

DORCHESTER TOWN COUNCIL

POLICY COMMITTEE

16th MARCH, 2010

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

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

APOLOGY for absence was received from The Mayor (Councillor S.C. Hosford).

44. **MINUTES**

The Minutes of the Meeting of the Committee held on 19th January, 2010, adopted by Council on 26th January, 2010, were taken as read and were confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

45. **RESOURCES PANEL – 17th FEBRUARY, 2010**

The Committee considered the Minutes of the meeting of the Resources Panel held on 17th February, 2010 (for Minutes see Appendices I – III).

It was

RECOMMENDED

That the Minutes be approved and the Recommendations contained in them be adopted.

46. **MANAGEMENT ACCOUNTS**

The Committee received and noted the Council's Management Accounts for the period ended 28th February, 2010.

47. **ANNUAL MINIMUM REVENUE PROVISION STATEMENT – 2010-11**

The Committee considered the report of the Financial Service Provider on the need to make an Annual Minimum Revenue Provision Statement to comply with the Local Authorities (Capital Finance and Accounting) (England) Regulations 2003.

It was

RESOLVED

That the Council continues with its existing practice which sets the loan principal repaid during a financial year as the Minimum Revenue Provision amount and accordingly that a sum of £53,259 be identified in respect of the 2010-11 financial year.

48. **THE COUNCIL'S POLITICAL MANAGEMENT ARRANGEMENTS**

The Committee reviewed the continuing fitness for purpose of the Council's political management arrangements with particular reference to the present panel structure and the possible introduction of formal delegated powers to panels.

It was

RECOMMENDED

- (1) That the Committee records its opinion that the Council's political management arrangements remain fit for purpose but that the Borough Gardens Panel should be disbanded following the completion of the refurbishment of the Borough Gardens which it was created to oversee, its functions to be assimilated within the work of other appropriate panels, notably the Recreational Activities and Property Management and Maintenance Panels.
- (2) That no powers be delegated to any panel beyond the emergency powers already provided for in Standing Order 50.

49. **QUALITY TOWN COUNCIL STATUS**

The Committee considered the report of the Town Clerk on the work necessary to achieve re-accreditation as a Quality Town Council following the expiry of the Council's existing accreditation in October, 2010 and on the absence of any tangible benefits arising from accreditation.

It was

RECOMMENDED

That re-accreditation as a Quality Town Council be not sought for the foreseeable future but that the situation be reviewed should any benefits of accreditation arise.

50. **DORSET ASSOCIATION OF PARISH AND TOWN COUNCILS**

The Committee considered the proposal of the Executive Committee of the Dorset Association of Parish And Town Councils to introduce revised arrangements for the calculation of membership subscriptions. The proposed changes would have no financial impact on the Council and it was

RESOLVED

That no objection be raised to the proposed revised basis of calculation.

51. **PROMOTE DORCHESTER COMMUNITY INTEREST COMPANY**

The Committee considered a request received from the Promote Dorchester Community Interest Company for the Council to agree to be identified as the 'asset locked body' to be the recipient of any residual assets in the event of the company winding up.

On the understanding that agreement to the request involved no commitments or liabilities on the Council it was

RECOMMENDED

That the request be acceded to and that the Council agrees to be identified as the asset locked body to receive any residual assets in the event of the company winding up.

52. **MEMBER TRAINING**

As an urgent item the Committee considered requests received from Councillors L.E. Heath and T. James to attend a course on Charing Skills organised by South West Councils in North Petherton on 24th June, 2010 at a cost of £190 plus VAT and travelling expenses each.

It was

RESOLVED

That the request be acceded to.

Chairman

DORCHESTER TOWN COUNCIL

RESOURCES PANEL

17th FEBRUARY, 2010

At a Meeting of the Resources Panel held on 17th February, 2010:

PRESENT The Mayor (Councillor S.C. Hosford) and Councillors M.A. Allwood (Chairman), T. James and Trevor Jones.

APOLOGIES for absence were received from Councillors V. Black and L.E. Heath.

1. **ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT**

The Panel considered a draft Annual Governance Statement which complied with the requirements of the latest Statement of Recommended Practice (SORP) and required discrete approval prior to its incorporation in the Final Accounts.

It was

RECOMMENDED

That the Annual Governance Statement reproduced at Appendix II be approved so far as the Panel is concerned subject to the insertion of 'annual' before 'appraisal' on page 4..

2. **INTERNAL AUDIT**

(a) **Review of Effectiveness**

The Panel reviewed the effectiveness of the Council's internal audit arrangements and it was

RECOMMENDED

That the Council expresses its satisfaction as to the effectiveness of its arrangements for internal audit.

(b) **Terms of Engagement**

The Panel considered the standard Terms of Engagement of Accounts and Audit Services Limited for the provision of the Council's internal audit service for 2010-11.

It was

RECOMMENDED

(1) That the Terms of Engagement be approved and that the estimated cost of £1,505.28 for providing the service be noted.

- (2) That the Town Clerk be requested to have discussions with Accounts and Audit Services Limited with a view to reducing their mileage recharge to 40p per mile, that being the reimbursement recognised by HM Revenue and Customs as cost-neutral.

(c) Programme – 2010-11

The Panel considered the internal audit programme for 2010-11 proposed by Accounts and Audit Services Limited taking into account the guidance contained in the latest edition of the Practitioners Guide and incorporating additional tests considered appropriate for the Council in view of the level of activity in which it is engaged, including a test of the accuracy of reported performance data as recommended by the Council's external auditor.

It was

RECOMMENDED

That the proposed internal audit programme for 2010-11 as now submitted be approved.

3. **MEMBER AND STAFF TRAINING**

The Panel received and noted a report detailing training delivered to members and staff during 2009.

Arising from the consideration of the report it was

RECOMMENDED

- (1) That the Compliance Manager be requested to investigate the availability of appropriate training for the Park Keepers.
- (2) That the Town Clerk be requested to adventitiously explore possible additional training opportunities for all staff and to investigate the need for annual refresher training in core skills.

4. **STAFF LEAVE AND TIME OFF IN LIEU**

The Panel received and noted a report setting out the current position regarding staff leave and time off in lieu and the likely carry forward of both to the next leave year. The Town Clerk reminded the Panel that the Council's policy authorised the carrying forward of up to nine days annual leave with consent.

Arising from the consideration of the report it was

RECOMMENDED

That the intentions of those members of staff likely to carry forward significant amounts of time off in lieu be investigated during their appraisals and that consideration be given at a future meeting of the Panel to the need to introduce a formal policy in respect of the issue.

5. **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 matters the public and representatives of the press be excluded from this meeting during their discussion.

6. **REVIEW OF SALARIES AND STAFFING LEVELS**

The Panel received and noted a schedule setting out information on current staffing levels and salaries.

7. **APPLICATION FOR REGRADING – COMPLIANCE MANAGER**

The Panel considered an application for regrading received from the Compliance Manager to acknowledge perceived significant increases in the range and nature of the responsibilities of the post in the light of the report of the Town Clerk and the comments of the Director of South West Councils, the regional employers organisation.

The Town Clerk circulated a revised Job Description for the post and suggested any regrading should be awarded subject to the postholder agreeing to accept it.

It was

RECOMMENDED

That the application for regrading be granted on the basis set out in the report subject to the postholder accepting the revised Job Description reproduced at Appendix III.

8. **STAFFING ISSUE**

The Town Clerk referred to an ongoing staffing issue without identifying the individual or individuals involved or the nature of the issue. Advice was being taken from Ellis Whittam, the Council's employment law advisers, and the issue would continue to be dealt with in accordance with their advice.

DORCHESTER TOWN COUNCIL

ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT – 2009-10

1. SCOPE OF RESPONSIBILITY

Dorchester Town Council is responsible for ensuring that its business is conducted in accordance with the law and proper standards, and that public money is safeguarded and properly accounted for and used economically, efficiently and effectively. The Council also has a duty under the Local Government Act 1999 to make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the way in which its functions are exercised, having regard to a combination of economy, efficiency and effectiveness.

In discharging this overall responsibility, the Council is also responsible for ensuring that there is a sound system of corporate governance which facilitates the effective exercise of its functions and which includes arrangements for the management of risk.

2. THE PRINCIPLES OF CORPORATE GOVERNANCE

The Council continues to refine and improve its arrangements for corporate governance and, in so doing, takes into account the six core principles, namely –

- Focusing on the purpose of the authority and on outcomes for the community and creating and implementing a vision for the local area
- Members and officers working together to achieve a common purpose with clearly defined functions and roles
- Promoting the values for the authority and demonstrating the values of good governance through upholding high standards of conduct and behaviour
- Taking informed and transparent decisions which are subject to effective scrutiny and managing risk
- Developing the capacity and capability of members and officers to be effective
- Engaging with local people and other stakeholders to ensure robust public accountability

3. THE ELEMENTS OF THE COUNCIL'S CODE OF CORPORATE GOVERNANCE

This section of the Statement explores the Council's arrangements under each of the six core principles. It continues to be refined and improved. In particular a programme of review has been agreed for all the elements of the Council's corporate governance arrangements and the review is proceeding in accordance with this programme.

Focusing on the purpose of the authority and on outcomes for the community and creating and implementing a vision for the local area

The Performance and Policy Plan is produced on an annual basis. The plan sets out the Council's objectives, the services provided by the Council in order to achieve them, costs associated with these services and the long term objectives for a variety of major issues.

Targets and measures have been agreed by elected members and senior managers to enable progress to be monitored against each of the corporate aims. These are published and monitored annually within the Performance and Policy Plan and are also monitored at approximately the halfway point of the life of the Performance and Policy Plan. Further work is in progress to improve the extent and quality of the Council's monitoring arrangements and the remit of the Council's Internal Auditor has been extended to include data quality checks.

This document took its present form in response to the imposition of the statutory duty of best value. This statutory duty was withdrawn with effect from 1 April 2008 but the Council recognises the value of the Performance and Policy Plan as a management tool and has decided to continue with its publication, albeit that the contents of it have already changed, and will change further, to make it more useful. The timing of its publication has also been changed to 30 November to more successfully inform the Council's resourcing considerations and budget process.

There are a number of other documents, policies and strategies which help to contribute towards the achievement of this principle, including the formal reporting of regular Management Accounts, a regularly-reviewed Treasury Management Policy and the Medium Term Financial Strategy. The Council also has a formal Complaints Procedure.

Members and officers working together to achieve a common purpose with clearly defined functions and roles

The Council has a written published Scheme of Delegation, agreed in September 2004 and operational from May 2005. The Scheme of Delegation was most recently reviewed in May 2008 as part of the review of all the elements of the Council's corporate governance documents, policies and procedures. It sets out the responsibilities of the full Council, delegations to committees and officers in accordance with the law, the Council's Standing Orders and Financial Regulations and its approved policy framework.

The Council's Standing Orders include detailed procedures for running business meetings; these were also last reviewed in May, 2008.

The full Council meets in public every other month with the possibility of extra meetings on an ad-hoc basis if required. This, together with an appropriate level of delegation, enables speedy and effective decision making. There is an opportunity for members of the public to speak at the end of all meetings of the full Council and also, with the consent of the Chairman, during committee meetings. The Council has considered whether to formalise the arrangements for public participation in committee meetings but concluded that the present arrangements operate satisfactorily.

The Council has a formal Member-Officer Protocol.

Promoting the values for the authority and demonstrating the values of good governance through upholding high standards of conduct and behaviour

The Council adopted a Local Code of Corporate Governance in March 2006 which sets out the full range of policies and procedures which the Council employs to ensure that its decisions are taken in accordance with the law and proper practice.

The West Dorset District Council's Standards Committee has jurisdiction over certain aspects of the conduct of Council Members within the framework established by the Standards Board for England. The Council adopted a revised Code of Conduct for Members in May 2007 following the recommendations of the Standards Board for England and all members attended a training session on the revised Code of Conduct in the Autumn of 2007 and twelve of the full complement of twenty members attended a further training session in October 2009.

Each agenda for a business meeting contains a note reminding members attending the meeting of the requirement to declare interests before an agenda item is discussed.

Members are encouraged to undertake training relevant to the area of decision making in which they are involved. New members joining the Council receive a detailed induction folder and induction training is available; five new members joined the Council at the 2007 elections and four of them underwent training arranged by the Dorset Association of Parish and Town Councils.

The Council appoints suitably qualified and experienced employees, selected against accurate and specific job descriptions and person specifications; an induction process is applied to all new employees and appropriate training is offered to employees where necessary. In addition the Council has adopted a Code of Conduct for Staff and this will be reviewed against the model code promised by the Standards Board for England when this is eventually published. The Council's Personal Achievement and Development Scheme has been examined by South West Provincial Employers and found to be suited to its purpose.

In response to comments made following the audit of the Final Accounts for 2007-08 the Council adopted an Anti-Fraud and Corruption Policy in September 2008.

Taking informed and transparent decisions which are subject to effective scrutiny and managing risk

In common with the vast majority of town and parish councils throughout the country the Council continues to operate a traditional committee structure which affords a high level of engagement and accountability. All members receive the agenda and supporting papers for all meetings of the Council and the various committees: Standing Orders provide for them to attend and speak at all meetings (with special arrangements in place in accordance with the code of conduct if the matter under consideration is one in which they have an interest). The work of

the Committees is supported and underpinned by nine panels focussing more closely on particular areas of the Council's activity.

Financial and service risks are considered as part of normal day to day business of the Council. The high-level Risk Management Strategy has been reviewed and formally adopted by the Council. The Risk Register has been populated with existing and new risks and the various risks scored. The Council has adopted a Local Code of Corporate Governance which embeds risk management as does the Performance Management framework adopted by the Council in March 2006.

Responsibility for risk management is ultimately held by members through the agency of the Risk Management Panel but responsibility for risks on a day to day basis is delegated to managers.

Advice to members on the law, regulations and internal procedures is provided either in-house or by engaging legal advisers and other specialists as required.

Internal and external audit reports are submitted to the Policy Committee or the Resources Panel and arrangements are in place for progress on the implementation on the recommendations contained in them to be monitored.

The Council has a formal Confidential Reporting Procedure and there are current working practices in place for regular risk assessments of play areas and other facilities run by the Council.

Developing the capacity and capability of members and officers to be effective

The Council has a proactive approach to training for both members and staff. Staff training needs are identified as part of the annual appraisal process and contribute to the corporate training plan. The Council has adopted a Member Development Strategy which encourages all members to undertake appropriate training.

Engaging with local people and other stakeholders to ensure robust public accountability

The Council has a long-standing commitment to public engagement and has an excellent record of public consultation and involvement. As well as dealing direct with residents in particular areas or particular interest groups when specific projects or initiatives are being developed the Council publishes a newsletter four times a year and has it circulated to all residential properties in the town.

The Council also maintains a website which is attractive to users and easy to access in another attempt to engage with local people.

4. THE FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT OF THE AUTHORITY

The Council has adopted Financial Regulations.

The system of financial control is based on a framework of regular management information, financial regulations, administration procedures (including segregation of duties so far as is possible in a small organisation), management supervision and a system of delegation and accountability. Development and maintenance of the system is undertaken by officers within the Council, with

appropriate reports to, and approvals where required from, elected members. In particular the system includes:

- Annual budgeting and forecasting systems
- Setting targets to measure financial and other performance
- The preparation of financial reports to members to compare actual and budget expenditure.
- Reports detailing the cash position when new projects are undertaken.

During 2009-10 the Council purchased an internal audit service from an external provider. Internal audit reviews all the activities of the Council and an audit plan taking account of risk has been prepared in consultation with the Council's financial service provider. Internal audit reports are issued to members of the Policy Committee for discussion.

The Council has not produced a long-term financial plan but a Medium Term Financial Strategy, ending in 2013-14 was adopted in January 2010; this Strategy will be periodically reviewed in accordance with a timetable approved by the Council. However from time to time long term projects are undertaken which have financial implications which run over years and receive forward planning. The Council also holds earmarked reserves for large expenditure items.

Budgets are determined annually and are set by the Council.

5. REVIEW ARRANGEMENTS

The Council has identified a timetable for review of the effectiveness of its corporate governance arrangements and, separately, a review of its internal audit arrangements. The Council will continue to respond proactively to reports from external and internal auditors and continue to monitor and develop its corporate governance arrangements and system of internal control, where appropriate in consultation with the Council's Financial Service Provider. Within the Council managers have a responsibility for the development and maintenance of the internal control environment.

Reviews will be informed by the work of internal audit, risk management, managers and comments made by the external auditors.

Signed on behalf of Dorchester Town Council:

A.N. Other
Mayor

Dennis Holmes
Town Clerk

DORCHESTER TOWN COUNCIL

Name

Post: Compliance Manager

JOB DESCRIPTION

Main Objective of Post

To ensure the effective management of the Council's Outdoor Services employees on a day-to-day basis, in line with good management practice, providing high quality recreational, horticultural, arboricultural and leisure facilities, and to ensure the requirements of all grounds maintenance and other contracts and specifications in connection with the routine maintenance of the various areas for which the Council is responsible are met.

Main Accountabilities

1. To ensure that all the requirements of the Contract Documents are met and all work undertaken, whether by the Council's direct employees or by outside contractors, meets the Contract Standard as defined within the Specification and that all staff are trained, knowledgeable and competent to undertake their duties.
2. To assist the Town Clerk and the Deputy Town Clerk in the overall management and development of the parks and open spaces services including maintaining day-to-day supervision of staff employed, attending such meetings as may be required and reporting in such form and in such manner as the Council may direct.
3. To ensure that the highest levels of horticultural and arboricultural standards are provided and maintained.
4. To develop work programmes for all horticultural, sports, recreational and cemetery management work in the section and to assess the staff required if the work is to be carried out in-house or to prepare the necessary contract documents to enable tenders to be sought if the work is to be exposed to competition and to ensure that the work programmes are implemented and adhered to.
5. To prioritise work programmes and to allocate work to appropriate staff, to monitor their performance and ensure that productive output is achieved.
6. To ensure that the collection, accounting and banking of all fees and charges is carried out in accordance with set procedures.
7. To maintain close contact with the Town Clerk and/or the Deputy Town Clerk and to provide weekly reports relating to all matters concerning the operation of the Council's parks, gardens and open spaces.
8. To ensure that all the requirements of the Council (and of any contract specification where applicable) are met, including but not limited to the inspection of the sites and facilities, identifying damage and defects and arranging for remedial works to be carried out.

9. To ensure the availability of all necessary horticultural materials, tools, plant and equipment, plants, trees, shrubs, bulbs and other horticultural sundries required for the efficient operation of the parks, gardens and open spaces in-house staff.
10. To arrange for all buildings, structures and other facilities to be inspected and maintained and repaired where necessary and to ensure compliance with all relevant legislation including, but not limited to, fire safety and emergency procedures and matters arising under the Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations.
11. To ensure that the approved regime for the minimisation of risks arising from legionella is properly and diligently applied in accordance with the recommendations of the specialist consultant.
12. To ensure that all the Council's outdoor staff are aware of their responsibilities relating to all relevant employment legislation and the Council's employment policies and procedures, ensuring that appropriate protective clothing is provided for the staff, investigating and reporting incidents, dangerous occurrences and accidents in accordance with set procedures, and that sufficient levels of certified first aiders are maintained in the workforce.
13. To carry out personally regular Health and Safety checks and to ensure that the requirements of the Council's safety policy and the relevant legislation are adhered to.
14. To ensure that sufficient staff are on duty to meet the Council's requirements ensuring that the staff are aware of and understand the byelaws and regulations and are at all times polite, civil and courteous in their contact with the public.
15. To deal with enquiries from the public and to offer help guidance and assistance to them as requested.
16. To assist in the recruitment, selection, induction and training of staff and to identify ongoing training needs.
17. To continually assess vehicle and plant needs, ensuring that any defects are reported and rectified and to ensure that inspections are made upon return to ensure that the repairs and maintenance has been carried out and to ensure their safe use and security.
18. To train in-house staff practically on site and in training sessions in all aspects of the Council's requirements.
19. To assist the organisers in the preparation of events and to be actively involved in the supervision of the events ensuring that the organiser complies with the Council's requirements.
20. To ensure that accurate records of staff attendance, sickness, annual leave etc. are maintained and that they are monitored regularly for any necessary action to be taken. Ensuring the provision of completed time sheets and such other documentation as may be required for management purposes.
21. To actively promote the Council's equality policy both in service delivery and employment practice by ensuring that all staff are fully aware of and meet their responsibilities under them. To ensure so far as possible that no outside contractor pursues employment or other practices which conflict with the Council's policies.

22. To chair investigations, disciplinary, and grievance hearings and where appropriate to present management's case.
23. In conjunction with the Town Clerk and/or the Deputy Town Clerk to meet with trade union representatives and to consult and negotiate with the trade unions in accordance with the Council's industrial relations policies.
24. The duties may change from time to time in accordance with the changing needs and demands of the service.