

Dorchester Town Council

Policy Committee

16 May 2017

Present: Councillors, R. Biggs, A. Chisholm, T. Harries, S. Hosford, G. Jones (Chairman) and T. Jones.

Apologies: Councillors B. Armstrong-Marshall and P. Stein.

Also present: Councillor J. Hewitt.

32. Minutes

The Minutes of the Committee of 21 March 2017, adopted by Council on 28 March 2017, were taken as read and confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

33. End of Year Reports 2016-17

The Town Clerk presented the Financial Statement, Annual Return and Corporate Plan milestones, focusing specifically on the budget underspend and implications for future years, also explaining the detail behind the Annual Governance Statement. He answered questions relating to the potential to establish a group to manage the Lubbecke Way allotment site, and to the Traffic and Parking Strategy and plan for the Market.

The Town Clerk agreed to produce a timeline for the delivery of Affordable Housing and arrange for the Management Committee to receive a report on fencing along South Walks.

Resolved

That the Financial Statement is noted

Recommended to Council

- a) That the Annual Return for 2016-17 is adopted
- b) That an additional £80,000 is transferred to the Corporate Projects Reserve and two unspent committed project budgets totalling £6,000 are added to the 2017-18 budget.

34. Financial Report 2017-18

The Town Clerk provided an update covering the Council's Month 1 spend in relation to the budget, cash position, current debt and payments position, plus a revised Treasury Strategy for the year and the latest audit report. He responded to a question about the repayment penalties on the Council's outstanding PWLB debt.

Resolved

- a) That the Payments list totalling £304,217.20 be approved
- b) That the Internal Audit report and the officer response is noted

Recommended to Council

That the Treasury Strategy, included at pages 5 – 8 of the Policy Committee Agenda of 16 May 2017, be adopted

35. Corporate Plan

The Committee received a report from the Town Clerk regarding the process for revising the Corporate Plan, noting a timetable of two informal evening meetings on 13 and 20 June, followed by consideration at the Committee cycle prior to adoption at Council on 25 July.

A member asked that any review of the Council's approach to Traffic and Parking strategy be expanded to include wider transport issues.

36. Town Centre Wi-Fi

The Committee had previously received a presentation from Dorset County Council's Superfast Broadband Team and Dorchester BID in relation to a town centre wi-fi scheme, considering the opportunity in detail, receiving responses regarding technical specifications, the risk of obsolescence, capital and ongoing funding support and coverage.

Resolved

- a) That £5,000 be allocated towards the project from the Heritage Tourism allocation within the Corporate Projects Reserve
- b) That up to £3,000 be allocated to introduce wi-fi into the Borough Gardens, to be met from savings within the Parks & Open Spaces Maintenance budget
- c) That further discussions take place with partners regarding governance and administrative arrangements

37. Town Bus Support

The Committee received notes of a recent meeting with Dorset County Council's Public Transport Team, covering the latest position regarding the withdrawal of the number 1/2 bus service and potential longer term changes to the number 6 service.

The Committee considered the merits of three options for providing a future town service; funding a lesser service using the existing operating model at c. £46,000 a year; discussions with new school bus contract operators; and discussions with community transport providers. It also noted plans to undertake a full survey of current users and encouraged the Town Clerk to capture information from as wide a range of potential users as possible.

Resolved

That the Town Clerk commences discussions with school bus contract operators, supported by the Public Transport team and using accurate usage data, with a view to securing a viable and cost effective town bus service.

Chairman