

# **DORCHESTER TOWN COUNCIL**

## **POLICY COMMITTEE**

**16th NOVEMBER, 2010**

At a Meeting of the Policy Committee held on 16th November, 2010:

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

18. **MINUTES**

The Minutes of the Meeting of the Committee held on 21st September, 2010, adopted by Council on 28th September, 2010, were taken as read and were confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

19. **MINUTES OF RESOURCES PANEL**

The Committee considered the Minutes of the Meeting of the Resources Panel held on 12th October, 2010 (for Minutes see Appendix I).

It was

**RESOLVED**

That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Resources Panel held on 12th October, 2010 be approved.

20. **MINUTES OF MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE**

The Committee considered the under-mentioned Minutes of the Management Committee held on 9th November, 2010:

Minute 28(a) – Minutes of Borough Gardens Panel – 19th October, 2010

Minute 28(b) – Minutes of Arts Panel – 3rd November, 2010

Minute 28(c) – Minutes of Property Management and Maintenance Panel – 3rd November, 2010

Minute 28(d) – Minutes of Community Activities Panel – 8th November, 2010

Minute 28(e) – Minutes of Grants Panel – 9th November, 2010

Minute 28(f) – Minutes of Recreational Activities Panel – 9th November, 2010

Minute 34 – Possible Economies

It was

**RESOLVED**

- (1) That, with the exception of Minute 1(c) of the Borough Gardens Panel (Management Minute 28(a) refers) the Minutes be approved so far as this Committee is concerned.

- (2) That consideration of Borough Gardens Panel Minute 1(c) be deferred pending further investigations into the health and safety considerations arising from the proposed installation of a drinking fountain in the children's play area in the Borough Gardens.

21. **DORCHESTER JOINT HERITAGE COMMITTEE**

Further to Resources Panel Minute 2(19) the Committee considered Minute 10 of the meeting of the Dorchester Joint Heritage Committee held on 8th November, 2010 setting out its justification for continued existence together with a letter dated 9th November, 2010 from the Chairman of the Joint Committee setting out further information about its work and plans for the future.

It was

**RESOLVED**

That the Council's core funding to the Dorchester Joint Heritage Committee be preserved but that the separate contribution towards the costs of ongoing improvements to the Mill Stream be reduced to £1,000 per annum with effect from the 2011-12 financial year.

22. **POSSIBLE ECONOMIES**

The Committee considered the report of the Town Clerk on possible economies identified by the Resources Panel which required detailed consideration by this Committee and it was

**RESOLVED**

- (1) That the Chairman and the Town Clerk be requested to engage in discussions with the other funding bodies and stakeholders of the Dorchester Area Community Partnership to explore the benefits to Dorchester which have already accrued and are expected to accrue in the future from the work of the Partnership and to explore the scope for a reduction in the Council's contribution.
- (2) That the Council continue in membership of the Dorset Association of Parish and Town Councils but that the practice of supplying each Member of Council with their personal copy of Local Council Review be discontinued when the current subscription expires.

- (3) That the Town Clerk be requested to enter into discussions with the Dorset County Council and the West Dorset District Council about the Council's desire to withdraw its funding from the Dorchester Highway Trees Partnership and that the proposed changes to the arrangements for maintaining the surfaces of the Town Walks be taken into account in those discussions.
- (4) That no changes be made to the existing arrangements for the preparation and distribution of Dorchester News.
- (5) That the Chairman and the Town Clerk be requested to enter into discussions with the other partners in the Dorchester CCTV initiative to explore the value of the system as a tool to combat crime and the security of the funding currently provided by other agencies.
- (6) That the information in the report on the constraints imposed by legislation on the Council's procurement arrangements be noted and that the officers be requested to investigate whether any benefits would derive from the Council's engagement with the joint county-wide procurement initiative.

23. **PRE-PAID CARD**

The Committee considered the report of the Town Clerk on the opportunity to subscribe to a pre-paid card which would simplify the Council's arrangements for purchasing unusual items via the internet. The arrangement would require an account to be opened with Unity Trust Bank plc to feed the card and the report suggested that an appropriate balance would be £1,000. The Council's Internal Auditor had been consulted on the proposal and supported it subject to the operation of adequate controls and the Financial Services Provider submitted the proposed control measures which had been agreed with the Internal Auditor.

It was

**RESOLVED**

That the proposal be approved subject to the safeguards set out in the Appendix to the report now submitted and that the Town Clerk and the Financial Services Provider be authorised to make the necessary arrangements.

24. **HEART TOWN PROJECT**

Further to Minute 13 (at which the Council had raised no objection in principle to the designation of Dorchester as a Heart Town) the Committee considered the draft agreement which the British Heart Foundation proposed should form the basis of the arrangement.

Members considered that the draft contained insufficient detail on what was expected of the Council and also expressed concern about the possible detrimental effects on other local charities of the proposed designation.

Accordingly it was

**RECOMMENDED**

That the draft agreement as now submitted be not approved and that the British Heart Foundation be requested to provide a further draft setting out in more detail the respective responsibilities of the parties to it.

(Councillors T.C.N. Harries and C.M. Hebditch declared personal interests because of the involvement of members of their families with the British Heart Foundation.)

25. **MANAGEMENT ACCOUNTS**

The Committee received and noted the Council's Management Accounts for the period ended 31st October, 2010.

26. **PERFORMANCE AND POLICY PLAN 2010-11**

The Committee considered the draft Performance and Policy Plan for 2010-11 together with a schedule summarising the reviews of the Objectives set out in the Plan by the various panels.

It was

**RECOMMENDED**

That the draft Performance and Policy Plan for 2010-11 as now submitted and incorporating the additional and/or amended Objectives now circulated be approved so far as this Committee is concerned subject to the addition of a further Objective for the Community Activities Panel to arrange if necessary an appropriate celebration of the wedding of Prince William of Wales and Miss Kate Middleton in 2011.

27. **MODERN COUNCILLOR**

The Committee considered information about the Modern Councillor service operated by Learning Pool to which the Council could subscribe and it was

**RECOMMENDED**

That no action be taken on this matter.

Chairman

**DORCHESTER TOWN COUNCIL**

**RESOURCES PANEL**

**12th OCTOBER, 2010**

At a Meeting of the Resources Panel held on 12th October, 2010:

**PRESENT** The Mayor (Councillor L.M. Phillips) and Councillors V. Black, L.E. Heath and Trevor Jones (Chairman).

1. **PUBLIC BODIES (ADMISSION TO MEETINGS) ACT 1960**

It was

**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 matter the public and representatives of the press be excluded from this meeting during its discussion.

2. **POSSIBLE ECONOMIES**

The Panel considered the Note of the Informal Meeting held on 5th October, 2010 which had identified a range of potential economies which might be made, bearing in mind the Council's declared aim of achieving a zero increase in the Band D council tax charge in the 2011-12 financial year. The measures identified should yield savings of between £10,000 and £68,000 depending on the number of economies pursued, and the process would have to be complete by the January, 2011 cycle of meetings when the Budget for 2011-12 would be finalised.

The Panel agreed that the Note was an accurate record of the conclusions reached at the Informal Meeting and identified one additional measure which should be added.

Accordingly it was

**RECOMMENDED**

- (1) That, in its review of fees and charges for 2011-12, the Management Committee should consider the scope for above-inflation increases and pay particular regard to allotment rents bearing in mind the charges made by local private providers, the extent to which demand outstrips supply and the costs incurred by the Council in collecting green waste from allotments unless the rents are further increased by a sum sufficient to cover the costs of providing the service.

- (2) That the Management Committee be recommended to review the Council's arrangements for periodic review of energy supply contracts.
- (3) That the decision of the Arts Panel at its meeting on 14 September, 2010 to discontinue the production of the 'Free Events' leaflet be welcomed.
- (4) That the Arts Panel be requested to review the level of the Council's funding to Dorchester Arts Centre, Dorchester Festival and Dorchester Youth Festival in the light of the decisions of other funding bodies and with a view to making economies in this area.
- (5) That the Borough Gardens Panel be informed of the meeting's opinion that it will not be possible in the foreseeable future to make available a sum of more than £5,000 for the materials required to reconfigure the area of the bowling green in the Borough Gardens and that it will not be possible to carry out conversion works to the bowls pavilion during 2011-12 but that both these matters be re-examined during the preparation of the budget for 2012-13.
- (6) That the Community Activities Panel be requested to review the costs of and benefits arising from the Council's continued involvement in town twinning, if necessary in consultation with the twin towns.
- (7) That the Grants Panel be requested to consider the feasibility of freezing the grants budget for the next three financial years.
- (8) That the Property Management and Maintenance Panel be asked to consider whether it is necessary to have windows cleaned monthly or whether savings can be achieved by reducing the frequency.
- (9) That the Property Management and Maintenance Panel be requested to consider whether there continues to be a need to engage an external cleaning contractor for the Municipal Buildings.

- (10) That the Property Management and Maintenance Panel be requested to consider whether there is scope to reduce expenditure on advertising and promotion of the Municipal Buildings.
- (11) That the Recreational Activities Panel be informed of this Panel's opinion that the provision of winter hanging baskets should be discontinued.
- (12) That the Recreational Activities Panel be informed of this Panel's opinion that there should be no hirings of Weymouth Avenue Recreation Ground or the pavilion there on Tuesdays or Wednesday mornings to avoid the additional costs involved in covering for the groundsman on his days off.
- (13) That the Policy Committee consider whether to withdraw the Council's support from Community Planning.
- (14) That the Policy Committee be informed of the Panel's view that the contract for the provision of financial services should be re-tendered at the expiry of the current arrangement.
- (15) That the Policy Committee consider the benefits deriving from the Council's continued membership of the Dorset Association of Town and Parish Councils and the need for all members to continue to receive personal copies of the National Association of Local Councils' magazine, Local Council Review.
- (16) That the Policy Committee consider the need to continue the Council's contribution to the Dorchester Highway Tree Partnership.
- (17) That the Policy Committee consider whether it is possible to discontinue entirely or reduce the frequency of publication of *Dorchester News* bearing in mind the potential detrimental effect of doing so should the Council decide to seek re-accreditation as a Quality Council in the future.

- (18) That the Policy Committee consider whether to withdraw from the Dorchester CCTV Partnership.
- (19) That the Dorchester Heritage Committee be asked to make out a case for its continued existence for consideration by the Policy Committee.