

DORCHESTER TOWN COUNCIL

POLICY COMMITTEE

18th MAY, 2010

At a Meeting of the Policy Committee held on 18th May, 2010:

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

APOLOGIES for absence were received from The Mayor (Councillor S.C. Hosford) and Councillor M.A. Allwood.

53. **MINUTES**

The Minutes of the Meeting of the Committee held on 16th March, 2010, adopted by Council on 23rd March, 2010, were taken as read and were confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

54. **MINUTES OF ANNUAL TOWN MEETING**

The Committee received and noted the Minutes of the Annual Town Meeting held on 25th March, 2010.

55. **LOCAL DEMOCRACY WEEK – OCTOBER, 2010**

In accordance with Management Minute 64 the Committee considered a report of the Deputy Town Clerk on possible Council involvement in Local Democracy Week, the precise dates of which were yet to be decided. The report set out an indicative proposal for a full day of activities and it was

RECOMMENDED

That the proposals set out in the report be supported so far as this Committee is concerned and that the Management Committee be authorised to make the detailed arrangements.

56. **ANNUAL REPORT 2009-10**

The Committee considered a draft of the Annual Report for 2009-10 which was required to be published by 30th June, 2010 by which time the necessary outturn financial information for 2009-10 will be available.

It was

RECOMMENDED

That the draft Annual Report for 2009-10 as now submitted be approved so far as this Committee is concerned.

57. **PERFORMANCE AND POLICY PLAN 2009-10 – MONITORING REPORT**

The Committee considered the report of the Deputy Town Clerk on progress against the various performance indicators contained in the most recent Performance and Policy Plan.

In response to a question from a Member the Town Clerk reported that he believed that the Duchy of Cornwall had identified a site at Poundbury for the creation of additional allotments and agreed to attempt to seek clarification prior to the meeting of the Poundbury Inter-Authority Working Panel on 20th May, 2010.

The Deputy Town Clerk reported in detail on the reticence of the Management Committee to assume responsibility for the Great Field in its entirety until landscaping works had been completed and there was complete clarity about the arrangements for dealing with surface water run-off from future phases of the development. The Committee was, however, considering assuming responsibility for the management of the sports pitches in the interim (Management Minute 82 refers).

It was

RESOLVED

That the report be noted.

58. **STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTING POLICIES**

The Committee considered the report of the Financial Service Provider on changes to the way in which the Council's Accounts were required to be presented with effect from 2009-10. SORP (the Statement of Recommended Practice) would no longer apply and the Council would instead be required to comply with FRSSE (Financial Reporting Standards for Smaller Entities).

One of the changes related to the accounting treatment of tangible fixed assets which had hitherto been subject to formal revaluation every five years. FRSSE did not prohibit revaluation but did not recommend it and offered two alternative methods of treatment, either retaining existing book values or restating to historical cost.

It was

RESOLVED

- (1) That the Council retains existing book values of tangible fixed assets but reserves the right to undertake revaluation should movement in property values mean that existing values no longer enable the accounts to represent a full and fair view.

There were also changes in the method of accounting for grants received for capital expenditure. FRSSE allowed the Council to apply any unamortised grant balance against the depreciated value of the asset and depreciate the adjusted asset value over the

remaining life of the asset, restating the opening balances accordingly or to continue with its previous policy, making full disclosure in a note to the balance sheet.

In respect of this matter it was

RESOLVED

- (2) That the Council continue with its previous practice of crediting grants received to the Contributions Deferred Account with the balance being written down over the life of the asset(s) concerned and that an appropriate note be included on the balance sheet.

FRSSE also gave the Council an option over whether or not to prepare group accounts which had been a requirement of the SORP. It was

RESOLVED

- (3) That the Council continue to prepare group accounts in the interests of consistency and comparability.

It was also

RESOLVED

- (4) That the draft Statement of Accounting Policies appended to the report be approved.

59. **SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES ACT 2007 (AMENDMENT) ACT 2010**

The Committee received and noted National Association of Local Councils Legal Briefing L03-10 in respect of this Act which would come into force on 8th June, 2010.

60. **MEMBER TRAINING**

The Committee considered whether to extend to appropriate members the opportunity to attend the NALC Leadership Academy which would be held at the University of Warwick at a cost of £799.50 per person.

It was

RESOLVED

That no action be taken.

61. **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.

62. **BAD DEBTS**

The Committee considered the report of the Financial Service Provider recommending the writing-off of three bad debts in the total sum of £3,194.79 together with a note of the small balance written off by the Town Clerk in accordance with Financial Regulation 5.3 in the sum of £2.50.

It was

RESOLVED

- (1) That the first two bad debts identified in the report in the total sum of £683.66 be written-off.
- (2) That further consideration to the writing-off of the third debt in the sum of £2,511.13 be given at the next meeting of the Committee in the light of a detailed report on the circumstances of the matter.
- (3) That the small balance of £2.50 written off by the Town Clerk in accordance with Financial Regulation 5.3 be noted.

63. **SAWMILLS DEVELOPMENT ASSOCIATION**

The Committee considered the report of the Deputy Town Clerk on the circumstances in which no attempts had been made to recover from the Sawmills Development Association the sums due as a contribution to the rent of the site for 2004-05 to 2008-09 inclusive as recorded at Policy Minute 64(4) of 18th March, 2003.

The report confirmed that payment had been received in respect of 2009-10 and arrangements were now in place to avoid a recurrence of the oversight.

It was

RESOLVED

That no attempt be made to recover the historical undemanded amounts.

Chairman