DORCHESTER TOWN COUNCIL

POLICY COMMITTEE

17th JULY, 2007

At a Meeting of the Policy Committee held on 17th July, 2007:

PRESENT Councillors M.A. Allwood, R.M. Biggs, V. Black, T.C.N. Harries, C.M. Hebditch, Trevor Jones (Chairman) and L.M. Phillips.

In attendance:
Councillor R.B. Potter.

APOLOGY for absence was received from The Mayor (Councillor D.J. Barrett).

2. **MINUTES**

The Minutes of the Meeting of the Committee held on 15th May, 2007, adopted by Council on 22nd May, 2007 and of the Special Meeting of the Committee held on 27th June, 2007 were taken as read and were confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

3. **PERFORMANCE AND POLICY PLAN 2007-08**

The Committee noted that the 2007 Best Value Performance and Policy Plan had been published by 30th June, 2007 following approval by the Chairmen and Vice Chairmen of the Management, Policy and Planning and Environment Committees.

4. **REVIEW OF COUNCIL POLICIES**

Further to Minute 29(2) (2006-07) the Committee considered a draft Medium Term Financial Strategy and a draft Asset Management Plan. Members noted that a draft Information Technology Security Strategy would be submitted for consideration at the next Meeting of the Committee.

It was

RESOLVED

That the draft Medium Term Financial Strategy and draft Asset Management Plan as now submitted be adopted subject in the case of the draft Asset Management Plan to the minor textual amendments now agreed.

5. **USE OF RESOURCES AUDIT**

Further to Minute 40(2) (2006-07) the Committee noted that it had not yet been possible to arrange a meeting with representatives of the Audit Commission and the Council's Financial Service Provider to discuss issues raised in the use of resources audit; the Committee requested that this matter should be reported on to the next meeting of this Committee.

6. **DOCUMENTATION OF FINANCIAL SYSTEMS**

Further to Minute 41 (2006-07) the Committee received and noted copy procedural notes on the operation of the Council's financial systems.

7. **MANAGEMENT ACCOUNTS**

The Committee received and noted the Council's Management Accounts for the period ended 30th June, 2007.

8. **PANELS – 2007-08**

(a) Membership of Panels 2007-08

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

It was

RECOMMENDED

(1) That the following Members be appointed by this Committee to Panels for the 2007-08 Council year:

Arts
Councillor C.M. Hebditch

Best Value
Councillor R.M. Biggs

Borough Gardens
Councillor C.M. Hebditch

Community Activities
Councillor V. Black

Grants
Councillor T.C.N. Harries

Property Management and Maintenance
Councillor L.M. Phillips

Recreational Activities
Councillor L.M. Phillips

Resources
Councillors R.M. Biggs, T.C.N. Harries and Trevor Jones.

(b) Appointment of Chairmen and Vice-Chairmen of Panels

The Committee considered the appointments of Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Resources and Risk Management Panels and it was

RESOLVED

(1) That Councillor Trevor Jones be elected Chairman of the Resources Panel and Councillor T.C.N. Harries its Vice-Chairman for the 2007-08 Council year.

(2) That Councillor R.M. Biggs be elected Chairman of the Risk Management Panel and Councillor M.A. Allwood its Vice-Chairman for the 2007-08 Council year.

9. **AUDIT COMMITTEE**

The Committee considered the report of the Town Clerk on the possible creation of an Audit Committee and, following discussion, it was

RECOMMENDED

(1) That the Council appoint an Audit Committee with the Terms of Reference set out at Appendix I.

(2) That the Committee comprise six members with The Mayor ex-officio and that the Chairman of it be appointed from within the second-largest political grouping on the Council.

(3) That the consequential changes be made to Standing Orders 36 and 39 and the Terms of Reference of this Committee.

(4) That the Council appoint members to serve on the Committee and its Chairman and Vice-Chairman.

10. **MEMBERS' ALLOWANCES**

The Committee considered the report of the Town Clerk on the powers for the Council to decide to pay allowances to Members and on the arrangements for determining the amounts of such allowances.

In considering this matter the Committee noted that individual Members would be able to elect not to receive any allowances and, following discussion, it was

RECOMMENDED

(1) That the Council proceed to prepare an allowances scheme dealing with both Parish Basic Allowance and travelling and subsistence allowances.

(2) That the West Dorset District Council's Parish Remuneration Panel be requested to undertake a review of their recommendations as to the level of these various allowances in the light of the level of the Council's activity.

(3) That the Council commit itself to either accepting or rejecting the recommendations of the Parish Remuneration Panel and not varying them.

11. **PUBLIC SPEAKING RIGHTS AT COMMITTEE MEETINGS**

The Committee considered whether it was necessary to prepare a protocol formalising the arrangements for members of the public to speak at meetings of the Council's committees and it was

RECOMMENDED

That no change be made to the existing arrangements.

12. **STAFF PERFORMANCE APPRAISAL**

The Committee noted that, in response to an enquiry made of them at the request of the Chairman and Vice-Chairman, South West Provincial Employers had indicated that they considered the Council's staff performance appraisal scheme to be thorough and satisfactory for its purpose.

13. **DORCHESTER SKATEPARK**

The Committee considered the report of the Deputy Town Clerk on the current position concerning the proposed creation of a skatepark on the Little Fairfield. The report reminded Members that planning consent had been obtained for the project and that the West Dorset District Council had agreed to lease the site to this Council for the purpose.

The total cost of the project was estimated at £200,000 of which £36,000 was already secured. Application had been made to the Youth Opportunities Programme for a grant of £20,000 the result of which was expected to be known shortly and the West Dorset District Council would reach decisions during the Autumn on a further £72,000 of funding, £67,000 from allocation to the District Council from the BIG Lottery Fund and £5,000 from its Leisure Development Fund.

If all these applications were ultimately approved there would remain a funding shortfall of £72,000.

Following discussion it was

RECOMMENDED

> That the Council agrees to make available capital funding of up to £72,000 to enable early progress to be made on the scheme subject to the various applications for funding referred to above being approved and that the expenditure be met by a reduction in the Council's General Reserve.

14. **DORCHESTER LIBRARY**

The Committee received and noted a letter dated 5th July, 2007 from the Head of Cultural Services to the Dorset County Council drawing attention to a report on the future of the Library Service in Dorset which was presented to the County Council's Cabinet on 11th July. The overall aim of the report was to make savings in the costs of the Library Service and, in respect of Dorchester Library, it identified two possible reductions from the present opening of hours of 52 per week, one to 45 hours per week and one to 42 hours per week.

The Town Clerk reported that he understood that the Cabinet's Recommendation which would be considered by the County Council at its meeting on 19th July was that, as a 'main' library, Dorchester Library's opening hours would be reduced to 45 per week.

It was

RECOMMENDED

> That this decision be noted with regret and that the County Council be informed of this Council's opinion that it is of paramount importance for Dorchester Library to continue to open on Saturdays and that the reduction required would best be delivered by the Library opening later in the mornings.

Chairman

Appendix I

AUDIT COMMITTEE – TERMS OF REFERENCE

Constitution: 6 Members and the Mayor ex-officio.

Referred Business: To review probity and the effectiveness of the Council's internal controls.

To review the Council's Statement on Internal Control and to make recommendations to the Policy Committee.

To review and monitor the Council's internal audit programme.

To receive and consider reports from the Council's Internal Auditor and to make recommendations on them to the Policy Committee.

To receive and consider reports from the Council's External Auditor with the exception of the report on the audit of the Annual Accounts and to make recommendations on them to the Council.

To consider any breaches of the Council's Standing Orders or Financial Regulations in the light of appropriate advice and to report to the Council.