CHRISTCHURCH BOROUGH COUNCIL
SCRUTINY AND POLICY OVERVIEW COMMITTEE

Minutes of the Meeting held on Tuesday, 15 November 2016 at 6.00 pm

Present:-
Councillor Cllr C P Jamieson – Chairman
Councillor Cllr Mrs L Dedman – Vice-Chairman

Present: Councillors Cllr J Abbott, Hon Freeman Cllr C R Bungey, Cllr D A Flagg, Cllr T Fox, Cllr N C Geary, Cllr W Grace, Cllr P R A Hall, Cllr D C Jones, Cllr Mrs D Jones and Hon Freeman Cllr J Lofts

213. Declarations of Interests

There were no declarations received on this occasion.

214. Minutes of Previous Meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 13 September 2016 and 11 October were confirmed and signed as a correct record, subject to Councillors Bungey and Flagg’s apologies being added to the 11 October minutes.

Voting: Nem:Con

215. Medium Term Financial Strategy & Budget Process

The Group Accountant submitted 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.

Members were asked to approve for the budget timetable and process for 2017/18.

Following a question from a Member, it was advised that money was assigned to pay for enforcement action and was earmarked within reserves.

It was confirmed that Christchurch Borough Council and East Dorset District Council were well placed financially, due to the partnership working agreement, in comparison with other district councils in Dorset.

RESOLVED that:

(a) Members approved the budget timetable and process as set out in this report, and;
(b) Members noted the content of the Medium Term Financial Strategy.

Voting: Nem:Con

The Strategic Director submitted 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.

Members were requested to consider the Annual Report on the use of covert surveillance by the Council.

**RESOLVED that Members noted the details of the report regarding usage of covert surveillance, pursuant to the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000.**

Voting: Unanimous

217. **New Ways Of Working Project Update**

The Organisational Development Manager gave a presentation to update Members on the New Ways of Working Project.

Members were shown a video of the new East Dorset District Council touchdown offices and meeting rooms at Allenview House.

Members thanked Officers for the way the scheme had been implemented.

Members were advised that the relocating of staff to the Civic Offices and disposal of the Furzehill Offices would allow the partnership to deliver a capital receipt. East Dorset District Council would provide an annual income through the rental of office space at the Civic Offices.

It was advised that the overall project cost and how the costs were apportioned across the Partnership were not currently available. It was agreed that this would be reported back at the next meeting.

Members expressed their thanks and congratulated the Team on all aspects of the Smarter Working Project. Thanks were also given to all staff who had been professional throughout all the changes.

It was confirmed that there were robust IT back-up systems in place. Some were built into the individual systems and there was also a daily, full IT back-up. Business continuity was taken very seriously. Officers were as confident as they could be that all information could be retrieved. The retention and disposal policy had also been promoted with officers.

218. **Scrutiny - Traffic Regulations Order Task and Finish Group**

Members were advised that this item had been deferred to the next meeting to be held on 1 February 2016. This was to allow further investigative work to be done.

219. **Verbal Update on the Progress of the Highcliffe Beach Huts Task and Finish Group**

Members received a verbal update on the first meeting of the Highcliffe Beach Huts Task and Finish Group, which was held on 1 November, from the Chairman, Councillor Mrs Dedman:
The notes from the initial meeting are on Page 51 of your notes. Councillors Hall and Jones attended, with the Chief Executive. Councillor Abbott had put in her questions for the meeting as she was unable to attend.

Although Councillor Mrs Jones was in attendance, this was only in order to await Councillor Mr Jones and Councillor Mrs Jones made no contribution to the work of the Group.

The group initially set out the parameters and the scope of our work, which was informed by the meeting of the Scrutiny and Policy Overview Committee decision to form the Group, to draw together the final report from the meeting on 11 October, in public. This main Committee, which interviewed officers and members of the public, asked that Councillor Hallam, the second Highcliffe Ward Member, who could not be present on that night, should appear before the Task and Finish group to give her contribution. That meeting also requested that Councillor Phipps, as Environment Portfolio Holder, should give her contribution. These two councillors will be asked to attend our second meeting.

The Group also asked that Councillor Nottage as Council Leader be asked to attend the second meeting for clarification on some points.

The remit of the Task and Finish Group was not only to report on what has happened in this Project but to clarify the situation which led, in this case, to the ending of the Project and to recommend a process to be put in place when other projects were considered, in order to improve the Council's performance. This second part of the remit was in the Group's view, very important, as like all organisations the Borough Council is always seeking ways to do things better.

To give the Group enough time and information to fulfil their task, it was decided at the initial meeting that the Group should meet formally twice more and in the interim continue information gathering, so that a full report could be presented to the meeting in February.

The Final Report had not been delayed, as there had not been a deadline for it, the Group would carry out their work carefully and thoroughly, to cover all issues.

It was confirmed that the Members request to see the contract with Plum Pictures would be part of the Group's remit and would be included in the final report.

220. Minutes of the Stour Valley and Poole Partnership Joint Scrutiny Meeting 12 October 2016

The minutes of the meeting of the Stour Valley and Poole Partnership Joint Scrutiny Panel, held on 12 October 2016 were noted.

Voting: Nem:Con

221. Single Member Item

Members were asked to consider the Single Member Item submitted by Councillor D Jones:
‘Consultation Process on Proposals for Reform of Local Government in Dorset.’

To review the consultation process on Proposals for Reform of Local Government in Dorset, to ensure that an accurate picture of popular opinion in Christchurch has been captured.

It was proposed that the issue be taken forward to next Full Council Meeting.

Councillor Jones was invited to explain why he had brought the item before the Committee:

He advised that he had circulated a memorandum to Members, but it was not a report. Although he had hoped to test his views at this meeting, he accepted this would not be possible. He felt that in relation to the process, for the last 12 months, the Council had been struggling. He had asked for a report with alternatives, which had not been reported to this Committee and requested a report detailing the intangible aspects of the project. He therefore felt that it had been difficult to get things discussed in public meetings. He advised that his memorandum would not feature as a part of any Council report, but would be published on the Keep Christchurch Special website. He emphasised that he was not criticising the consultants or services with employing any intention of bias. He had requested that the item be raised at this meeting, as he felt it was important that Members were aware of it before Full Council on 13 December, as there were no further Scrutiny and Policy Overview Committee meetings before then.

RESOLVED that the matter, as outlined in item 10, is presented to the meeting of Full Council on 13 December 2016.

Voting: Nem:Con

222. Appointment of Representative on DWP Joint Scrutiny Committee

The Committee were asked to appoint the second nominee to the Dorset Waste Partnership Joint Scrutiny Committee.

Councillor Mrs Abbott was nominated for the position.

RESOLVED that Councillor Mrs Abbott be appointed as a representative on the Dorset Waste Partnership Joint Scrutiny Committee.

Voting: Unanimous

223. Work Programme

The Scrutiny Officer submitted 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.

Members were presented with the latest version of the Work Programme for the Scrutiny and Policy Overview Committee.

It had been suggested that the Committee should investigate the Planning Service, in relation to delays in processing applications. However, a report
would be presented to the Joint Audit Committee on 1 December on the same issue. It was agreed that this Committee would look at what comes out from this report and decide if any follow up was needed. Members were also advised that an improvement plan had been produced and that they should read this to better inform any future questions.

The issues surrounding the traffic works at Highcliffe – road improvements scheme was raised as a potential item for the Committee to look at. It had been a major concern of the Planning Service at the time. It was suggested that this was a Dorset County Council issue and not a Borough issue.

It was agreed that this should be referred to the Environment Overview Committee, Dorset County Council.

RESOLVED that the Work Programme be amended, where necessary and agreed.

Voting: Nem:Con.

224. Press Releases

A Member requested that a press release be written commending Staff with coping well with the recent changes and money being saved through the New Ways of Working Project.

It was also requested that a press release be written advising that the Medium Term Financial Strategy and budget were on target.

The meeting ended at 7.45 pm

CHAIRMAN