around not providing a free carparking offer across the Christmas period in town centre car parks.
- Service rationalisation – whether there was consideration given to cutting back services to the statutory minimum. It was noted that consideration was being given to different ways of providing services.
- The staff time spent working on transformation and the capitalisation of staff time. This was largely a percentage of officer time and was weighted towards more senior roles, rather than a dedicated transformation team. There had been lots of work in housing, environment and planning in terms of the place based services.
- Transformation savings for 2023/24, assumed that a third of savings were not itemised and it was not known where these savings were coming from. It was noted that a back-office system would allow the tracking of every pound spent as an organisation.
- Air Festival 2023, the cost to Council to put this on and what savings were being built into the budget for the next show. The Leader advised they were committed to this issue and discussion was underway on options for financially commercialising it. The Leader undertook to provide a written response on further details around this.
- Commercialisation and providing services to the community. There was concern regarding the maximum increases in costs of services for residents.
- Crematorium loss of income and increased service costs, along with increases in competition and whether the Council was in the right place in the market. It was noted that a paper was coming forward on this issue but it was still in early stages and would come back to Scrutiny in March. The team were working hard on this and there had been some positive responses to the new facilities in Poole.

- Council activity on avoiding and capturing waste and sale of items from recycling centre. It was noted that the 'New to You' initiative was being monitored and was going well, with new opportunities and sites being considered.
- Savings in street lighting despite the utility price increases. It was noted that much of the saving came through the use of new bulbs. In terms of the cost going forward all options were being looked at and mitigating the rising energy costs would need to be considered.
- It was noted that the Leader had mentioned the aspect of benchmarking and it was suggested that the Council should look at other comparable authorities along the coastline. It would be useful if some clear indication on benchmarking could be provided in future.

37. Fire Breaks

The Portfolio Holder for Environment and Place and the Strategic Lead for Greenspace and Conservation 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 Committee was asked to endorse the current management approach to wildfires and the work of the Emergency Planning Team and strong partnership work in place with the Urban Heath Partnership and Dorset and Wiltshire Fire and Rescue Service. The Committee considered a comprehensive presentation which was circulated to Committee members and appears as Appendix 'C' to these minutes in the Minute Book. The Strategic Lead was supported in the presentation by representatives from Emergency Planning, the Urban Heath Partnership and the Dorset and Wiltshire Fire and Rescue Service. Following the presentation, a number of points were raised and responded to including:

- Properties surrounding heathland areas and use of firebreaks. It was noted that there was an effort to minimise extensive areas of heather or gorse near to property boundaries. A proportional response in terms of what action would be necessary was needed but it was noted that it was a concern for residents, and it was a case of minimising the risks.
- The social media campaign following the recent fire on Canford Heath. It was noted that this was a very positive piece of work and it was hoped it would continue.
- The sighting of fire boxes and the risk/benefit analysis for those who may be using them.
- The Litter Free Dorset campaign to stop selling disposal BBQs.
- It was noted that there was a PSPO in Dorset covering people lighting fires in various areas and that evidence was needed for these to be implemented. Officers advised that this was being worked on for both beach and heathland areas. It was noted that a report to Cabinet was expected to come forward on this issue.
- Concern from residents not backing on to heathland but with significant amounts of vegetation which may have been considered a fire risk during the dry summer. It was suggested that there would be a multi-agency workshop to consider areas of risk. Officers advised that the

multi-agency response was important, as each area had a wealth of knowledge but was not aware of a workshop and would pick this up outside of the meeting.

- The causes of heathland fires, including whether there was human intervention in starting them and whether this was deliberate or otherwise. It was noted that prevention was better than cure. Members asked if anything could be done to lobby MPs. It was noted that evidence was needed for this. Officers undertook to provide information to the Committee members on this.
- Concern was raised regarding the increase in heathland fires.
- The Committee was pleased to see the partnership working in this area to try to address these issues and expressed its support for the education initiatives to help address this problem.
- Methods for controlling fires and managing vegetation were discussed.

RESOLVED:

- a. That the current management approach to wildfires be endorsed;**
- b. That the current work of the Emergency planning team to support and react to events on the ground be endorsed;**
- c. That the strong partnership working already in place through the Urban Heaths Partnership and Dorset & Wiltshire Fire and Rescue Service be acknowledged.**

Voting: Nem. Con.

The Committee were very supportive of the proposals around Public Space Protection Orders regarding Heathland Fires and discussed making a recommendation regarding this issue. The Committee then:

RESOLVED: That the Committee supports the work underway to introduce a PSPO to cover damaging activities related to wild fires, in areas of heathland, woodlands and inappropriate open space.

Voting: nem com

The meeting adjourned at 8.21pm and resumed at 8.27pm.

Cllr M Iyengar left the meeting during the adjournment.

38. WISE Fly Tipping Enforcement Review

The Portfolio Holder for Community Safety and Regulatory Services 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 Committee was advised of the work carried out since May 2022 with the Councils Communications Team and Waste Compliance Officers in line with recommendations made to Cabinet, the report summarised some of the learning from other Local Authorities and provided an update on the performance and data of the pilot. In the subsequent discussion a number of points were raised and responded to by the Portfolio Holder and Officers including:

- The option outlined appeared to be the economically best option for the Council.
- There was concern regarding the economic viability of the outlined option and whether all other options had been explored. It was confirmed that it was cost neutral to the council, which was why officers were recommending this approach. There was an intention to go out to tender, market testing had been very positive so this would be the next step.
- Residents leaving things outside their houses for others to collect and consequently receiving fines. It was suggested that there could be schemes to support this kind of community recycling and reusing as there were elsewhere.
- It was noted that the hours of Household Waste Centres were reduced many years ago to reduce costs and based on usage data. Use of these were also free in most circumstances.
- The rate of returns in the pilot and fines issued, including the issues for following through with pursuing Fixed Penalty Notices. Concerns were raised regarding the number of fines paid. The payment rates for duty of care inspections were favourable. Prosecutions were costly and time consuming and efforts would be focused on persistent offenders.
- Concerns around RIPA in terms of activities undertaken in the pilot. It was noted that it was not deemed to require RIPA approval as it was not targeted covert surveillance. The officers were visible in full uniforms and were not targeting anyone.
- Whether dog fouling was included wasn't and required a PSPO to be in place. It wasn't and would require a PSPO in place in order to enforce this. However, it would be included as litter if within a plastic bag. Concerns were raised that dog waste bins had been removed.
- Whether litter thrown from cars to roadside verges was covered through the scheme. Litter thrown from cars in car parks would be covered but an evidence base would be needed.
- Concern was raised regarding enforcement on this issue as it was not always welcomed, including hostility to the use of body cameras before it had been established if there had been an offence committed.
- Concerns were expressed that the detail on the other options within the report were not as clear as the preferred option.
- How use of officers' time would be allocated to different areas within the conurbation, including the district centres.
- It was noted that fines wouldn't be issued to under 18s but enforcement officers would seek to engage with them.

The Chairman outlined the recommendations within the Cabinet report and asked the Committee if these were accepted.

RESOLVED: That the Committee accepted the recommendations as outlined within the Cabinet report

Voting: 8 for; 0 against; 2 abstentions.

39. Work Plan

The Chairman introduced the item, a copy of the associated report had been circulated to members and a copy of which appears as appendix D in the Minute Book. The Chairman raised the following points:

There were FuturePlaces Business cases due to be considered by Cabinet in February. A Special meeting of the Committee would need to be arranged to consider these in early February. Democratic services would look into a date.

The Tree Strategy Working Group was yet to meet but was looking to get dates in the diary and was scheduled to report into the next scheduled meeting.

Committee members raised the following issues:

- The Development of Templeman House in Redhill and Northbourne. The contractor for which had gone into liquidation. It was noted that there were wider issues to look at concerning procurement processes.
- Sterte Court Cladding – the provider for this scheme had also gone into administration and the process around this needed to be considered.
- The emerging Local Plan – As the previous O&S working group was no longer operating there was no scheduled public scrutiny of this issue. It was noted that the Local Plan was on the Committee's work Plan with a date to be scheduled. Further scheduling for this would be given consideration.
- Climate Change Progress report – this was a very important issue which needed to be considered by the Committee.
- Concerns were raised that the gap between meetings was too long. The next meeting not being until March and that scheduling ad hoc special meetings was chaotic. It was suggested that the scheduled meetings should be tracking Cabinet dates in order to avoid not having an opportunity to consider Cabinet reports for pre-decision scrutiny.

The frequency of O&S Committee meetings had been agreed by Council. Committee members felt that this needed to be reconsidered. A motion was proposed that the number of scheduled meetings needed to be increased. It was noted that there was difficulty in trying to look at everything.

RESOLVED the Committee request that the Constitution review working group review the frequency of Place O&S Committee meetings with a recommendation that these should track Cabinet meeting dates.

7 in favour 2 against 1 abstention.

40. Future Meeting Dates

The date of the next scheduled meeting was 1 March, an additional meeting would be scheduled to consider Futureplaces Business cases.

The meeting ended at 9.36 pm

CHAIRMAN