

Dorchester Town Council

Policy Committee

15 July 2014

Present: Mayor P.G. Mann and Councillors V. Allan, T. Harries, T. Jones (Chairman) and D. Roberts

In attendance: Councillor S. Hosford

Apologies: Councillors R. Biggs, A. Canning and G. Jones.

1. Minutes

The Minutes of the Meeting of the Committee held on 13 May, 2014, adopted by Council on 20th May, 2014, were taken as read and were confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

The Chairman invited the Town Clerk to review arrangements for signing the minutes.

2. Finance Report

The Financial Controller presented a report covering the 3 months to 30 June 2014.

In response to questions the Town Clerk confirmed that security of funds was a key consideration when holding money with Lloyds Bank or making investments in the National Savings and Investments account, and that the decision to pre-pay part of the Councils Pensions deficit for financial reasons, previously approved by the Committee, had now been actioned.

Resolved

That six historic debts totalling £290 be written off.

3. Panel 2014-15

The Committee considered the allocation of Members to Panels following the receipt of Councillors' individual preferences.

Resolved

(a) That the following Members be appointed by this Committee to Panels for the 2014-15 Council Year:

Arts	V. Allan
Community Activities	T. Harries
Outdoor Services	A. Canning
Property	D. Roberts
Risk & Resources	T. Jones, G. Jones & R. Biggs

(b) That Councillor G. Jones be appointed as Chairman of Risk & Resources Panel.

4. **Cover Arrangements for the Finance Function**

The Committee reviewed a table prepared by the Town Clerk which documented cover arrangements for each element of the Council's Finance function. The report was amended to include two members in the process for releasing money from the Council's Bank Accounts.

Resolved

- (a) That a further report be brought to Committee by January 2015 regarding any proposals for mutual support with other Town Councils
- (b) That hard copies of the Cover arrangements be kept available to the Mayor and Chairman of Policy Committee

5. **Discussions with Dorset Police regarding front desk provision in Dorchester**

The Committee received progress regarding discussions between Dorset Police and local authorities about alternative arrangements for provision of reception facilities in Dorchester. They noted that it was likely that West Dorset District Council would fulfil the role in Dorchester.

6. **Performance Management and Appraisal**

The Committee noted the report of the Town Clerk.

Resolved

That the current arrangements are reviewed shortly after the May 2015 Council is elected, and then every four years, and that the completion of each Appraisal process is reported annually to Policy Committee

7. **District Council Service Review Programme**

The Committee noted four services are included in West Dorset District Council's 3 year Service Review programme.

At the request of a member the Town Clerk agreed to contact West Dorset District Council for more detailed information and clarification of the timetable for the review of Support for Voluntary Organisations

Resolved

That the Town Clerk arranges for the Committee to have an informal briefing regarding the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy, and gives further consideration both to the list of services that West Dorset District Council intends to review and those that might be under review by Dorset County Council

8. **Dorchester Prison**

The Committee considered whether the Town Council should formalise its views on the development of the Prison site, to assist developers understanding of local needs.

Councillor Hosford spoke in support of the recommendation, identifying the benefits of the Town Council taking the lead in expressing the expectations of the town on a very important site in the town centre. The Town Clerk updated the Committee on discussions with District Council officers.

The Town Clerk confirmed that a potential advisor had been identified and could be appointed, in accordance with the Council's Standing Orders on Contracts, for a value to be agreed by the Committee, to produce a Concept Statement for the prison site to a very short timetable.

Resolved

That a specialist advisor be engaged to prepare a Concept Statement for the Dorchester Prison site, at a fixed price, and to a short timetable to be agreed by the Town Clerk

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

The Committee considered whether to exclude press and public from the meeting.

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 representatives of the press be excluded from this meeting during their discussion.

10. **Municipal Buildings - Staffing**

The Committee considered a recommendation of the Management Committee requesting extra short term funding to improve staffing arrangements for the Municipal Buildings following the resignation of a part time Town Hall Keeper.

Members expressed support both for the need to strengthen management arrangements, and also for the staff currently delivering the Keeper service. The Town Clerk confirmed that any appointment would result from an application process that invited applications from both within and outside the current service.

Resolved

That an additional budget of £3,000 be made available to introduce the arrangements agreed by the Management Committee, but that the arrangements are reviewed again on the next occasion that a vacancy arises

11. **Dorset County Museum**

The Committee considered a letter from Dorset County Museum requesting a short term loan to assist them to develop their lottery bid. The Committee recognised the significance of the bid to the future of heritage in Dorchester, noted its power conveyed by s19 of the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976 to make a loan, considered the issue of loss of c. £90 interest to the Council as a result of making a loan at nil interest, and reviewed the implications of both success and failure of the lottery bid on the Museum's ability to repay the loan.

Recommended

That a loan be advanced to the operators of Dorset County Museum for a maximum period of one year in the first instance, at nil interest, subject to the Town Clerk carrying out a due diligence review of the Museum's financial position.

Chairman