

DORCHESTER TOWN COUNCIL

POLICY COMMITTEE

18th MARCH, 2008

At a Meeting of the Policy Committee held on 18th March, 2008:

PRESENT Councillors M.A. Allwood, R.M. Biggs (in the Chair), V. Black, T.C.N. Harries and L.M. Phillips.

In attendance:
Councillor R.B. Potter

APOLOGIES for absence were received from The Mayor (Councillor D.J. Barrett) and Councillor C.M. Hebditch.

44. **MINUTES**

The Minutes of the Meeting of the Committee held on 22nd January, 2008, adopted by Council on 29th January, 2008, were taken as read and were confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

45. **RESOURCES PANEL**

The Committee considered the Minutes of the meeting of the Resources Panel held on 10th March, 2008 (for Minutes see Appendices I, II and III).

It was

RECOMMENDED

That the Minutes of the Resources Panel held on 10th March, 2008 be approved.

46. **MINUTES OF MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE**

The Committee considered the under-mentioned Minutes of the Management Committee held on 11th March, 2008:

Minute 60 – Land Adjacent to New Tennis Courts/West Walks
Minute 65 – Control of Legionella Bacteria – Risk Assessment

It was

RECOMMENDED

That the Minutes be approved so far as this Committee is concerned.

47. **PROPOSED BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT DISTRICT – DORCHESTER TOWN CENTRE**

Further to Minute 38 the Committee received and noted a copy of the Declaration of the Result of the Ballot on the Business Improvement District and was pleased to note that the vote had been firmly in favour of the initiative.

The Committee also received and noted a copy of a letter dated 1st March, 2008 from the Dorchester BID Company expressing their appreciation of the Council’s support during the developmental stages of the proposal and considered a letter dated 14th March, 2008 to the owners of all qualifying hereditaments notifying the date of the Annual General Meeting to be held at 6.15pm on Wednesday, 9th April, 2008 which would elect a Board of Directors to manage the Company and seeking nominations to serve on the Board.

It was

RECOMMENDED

- (1) That the Declaration of the Result of the Ballot be noted with satisfaction.
- (2) That the date of the Annual General Meeting of the Dorchester BID Company be noted and that the Chairman (or, in his absence, the Vice-Chairman) be appointed to represent the Council at it.
- (3) That the Council make no nomination to serve on the Board of Directors of the Company.

48. **DORCHESTER LIBRARY**

Further to Minute 29 the Committee received and noted a summary of the responses to the County Council’s consultation on revised opening hours for Dorchester Library and the final proposals of the County Council which had been formulated taking account of the feedback from the consultation, comments from staff and analysis of the current patterns of use as follows:

	Current (52)	Proposed (45)	Final (45)
Monday	10.00am – 7.00pm	10.00am – 5.30pm	10.00am – 5.30pm
Tuesday	9.30am – 7.00pm	10.00am – 7.00pm	9.30am – 7.00pm
Wednesday	9.30am – 7.00pm	1.00pm – 5.30pm	9.30am – 1.00pm
Thursday	9.30am – 5.00pm	9.30am – 5.30pm	9.30am – 5.30pm
Friday	9.30am – 7.00pm	9.30am – 7.00pm	9.30am – 7.00pm
Saturday	9.00am – 4.00pm	9.30am – 4.00pm	9.00am – 4.00pm

49. **BUSINESS CONTINUITY PLAN**

Further to Minute 41 the Committee considered a draft Business Continuity Plan and it was

RESOLVED

That the draft Business Continuity Plan as now submitted be welcomed as a useful first step in the process and that it be referred to the Risk Management Panel for detailed consideration, development and refinement.

50. **MANAGEMENT ACCOUNTS**

The Committee received and noted the Council's Management Accounts for the period ended 29th February, 2008.

51. **DORCHESTER NEWS**

The Committee considered the report of the Town Clerk on alternative arrangements which might be made for the distribution of Dorchester News in an attempt to address some of the perceived shortcomings of the current arrangement and it was

RESOLVED

That future editions of Dorchester News be distributed by Tudor Distribution of Wimborne on a shared basis at a current cost of £31 per thousand copies.

52. **WEST DORSET DISTRICT COUNCIL – STANDARDS COMMITTEE**

The Committee considered whether to nominate a representative to be considered to serve on West Dorset District Council's Standards Committee following the recent adoption by the District Council of a modified constitution providing for the appointment of three parish representatives.

It was

RECOMMENDED

That the Committee records its opinion that a nomination should be made but that any nominee put forward by the Council should not be a member of the District Council and that a volunteer be sought at the next meeting of the Council on this basis.

53. **CORPORATE DOCUMENTS – REVIEW**

In accordance with Minute 41 the Committee reviewed the following corporate documents:

- Code of Corporate Governance
- Data Protection Policy
- Member-Officer Protocol
- Procurement Strategy
- Publication Scheme
- Role of Town Councillors
- Appeals Procedure
- Code of Conduct for Staff
- Complaints Procedure
- Confidential Reporting Procedure
- Disciplinary Procedure
- Disciplinary Rules
- Equality Policy
- Grievance Procedure
- Harassment & Bullying Policy
- Personal Achievement & Development Scheme
- Safety Policy
- Sickness Absence Control Policy
- Stress Management Policy

It was

RECOMMENDED

- (1) That the Data Protection Policy be modified to take account of changes in the status of the legislation since it was last reviewed.
- (2) That the Town Clerk be requested to check progress in complying with the targets set out in paragraph 2.3.1 of the Equality Policy.
- (3) That the Town Clerk be requested to make further progress towards the unification of the format of the documents and to incorporate in all the date of last review and the due date of the next review.
- (4) That, save as mentioned above, the Committee records its opinion that the various documents now considered remain fit for their various purposes.

54. **SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES ACT 2007**

The Committee received and noted a guide to the Sustainable Communities Act 2007.

55. **LOUDS MILL DEPOT**

As an urgent item the Town Clerk reported that the Final Account for the construction of Louds Mill Depot had now been received in the sum of £351,572.22, and increase of £14,924.22 or 4.43% on the tender sum of £336,651 approved at Policy Minute 7 (2006-07). The increase was predominantly due to the need to introduce revised arrangements for disposing of surface water run-off and additional costs in the provision of the electricity supply to the building.

It was

RESOLVED

That the report be noted.

Chairman

DORCHESTER TOWN COUNCIL

RESOURCES PANEL

10th MARCH, 2008

At a Meeting of the Resources Panel held on 10th March, 2008:

PRESENT Councillors R.M. Biggs, T.C.N. Harries, L.E. Heath and Trevor Jones (Chairman).

APOLOGIES for absence were received from The Mayor (Councillor D.J. Barrett) and Councillor M.E. Rennie.

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, which incorporates the minor textual amendments now agreed, be approved so far as the Panel is concerned.

2. **CAPITALISATION OF ASSET-RELATED EXPENDITURE**

Further to Minute 17(2) the Panel considered the report of the Council's Financial Service Provider on the setting of a de-minimis level for the capitalisation of expenditure related to assets. The report included examples of the de-minimis levels set by other best value town councils and it was

RECOMMENDED

That the Council adopt a de-minimis level of £5,000 for capitalising asset-related expenditure.

3. **INTERNAL AUDIT**

(a) **Internal Auditor's Report**

The Panel received and noted the most recent report of the Council's Internal Auditor. The Town Clerk undertook to provide detailed clarification of the action taken in response to the point raised about the application of the European Working Time Directive to the Town Hall Keepers prior to the next meeting of the Policy Committee.

He also explained that the point raised in the report about levels of staffing in the Outdoor Section arose from the subsequent filling of a vacancy for an Assistant

Gardener/Labourer which had existed during the refurbishment of the Borough Gardens and which should be compensated for in part by a reduction in the number of seasonal staff employed.

(b) Review of Effectiveness

The Panel reviewed the effectiveness of the Council's internal audit arrangements in the light of guidance abstracted from 'Governance and Accountability in Local Councils in England and Wales – A Practitioners Guide' and it was

RECOMMENDED

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

(c) 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 2008-09.

It was

RECOMMENDED

That the Terms of Engagement be approved and that the estimated cost of £1,397.76 for providing the service be noted.

(d) Programme – 2008-09

The Panel considered the internal audit programme for 2008-09 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.

It was

RECOMMENDED

That the proposed internal audit programme for 2008-09 as now submitted be approved.

4. **DEPUTY TOWN CLERK – JOB DESCRIPTION**

The Panel considered a draft revised job description for the post of Deputy Town Clerk which took into account changes resulting from the removal of the statutory duty of best value and from the Council's increasing focus on risk management.

It was

RECOMMENDED

That the revised job description reproduced at Appendix III, which incorporates the minor textual amendments

now agreed, be approved so far as the Panel is concerned.

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

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

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

DORCHESTER TOWN COUNCIL

ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT – 2007-08

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 work on this programme is in hand.

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.

This document took its present form in response to the imposition of the statutory duty of best value. This statutory duty will be 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 already decided to continue with its publication, albeit that the contents of it are likely to change to make it more valuable and the timing of its publication is likely to change to increase its impact on 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 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 reviewed in May 2006 and is shortly to be reviewed again 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.

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 recently 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.

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 was recently examined by South West Provincial Employers and found to be suited to its purpose.

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 eleven 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 were introduced during 2006-07 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 appraisal process and contributed 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 has also completely redesigned its website recently in a way which is more attractive to users and easier 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), 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 2007-08 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 2010-11 was adopted during 2007-08; this Strategy will periodically reviewed in accordance with a timetable approved by the Council. However long term projects are undertaken, for example the Borough Gardens refurbishment, which do have financial implications which run over years and do 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

JOB DESCRIPTION

- Job Title:** DEPUTY TOWN CLERK
- Full Time:** 37 hours per week (one hour for lunch).
- Conditions:** Leave entitlement 20 days
Post Superannuable
- Responsible to:** Town Clerk
- Responsible for:** All staff indicated on the enclosed staff structure

1. Job Purpose

- 1.1 To be responsible for the day to day management of the Council.
- 1.2 To manage those employees indicated on the enclosed staff structure, including ensuring that performance appraisals of all staff are carried out in accordance with the Council's Personal Achievement and Development Scheme.
- 1.3 To be responsible for the preparation of the Council's annual Performance and Policy Plan.
- 1.4 To administer the Council's Risk Register and risk management activities.
- 1.5 To act as designated officer for the administration of the Council's disciplinary and grievance procedures in respect of all the Council's employees and to deal with other personnel-related issues as required.
- 1.6 To ensure the implementation of changes in priority of the Council's policy objectives.
- 1.7 To actively promote the other policies of the Council as determined from time to time and to assist and support the Town Clerk in the corporate management of the Council's affairs.
- 1.8 To deputise in all respects during any absences of the Town Clerk.

2. Main Duties

- 2.1 To support the Town Clerk in his or her role as principal advisor to the Council through attending Council, Committee, Sub-Committee and Panel meetings as required.
- 2.2 To be responsible for such committees of the Council as may be required including the preparation of agenda, attendance at meetings, the drafting of minutes and action arising and, in addition, attending meetings of such other bodies, organisations or groups as may reasonably be required.
- 2.3 To be responsible for delivering the Council's agreed Performance Management system, including the preparation, implementation and monitoring of service plans.

- 2.4 To act as lead officer for the Council's risk management activities.
- 2.5 To assist the Town Clerk with any duties deemed necessary for the smooth running of the Council.
- 2.6 To assist as required in the organisation of civic and/or ceremonial events.
- 2.7 Such other ad hoc duties as required appropriate to the grading of the post.
- 2.8 The duties set out above shall apply as necessary to the activities of the Dorchester Markets Joint Committee and of the Dorchester Joint Burial Committee in the same way as they apply to the activities of the Town Council.

3. **Summary**

- 3.1 The salary paid is commensurate with ability and experience and reflects the seniority and expectations of the position held.
- 3.2 The salary paid reflects the requirement to attend evening and weekend meetings and events. Time off in lieu at basic rate will be available in respect of these duties.
- 3.3 It is expected that the appointee will attend all civic functions and other events of the Town Council as requested by the Town Clerk as part of their contract.

4. **Confidentiality Clause**

The Council accepts that open government is best and the law requires that certain types of information must be made available to Councillors, auditors, government departments, service users and the public. However, you must maintain a proper level of trust and confidence regarding confidential information and must not communicate to the public the proceedings of any Committee etc, nor the contents of any document relating to the Council unless authorised to do so.

You must not supply information concerning an employee's personal details to any person outside the Council's employ or within the Council unless that person has a right to know and you have the employee's consent to do so.

You must not use any information obtained in the course of your employment for personal gain, benefit or other improper motives, nor can you pass it on to others who might use it in such a way.

Any particular information received from a Councillor or a member of staff which is personal to that individual and does not belong to the Council must not be divulged without the prior approval of the individual concerned except where such disclosure is required or sanctioned by law.

If you are in any doubt as to what to do if approached for confidential information, consult the Town Clerk.

When you leave the Council's employment, you must maintain a proper level of trust and confidence and not use inside contacts to short-cut normal Council procedures.