

BOURNEMOUTH, CHRISTCHURCH AND POOLE COUNCIL
COUNCIL

Minutes of the Meeting held on 10 December 2024 at 7.00 pm

Present:-

Cllr L Dedman – Chairman

Cllr S Bull – Vice-Chairman

Present: Cllr C Adams, Cllr S Aitkenhead, Cllr M Andrews, Cllr S Armstrong, Cllr J Bagwell, Cllr S Bartlett, Cllr P Broadhead, Cllr D Brown, Cllr O Brown, Cllr R Burton, Cllr J J Butt, Cllr P Canavan, Cllr S Carr-Brown, Cllr A Chapmanlaw, Cllr B Chick, Cllr J Clements, Cllr E Connolly, Cllr P Cooper, Cllr M Cox, Cllr D d'Orton-Gibson, Cllr B Dove, Cllr M Dower, Cllr M Earl, Cllr J Edwards, Cllr D A Flagg, Cllr M Gillett, Cllr C Goodall, Cllr A Hadley, Cllr J Hanna, Cllr E Harman, Cllr R Herrett, Cllr P Hilliard, Cllr B Hitchcock, Cllr M Howell, Cllr A Keddie, Cllr M Le Poidevin, Cllr S Mackrow, Cllr A Martin, Cllr D Martin, Cllr G Martin, Cllr J Martin, Cllr C Matthews, Cllr S McCormack, Cllr P Miles, Cllr S Moore, Cllr A-M Moriarty, Cllr B Nanovo, Cllr L Northover, Cllr M Phipps, Cllr K Rampton, Cllr Dr F Rice, Cllr J Richardson, Cllr V Ricketts, Cllr C Rigby, Cllr K Salmon, Cllr J Salmon, Cllr P Sidaway, Cllr P Slade, Cllr T Slade, Cllr V Slade, Cllr M Tarling, Cllr T Trent, Cllr O Walters, Cllr C Weight, Cllr L Williams, Cllr K Wilson and Cllr G Wright

40. Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors H Allen, J Beesley, J Challinor, G Farquhar, D Farr and A Filer.

41. Declarations of Interests

Councillors Sara Armstrong, Paul Slade and Vikki Slade declared interests in Minute No. 48 (Linwood Special School SEND Post 16 Provision at Ted Webster) and left the room for the discussion and voting thereon.

42. Confirmation of Minutes

The Minutes of the Council meeting held on 15 October 2024, reconvened on 4 November 2024 were confirmed as a correct record.

43. Announcements and Introductions from the Chairman

The Chairman reported the sad passing of former Councillor and Mayor Ron Parker who was elected to Poole Borough Council in 1988, was Mayor of Poole from 2001-2002 and a serving Poole Councillor until 2019.

Councillor Karen Rampton relayed personal experiences of Ron Parker following which Councillors stood in silent tribute.

The Chairman updated Council on her activities since the last meeting. These included attendance at: -

- Launch Christchurch living advent calendar
- Poppy appeal launch Bovington tank museum
- Dorset legal service, attended by High Sheriff
- Health science university launch attended by HRH Princess Anne
- Bournemouth University graduation event
- Remembrance 2-minute silence
- Nurturing by nature, Poole, celebration event
- Alpine lodge Christmas launch
- Lunch meeting and introduction to BCP for Lord Lieutenant
- Indian soldiers' plaque unveiling, attended by Lord Lieutenant
- Upton house celebration of success, attended by lottery fund representative
- Bournemouth Arts University and soroptimists event and prize giving

The Vice-Chairman advised that he had attended: -

- Lord Lieutenants awards evening
- Remembrance Parade in Christchurch followed by the service at the Christchurch Priory

44. Public Issues

The public questions and statements set out in the minutes below are printed as per the wording used within the submissions made in accordance with the constitution.

As a number of the public statements submitted were identical the statement was read once referencing all those who had submitted the statement.

Public Question from Sue Hobbs

In view of the current housing shortage, what are the Council's plans to ensure that homes, including the significant proportion of social housing included in the original plans, are built on the Poole Power Station site as quickly as possible?

Are the Council pursuing grants and funds to pay for the clean up?

Does the Council have any plans to sell all or part of this land?

Response by the Leader of the Council, Councillor Millie Earl

The Council has developed a 5-year plan to deliver homes across numerous sites which includes the former Holes Bay power station site. We are working with the National Government Agency, Homes England to develop our proposals for the former Power Station site, which includes maximising much needed affordable housing. This includes interventions such as grant to mitigate the flood risk, remediate the site for development and establishing partnerships for planning and building out the homes. We are exploring a range of options for how we can bring the site forward at pace.

With us, Homes England is fully committed to working in partnership with BCP Council to explore and unlock the regeneration potential of the significant landholding at Holes Bay. Recognising the complexity of the site we believe our collaborative approach can help deliver a landmark housing-led, mixed-use development that aligns with both local and national objectives.

Public Question from Alex McKinstry

On 18 January 2024, the Planning Committee voted *not* to enter exempt session to discuss some legal advice; whereupon the monitoring officer stated that the advice remained exempt (under Schedule 12A LGA 1972) and could not be discussed openly. Had the Committee thought on its feet, and tabled a motion that *the public interest in the advice outweighed the case for exemption* - and had such a motion been carried - would the Committee, then, have been able to discuss the advice openly? In short, can committees overrule officers regarding whether documents are exempt?

I ask this, apprehensive that any reports into the FuturePlaces investigation might be withheld from public view or heavily redacted - as happened with the Bayside report. I note however that Pembrokeshire Council voted to debate an alleged fraud case in open session in March 2024, thereby overruling their statutory officers.

Response by the Portfolio Holder for Transformation, Councillor Jeff Hanna

Thank you for the question. I am always wary of responding to hypothetical questions, but I have taken advice from the Monitoring Officer and will do my best.

The exemption applied to the report in question was under s5 Schedule 12A Local Government Act 1972 “Information in respect of which a claim to legal professional privilege could be maintained in legal proceedings.”

Had the Committee tabled the motion that Mr McKinstry suggests, the Monitoring Officer, prior to any vote being taken, would have advised the Committee about the need to safeguard the Council's legal position and this may have resulted in an adjournment of the meeting to enable further advice on the implications of any such motion to be provided to the Committee.

The Monitoring Officer's strong legal advice is that the council should not take steps to waive legal professional privilege as to do this on any one matter has huge consequences for the safety of the legal advice across all areas of the council i.e. all legal advice provided would not be protected by legal privilege and therefore prejudice the council in any future hearings/meetings, court proceedings or whatever.

As a council we employ our Monitoring Officer to give us professional advice to safeguard the interests of the council and our residents, and my advice as portfolio holder for governance is to act on her advice.

Public Question from Alex Harman

I would like to inquire about the progress made since the Environment and Places O&S Committee meeting held on 11th September. Specifically, I'm interested in understanding the reasons behind the council's decision not to endorse the Plant-Based Treaty yet.

Given the committee's comments regarding ambitious targets, and the urgent need for environmental action, I believe endorsing the treaty would be a significant step towards demonstrating your commitment to positive change within our community.

Therefore, with proposals such as:

- Endorsing the Plant-Based Treaty as a symbol of the council's intent to prioritise sustainability.
- Mandating at least 50% plant-based options in council-controlled food services.
- Implementing measures to limit unsustainable advertising.
- and launching public education campaigns to promote plant-based diets and sustainable living.

What is preventing the council from implementing these actions?

Response by the Portfolio Holder for Climate Response, Environment and Energy, Councillor Andy Hadley

Alex, Thank you for your question.

The topic of the Plant Based Treaty has been raised and thoroughly discussed by the Place and Environment Overview and Scrutiny committee.

From a Commercial operations perspective, the mandating of 50% plant based options is being considered, but it needs to be brought forward carefully in line with procurement, and the operations teams capacity.

Changes in menu can impact competitiveness and viability in the market place, and with the council's financial position, change must be carefully balanced. Ensuring Plant Based options are prominent is being taken forward by the Portfolio Holder and Commercial operations director to examine how we can lift our vegan options whilst maintaining our commercial position.

The Council is developing a strategy for advertising in spaces that it controls, and we anticipate this will aim to limit unsustainable advertising.

This Council is also seeking to create positive change by working with the community to educate and support moves towards plant-based diets and sustainable living, but we need to work with the public on this.

Public Statement from Daniel Glennon

The heart-breaking floods that hit Valencia and Barcelona in Spain a few weeks ago, killing 250 people and causing thousands to lose their homes and livelihoods, are a stark reminder that climate breakdown is here, now. It's not a problem for future generations to deal with or that will only affect far-off continents. As the planet continues to warm, such disasters will

become more frequent, more devastating and more widespread. The need to reduce CO2 and other greenhouse gases could not be more urgent.

The council has an opportunity to show real climate leadership by considering becoming a Plant-Based Council. Food accounts for one third of greenhouse gas emissions, more than our whole transport system. Studies have shown that vegan diets produce 75% less emissions; transitioning to a plant-based food system would also reduce land use by 75%, freeing up land for rewilding and carbon sequestration.

Public Statement from Suhaila Simmonds read by the Chief Executive

As a BCP resident I do NOT support being twinned with a town in an apartheid state and one that is actively carrying out a genocide, and that this twinning arrangement must end now. I was not asked to vote for this twinning in the first instance and deem it very strange that it would have been actioned without residents being involved.

Note: Similar statements were also submitted by Ian Simmonds, Ula Simmonds, Najla Hayden and Elizabeth Elwick

Public Statement from Tammy Sullivan and Torin Van Breda

I'm Tammy, Assistant Music Leader of the Bournemouth National Open Youth Orchestra Ensemble (NOYO for short) run by Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra here in BCP. I'm Torin and I play the French Horn in NOYO.

NOYO is an inclusive orchestra for young disabled and non-disabled musicians. It allows musicians to perform together playing both traditional and new music. What makes NOYO different is it brings together old and new instruments like Clarion which you play with eye or head movement.

It provides a platform to start making music and then get involved in other things. I'm doing a Silver Arts Award and helping organise the next concert. NOYO has given me loads of opportunities and has opened new doors and I recently joined a brass band.

NOYO is one of many unique initiatives made possible by BSO because of BCP cultural funding, and we want to thank you for this support.

Public Statement from Nick Greenwood read by the Chief Executive

In July 2019, the BCP Council joined two-thirds of UK Councils in declaring a climate emergency. However, history reminds us that majority consensus does not always equate to a correct stance. As Councilors, do you possess the scientific expertise necessary to evaluate whether your advisors are genuinely independent from the influences of political ideology and nepotism that often positions climate change as an undisputed scientific fact? I urge you to consider the courage it would take to establish a Scrutiny Committee that revisits the critical questions, engaging independent expert climate scientists either in person or through virtual platforms. This committee could facilitate discussions on the expansion of NET ZERO, which carries significant financial implications. Any gaps in knowledge may lead to decisions made without a solid evidence base, ultimately risking the

misallocation of public funds. Let us ensure that our approach to this pressing issue is both informed and judicious.

Public Statement from Nicola Harris

I stood here in July, inviting this council to join dozens of cities endorsing the Plant Based Treaty to address one-third of greenhouse gas emissions from the food system. Since then, 4 new cities have endorsed it, and I urge BCP to be bold and next. An open letter in your inboxes, signed by Dr Jane Goodall, Chris Packham, Neil Duncan-Jordan, MP for Poole, and the Bournemouth University Sustainability Team, urges you to assess the impact of endorsing the treaty. Let me remind you that recent weeks have brought us flooding, fallen trees, and a cliff fall. Achieving the Paris Agreement's 1.5C target is only possible by lowering food emissions. Please let 2025 be the year that BCP shows leadership by expressing support for a global Plant Based Treaty and creates an action-plan like other supporting cities, including Edinburgh, Amsterdam and West Hollywood. Our future is in your hands.

Public Statement from Felicity Porter

I am Felicity Porter and I am Chair of the Mudeford Wood Preschool.

We are being evicted from Mudeford Wood Community Centre in July next year, our home of over 30 years.

It is a BCP building leased to the Mudeford Wood Community Trust, you we rent us our space.

We are a successful pre-school, currently serving 70 local families, a waiting list and 18 staff. My 2 eldest sons attended the setting and both thrived.

I am gravely concerned about the loss of the pre-school in Mudeford, both for local families but also for all the dedicated staff who are set to lose their jobs.

We are working incredibly hard to find a solution for this valuable community resource. We are asking for your support as councillors to help us find a way forward and secure its future for the benefit of our community.

45. Licensing Committee 19 September 2024 - Minute No. 18 - Approval of Statement of Licensing Principles- Gambling Act Policy 2025 - 2028

The Chair of the Licensing Committee, Councillor David Flagg presented the report on the Statement of Licensing Principles – Gambling Act Policy 2025-2028 and outlined the recommendations as set out on the agenda.

RESOLVED that the Statement of Licensing Principles – Gambling Act Policy 2025 – 2028 be approved.

Voting: Agreed with no dissent

46. Cabinet 30 October 2024 - Minute No. 72 - Westbourne Plus

The Portfolio Holder for Finance, Councillor Mike Cox presented the report on Westbourne Plus and outlined the recommendations as set out on the agenda.

In proposing the recommendations, the Portfolio Holder for Finance proposed an amendment to recommendation (b) so that recommendation (b) read as follows: -

- (b) ~~**Subject to a viable alternative being confirmed before the Council meeting on the 10 December 2024, approve the disposal on an open market basis of the former Westbourne Plus site including St Ambrose Cottage on such terms to be approved by the Director of Finance, also acting in his capacity as Corporate Property Officer, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Finance.**~~

This was seconded by Councillor David Brown and debated as the substantive motion.

It is RESOLVED that Council: -

- (a) **note the confidential draft minutes and the recommendations of the Cross-Party Asset Disposal Working Group meeting held on the 4 October 2024; and**
- (b) **approve the disposal on an open market basis of the former Westbourne Plus site including St Ambrose Cottage on such terms to be approved by the Director of Finance, also acting in his capacity as Corporate Property Officer, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Finance.**

Voting: For:55, Against:1, Abstentions:9

The meeting adjourned at 7.43pm and reconvened at 7.50pm.

47. Audit and Governance Committee 28 November 2024 - Minute No. 54 - Review of the Council's Constitution - Recommendations of the Constitution Review Working Group

The Chair of the Audit and Governance Committee, Councillor Marcus Andrews presented the report on the Review of the Council's Constitution – Recommendations of the Constitution Review Working Group and outlined the recommendations as set out on the agenda.

Councillor Kieron Wilson highlighted an omission in relation to Appendix 1, paragraph 4.3.2 whereby an additional item should be included prior to 6 to 'agree the budget'.

In addition Councillor Wilson highlighted a grammatical error at Appendix 1, paragraph 4.3.2 point number 5(i) where it should read (i) Revenue budget (including ~~d~~fees and charges...).

Council was advised that any grammatical errors would be picked up as set out in recommendation e.

RESOLVED that: -

- (a) in relation to Issue 1 (Article 4 – The Full Council) the proposed amendments to Part 2, Article 4 (The Full Council), as set out in Appendix 1 to the report, be approved;**
- (b) that the Council meeting scheduled for Tuesday, 25 February 2025 be designated as the Annual Budget Council Meeting and that an additional ordinary meeting of Council be scheduled for Tuesday, 11 February 2025 at 7.00pm;**
- (c) in relation to Issue 2 (Part 3A Responsibility for Functions – Planning Committee) the proposed amendments to Part 3A (Responsibility for Functions), as set out in Appendix 2 to the report, be approved, subject to the addition of the words ‘part or all of’ in section 2.3.7 (a) to read:**
- (d) “in the opinion of the Councillor making the request, the application raises material planning issues that affect part or all of their ward or would affect the wider public interest that would warrant debate and consideration by a planning committee; and”**
- (e) any necessary and consequential technical and formatting related updates and revisions to the Constitution be delegated to the Monitoring Officer.**

Voting: Agreed with no dissent

48. Recommendations from the Cabinet - 10 December 2024

Council was advised that there were three items from the Cabinet meeting earlier that day with recommendations to Council.

Minute No. 87 – BCP Council Plan for Play

The Portfolio Holder for Communities and Partnerships, Councillor Sandra Moore presented the report on BCP Council Plan for Play and outlined the recommendations as set out in the supplementary agenda papers.

Council debated the item and whilst members were supportive of the paper the following aspects were raised: -

- Would have liked more information on strategic CIL
- There is no mention of paddling pools and in particular the Redhill paddling pool

RESOLVED that Council approved: -

- (c) the allocation of £548,047 of capital funds from various planning obligations and reserves to the Improvement Plan;**
- (d) the allocation of £3,390,609 from Strategic Community Infrastructure Levy to the Improvement Plan; and**
- (e) both (c) and (d) are subject to receiving the subsequent endorsement of the Director of Finance based on the availability of the necessary cash.**

Note – resolutions (a) and (b) were resolved matters by the Cabinet.

Voting: Unanimous

Minute No. 93 – Linwood Special School SEND Post 16 Provision at Ted Webster

The Portfolio Holder for Children, Young People, Education and Skills, Councillor Richard Burton presented the report on the Linwood Special School SEND Post 16 Provisions at Ted Webster and outlined the recommendations as set out in the supplementary agenda papers.

RECOMMENDED that Cabinet recommends approval of the scheme by Council to develop a satellite of Linwood Special School at the former Ted Webster Children's Centre providing a total of 60 Post 16 places requiring a capital budget of £1.55m to develop the scheme. The scheme is fully funded from the council's grant allocation of High Needs Provision Capital and will progress in line with the project programme set out at paragraph 12.

Voting: Unanimous

(Councillors Sara Armstong, Paul Slade and Vikki Slade declared interests in this item and left the meeting for the discussion and voting thereon).

Councillor Julie Bagwell joined the meeting at 8.20pm part way through the debate on this item and therefore did not participate in the vote.

Minute No. 94 Transforming Urgent and Emergency Care Services

The Portfolio Holder for Health and Wellbeing, Councillor David Brown presented the report on Transforming Urgent and Emergency Care Services and outlined the recommendations as set out in the supplementary agenda papers.

Comprehensive discussion took place on the item with some members raising concerns with regards to the associated risks.

RESOLVED that Council: -

- (a) notes the summary of the diagnostic review, including improved outcomes for residents and financial benefits for the Council;**
- (b) notes that anticipated benefits are significantly in excess of costs to the Council; and**
- (c) delegates to the Corporate Director for Wellbeing, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Health and Wellbeing, the Director of Law and Governance and the Director of Finance, authority to finalise and enter into the Partnership Agreement to undertake the proposed transformation programme.**

Voting: For:58, Against:6, Abstentions:2

Councillor Bobbie Dove joined the meeting at 8.24pm part way through the Portfolio Holders introduction.

Councillor Vikki Slade left the meeting at 8.41pm

49. Review of the political balance of the Council, the allocation of seats on Committees to each political group and the appointment of Councillors to Committees and Outside Bodies

The Leader of the Council, Councillor Millie Earl 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.

Council was requested to consider and approve the review of the political balance of the Council, the allocation of seats on Committees to each political group, the appointment of Councillors on Committees and the appointments to outside bodies following the result of the by-election in the Muscliff and Strouden Park Ward on 24 October 2024.

RESOLVED that: -

- (a) the revised political balance of the Council, as set out in Table 1 to this report be noted;**
- (b) the number of seats on each committee, as set out in Table 2 to this report, be approved;**
- (c) the allocation of committee seats to each political group, as set out in Table 3 to this report, be approved;**
- (d) the appointment of Councillors to Committees and Boards in accordance with the wishes of the political groups, as detailed in Table 4 to this report, be approved;**
- (e) the allocation of seats to each political group on the outside bodies, as detailed in Table 5 to this report, be approved;**
- (f) the appointment of Councillors to the outside bodies in accordance with the wishes of the political groups, as detailed in Table 6 to this report, be approved;**
- (g) subject to (c) above the appointment of the unaligned Members to the Committees and Boards as shown in table (d) be approved.**

Voting: Agreed with no dissent

50. Members Allowances Scheme

Council was advised that further to the interim report shared with Council in July that the Independent Remuneration Panel had now submitted its report for consideration, 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.

In addition, Council was made aware of a typo on page 141 whereby the recommended allowance to the leader should read £40,000.

Council was advised that the submitted report had come directly to council and had not been shared prior to this meeting with any councillor.

Further to this Council was advised that the report sought Council's approval of the Scheme of Allowances for 2025-2026 Municipal Year and incorporated the recommendations of the Independent Remuneration Panel (IRP) on their review of the Members' Scheme of Allowances for 2025/26.

The Leader spoke against the recommendations contained within the report stressing that the report should be rejected on the basis that the Council is already experiencing significant budget pressures and that it wasn't the appropriate time to consider any potential changes to the members allowances which would result in additional expenditure.

Comprehensive discussion took place with the following aspects being raised: -

- The importance of the Independent Panel to review allowances
- The complex and large amounts of time councillors put into their duties
- Concern that the report didn't address the difference in effort put in by individual councillors – allowances should be reflective of the time and effort people put in
- Councillors should be remunerated in a way which doesn't just mean someone has to take a pay cut or give up work.
- Being a councillor is hard work and deserves to be rewarded
- Are there ways in which councillors could deal with queries and issues more efficiently by having easy points of contact and matters resolved more swiftly.
- Concern that the way in which the allowances are distributed is wrong, there is an imbalance

Councillor Chris Rigby proposed that the report be deferred until such time as the pay and reward matters had been resolved. This proposal was seconded by Councillor David Flagg.

RESOLVED that the report be deferred until such time as pay and reward has been finalised.

Voting: For:51, Against:15, Abstentions:1

The meeting adjourned at 9.14pm and reconvened at 9.37pm

Councillors Julie Bagwell, Brian Hitchcock and Pete Miles left the meeting at 9.14pm

51. Non-compliance with Standards Complaints Process - Determination

The Chair of the Standards Committee 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.

Council was advised that the report was for information and provided the Council with details of a complaint where the subject councillor had failed to

comply with a determination requesting that an apology be made following the informal resolution stage of the complaints process.

RESOLVED that the report was noted.

Voting: For:55, Against:0, Abstentions:9

52. Hurn Neighbourhood Plan

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.

Council was advised that the Hurn Neighbourhood Plan was subject to independent examination May to August 2024, and that the examiner's report received on 9 August 2024, concluded that subject to modifications, the neighbourhood plan meets basic and legal conditions.

Further to this Council was informed that Cabinet on 4 September 2024 agreed the examiner's modifications, together with the council's decision statement and approved the modified plan for referendum, and that the referendum had taken place on 24 October 2024 within the Hurn area.

In relation to this Council was advised that the referendum question asked:

'Do you want BCP Council to use the Neighbourhood Plan for Hurn to help it decide planning applications in the neighbourhood area?'

As a result of this Council was informed that since the result of the referendum was positive, with more than 50% of those voting, agreeing with the above question, the council must now bring the plan into force so that it forms part of the statutory development plan, it will also be used alongside the Local Plan to determine planning applications in the Hurn Neighbourhood area.

Thanks were expressed to the Lead Member for Local Plan Delivery, Councillor Margaret Phipps for all her hard work.

RESOLVED that Council: -

- (a) **noted the results of the Hurn Neighbourhood Plan referendum held on 24 October 2024 (Declaration of Result of Poll - Appendix 1);**
- (b) **agreed to make the Hurn Neighbourhood Plan (Appendix 2), that was subject to referendum on 24 October 2024, part of BCP Council's statutory development plan so that it can be used alongside the Local Plan to determine planning applications in the Hurn neighbourhood area; and**
- (c) **approved the Local Planning Authority's Decision Statement (Appendix 3) and delegate publication and circulation of the Decision Statement to the Director of Planning and Transport in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Dynamic Places.**

Voting: Unanimous

53. Notices of Motions in accordance with Procedure Rule 10

Council was advised that four motions had been received on this occasion.

Housing Targets

The following motion was submitted in accordance with Procedure Rule 9 of the Meeting Procedure Rules and was moved by Councillor Philip Broadhead and seconded by Councillor Toby Slade.

This Council therefore:

Argues strongly that housing targets should remain decided locally and not dictated by Government.

Asks the Lead Member for Local Plan Delivery to write to the Secretary of State Angela Raynor to:

- **ask her to think again on these plans to remove the ability for local areas to decide their own housing figures**
- **inform her that we strongly oppose the new centrally imposed figure of 2962 new homes per annum being forced to be built in the BCP Council Area**
- **tell her that we want our Green Belt protected and not redefined as Grey Belt**

We also ask the Council to publicly publish its formal response to the Government's Consultation to the proposed revised NPPF for transparency purposes.

Councillor Marcus Andrews proposed an amendment to the motion with the addition of a fourth bullet point to read: -

- ***tell her to take urgent action to consider the number of empty homes in an area in calculating local housing numbers and to outline plans to bring such homes back into use***

This amendment was seconded by Councillor Kieran Wilson.

The proposer and seconder of the original motion advised that they accepted the amendment. Council agreement was sought to confirm the amendment as the substantive motion which was subsequently carried without dissent.

Comprehensive discussion took place on the motion with members expressing concern with regards to what was deemed to be unrealistic housing targets.

This Council therefore:

Argues strongly that housing targets should remain decided locally and not dictated by Government.

Asks the Lead Member for Local Plan Delivery to write to the Secretary of State Angela Raynor to:

- **ask her to think again on these plans to remove the ability for local areas to decide their own housing figures**

- **inform her that we strongly oppose the new centrally imposed figure of 2962 new homes per annum being forced to be built in the BCP Council Area**
- **tell her that we want our Green Belt protected and not redefined as Grey Belt**
- **tell her to take urgent action to consider the number of empty homes in an area in calculating local housing numbers and to outline plans to bring such homes back into use**

We also ask the Council to publicly publish its formal response to the Government's Consultation to the proposed revised NPPF for transparency purposes.

Voting: For:48, Against:10, Abstentions:6

Councillor Judes Butt left the meeting at 10.20pm

Remote Attendance and Proxy Voting

The following motion was submitted in accordance with Procedure Rule 9 of the Meeting Procedure Rules and was moved by Councillor Philip Broadhead and seconded by Councillor Cameron Adams.

This Council believes:

- **While there are benefits to virtual and/or hybrid meetings, especially for informal meetings and training sessions, the current regulations which require a physical presence for Councillors to vote at formal meetings are sufficient.**
- **It is important, for formal Council meetings, for the public to see their Elected Members coming together to debate, discuss and vote on the issues in person, with the benefit of all of the information being received at the same time and in the same way. Our residents expect our physical attendance, and it would erode the accountability and view of Councillors by the public should this requirement be removed.**
- **That the Leader of the Council respond formally to the consultation on behalf of the Council to say that we do not agree with a change in the regulations to enable remote attendance and proxy voting at local authority meetings.**

Comprehensive discussion took place on the motion with Councillors speaking both for and against the motion.

During the debate it was highlighted that Councillors were able to respond to the consultation individually and the Leader of the Council expressed concern with regards to the submission of a collective response which may not fully reflect all members' individual thoughts on the issue.

Following further discussion, Councillor Joe Salmon proposed motion 11.1.13 that the question be now put. Council support was sought and agreed without dissent that the question be now put and following the

summing up by the proposer of the motion the motion was put to the vote and fell with voting as set out below.

Voting: For:14, Against:44, Abstentions:6

The proposed motion fell with the voting set out as above.

Councillors Paul Hilliard and Vanessa Ricketts left the meeting at 10.42pm

Van life – Supporting all communities

The following motion was submitted in accordance with Procedure Rule 9 of the Meeting Procedure Rules and was moved by Councillor Peter Cooper and seconded by Councillor Patrick Canavan.

In moving the motion Council was advised that amended wording had been submitted by Councillor Andy Hadley which amended the motion to read as follows: -

To this end, the Council resolves to: develop a Community Pact, *requesting that the Place and Environment OSC consider the detail*, for all vehicle dwellers that will:

- (a) Outline a clear plan to establish designated safe parking areas with access to basic amenities for van dwellers that will provide both permanent and temporary sites for vehicle dwellers and ensure that they have secure and legal places to stay.**
- (b) Meet anticipated future requirements and facilitate access to essential services such as healthcare, sanitation, and education, ensuring that all residents can live safely and healthily.**
- (c) Set up an ongoing forum for dialogue between local communities and travellers as a safe space in which discussion can take place and issues can be resolved quickly.**
- (d) Promote anti-discrimination policies that protect these communities from harassment and unfair treatment, whether by private individuals or public authorities, alongside the responsibility of all concerned to abide by existing laws and expectations.**

Councillor Cooper advised that the wording had been accepted by himself as the proposer and had also been accepted by the seconder of the motion. Council agreement was sought to confirm the amendment as the substantive motion which was subsequently carried without dissent.

Comprehensive discussion took place on the item following which Councillor Joe Salmon proposed motion 11.1.13 that the question be now put. Council support was sought and agreed without dissent that the question be now put and following the summing up by the proposer of the motion it was:

To this end, the Council resolves to: develop a Community Pact, *requesting that the Place and Environment OSC consider the detail*, for all vehicle dwellers that will:

- (a) Outline a clear plan to establish designated safe parking areas with access to basic amenities for van dwellers that will provide both permanent and temporary sites for vehicle dwellers and ensure that they have secure and legal places to stay.
- (b) Meet anticipated future requirements and facilitate access to essential services such as healthcare, sanitation, and education, ensuring that all residents can live safely and healthily.
- (c) Set up an ongoing forum for dialogue between local communities and travellers as a safe space in which discussion can take place and issues can be resolved quickly.
- (d) Promote anti-discrimination policies that protect these communities from harassment and unfair treatment, whether by private individuals or public authorities, alongside the responsibility of all concerned to abide by existing laws and expectations.

Voting: For:54, Against:0, Abstentions:7

Climate and Nature

The following motion was submitted in accordance with Procedure Rule 9 of the Meeting Procedure Rules and was moved by Councillor Kate Salmon and seconded by Councillor Chris Rigby.

In moving the motion Council was advised that amended wording had been submitted by Councillor Patrick Canavan which amended the motion to read as follows: -

BCP Council therefore resolves to:

1. **Support the Climate and Nature Bill**
2. **Inform residents and local press/media of this decision**
3. **Write to the five MPs who represent our local area to inform them that this motion has been passed and to urge those who have not yet done so to support the Climate & Nature Bill**
4. **Write to Zero Hour, the organisers of the cross party campaign for the Climate & Nature Bill, expressing BCP Council's support**
5. **Pledge to work with our communities and partners to reverse the decline in biodiversity and protect our town from climate related issues, taking this into account in all decision making**
6. ~~**Request that the Environment & Place Overview & Scrutiny Committee sets up a cross party working group on Climate Action to identify our priorities with an emphasis on protecting the most vulnerable in society from the effects of climate change. This should include building officer capacity and expertise to apply for funding for Climate Action, including for developing a conurbation-wide climate action plan involving all major stakeholders by way of a local citizens assembly, forum or similar. This should also include urgently developing a Climate**~~

~~Adaptation plan for the conurbation, which should support and extend the climate adaptation work already going on around flooding and coastal erosion.~~

6. *Request that within the next 12 months the Portfolio Holder for Climate Response, Environment & Energy commission a review of all targets and objectives relating to the climate and nature crises within the BCP Corporate Plan, to ensure a) that they are SMART and b) that all aspects of these two critical issues over which the Council has influence are fully addressed within the Plan. Objectives should include building officer capacity and expertise to apply for funding for Climate Action, including for developing a conurbation-wide climate action plan involving all major stakeholders by way of a local citizens assembly, forum or similar. This should also include urgently developing a Climate Adaptation plan for the conurbation, which should support and extend the climate adaptation work already going on around flooding and coastal erosion*
7. *Request that the Environment & Place Overview & Scrutiny Committee determines a scrutiny process focused on the relevant key priorities within the Corporate Plan, with an emphasis on protecting the most vulnerable in society from the effects of climate change.*

Councillor Salmon advised that the wording had been accepted by herself as the proposer and had also been accepted by the seconder of the motion. Council agreement was sought to confirm the amendment as the substantive motion which was subsequently carried without dissent.

Comprehensive discussion took place following which Councillor Joe Salmon proposed motion 11.1.13 that the question be now put. Council support was sought and agreed without dissent that the question be now put and following the summing up by the proposer of the motion it was:

BCP Council therefore resolves to:

1. **Support the Climate and Nature Bill**
2. **Inform residents and local press/media of this decision**
3. **Write to the five MPs who represent our local area to inform them that this motion has been passed and to urge those who have not yet done so to support the Climate & Nature Bill**
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6. **Request that within the next 12 months the Portfolio Holder for Climate Response, Environment & Energy commission a review of all targets and objectives relating to the climate and nature crises within the BCP Corporate Plan, to ensure a) that they are SMART and b) that all aspects of these two critical issues over**

which the Council has influence are fully addressed within the Plan. Objectives should include building officer capacity and expertise to apply for funding for Climate Action, including for developing a conurbation-wide climate action plan involving all major stakeholders by way of a local citizens assembly, forum or similar. This should also include urgently developing a Climate Adaptation plan for the conurbation, which should support and extend the climate adaptation work already going on around flooding and coastal erosion

7. Request that the Environment & Place Overview & Scrutiny Committee determines a scrutiny process focused on the relevant key priorities within the Corporate Plan, with an emphasis on protecting the most vulnerable in society from the effects of climate change.

Voting: For:59, Against:0, Abstentions:2

Councillors Alasdair Keddie, Chris Rigby and Tony Trent left the meeting at 11.15pm

54. Questions from Councillors

Question from Councillor Duane Farr (at the Chairs discretion the question was read out by Councillor Cameron Adams in Councillor Farris absence)

An elderly resident who requires a Blue Badge card contacted me raising his concerns about the difficulty dealing with BCP Council customer services. After numerous attempts to speak to someone on the telephone and being cut off after a lengthy wait he was informed it could take 12 weeks to receive his new Blue Badge if successful.

12 weeks wait seems excessive. In the private sector to order a new debit card from a bank it usually takes 3 days. Why such a long wait. What can be done to improve on the service for our residents?

Response from the Portfolio Holder for Customer, Communications and Culture, Councillor Andy Martin

Thank you Cllr Farr for your question.

I am very aware as cabinet member for customer services that our Blue Badge Service is not currently where we want it to be. Indeed, I have personally dealt with a number of residents in recent weeks after they have raised their concerns with me and in most cases I have spoken with them at length on the phone - the latest on Sunday morning.

So can I say at the outset as portfolio holder and on behalf of the council I am very sorry for the delays some residents are experiencing and thank them for their patience whilst the workload is progressed.

I know delays can be stressful.

The process of assessing blue badge applications is proscribed by the Department of Transport and requires a range of evidence to be provided in order to determine an applicant's eligibility for a blue badge.

For the majority of cases the same process applies whether an applicant is applying for the first time or if it is a renewal.

The council receives in the region of 1000 applications each month and consequently the workload is significant.

The DoT expects applications to be determined within 12 weeks, hence the advice given to the applicant in this case, but recent increases in demand along with staff sickness has meant that processing has taken as long as 14 or 15 weeks.

The recent introduction of a temporary streamlined assessment process for renewals has brought the turnaround time down to around the 12 week mark and this is expected to reduce further over the next month.

The Blue Badge service was recently discussed at length at Overview and Scrutiny committee and it was agreed I would write to the Secretary of State for Transport to express the council's frustration at the process that is required and the time it can take, when in many cases applicants have life long conditions that will necessitate repeat blue badges.

We recently had a response from the Future Roads Minister and I will share that with Cllr Farr.

The Blue Badge team are working hard to process applications as quickly as possible and are currently prioritising renewals.

The week beginning Nov 19 saw 360 Blue Badges approved, a 63 per cent increase on the previous week.

A further 347 were issued week commencing November 25.

Finally, as an interim measure, badges will remain valid for 3 months following expiry to allow processing times to catch up and limit the impact of delays on the mobility of our customers.

This interim measure however only applies to the BCP Council area and where the council is legally responsible for undertaking parking enforcement.

Question from Councillor Mark Howell

In relationship to the Cabinet decision to remove members from Council company and partnership boards and replace them with officers, the Chief Executive justified the change in policy by saying

“Previous reports over many decades have said that having officers and members on the same board will often inhibit one or the other – normally the officer – from expressing their views because they do not want to be seen to go against the wishes of the elected councillors and therefore they don't act with independence on the board and therefore they do not fulfil the statutory requirement on the board which is acting independently as directors.”

The committee report produced did not reference any such reports. It held out the changes to be best practice according to The Local Partnerships Local Authority Companies Report (LPLAC). However, the LPLAC does not say that officers and members should not be on the same committees and,

indeed, envisages situations where they are. Its emphasis is on diversity of experience and independent decision-making. Council officers generally lack the experience to operate in commercial environments. They also work in a hierarchical structure which obliges them to follow the instructions of more senior officers, so they will not want to be seen to go against the wishes of those officers. The fact that the Chief Executive envisages situations where he would not trust his officers to be capable of independent decisioning on boards should be a reason for not including officers on boards rather than excluding others. By excluding members, the Council will reduce diversity of experience and opinion on boards and make council companies and partnerships less effective.

Please can you specify which of the “previous reports over many decades” referred to by the Chief Executive were used by the author of the report to justify the removal of members from boards, stating the pages where specific references are made.

Response from the Portfolio Holder for Transformation, Resources and Governance, Councillor Jeff Hanna

Thank you Madam Chairman.

I am unsure of the purpose of the question, given that the matter has already been determined by Full Council.

It is also the case that Cllr Howell has received an email from the Chief Executive clarifying his comment.

Given that Full Council has made its decision I do not propose to detail the content of the Chief Executive’s email, or rehearse the considerations, but in response to the specific question, in describing his understanding of the generality of views expressed in historic reports, the Chief Executive did not say that the author of our own reports to Cabinet had drawn on any other historic reports to justify the recommendation.

The January report to Cabinet set out the specific documents referred to in that report, and I would refer Cllr Howell to that report.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

Supplementary Question from Councillor Mark Howell

Don’t you think and doesn’t the Chief Executive think that that is a very serious matter and that in fact the Chief Executive should apologise to Councillors for a report coming to Councillors which reflects his personal opinion and preferences rather than best practice?

Response from the Portfolio Holder for Transformation, Resources and Governance, Councillor Jeff Hanna

I cannot possibly answer for the Chief Executive, and I do not share Councillor Howell’s view on the matter as just stated.

Question From Councillor Peter Cooper

“Given the recent decision by the Dorset and Wiltshire Fire Service to remove one of the remaining two engines at Poole Fire Station, potentially

reducing the service's capacity to protect local residents, can the Council address the following concerns:

What steps will be taken to secure an urgent meeting with the Chief Fire Officer to discuss this decision and its implications for the community, and will councillors have the opportunity to question him directly?

Response from the Leader of the Council, Councillor Millie Earl

BCP Council is constitutionally represented at the Dorset and Wiltshire Fire and Rescue Authority (DWFRA). DWFRA is made up of Councillors from BCP, Dorset, Wiltshire and Swindon in accordance with each council's political balance.

It is only a second wholtime fire appliance removed at Poole, there remains a second on-call appliance.

These details were sent to all BCP Councillors from Cllr Hilliard, who is chair of the BCP local performance and scrutiny committee, on 5 September 2024 about the changes at Poole via email. This can be included in the minutes for this item.

I also met with the Chief fire officer this year to discuss the challenges the service faced.

Scrutiny and engagement is not undertaken directly by the Council but delegated through the Fire Authority. The Fire Authority and the Finance and Audit Committee each meet 4 times a year, and public questions are welcomed. Local Performance and Scrutiny meetings take place three times a year in the BCP area. These are public meetings, and councillors would be welcome to attend any of those meetings and ask questions.

Supplementary Question from Councillor Peter Cooper

So the supplementary question is, can we take this further? Because the workers on the ground don't believe that this management decision based on fiscal reasoning is the right one and I feel we have a responsibility to take it further. For right across the conurbation, not just here.

Response from the Leader of the Council, Councillor Millie Earl

I think in response to your supplementary question, Councillor Cooper, you talk about 'we' and I'm not sure who 'we' is because like I said, we're constitutionally represented by the Fire Authority. We are residents in relation to it, but I would absolutely encourage any member to engage with the Fire Authority.

I had the great privilege of being on it for, I can't remember how long, maybe two years, and really, really enjoyed my work there. And I wish, and I know other members who are on it, we all wish that people would really engage with it. So as much as I think we can look at the community safety issues, we can do that kind of thing as a local authority. We don't have the ability as a council to force the Fire Authority to do XYZ because they are an organisation that have their own constitution and represent us on that basis.

Question from Councillor Kate Salmon

Why hasn't the Transport Advisory Group met since the group's initial training session? How are the issues that TAG is supposed to cover being dealt with in the absence of these meetings?

Response from the Portfolio Holder for Climate Response, Environment and Energy, Councillor Andy Hadley

In short, there has been no relevant business.

I am supportive of the concept of a Transport Advisory Group, giving more time to consider Transport issues, including public and officer input, and to advise Cabinet accordingly.

The TROs that have been recently advertised have not required referral to TAG, as there have not been comments or petitions that have met thresholds for reply. Just prior to the formation of TAG there were numerous transport related matters that were approved at Cabinet and Council e.g., Safer Roads Fund, ATF4, 20mph programme and the LTP 2024/25 Capital Programme.

It is worth noting that a cross-party group has been meeting to discuss LTP4, which you are part of.

In the coming months there will be the following items that could be discussed en-route to March 2025 Cabinet:

- LTP Capital Programme 2025/26
- Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) 2025/26
- Active Travel Fund schemes

Upcoming TAG meetings are 22 Jan 2025 and 19 Feb 2025. It is unlikely that there will be any business for Jan TAG but as per above, the Feb TAG could be used to discuss these topics.

Supplementary Question from Kate Salmon

Given that, do we think that the TAG has been set up correctly, or should we perhaps review the way it's been put together to make sure it's actually a useful body?

Response from the Portfolio Holder for Climate Response, Environment and Energy, Councillor Andy Hadley

It is difficult because the group hasn't actually met as you've highlighted. I think that's a question that we need to actually have the Transport Advisory Group meet in order to establish how useful it is. I think it should be useful. I would go right back to, in the old Poole Council days we had Transport Advisory Group, and before I was a Councillor, I went along to it and I found it really helpful, as a member of the public, to be able to engage. That was part of the purpose, because when things come to Cabinet, very often the transport items don't get that level of public discussion and exposure that I think they deserve in terms of the public. So I think, for me, the reason is actually to give the public an opportunity to see and comment on schemes and get into that. We haven't had controversial schemes that they've wanted to do that with, so I think that's been our recent challenge. But I do

believe it should have value and I would hope that we will get into that. Thank you.

Question from Councillor Sara Armstrong

Residents living on the East Cliff are expressing their dismay about what appears to be inflexible and inconsistent policy across BCP regarding the management and care of trees, in particular relating to the Holm Oaks along the East Cliff.

Residents are concerned about the growth of such species, the impact they have on light and the natural biodiversity of the area due to their increasing height and large canopies as well as the ongoing care of the existing tree population in the conservation area.

Will BCP undertake to consult with residents who live on the East Cliff regarding trees, review how BCP exercises its statutory discretion in relation to the care of trees on private and public land and update the Cliff Management/Tree Management Strategy for the conservation area, to include the views of residents?

Residents are keen to work in partnership with the council as custodians. They want to see an approach to tree management that respects the local biodiversity and takes into account the views of residents and needs of the area as a whole, in a more responsible, imaginative and friendly manner than they are experiencing currently.

Response from the Portfolio Holder for Climate Response, Environment and Energy, Councillor Andy Hadley

Councillor Armstrong, thank you for your question.

The trees on the overcliff are inspected for safety and are managed in accordance with a management plan.

Any requests for tree work are not part of a statutory function and under current spending controls, only essential health and safety work is being undertaken.

We estimate that treework as a result of Storm Bert cost around £50K, and that for Storm Darrah was in excess for £100K.

The Council does not have a legal duty and nor do we manage trees, to maintain sight lines or views.

The future management of trees on the East cliff can be discussed and reviewed with residents to explore and understand any constraints and opportunities.

These can support biodiversity and nature recovery and can be developed in line with the recommendations in the Urban Forest Strategy and Green Infrastructure strategy.

Question from Councillor Mark Howell

“How many people attended each of the five Public Briefing sessions on the Community Governance Review?”

Response from the Leader of the Council, Councillor Millie Earl

The Community Governance Review process provides an opportunity for individuals, groups and organisations to suggest changes to existing arrangements and to propose new arrangements in our unparished areas. BCP Council is seeking views and has sought to promote the project through the establishment of comprehensive web pages which includes details of the project timeline, information documents, survey forms, interactive and downloadable maps, datasets for all areas and other information. We have also made this information available at all libraries and local community hubs where copies of these documents are available for those unable to get online. Promotional posters and postcards are also available at these locations. The web site also includes an explanatory video which has received over 280 views.

To promote the project, we have sent out emails to those on various mailing lists held by the council, used social media channels with over 58,000 followers and issued a series of press releases. The public events were promoted through each of these communications and we have also offered to attend local events throughout BCP for any groups interested in the review. We ran an all-councillor awareness session on 14 November at which 34 councillors were in attendance and a separate session for all existing parish and town council clerks and members on 21 November at which 29 were in attendance.

With regards to the public events the attendance figures are as follows:

18 November (Bournemouth Civic Centre) – 1

18 November (Poole Guildhall) – 7

20 November (Kings park) – No attendees

21 November (Christchurch Library) – 8

22 November (Kinson Hub) – 1

27 November (Bournemouth Civic Centre) – 2

The number of people attending each event was lower than we had hoped for, given the complexity and importance of the subject, and we therefore decided to hold a LIVE online event on 3 December. This was recorded and is available on the web site. To date this has received 72 views.

In response to the offer to attend local community group meetings, we have had a number of requests which officers have agreed to, including one attended yesterday evening for the Poole Quays Forum which was attended by 69 members.

Supplementary Question from Councillor Mark Howell

A local organisation in Poole received their invitation to their local event two days before the event.

This exercise in community governance has been flagged to us for a year and a half it began on October 16th.

Do you think it is acceptable service to the residents of BCP for the council to give two days' notice of such an important event?

Do you think that that inevitably compromises the consultation to some degree?

Response from the Leader of the Council, Councillor Millie Earl

I think we have to understand that these are public briefing events but there are lots of other ways in which people are engaging with the community governance review. I'm personally someone who doesn't particularly like to go to events, I quite like having a look online, watching YouTube videos, that kind of thing. I think it's to appeal to a certain sector of people who would like to do that kind of in-person engagement. I would also just add that in our community, for example, I've been working with my colleagues, Marion and Tony, and we're putting together an event so that people can engage with this particular topic.

Democratic Services are offering to come to events and basically run a bit of a session with people who wish to go. I believe there was one at Poole Quays Forum yesterday which was attended by 69 members of the community.

There are lots of ways to engage, I think that those were just one of the ways. But if you have anyone who would like to organise a session, or maybe you could, I don't know, organise a session yourself, then I'm sure that Richard Jones would be happy to come along and give the briefing there. Thank you.

Question from Councillor Peter Cooper

Given the ongoing issues with pothole repairs and maintenance across BCP Council, can the Cabinet Member responsible clarify whether these works are primarily carried out by in-house teams or outsourced to private contractors? Furthermore, what quality assurance measures are in place to ensure repairs are completed to a high standard, and how are costs monitored to ensure value for money for residents, especially considering the poor quality of some recent repairs?

Response from the Portfolio Holder for Climate Response, Environment and Energy, Councillor Andy Hadley

Thank you Councillor Cooper for your question.

Pothole repairs are either undertaken by our in-house Streetscene team, or by contractors on our behalf, whilst reconstruction work, much less frequent, which requires specialist tools and significant logistics and traffic management is often undertaken by private contractors overseen by our Engineering team.

In some areas of our conurbation, the road surface is very thin, or laid over concrete slabs or compacted sand/gravel base, and subject to increasing wear from heavier vehicles.

Whilst immediate temporary repairs may erode again quite quickly, there is work underway with in-cab technology which will enable crews to enact permanent repairs in a single visit.

Work undertaken on our behalf is overseen by Council Officers and has a defects period, usually 2 years, for any repairs to be undertaken at the expense of the contractor.

Supplementary Question from Councillor Peter Cooper

With that in mind, would it be possible to assess the Poole bridge, the Poole lifting bridge, because the potholes are filled and then the potholes are destroyed over three months. They must have used about 15 tonnes of tarmac, so it would be quite nice to have that assessed, who quality assured it, who carried out the job? And then the other question is, how much money are we spending on outsourcing that work? What support are the in-house people having to do a proper job? Because it is not happening

Response from the Portfolio Holder for Climate Response, Environment and Energy, Councillor Andy Hadley

Thank you. Obviously, you're meaning the Poole bridge rather than the Twin Sails Bridge, and I think when there was major repairs done on that, there was a problem with the tarmac sticking to the bridge, because obviously it goes vertical on a very regular basis so it's stressed both by traffic and by the bridge lifts themselves. I'm afraid I'm going to have to go away and find an answer for you on that, but I accept that. I do go across the bridge quite often and I see the holes and I know what you're talking about. Thank you.

Question from Councillor Sara Armstrong

The Household Energy Support Fund for organisations to bid for to provide warm spaces and energy advice for residents at risk of fuel poverty or who can't afford to buy food – although welcomed, it still falls way short to meet our growing need.

Some organisations did not receive the full amount they required to deliver their warm space projects – there was not enough in the pot to meet the demand.

There are now more than 50 'warm spaces' for people experiencing fuel poverty in BCP and food banks are a growth industry. More people who are in work are using foodbanks than ever before - what is BCP doing to address the root causes of poverty? How many children are living in poverty right now in BCP and do we have a strategy to eliminate poverty?

Response from the Lead Member for Homelessness and Cost of Living, Councillor Simon McCormack

The BCP Food and Energy Support Fund is administered by Dorset Community Foundation, funded via the Household Support Fund. Applications for the fund were oversubscribed and there were requests for approx. £355k from a grant pot of £225k. They were all fundable projects and doing some great work to support our communities. As a result, we allocated a further £50,000 to the fund to enable more projects to be funded, but regrettably we could not fund every scheme. Wherever possible we try to signpost groups to alternative funding source such as the BH Coastal Lottery Small Grants Scheme. We also provide a free funding e-newsletter every fortnight detailing funding opportunities alongside a searchable funding platform which groups and individuals can register to use free of charge.

Poverty is a national issue, not just something that is unique to the BCP Council area and it requires a sustained whole system change to tackle the root causes. Whilst some of this therefore needs to take place on a national level, we are working with our partners in the BCP Council area to try and support households to make changes to move away from crisis interventions. Examples of this include the Together We Can Partnership and Access to Food Partnership which works with a wide range of community and voluntary sector partners to address issues relating to food insecurity and debt. Our partners at Citizen's Advice BCP administer grants for households funded through the Household Support Fund, undertaking a fuller review of the household's finances to try and tackle the root causes of their financial hardship and looking at option to reduce costs and ensure they are getting the correct benefits that they are entitled to.

In regards to children, Unfortunately, we don't have precise current data of the number of children living in poverty right now. At a recent Children's services whole staff event the numbers of children living in poverty was one of the subjects under discussion. This was using the latest available data which is for 2023 and was for children living in absolute poverty. The absolute poverty data is data from the Department for Work and Pensions [Poverty in the UK: statistics - House of Commons Library](#). On a BCP level this translates to 10.8% of children (7105 children), which compared to 15.9% nationally. It must be remembered that this means that these children and young people are living in households in absolute poverty, and it is this that needs addressing.

In August, this year, the government announced the Child Poverty Taskforce which is across government and joined Work & Pensions and Education Secretaries to investigate this issue. This will come up with its findings in the spring and we await these findings to help inform our further work around this vital area.

If you'd like to know more, there is an all-councillor session taking place on the 17th December at 5pm for Councillors to find out more about the support that is available residents over the winter period.

Supplementary Question from Councillor Sara Armstrong

I just want to acknowledge the amount of partnership work that is going on to try and address this issue, but I think not knowing exactly what the scope of the issue is across BCP and how it's impacting families still concerns me. But I hope that on 17 December that we can come together and perhaps look at how do we find that out and what else can we be doing about it. Thank you

55. Urgent Decisions taken by the Chief Executive in accordance with the Constitution

Council was advised that no urgent decisions had been taken by the Chief Executive in accordance with the Constitution since the last meeting of the Council.

The meeting ended at 11.50 pm

CHAIRMAN