

Dorchester Town Council

Meeting of the Dorchester Town Council

23 September 2014

Present: Mayor P. Mann and Councillors V. Allan, C. Biggs, R. Biggs, T. Harries, S. Hosford, S. Jones, T. Jones, F. Kent-Ledger, A. Lyall, R. Potter, M. Rennie and D. Roberts.

In attendance: Inspector Steve Marsh

Apologies: Councillors K. Armitage, A. Canning, G. Jones, T. Loakes and D. Taylor

15. Declarations of Interest

Councillor T. Jones declared an interest in item 23 of the Policy Committee as a member of Dorset Fire Authority and identified that he would not speak if the issue was discussed.

16. Minutes

The minutes of the meetings of the Council held on 22 July 2014 were confirmed and signed by the Mayor as a correct record.

17. Communications & Questions

The Mayor invited the Youth Council to speak on any issues covered by agendas during the current cycle. The Chairman thanked Councillors for their support in promoting the series of events that had taken place over the course of the summer, particularly the Anonymous Festival. The Youth Council were supportive of the Charles Street retail scheme, and hoped it would widen the range of shops in the town. They also wanted to note the loss of grant to Dorchester Arts Centre and wanted to record their support for the Arts Centre and the services it provides.

The role of the Youth Council in supporting Democracy Day, the visit of footballers from twin town Lubbecke, and their participation in the selection of a prizewinner for the Prix Bayeux Calvados War Correspondents TV competition, were also noted.

A councillor asked for the Youth Council's views on whether the voting age should be reduced to 16. Noting that young people would generally be less aware of some of the issues on which they would be required to vote than other parts of the population, but also that young people would ultimately be the most affected by any change in legislation, a spokesperson for the Youth Council identified that generally they felt that it would be a good idea to lower the voting age.

The Mayor announced the deaths of two of Dorchester's citizens, Reg Brissenden who had served on the Council, and Derek Beauchamp who had served the community through his work with the RNA, Dorchester Civic Society and the Dorchester Heritage Committee. He invited Council to record its thanks for their contributions to the life of the town in the minutes.

The Mayor asked for the grateful thanks of the Council to be recorded to all staff involved in securing a seventh consecutive Green Flag and Green Heritage Award for the Borough Gardens.

The Mayor reminded members that on Wednesday 8th October the Corn Exchange would host the premiere of the play Passion by As One Theatre Company.

Finally the Mayor updated members on progress towards creating a grass free lawn in Dorchester in Spring 2015, in particular noting the efforts of Joy Wallis of Dorset Wildlife Trust in distributing over 1,000 trays of seeds to be grown by many institutions and individuals over the winter period.

No questions had been received in accordance with Standing Order 12(3).

18. Planning and Environment Committee – 4 August 2014

It was proposed and seconded that the minutes of the meeting be adopted.

Resolved

That the minutes of the meeting of the Planning and Environment Committee held on 4 August 2014 be adopted.

19. Planning and Environment Committee – 1 September 2014

It was proposed and seconded that the minutes of the meeting be adopted.

A Councillor requested an update on the DTEP proposal. A verbal update was provided, and the Chairman identified that a further report would come to the Committee when the outcome of Dorset County Council's deliberations are known.

Resolved

That the minutes of the meeting of the Planning and Environment Committee held on 1 September 2014 be adopted.

19. Special Planning and Environment Committee – 8 September 2014

The minutes were amended to record that while Councillors S. Jones and R. Potter attended the meeting, they declared an interest as members of West Dorset District Council's Development Control Committee and neither took part or voted during the debate.

It was proposed and seconded that the minutes of the meeting be adopted.

Resolved

That the minutes of the meeting of the Special Planning and Environment Committee held on 8 September 2014 be adopted.

20. **Management Committee – 9 September 2014**

It was proposed and seconded that the minutes of the meeting be adopted.

Resolved

That the minutes of the meeting of the Management Committee held on 9 September 2014 be adopted.

21. **Policy Committee – 16 September 2014**

It was proposed and seconded that the minutes of the meeting be adopted.

Members resolved to accept recommendation 18.

The Town Clerk identified that Minute 17 should be treated as a recommendation, not a resolution. Council debated the advantages and disadvantages of requesting a Community Governance Review, in particular focusing on the short timescale between the announcement of an outcome, likely to be in February 2015, and the elections in May 2015, and whether this outweighed any advantage of seeking to amend the current LGBCE recommendation which is viewed as electorally unfair. On being put to the vote it was

Resolved

That the Council urgently request West Dorset District Council to carry out a Community Governance Review

Council then discussed the merits of two alternative options that would be more electorally fair than the LGBCE proposal, and on being put to the vote it was

Resolved

That the Council proposes to West Dorset District Council that 8 councillors should be elected for North Ward and 5 each for South, East and West Wards, a total of 23 councillors, with effect from May 2015

Resolved

That the minutes of the meeting of the Policy Committee held on 16 September 2014 be adopted.

22. **Police Matters**

Inspector Marsh presented a report regarding recent policing issues, which highlighted a small overall reduction in crime incidents. Burglaries, theft, and criminal damage had reduced over the last period, while assaults and thefts from motor vehicle had increased. He noted that the local Police service had coped well with reduced staff during the summer during a period of short term redeployments and sickness. Current issues included a risk that class A drug selling will be displaced due to a crackdown in Weymouth, and an initiative to reduce begging in Dorchester.

Inspector Marsh responded to questions about the relationship between assaults and drug and alcohol abuse, and in relation to domestic violence. He confirmed that a recent assault at Dorset County Show was very unusual for the event, and responded to concerns about drunkenness on West Walks/Bowling Alley Walks.

In response to a question he identified his support for the Crime and Prevention Panel and answered general questions regarding the closure of the Police Inquiry Desk at Dorchester Police Station and emphasised that drop-in sessions at the Library would continue.

The Council rose at 8.14 pm.

Mayor

After the meeting the Council held a Democratic Half Hour.