

MINUTES of a VIRTUAL meeting (GoToMeeting ID: 731-518-517) of the PLANNING COMMITTEE held on Monday 22 February 2021 at 5.30pm.

PRESENT: Cllr Dave Bolwell (in the Chair)

Cllrs:	Geoffrey Ackerman	Anne Rickard
	Barry Irvine	Dave Rickard
	Julian Jones	Sarah Williams

ALSO PRESENT: Nick Phillips (Almshouse Association, until minute 90), Jack Baldan (Almshouse Association, until minute 90), four members of the public, two representatives of the press, David Dixon (Project Manager & Community Initiatives Officer) and Will Austin (Town Clerk).

### **PUBLIC FORUM**

Nick Hurrell, a Drimpton resident, addressed councillors on the draft Dorset Council Local Plan, which he considered to be of poor quality and lacking in commitment to improving public transport and community connectivity.

Debbie Bond spoke on behalf of Daniel Taylor Almshouse Trust as a former non-executive director involved in the transfer of Chancery House for affordable housing, and as a director of Magna Housing Limited. She was aware of housing gaps that almshouses could fill and asked the Town Council to support a further planning application for Chancery House, for this purpose.

### **87. APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Cllrs Sarah Carney and Kelvin Clayton.

### **88. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

### **89. MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 25 January 2021 be confirmed as a true and correct record, and that the Chairman should sign the minutes at the earliest available opportunity.

### **90. THE ALMSHOUSE ASSOCIATION**

Consideration was given to a letter from The Almshouse Association, ENCL: 3589.

Representing the Almshouse Association, Nick Phillips (CEO) and Jack Baldan introduced themselves and presented on the organisation and the work of almshouses. They advised that there were 1,700 almshouses in the UK, of which 700 were members of the Association. 36,000 people occupied almshouses which

had existed for over 1,000 years. This was the first example of truly affordable housing with a unique legal status. The majority were small scale, managed with a community feel, care and compassion. Almshouses were run by charities and trustees from the community, could not be sold later, had to be run as almshouses and were exempt from right to buy. If sold, the funds raised were required to be reinvested in almshouses. Some almshouses were Registered Social Landlords and the majority not. Residents were given a letter of appointment, rather than a tenancy, which meant the dwelling was gifted to the person in need and subject to any conditions of eligibility. A weekly maintenance charge was not allowed to cause hardship. Rents for the Daniel Taylor Almshouses in Bridport were at 60% to 70% of Local Housing Allowance rents. Almshouses were small developments with a community ethos and a positive option for Bridport.

A discussion followed, covering:

- The number and spread of almshouses across Dorset.
- The legal status of almshouses, which the Almshouse Association was working with the Charity Commission to define.
- The potential impact of any covenant relating to Chancery House, which Nick Phillips said he was not able to comment on.
- Affordability in perpetuity, which Nick Phillips advised was usually enshrined in the charitable objects and in the spirit of almshouses. Jack Baldan advised there was no profit motive and that almshouses were guided by advice from the Association.
- The role of almshouses in meeting need for those who did not meet the requirements of housing associations.
- The quality of accommodation, which Nick Phillips advised was governed by the standards of almshouse management, Charity Commission guidelines and regulation.

RESOLVED: that the presentation of the Almshouse Association be noted.

The Chairman thanked Nick and Jack for their attendance and input.

## **91. LOCAL PLAN CONSULTATION**

Consideration was given to a draft response to a consultation on the Dorset Council Local Plan, ENCL: 3590.

Members welcomed the draft response, highlighting 18 hours of working group meetings that had considered both the strategic and detailed aspects. Members highlighted the particular concerns about transport strategy that would be discussed at a forthcoming Dorset Council Cabinet meeting. Initial responses indicated that the draft had been well received within the community and it would be important to publicise the document to engage the town.

The Town Clerk reported that video and text summaries of the draft response had been developed and would be finalised and published when the committee had resolved its final response, along with a press release. The Mayor advised he would include information in his blog and the Town Clerk was asked to ensure that the response was circulated to the Bridport Local Area Partnership and Bridport Business Chamber.

Members also highlighted a concern regarding the online response system, which was not functioning as intended. This had been taken up with Dorset Council by councillors and the Town Clerk.

RESOLVED: that the draft response to a consultation on the draft Dorset Council Local Plan be approved for submission as tabled.

## **92. HIGHWAYS & TRANSPORTATION WORKING GROUP**

The notes of the meeting held on 11 February 2021 were received.

RESOLVED: that the notes of the meeting held on 11 February 2021 be received and the following recommendations approved:

(i) Parking Issues – Bridport Primary School

RESOLVED: that Dorset Council and the Police be requested to carry out additional enforcement of parking and obstruction regulations respectively.

(ii) Speeding Issue – West Road

RESOLVED: that a 20mph limit be considered as part of the Access & Movement Study.

(iii) Pedestrian crossing request – Bothenhampton & Walditch Parish Council

RESOLVED: that the officer of Dorset Council be invited to the next meeting to advise on the request for a pedestrian crossing.

(iv) Access to bus stop on Sea Road South

RESOLVED: that the officer of Dorset Council be invited to the next meeting to advise on the request for a hard standing across the grass verge between the pavement and the bus stop.

## **93. COMMUNICATIONS AND ONGOING ISSUES**

The Chairman reported on:

- An offer of a planning system that could be incorporated into the Town Council's website, drawing on data from the Dorset Council planning portal. He invited informal views, and members considered that the cost could outweigh any benefit, as the information was available via the Dorset Council website.
- An email from the Dorset Council Portfolio Holder for Transport, advising the Campaign for Real Aires UK of changes to enable overnight parking by motorhomes. Dorset Council members had not been made aware of this. Members discussed the need to be engaged in any changes, a need for reassurance about how such an arrangement would be managed at West Bay, and the potential impact on commercial campsites.

The Town Clerk reported that a letter regarding a local charity was being dealt with.

The meeting closed at **6.50pm**.

**The next meeting of the Planning Committee will be held on 22 March 2021**