

Dorchester Town Council

Management Committee

13th November 2023

Present: The Mayor (Councillors A. Chisholm) and Councillors L. Fry, S. Jones, F. Kent-Ledger (Chairman), R. Major, R. Potter, M. Rennie, D. Leaper, R. Ricardo, K. Reid and D. Taylor.

In Attendance:

Councillors S. Hosford and R. Biggs.

Apologies: None.

20. Declaration of Interests

Cllr K. Reid declared that she was an allotment holder.

21. Minutes

The Minutes of the Meeting of the Committee held on 11th September 2023, adopted by Council on 25th September 2023, were taken as read and were confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

22. Market Proposal

The committee received the report from the Assistant Town Clerk (Corporate) and were provided with additional information from Jules Bradburn of Dorset Artisan Markets Ltd, who was in attendance to answer questions. In response to a question from Cllr Jones, it was confirmed that the Sherborne and Shaftesbury markets had resulted in traders moving on to open high street shops.

It was also confirmed that stallholders would be expected to park their cars/vans offsite and appropriate arrangements would be put in place – Cllr Jones suggested that perhaps an arrangement at the County Hall car park could avoid traders taking up space in the public car parks.

Cllr Rennie relayed to the committee the outcome of the discussion at the Markets Joint Panel, which had been very supportive of this proposal. However, there were concerns that extending the artisan market into Brewery Square might take trade away from South Street. Cllr Rennie also suggested that one of the allocated free parking days could be used to support the markets.

Cllr Kent-Ledger mentioned that the operator of the Cornhill market had been consulted and was in favour of the proposal.

Resolved:

- 1) That the proposals from Dorset Artisan Markets Ltd, as set out in Appendix A, for a monthly artisan market in Borough Gardens be agreed.
- 2) That a review report on the performance of the Dorset Artisan Markets Ltd market in Borough Gardens in 2024 is presented to the committee prior to any further bookings for 2025 onward.
- 3) Any donation to the council from the Dorset Artisan Markets Ltd will be allocated as grants to the local community via the Dorchester Car Boot Grant Panel.

23. Outdoor Services – Update Report - Autumn 2023

The committee received the update report from the Assistant Town Clerk (Outdoor Services). The future financial implications of the council taking on the management of The Great Field was highlighted and it was noted that this would need to be addressed during the budget setting process. Cllr Biggs asked about the approach to trimming hedgerows and it was confirmed that an appropriate technique would be used. Cllr Canning asked about the disposal of grass cuttings from The Great Field and it was confirmed that this would need to be disposed of due to contamination. Cllr Reid asked about putting up a notice to identify the trees at Kings Road however there had not yet been any further progress with this proposal.

Resolved:

That the Outdoor Services update report for Autumn 2023 be noted.

24. Donated Trees Policy for The Great Field

The committee received a report from the Assistant Town Clerk (Outdoor Services) which set out a proposed 'Donated Tree Policy' for the Great Field. Cllr Potter asked how the council might acknowledge the donation of trees in future and Cllr Reid proposed that there be an online list of donors on the council website.

Resolved:

That the Donated Tree Policy for The Great Field be agreed for implementation from January 2024.

25. Pleached lime trees at Borough Gardens.

The committee received a report from the Assistant Town Clerk (Outdoor Services) who confirmed that replacement trees could be funded from existing budgets. Cllr Leaper queried whether the limes could be replaced with another species and it was suggested that hornbeam was an option but Cllr Major proposed that limes would be more in keeping with the Gardens. Cllr Canning suggested that the council newsletter could provide residents with more information about the many changes being made to the stock of trees across the town.

Resolved:

That the proposal for the removal pleached lime trees in Borough Gardens be agreed and new pleached specimens be planted.

26. Allotments charges and annual review

The Assistant Town Clerk (Corporate) presented a report and outlined changes to the way officers inspected allotments and administered the agreements. Members discussed their involvement in the inspection process and the previous practice of holding annual meetings with allotment holders. The Assistant Town Clerk proposed that there be briefings on allotments (including the council's legal obligations) to members following the elections in 2024.

Members discussed the current waiting list (c. 30 people) but officers explained that although the council could try to reduce this by offering more half plots, many of those on the list were waiting for plots at specific sites, such as Frome Terrace.

Members discussed the fees charged by the council and queried whether these had been compared to other councils. Officers confirmed that there was current liaison with other town councils in Dorset to improve benchmarking. Cllr Major considered the council's fees to be very reasonable and Cllr Ricardo was concerned that, overall, the service still ran at a deficit and that below inflation fee increases would make this worse. Cllr Reid suggested that offering more smaller plots would help increase income.

Cllr Kent-Ledger proposed that the committee review allotment prices in 2024 well in advance of the 2025-26 budget setting process and that there should be more frequent allotment updates to the committee.

Resolved:

- 1) That the allotment rent, from January 2024, be increased by £1.00 per plot no matter the size.
- 2) That the water fee, from January 2024, be increased by £1.00 per plot no matter the size.
- 3) That the practice of charging double fees for non-Dorchester residents continues.

27. Grant Applications

The Committee considered various requests for financial assistance.

Resolved:

- 1) That no grant be awarded to Age UK NSW Dorset for its community allotment project.
- 2) That a grant of £300 be awarded to South West Dorset Multi-cultural Network towards the costs of Holocaust Memorial Day event
- 3) That a grant of £250 be awarded to Damers First School towards the cost of a wildlife information board on The Great Field.

- 4) That no grant be awarded to Dorchester Rugby Football Club towards the cost of recently installed floodlights.
- 5) That no grant be awarded to Dorchester Arts towards the cost of the Rise programme of creative therapy for mothers with postnatal depression and anxiety.
- 6) That no grant be awarded to Art in Poundbury towards the cost of hall hire for its December 2023 exhibition.
- 7) That the Assistant Town Clerk, following consultation with the Committee Chairman, be given delegated authority to agree a grant of £500 to Dorset County Museum towards the cost of allowing free entry for local residents to the 2024 Dorchester Family Science Day.
- 8) That a grant of £350 be awarded to Dorchester Chamber for public liability insurance of the Christmas Cracker event 2023.
- 9) That a grant of £350 be awarded to Dorchester Chamber for venue hire for the Christmas Cracker 2023.

28. Notes of Twinning & Cultural Activities Panel

Members considered the notes of the Twinning & Cultural Activities Panel established by Management Committee. Cllr Potter agreed with the suggestion from the Panel that there should be a memorial to the late Queen.

Resolved:

That the notes of the Twinning & Cultural Activities Panel meeting be noted.

29. Minutes of Dorchester Arts board meeting.

The committee considered the minutes of the Dorchester Art board meeting on 17th July 2023.

Resolved:

That the minutes of the Dorchester Arts board meeting be noted.

30. Cemetery Matters

(a) Exclusive Right of Burial and Interments and Burial of Ashes

The report which detailed the Grants of Exclusive Right of Burial for grave spaces and the number of interments and burials of ashes, and the use of the South Chapel, at Dorchester Cemetery since the last meeting of the Committee had been circulated with the agenda.

Resolved:

That the report on the Grants of Exclusive Right of Burial and Interments and Burial of Ashes since the last meeting of the Committee be noted.

(b) Headstones and Inscriptions

The Committee received and noted applications for the design of headstones and inscriptions.

Resolved:

That the action of the Town Clerk in approving designs numbered 5367 to 5381 be confirmed and the Register of Memorials be signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

31. **Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960**

Resolved:

That in view of the fact that publicity would be prejudicial to the public interest by reason of the confidential nature of the following matters the public and press representatives be excluded from this meeting during their discussion.

32. **Borough Gardens – extension to staff mess facilities.**

The Assistant Town Clerk (Outdoor Services) reported to members on the outcome of the procurement process for the contract to build the extension to the Borough Gardens mess facility. The bid from Skelly Construction Ltd offered the best value for money but was £19,927 above the original budget estimate for the project of £40,000 already agreed by Committee. Members were invited to consider either abandoning the project, and thereby leave the staff with inadequate mess facilities, or increase the budget from reserves to enable construction to proceed. Members expressed support for the project and agreed to request to Policy Committee a further allocation from reserves.

Resolved:

That Policy Committee be requested to allocate an additional £19,927 to the project budget for the extension of the gardeners' mess facilities at Borough Gardens from the Parks Buildings reserves.

Chairman.....