

DORCHESTER TOWN COUNCIL

POLICY COMMITTEE

21st MARCH, 2006

At a Meeting of the Policy Committee held on 21st March, 2006:

PRESENT The Mayor (Councillor R.M. Biggs) and Councillors T.C.N. Harries, Trevor Jones (Chairman) and L.M. Phillips.

APOLOGIES for absence were received from Councillors Miss C.M. Hebditch, Mrs. S.C. Hosford, T.A. Parsley and R.G. Tarr.

40. **MINUTES**

The Minutes of the Meeting of the Committee held on 17th January, 2006, adopted by Council on 24th January, 2006, were taken as read and were confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

41. **MINUTES OF RESOURCES PANEL**

The Committee considered the Minutes of the Resources Panel held on 23rd February, 2006 (for Minutes see Appendices I – III).

It was

RESOLVED

That the Minutes be noted and that, insofar as they deal with matters in respect of which the Panel did not exercise delegated powers, the recommendations contained in them be approved so far as this Committee is concerned.

42. **MINUTES OF OTHER COMMITTEES**

(a) **Planning and Environment Committee – 6th March, 2006**

The Committee considered Minute 82 of the Planning and Environment Committee regarding Dorset County Council's proposed Private Finance Initiative in respect of street lighting and it was

RESOLVED

That the Minute be approved so far as this Committee is concerned and that no objection in principle be raised to the Council making a financial contribution towards the costs involved in installing improved street lighting related street furniture in conservation areas subject to further consideration when the likely levels of financial support and a

potential timescale for implementation have been identified.

(b) Management Committee – 14th March, 2006

The Committee considered the under-mentioned Minutes of the Management Committee:

Minute 56 – Grants Panel

Minute 58 – Dorchester and District Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Tourism – Grants.

It was

RESOLVED

- (1) That Minute 56 be approved so far as this Committee is concerned and that the request for virement contained in it be granted.
- (2) That Minute 58(1) be noted.
- (3) That, in respect of Minute 58(2), the request for a supplementary estimate of £5,000 be not agreed but that the proposed expenditure be met from the Contingency provision and that the Minute be approved so far as this Committee is concerned on that basis.

43. **UNBUDGETED EXPENDITURE**

Members expressed their concern about the funding of expenditure not provided for within the Estimates and it was

RECOMMENDED

That the Council declares that it will not permit the use of its balances and reserves to fund anything other than genuinely unforeseeable, unavoidable and uncontrollable expenditure and only then in the light of advice from the Council's financial service provider.

44. **CORPORATE GOVERNANCE**

The Committee considered the report of the Town Clerk reviewing the Council's arrangements for corporate governance which included a draft local code of corporate governance for possible adoption.

The report also drew attention to disparities and irregularities between the Council's objectives and those articulated in the Performance and Policy Plan.

It was

RECOMMENDED

- (1) That the draft Local Code of Corporate Governance now submitted be adopted (for Code see Appendix IV).
- (2) That the officers be requested to take account of the disparities in the Council's recorded objectives in the drafting of the Performance and Policy Plan for 2006 and that this matter be dealt with during the consideration and subsequent approval of that Plan.
- (3) That the Town Clerk be requested to submit a report to the next meeting of this Committee on the likely costs of engaging professional advice on the preparation of a cyclical maintenance plan for the Council's various properties and on the finding of that expenditure.
- (4) That consideration be given to the funding of a training programme for Members during the preparation of the Estimates for 2007/08.

45. **PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT**

The Committee considered the report of the Deputy Town Clerk on the Council's arrangements for performance management and review with particular reference the various key milestones during the Council Year; the report had been prepared taking into account the principles of the Local Code of Corporate Governance referred to at Minute 43 above.

The Committee accepted that there were potentially significant resource implications and it was

RECOMMENDED

- (1) That the report be noted and the graphical representation of the Council's performance management and review arrangements reproduced at Appendix V be approved.
- (2) That the resourcing of the activity be further considered in the light of six months' experience of the full operation of the proposals agreed at this Minute and at Minute 43 above.

46. **BEST VALUE PERFORMANCE PLAN 2005 – AUDIT**

The Committee considered draft responses to the Action Plan arising from the audit of the Performance and Policy Plan for 2005/06 which had now been received from District Audit and it was

RESOLVED

That the Action Plan be responded to in the terms set out at Appendix VI.

47. **OFFICE OF THE DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER**

(a) **Promoting Effective Citizenship and Community Empowerment**

The Committee received and noted this publication from the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister.

(b) **Empowerment and the Deal for Devolution**

The Committee received and noted a copy of a speech to the New Local Government Network's Annual Conference by the Minister of Communities and Local Government. In particular the Committee considered its responses to the six questions contained in the document and it was

RESOLVED

That the questions be responded to in the manner indicated at Appendix VII.

48. **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 because they deal with matters affecting the terms and conditions of employment of individuals.

49. **DORSET COMMUNITY ACTION**

The Committee considered a letter dated 13th March, 2006 from Dorset Community Action's Community Development Manager seeking a financial contribution from the Council of £3,000 per annum index-linked towards the costs of engaging an additional member of the Dorchester Area Community Worker Team for a total of three years and it was

RECOMMENDED

- (1) That the request be approved and that the costs in 2006/07 be met from the Contingency provision.
- (2) That Dorset Community Action be requested to use their best endeavours to obtain funding from parish councils in the surrounding area which will benefit from the appointment to enable this Council's contribution to be proportionately reduced in 2007/08 and 2008/09.

50. **STAFFING MATTERS**

Further to Resources Panel Minute 5(a) the Committee considered a supplemental report received from South West Provincial Employers and it was

RESOLVED

That the salary review recommendations set out in the report be implemented with effect from 1st April, 2005.

Chairman

DORCHESTER TOWN COUNCIL

RESOURCES PANEL

23rd FEBRUARY, 2006

At a Meeting of the Resources Panel held on 23rd February, 2006:

PRESENT The Mayor (Councillor R.M. Biggs) and Councillors A.J. Canning, Mrs. S.C. Hosford, Trevor Jones (Chairman) and T.A. Parsley.

In attendance:
Councillor L.M. Phillips

APOLOGY for absence was received from Councillor Mrs. M.E. Rennie.

12. **INTERNAL AUDIT**

The Panel received and noted the report of the Council's Internal Auditor on his most recent review of the Council's financial affairs which had revealed no matters of substance.

13. **EQUALITY POLICY**

The Panel considered a draft comprehensive equality policy which had been prepared to accord with recent changes in legislation.

It was

RECOMMENDED

- (1) That the draft policy as now submitted be approved so far as the Panel is concerned subject to the modification of paragraph 2.2.1 along the lines now agreed (for policy as amended see Appendix II).
- (2) That the Town Clerk be requested to investigate the availability of suitable equality training materials.
- (3) That this policy be reviewed in March, 2008 and that, as a matter of practice, all the Council's employment and associated policies be reviewed cyclically every two years.

14. **HARASSMENT AND BULLYING POLICY**

The Panel considered a draft policy on harassment and bullying (for policy see Appendix III).

It was

RECOMMENDED

That the draft policy be approved so far as the Panel is concerned and that the attention of all members of staff be drawn to paragraph 12.3 of it when they are provided with a copy.

15. **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.

16. **PROVISION OF FINANCIAL SERVICES**

Further to Minutes 9 and 11 the Panel considered the report of the Town Clerk on the tenders received for the provision of financial services to the Council with effect from 1st April, 2006.

Following discussion, and in accordance with the delegated powers granted at Standing Order 50, it was

RESOLVED

- (1) That the tender of the West Dorset District Council be accepted subject to the Town Clerk satisfying himself regarding the various detailed concerns now raised.
- (2) That, in the event of the Town Clerk not being so satisfied the contract be awarded to the tenderer now named.

17. **ACTING-UP PAYMENT**

The Panel considered the report of the Town Clerk on additional duties assumed by a member of staff over the last year and, in accordance with the delegated powers granted at Standing Order 50, it was

RESOLVED

That an acting-up payment of £175.10 be made to the member of staff concerned.

DORCHESTER TOWN COUNCIL

EQUALITY POLICY

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Objectives

1.1.1 The Town Council is firmly committed to promoting equality of opportunity and to combating discrimination both in the way we deliver services to the public and through our actions as an employer. We also seek to promote the principles of equality to the wider community and to provide leadership by example.

1.1.2 To achieve this we aim to ensure that no member of the public, elected member, employee/worker or potential employee is discriminated against irrespective of, for example, their gender, physical or mental disability, race, colour, national or ethnic origin, age, sexual orientation, religion or belief, marital status or trade union involvement.

1.1.3 Our commitment to equality stems from a belief that such an approach can contribute to a more cohesive and inclusive community. We also believe that employment practices that are founded on the principles of equality will make us a better organisation to work for.

1.1.4 This Policy confirms our commitment to equality unequivocally.

1.2 Statutory duties and our commitment to meet them

1.2.1 The Council is committed to complying with all current statutory equality requirements and this Policy has been developed in the context of the following legislation (this list is not exhaustive):

- Equal Pay Act 1970
- Sex Discrimination Act 1975 (and 1979 and 1986)
- Human Rights Act 1998
- Race Relations Act 1976 and Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000
- Disability Discrimination Act (1995 & 2005)
- Sex Discrimination (Gender Reassignment) Regulations 1999
- Part-time Workers Regulations 2000
- Fixed-term Employees Regulations 2002
- The Employment Equality (Religion or Belief) Regulations 2003
- The Employment Equality (Sexual Orientation) Regulations 2003
- Civil Partnerships Act 2005

1.2.2 The Human Rights Act 1998 incorporates into domestic legislation the European Convention on Human Rights & Fundamental Freedoms. The aims of this policy seek to ensure that the Convention is not breached. In addition the Council will comply with the codes of practices relating to equalities and discrimination issued by the following organisations:

- Equal Opportunities Commission

- Disability Rights Commission
- Commission for Race Equality
- Commission for Equality and Human Rights – as proposed in the Equality Bill.

1.3 **The Equality Standard**

1.3.1 This Policy is based upon the guidance contained in the Equality Standard for Local Government - a tool to enable local authorities to mainstream equality practice into policy and services at all levels. Working to the Standard will assist the Council to identify and remove any discriminatory barriers preventing equal access to services and employment. The structure and headings in this Policy closely follow the guidance contained in the Equality Standard.

1.3.2 There are five levels to the Standard and at present the Council aims to achieve Level 3 by October 2008. The primary areas of work for each level can be summarised as follows:

- Level 1: A commitment to a Comprehensive Equality Policy
- Level 2: Engaging in impact assessment and consultation
- Level 3: Setting equality objectives and targets
- Level 4: Developing an information system and monitoring progress against targets
- Level 5: Achieving and reviewing outcomes

1.3.3 As the Council achieves each of these levels, it will make available evidence to demonstrate that it has met the requirements of the Equality Standard for Local Government.

1.4 **Race Equality**

1.4.1 The Race Relations Act 1976, supplemented by the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000, places a general duty on a wide range of public authorities to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination
- Promote equality of opportunity
- Promote good relations between people of different racial groups.

1.4.2 In addition, the council has a specific duty to:

- assess proposed policies for any effect they might have on the promotion of race relations
- consult people who are likely to be affected by those policies.

1.5 **Gender Equality**

1.5.1 The Council is committed to complying with all statutory equality requirements for gender and to implement the proposed Gender Duty for public authorities. The aim of the proposed Gender Duty is to:

- make a difference to women's and men's everyday lives through improved public services that are responsive to their needs.
- to adopt better employment practices, that will help retain skilled staff

- tackle systemic discrimination more effectively.

1.6 Disability Equality

- 1.6.1 The Council is fully committed to providing accessible services and to meeting its responsibilities under the Disability Discrimination Acts 1995 and 2005 as both an employer and a service provider.
- 1.6.2 Within the context of improving equality of service delivery, the Council will, as far as is reasonably practical, provide services that are accessible to all. Where this cannot be achieved, services will be provided by other means, unless the physical nature of the service prevents it.
- 1.6.3 The Disability Discrimination Act 2005 places a general duty on all public bodies to promote disability equality and in carrying out its functions the Council will need to:
- eliminate unlawful disability discrimination and the harassment of disabled employees
 - promote equality of opportunity for disabled people
 - take steps to take account of disabled people's disabilities, even where that involves treating disabled people more favourably than other people
 - promote a positive attitude towards disabled people and encourage the participation of disabled people in public life.
- 1.6.4 The Council will work through the Dorchester Area Partnership with individuals and groups representing disability concerns to assist it to meet the requirements of the duty and the needs of local people.
- 1.6.5 An access audit has been carried out on the Council's properties where services are provided to the public and its findings implemented where practicable.

1.7 What is discrimination?

- 1.7.1 The Council opposes all forms of harassment and unfair discrimination. We recognise that there are various forms of discrimination and harassment:
- **Direct Discrimination** – this occurs when a person is treated less favourably or more favourably than others would be on grounds that are not justifiable, for example, not employing or providing the same level of service because of a person's race, gender, disability, sexuality or religious belief.
 - **Indirect Discrimination** – this occurs when a person is treated less favourably because of a requirement or a policy, for example, in an employment situation, a requirement that a machine operative has a minimum level of numeracy or literacy may be discriminatory against a disabled person with learning difficulties.
 - **Harassment** – this occurs when the harasser engages in unwanted conduct, which has the purpose or effect of violating the victim's dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for the victim. Harassment can include abusive language or behaviour, sexual harassment and written word or signs.

- **Victimisation** – this occurs when a person suffers detriment or disadvantage as a result of, for example, making allegations, bringing proceedings or providing information in reporting discrimination.

1.8 **A profile of Dorchester**

1.8.1 Dorchester is a vibrant and historic market town at the heart of a substantial rural hinterland where farming still predominates. It has a population of 16,160. In terms of equalities, the following aspects are particularly significant:

- 52.1% of the population are female
- 3.5% of the population do not consider themselves to be ‘White British’
- 18.9% of people consider themselves to have a limiting long-term disability or health problem
- 25.9% of the population are aged 60 or over
- the number of young people in the district is less than the national average

2.0 **LEADERSHIP AND CORPORATE COMMITMENT TO EQUALITY**

2.1 **Our commitment to improving equality practice corporately and in all services**

2.1.1 The Council is committed to maintaining its positive approach to equality issues.

2.1.2 With regard to accessibility, the Town Clerk is responsible for matters affecting access to the Council’s various properties.

2.1.3 The Council will continue to support the Access Group established under the Dorchester Area Partnership which has a wide remit covering all matters of access to premises and services.

2.2 **Our commitment to providing the resources needed**

2.2.1 The Council has a budget for training and this provision is sufficiently flexible to fund training for all staff on equality matters. It regards equality as an intrinsic part of its day-to-day business and management and specific pieces of work, such as reasonable adjustments to buildings and facilities to widen access to services and to ensure compliance with the Disability Discrimination Act will be funded through the normal budgeting process.

2.2.2 Through its support for the Dorchester Area Partnership the Council demonstrates its commitment to supporting capacity building, encouraging community cohesion and consulting with disabled people, people from ethnic minorities and younger and older people living in the town.

2.3 **Our commitment to progress towards Level 5 of the Equality Standard**

2.3.1 The Council is committed to achieving the highest standards of corporate performance across its entire range of services and activities including equality issues. It aims to:

- achieve Level 2 by October 2007 and Level 3 by October 2008;
- implement the general duties of the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 by October 2007.

2.3.2 Targets may also be set in relation to the duties set out in the Disability Discrimination Act 2005.

2.4 **Reviewing functions**

2.4.1 All Council services and policies) are continually monitored for their impact on the different groups within the community.

2.5 **Undertaking Equality Impact Assessments (EIAs)**

2.5.1 The EIA process assists in identifying direct or indirect discrimination and will result in an 'improvement plan'. This sets out ways to improve access and/or remove barriers to access and will be taken into account when services are planned. If an EIA indicates that significant changes to services or budgets are required, this will need to be reported to the appropriate committee of the Council (usually the Management Committee).

2.5.2 In considering is now any proposed changes to a service or policy the Council will take account of their likely impact on equality issues. In most cases a formal EIA is unlikely to be required but the equality considerations taken into account will be recorded for future reference.

2.5.3 The EIA process and the more practical approach outlined in paragraph 2.5.3 also helps to mainstream equality by prompting members and staff to consider how their functions, methods of communication and consultation should be delivered to ensure equality of access. For example, a full EIA requires Council officers to:

- identify all the stakeholders affected by the service, including equality groups;
- ensure appropriate consultation has taken place with all the stakeholders, including equality groups;
- ensure communication is a two-way process, delivered in an appropriate format to equality groups;
- identify any improvements to the service;
- mainstream the improvements by developing targets to go into the Performance and Policy Plan;
- set up administrative systems to monitor progress on the improvements.

2.5.4 If the results from the EIA indicate that a proposed service or policy is likely to have adverse impact, we shall consider making amendments to it and/or seek ways of compensating for the adverse affects. If changes to the proposed function are significant, we shall consider further consultation.

2.5.5 The Council will ensure that all key staff are able to undertake Equalities Impact Assessments.

2.6 **Monitoring**

2.6.1 The Council will monitor the progress of equality actions and revise targets arising from all areas of action, such as the EIA process and consultation findings. If a policy or service is shown to have an adverse impact on the Council's delivery of equality of opportunity we shall consider finding another way of meeting our aims or decide whether the policy or service is justifiable because of its overall objectives.

2.6.2 Performance relating to equalities will be reported in the Performance and Policy Plan and monitored through the Council's existing procedures and practices.

3.0 CONSULTATION, SCRUTINY AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

3.1 The Council will strive to identify groups within the community whose needs and requirements are less well met by Council services than those of other groups. This will be achieved through the on-going monitoring of service users and through an assessment of all available information on the demographics of the community.

3.2 Our commitment to systematic consultation

3.2.1 The Council will carry out internal and external consultation.

3.2.2 Consultation exercises must consider equality issues and barriers to public participation in them. The Council will consider the location and time of meetings, access and communication needs, childcare and other caring issues, as well as the different techniques for consulting.

3.2.3 Where appropriate (and where a vehicle other than the Dorchester Area Partnership is necessary to secure thorough consultation) a local forum will be set up and/or facilitated by the Council to ensure that all groups within the community are engaged in corporate consultations. Such local forums might include equality forums, older people's forums, youth forums and disability forums.

3.2.4 The development of forums for equality groups - to enable their views to be heard and considered - is recognised by the Council as a vital part of its commitment to both equality and community planning. The Council will work closely with these forums to agree the best methods for consultation and, where possible, work with other agencies to arrange joint consultation.

3.2.5 The Council will embrace consultation best practice and ensure that the final report from a consultation exercise, its recommendations and outcomes is communicated back to those who participated in it to ensure that local people are kept informed and to help maintain trust and confidence in the consultation process.

3.3 Our commitment to scrutiny

3.3.1 The Council will work with key stakeholders to ensure its commitment to comprehensive equality is delivered.

3.3.2 Internal scrutiny of the Council's equality commitment and performance will be assessed in the Performance and Policy Plan and monitored through the Council's existing procedures and practices.

3.5 Community development

3.5.1 The Council will endeavour to improve relations between different groups within the community through supporting multi-cultural and cross-generation events and the active promotion of positive equality news through the press, publicity campaigns and Dorchester News.

- 4.0 OUR COMMITMENT TO EQUALITY IN THE DELIVERY OF COUNCIL SERVICES AND CUSTOMER CARE**
- 4.1 Our commitment to providing services fairly to the whole community**
- 4.1.1 The Council will provide its services fairly to all elements of the community will design services that meet the needs of the public in a flexible and accessible way.
- 4.2 Our commitment to monitoring service delivery and usage**
- 4.2.1 All services that have a significant impact on equalities will be monitored to identify any disparity in usage and to evaluate the key areas for improvement.
- 4.3 Promoting equality through procurement and partnerships**
- 4.3.1 The Council expects all organisations and people working on its behalf to practice equal opportunities and adhere to this Comprehensive Equality Policy.
- 4.3.2 The Council's Procurement Strategy addresses equality issues by identifying that supplier diversity contributes to a strong local economy. Where possible the Council will provide information and advice to assist small businesses, social enterprises, voluntary sector organisations and ethnic minority businesses to build their capacity to win and retain public contracts.
- 4.3.3 In accordance with the Procurement Strategy the Council will aim to ensure that all contractors, carrying out work on behalf of the council or sub-contracting on behalf of the Council will be required to comply with an equality checklist and produce an equal opportunity statement or policy relating to both employment practices and service delivery.
- 4.3.4 Access to services will be taken into account in the procurement process and, where necessary, selected contractors will be required to develop more accessible products and services.
- 4.4 Communication**
- 4.4.1 The Council will ensure equality in the ways it communicates with the public. We shall ensure that written material produced by the Council is made available in large print format on request.
- 4.5 Complaints**
- 4.5.1 All complaints relating to equality issues will be dealt with through the existing formal complaints procedure.
- 4.6 Our commitment to making services accessible**
- 4.6.1 The Council will use every endeavour to ensure the accessibility of its services both physically and through other channels including the internet and telephone.
- 4.6.2 The Council will use BS 8300 as a reference standard for the physical accessibility of all its services and will strive to achieve this wherever practicable.

- 4.6.3 Auxiliary aids (for example hearing loops in meeting rooms) will be provided wherever a need is identified or anticipated.

5.0 OUR COMMITMENT TO EQUALITY IN EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING

- 5.1 The Council is committed to equality of opportunity in its recruitment, training and promotion of employees. In its role as an employer, the Council will promote equality and prevent discrimination through the regular monitoring of:

- recruitment
- promotion
- training
- pay and allowances
- grievances
- exit from employment

- 5.2 The Council has adopted policies on harassment/bullying and employment practices which are consistent with all relevant legislation and codes of practice and is committed to their effective implementation.

- 5.3 The Council will seek to recruit a workforce that reflects the diversity of the community. This will be achieved through an approach based on workforce profiling and equality assessment of the local labour market.

5.4 Our commitment to fair recruitment

- 5.4.1 The Council is committed to fair recruitment and to the elimination of any assumptions, preferences or judgements that do not relate to the potential abilities of individuals to perform the required jobs. This principle will apply to assembling job descriptions, person specifications, advertisements and to the shortlisting, selection and interviewing of applicants. Additional practical measures that the Council will implement to ensure fair recruitment are set out in Appendix 1.

- 5.4.2 The Council will set standards to ensure that objective, job-related criteria apply to all its employment practices. All appointments and promotions will be based on merit, qualifications and relevant experience.

- 5.4.3 To ensure equality of opportunity when recruiting, the Council will ensure that:
- all permanent job vacancies, except those covered by a restructuring, promotion or transfer (as a result of natural processes or redundancy), will be advertised internally as a minimum. Externally advertised vacancies will be notified to the local Job Centres, and placed on the dorsetforyou.com website. The Council will keep under review its approach to advertising to ensure that it is compatible with this policy.
 - all new fixed term posts will be advertised, with a specific indication in the advertisement that the post may become permanent at a later date, where appropriate.
 - where, however, there is a proposal to offer the existing holder of a fixed-term contract a permanent contract in respect of the same post and at the same grade, the post will not be advertised where the current postholder was appointed to the post following a process of advertisement, interview and selection.
 - there will be an internal advertisement of the new post where two or more fixed-term contract posts have the same responsibilities and duties and the number of

permanent posts to be created is less than the number of existing fixed term posts.

- youth trainees, Modern Apprenticeships and persons providing cover for maternity leave can be appointed without advertisement although the creation of any subsequent fixed term or permanent post will be advertised, at least internally.
- for the purposes of this Policy, ‘internal advertisement’ means advertisement to existing staff of the Council and only existing staff may apply. Existing staff includes casuals.
- no ‘word of mouth’ recruitment, the use of ‘waiting lists’, personal recommendations or any other unofficial recruitment of permanent staff that contravenes this policy, will be permitted.
- all advertisements (internal or external) for job vacancies will carry the statement ‘Dorchester Town Council is an Equal Opportunities Employer’.

5.5 Our commitment to equal access to training and career development

5.5.1 The Council will ensure that all employees have equal access to training and development opportunities, regardless of their working hours or any special needs. We shall therefore consider all training requests on their merits. Any special needs such as disability or difficulties in attending training events at certain times will be taken into account and reasonable adjustments will be made. The timing and location of training courses will be reviewed to ensure that wherever possible staff, regardless of their particular circumstances, can take advantage of any appropriate training courses on offer. Where adjustments cannot be made for a particular course, other training and development methods will be considered.

5.5.2 Practical measures to ensure equality of access to training will include:

- making sure that training venues are suitable for any disabled staff attending, in terms of where the venue is sited and how it is equipped;
- procuring popular courses on different days of the week to allow as many staff as possible to attend;
- ensuring that staff are reminded regularly on equality and diversity matters to maintain an appropriate level of awareness’
- ensuring that the Council has access to a range of training materials including videos, books and other resources that can be offered as an alternative to attending a training course.

5.5.3 Additional measures that the Council will implement to ensure equality in training and development are set out in Appendix 1.

5.6 It is important that the Council actively promotes its commitment to equality to all staff and members and it will do so through an on-going process of communication. Equality issues will be highlighted during the induction process for all new staff and appropriate levels of training (ranging from videos to formal training sessions) will be offered to all existing employees on a regular basis.

5.7 The Council will take positive action, wherever practicable, to retain and/or redeploy existing employees who become disabled and are unable to continue in their existing employment. Such action will consider adaptation of equipment and restructuring of work where possible to enable them to continue working. We shall provide, where necessary, additional training to employees who become disabled to assist them in adapting to their current employment or an agreed alternative.

5.8 Our commitment to equality in Employment Terms and Conditions

5.8.1 The Council undertakes not to discriminate unfairly in the operation of national and local conditions of service. Any benefits and facilities provided by the Council will be offered equally to all groups and individual employees, always provided there is not a national or local agreement which has been specifically negotiated which excludes this. As new legislation and good practice emerges, reviews will be carried out to ensure that the council fulfils its obligations.

5.9 Our commitment to equal pay policy

5.9.1 The Council is committed to an equal pay policy which applies to all staff.

5.10 The Council will seek to support members of staff from minority or disadvantaged groups by raising awareness of local support groups and through the development of appropriate internal support mechanisms.

5.11 Additional practical measures that the Council will implement to ensure equality in terms and conditions of employment are set out in Appendix 1.

5.12 Complaints Procedure

5.12.1 Any employee who believes they have a grievance in relation to this Policy should pursue it through the Council's grievance procedure. Where the Council is satisfied that a deliberate act of discrimination by an employee has been committed, disciplinary action will follow.

5.13 Role of the Trade Unions

5.13.1 The Council acknowledges the important role the trade unions can play in achieving the objectives of this Policy. The Council will liaise with the recognised trade unions when necessary to ensure that equal opportunity in employment is achieved.

Practical measures to ensure equality in employment, recruitment and promotion

1. The following objectives are intended to ensure equality in employment and promotion:
 - train all interview panel members in effective interviewing techniques;
 - ensure that all interview panel members are aware of legislation that prohibits discrimination in employment and of potential direct and indirect discrimination
 - review job descriptions prior to advertising to ensure they are up-to-date and the content appropriate;
 - prior to advertising, prepare an up-to-date and valid Person Specification ensuring that any unnecessary physical, language or unjustified experience requirements are avoided;
 - shortlisting of applications for interview against the criteria specified in the Person Specification. The reasons for all decisions to be recorded. Managers will be encouraged to give feedback to candidates if requested;
 - ensure that all interview questions and tests are fair and appropriate for the specific job;
 - record the reasons for decisions taken by the interview panel;
 - consider any reasonable adjustments to premises and working arrangements which may be required by a disabled applicant;
 - promote the Council's Complaints Procedure as a means of addressing problems, improving services and providing equal opportunities.

2. The following objectives are intended to ensure equality in training and/or career development.
 - provide, where necessary, additional training to employees who become disabled to assist them in adapting to their current employment or an agreed alternative;
 - provide induction training to all new employees;
 - ensure the availability of effective appraisal training including reference to the importance and benefit of treating all employees equally and without favouritism;
 - arrange training in equality, assertiveness and communication skills to enhance the concept and practice of fairness and equality;
 - monitor training plans to ensure provision of equal opportunity is being delivered across the Council to meet the needs of staff and councillors.

3. The following objectives are intended to ensure equality in employment terms and conditions.
 - use criteria for assessing salary at appointment which is consistent and non-discriminatory;
 - train managers and supervisors to be aware of potential direct and indirect discrimination when making decisions on terms and conditions of employment;
 - give proper consideration to any request for job share and flexible working arrangements.

DORCHESTER TOWN COUNCIL

HARASSMENT AND BULLYING POLICY & PROCEDURE

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 This policy applies to all employees of Dorchester Town Council. It covers all forms of harassment (including victimisation, bullying and sexual).
- 1.2 With regard to sexual harassment, whilst the principles of this policy will apply, a separate Code of Practice has been developed to provide a guide to dealing with this difficult issue sensitively and effectively; the Code of Practice appears at Appendix A.

2.0 Statement of Intent

- 2.1 The Council takes its obligations very seriously and supports the right of all employees to work in an environment where they are treated with dignity and respect. Harassment, for whatever reason, is a serious infringement of this right and will not be tolerated.
- 2.2 The Council will make all reasonable efforts to protect its employees from harassment and intimidation at work. Disciplinary action, including dismissal where appropriate, will be taken against an employee found guilty of harassment.
- 2.3 The Council also recognises that it has a responsibility to protect employees from harassment by members of the public when carrying out their normal duties. It is equally unacceptable for an employee to harass a member of the public.

3.0 Definition

- 3.1 Harassment can take many forms and is not easily defined in a few words but a useful definition can be found in criminal law.
- 3.2 Under the Public Order Act 1986 a person is guilty of an offence if, within the hearing or sight of a person likely to be caused harassment, distress or alarm s/he:
- (a) uses threatening , abusive or insulting language or behaviour, or disorderly behaviour, or
 - (b) displays any writing, sign or other visible representation which is threatening, abusive or insulting
- 3.3 The offence can be committed in a public or private place (though not in a dwelling). It follows that any intentional harassment in the workplace may be a criminal offence.
- 3.4 For the purposes of this policy conduct regarded as harassment may be wider in scope than that embraced by the definition under the Public Order Act. There is no generally accepted definition of what constitutes harassment but usually two conditions have to be met:
- (a) The person is treated detrimentally
 - (b) The person perceives their treatment as unacceptable and/or offensive

- 3.5 Whereas the criminal offence has to be intentional, harassment may also occur unintentionally. Employees can be harassed by their managers, colleagues or subordinates. Sometimes individuals are harassed by groups and vice versa.
- 3.6 Managers have the right and responsibility to raise legitimate areas of concern with their staff. This is part of the manager's role and does not constitute harassment, even if the concerns have to be raised repeatedly with an individual. In these circumstances harassment would occur only if the manager was behaving unreasonably, unfairly and/or aggressively.

4.0 Examples of Harassment

- 4.1 The following list, whilst not exhaustive, serves to illustrate the sorts of behaviour which may amount to harassment:

Physical

- unnecessary touching, pushing, assault

Verbal

- shouting, abuse, name calling, using offensive language, joking at the victim's expense, public humiliation, spreading unfounded rumours, intimidation

Non-verbal

- ignoring or isolating the person, making aggressive or obscene gestures, displaying offensive posters or notices

- 4.2 The reaction of the recipient is crucial. What one person may regard as normal banter, another may find distressing.

5.0 Grounds for Harassment

- 5.1 The potential grounds of harassment include:

- Race
- Sex
- Sexual Orientation
- Disability
- Age
- Religion
- Political Beliefs
- Membership or non-membership of a trade union

- 5.2 Harassment can occur for other reasons. Nobody is immune from harassment but individuals or groups who are perceived as different or lacking in power are particularly at risk.

6.0 Impact on the Victim

- 6.1 Sustained harassment of employees can have a devastating effect on the life of the individual at the receiving end of the behaviour. Employees who experience harassment may become less motivated, less productive, unwell and more likely to leave.

7.0 Impact on the Organisation

7.1 Harassment can seriously reduce the efficiency of the Council. Dealing with formal harassment complaints may draw on considerable management time. In addition any litigation which may arise from cases of harassment will prove costly in terms of Industrial Tribunals and have an adverse impact on the Council's reputation.

8.0 Complaints Procedure

8.1 The Council recognises that there can be difficulties in reporting allegations of harassment and wants to ensure that such difficulties are overcome and that allegations of harassment are raised and managed. To help achieve this we encourage employees to seek support and/or advice from their trade union representative or their supervisor to help them in either the informal or formal procedure.

9.0 Informal Procedure

9.1 If an employee considers that they are being harassed they or their representative should make it clear to the offender that such behaviour is unwelcome and request that they stop. If they do not feel able to do this or if the harassment continues they should report the matter to their immediate supervisor.

9.2 If their complaint refers to the behaviour of their immediate supervisor the employee should report the matter to their manager.

9.3 The supervisor/manager is responsible for dealing with the situation as quickly as possible.

9.4 Employees who are not satisfied that their complaint is being properly dealt with may use the grievance procedure.

10.0 Formal Procedure

10.1 If the harassment continues or if there is a single serious incident then the employee should report the matter to their manager.

10.2 Allegations of harassment will be dealt under the Council's Disciplinary Procedure. Where a formal disciplinary hearing is necessary the case will be presented by a representative of the employee's choice and the complainant would need to give evidence.

10.3 Appeals against any disciplinary action will be dealt with in accordance with the appropriate disciplinary procedure.

10.4 Where harassment has been proved and it is necessary to relocate one of the parties every effort will be made to relocate the harasser rather than the victim unless the victim prefers to be relocated.

11.0 Employees

11.1 It is the responsibility of every employee to ensure that harassment does not occur at work and in the course of dealing with members of the public. This may involve tackling harassment as soon as it happens, providing support to colleagues who are affected by it,

reporting incidents to management and trade union representatives as appropriate and coming forward as a witness to harassment.

11.2 Employees should ensure that their behaviour does not contribute to harassment, discrimination or victimisation by not condoning or colluding with harassment where they know it is occurring, or by directly harassing work colleagues, or members of the public.

11.3 All employees have an obligation to contribute to a work atmosphere which is free from harassment.

12.0 Managers and Supervisors

12.1 Managers and supervisors have a responsibility for explaining and promoting the Council's policy to staff and for fostering a working environment that does not condone harassment.

12.2 Managers and supervisors are expected to intervene immediately when they become aware of harassment. There does not necessarily have to be a complaint. Some victims of harassment find the prospect of embarking on a formal course of action to be quite daunting and may be unwilling to complain. Managers and supervisors should be sensitive to individuals' needs and wishes.

12.3 Managers and supervisors have a responsibility to ensure all staff are aware of the Council's policy on harassment and its attitude towards any breach. They also have an obligation to investigate any complaint of harassment promptly and in accordance with the procedure set out in this policy.

13.0 Support for Employees

13.1 In the event of possible harassment confidential advice can be sought from a trade union or colleagues. If necessary professional counselling will be made available.

13.2 Employees will be protected from victimisation and discrimination for making a complaint or assisting in an investigation. Retaliation or intimidation against an employee will be regarded as a disciplinary offence.

14.0 Monitoring

14.1 Managers should keep detailed confidential records of individual harassment complaints as they arise including such information as:

- the grounds of the allegation
- the identities of the complainant and the person complained against
- the outcome of their investigation

DORCHESTER TOWN COUNCIL

SEXUAL HARASSMENT - CODE OF PRACTICE

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 The Council's policy on Harassment makes clear that it takes its duty of care very seriously and supports the right of all employees to work in an environment where they are treated with dignity and respect. Sexual harassment, for whatever reason, is a serious infringement of this right and will not be tolerated.
- 1.2 This Code of Practice should be read in conjunction with the policy document on harassment and is intended to help all employees understand what sexual harassment means, the procedure for bringing a complaint and the support available to them.

2.0 What is Sexual Harassment?

- 2.1 To a large extent sexual harassment is subjective and difficult to define. It is characterised by the fact that it is unwanted, is unreciprocated and uninvited.
- 2.2 As a general rule it is up to the individual on the receiving end to determine whether certain behaviours are acceptable or not.
- 2.3 Sexual harassment can take various forms including a range of physical, verbal and non-verbal conduct. It is not necessary for physical contact to take place for harassment to occur.

The following list, whilst not exhaustive, gives some of the sorts of behaviour which may amount to sexual harassment:

Physical

- Unnecessary touching, pinching or brushing against other employees

Verbal

- Embarrassing or lewd remarks or comments about dress, appearance, lifestyle or other personal matters
- Ridicule of a person's sex or sexual orientation
- Inappropriate terms of endearment
- Suggestions that career development may be influenced by offering or withholding sexual favours

Non-verbal

- The display of pornographic or sexually suggestive material which includes pictures or written material

3.0 Complaints Procedure

- 3.1 The Council recognises that sexual harassment is a difficult area so all complaints will be treated sympathetically and in strict confidence. Any breach of confidentiality may result in disciplinary action.

- 3.2 Allegations of sexual harassment will be dealt with in accordance with the procedure set out in Paragraph 8 of the policy document relating to Harassment.
- 3.3 Investigations of complaints should be handled with sensitivity and with respect to the rights of both the complainant and the person complained against.
- 3.4 The individual carrying out the investigation should not be connected with the allegation in any way. The investigation must focus only on the facts of the case.

4.0 The Legal Context

- 4.1 Sexual harassment in the workplace may lead to claims of unlawful sex discrimination, unfair dismissal or breach of contract.

DORCHESTER TOWN COUNCIL

Code of Corporate Governance

Introduction

Local Code of Corporate Governance

- Community Focus**
- Service Delivery Arrangements**
- Structures & Processes**
- Risk Management and Internal Control**
- Standards of Conduct**

Introduction

Corporate governance is the framework of accountability to users, stakeholders and the wider community, within which organisations take decisions, and lead and control their functions, to achieve their objectives (*“Corporate governance – improvement and trust in local public services”* Audit Commission, 2003).

So corporate governance is about how the Council goes about its work and how it holds itself answerable to the community it serves.

The Council has a key role in leading and governing the community of Dorchester, and is committed to the highest standards of corporate governance in all its practices and processes.

Good corporate governance supports effective decision making. Effective decision making in a well-governed organisation is based on:

- A well balanced accountability framework that is based on clear communication and understanding across the organisation of roles and responsibilities
- Robust performance, financial, risk and information management systems
- High standards of conduct

Organisations with good corporate governance have the capacity to maintain high-quality services and to deliver improvement. Poor governance arrangements set the framework within which organisational systems and processes fail to detect or anticipate serious service and financial failures.

Good governance in organisations, based on openness, clarity and honest accountability enhances public trust and civic engagement.

We are committed to engaging the community in the decisions we take, upholding the highest standards of probity and accounting openly to our stakeholders for our actions, performance and outcomes.

The principles of good governance are:

- **Openness and inclusiveness:** ensuring that full and accurate information is available about what we do and how we do it and ensuring that everyone who wants to can engage with the decision making process.
- **Integrity:** ensuring we are straightforward and honest in our dealings
- **Accountability:** being answerable for our decisions and actions.

We are committed to embedding these principles within our culture. We shall do this by applying the principles to a defined framework of management processes in a way that makes them transparent. Our various corporate governance arrangements are important to the following areas of our activities:

- Community focus
- Performance on service delivery
- Structures and processes

- Risk management and internal control
- Standards of conduct

This Code is based on the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) and the Society of Local Authority Chief Executives and Senior Managers (SOLACE) Framework *Corporate Governance in Local Government: A Keystone for Community Governance*. The Code is supported by the Local Government Association and the Audit Commission. We have reviewed our existing corporate governance arrangements against this framework, have prepared and adopted this Local Code and will carry out regular assessments to make sure it is applied in practice.

In addition, we shall make an annual statement in our annual Performance and Policy Plan on how we are complying with our Code, how we have monitored its effectiveness during the year and any changes that we have planned in the coming period.

1. Community Focus			
The Council will continue to work for and with the people of Dorchester, exercising leadership when it is right to do so and do its best to promote the well-being of the town.			
	What?	How?	Where?
a)	<p>The Council will publish information in an objective and understandable of its:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Activities & achievements • Financial position and performance 	<p>The Council will produce <i>Dorchester News</i> four times a year containing articles on services and activities, feedback from any community survey, performance measures for the year, and a summary of accounts.</p> <p>The Council will produce and publish its statement of accounts annually, and make it available in both electronic and paper format.</p>	<p><i>Dorchester News</i></p> <p><i>Annual Accounts</i></p>
b)	<p>The Council will publish an annual Performance and Policy Plan presenting an objective, balanced and understandable account and assessment of its:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Current performance in service delivery • Plans to maintain and improve service quality 	<p>The Council will produce and publish a Performance and Policy Plan by 30 June each year. This will contain performance figures, targets for improvement, performance against priority tasks and summaries of completed reviews.</p>	<p><i>Performance and Policy Plan</i></p>
c)	<p>The Council has put in place proper arrangements for independent review of its financial and operational reporting processes</p>	<p>Reports from the Audit Commission are submitted to the Policy Committee for information; all members of the Council receive copies and can attend and speak at the meeting.</p>	
d)	<p>The Council has put in place proper arrangements designed to encourage individuals and groups from all sections of the community to engage with, contribute to and participate in the work of the authority and put in place appropriate monitoring processes to ensure they continue to work in practice</p>	<p>The Performance and Policy Plan sets out the Council's consultation statement.</p> <p>The Council will continue to engage the public, its partners and its stakeholders with reference to specific schemes and projects.</p> <p>The Council publicises calendars of meetings and circulates agenda papers to the press.</p>	<p><i>Performance and Policy Plan</i></p> <p><i>Annual appointments of members to serve on various outside bodies</i></p> <p><i>Regular liaison with twinning societies, users of sports pitches, allotment holders, etc.</i></p>
e)	<p>The Council is committed to openness in all its dealings, subject only to the need to preserve</p>		

	<p>confidentiality in those specific circumstances where it is proper and appropriate to do so, and by its actions and communications deliver an account against that commitment.</p>		
f)	<p>The Council will establish clear channels of communication with all sections of the community and other stakeholders, and put in place proper monitoring arrangements to ensure that they operate effectively.</p>	<p>The Council's main channels of external communication are through <i>Dorchester News</i> which is delivered to every household 4 times a year), and press releases or responses.</p> <p>The Council actively supports the community planning process and the Community Partnership Worker who leads the Dorchester Area Partnership is based in the Council Offices.</p>	<p><i>Dorchester News</i></p> <p><i>Dorchester Area Partnership</i></p>
g)	<p>The Council will engender a high level of civic pride.</p>	<p>The Council provides a wide range of facilities and activities which all help to build a sense of community.</p> <p>It is committed to maintaining the traditions associated with Dorchester's historic role as County Town and to organising civic events which celebrate this in response to both local and national issues.</p> <p>It will continue to organise a free programme of summer events which have proved to be effective in enhancing community life.</p> <p>It will also continue to develop new and improve existing facilities for active and passive recreation where possible and to maintain its various facilities to a high standard.</p>	<p><i>Annual programme of civic events</i></p> <p><i>One-off events</i></p> <p><i>Concert programme</i></p> <p><i>Performance and Policy Plan</i></p>

2. Service Delivery Arrangements		
The Council is committed to seeking continuous improvement in all its services.		
What?	How?	Where?
a) The Council sets standards and targets for performance in the delivery of services on a sustainable basis and with reference to equality policies	Standards and targets for performance are set annually by the Council and contained within the Performance and Policy Plan.	<i>Performance and Policy Plan</i> <i>Equal Opportunities Policy</i> <i>Equal Opportunities monitoring</i>
b) The Council will put in place sound systems for providing management information for performance measurement purposes.	Performance information is reported retrospectively in the Performance and Policy Plan and in a half year monitoring report. The Council will develop and implement a simple performance management system during 2006/07.	<i>Performance and Policy Plan</i> <i>Best Value Half Year Monitoring Report</i>
c) The Council monitors and reports performance against agreed standards and targets and has developed comprehensive and understandable performance plans	The Performance and Policy Plan reports performance against targets and standards for the year. The half year monitoring report provides ongoing performance information. The Council will develop and implement a simple performance management system during 2006/07.	<i>Performance and Policy Plan</i> <i>Best Value Half Year Monitoring Report</i>
d) The Council has put in place arrangements to allocate resources according to priorities.	The Policy Committee is responsible for allocating resources for the Council's functions taking into account the objectives approved by the Council. The Performance and Policy Plan details priority tasks for the year. Progress on these tasks is reported in the half year monitoring report.	<i>Performance and Policy Plan</i> <i>Best Value Half Year Monitoring Report</i>
e) The Council has fostered effective relationships and partnerships with other public sector agencies and the private and voluntary sectors, and considered outsourcing where	The Council has a positive and pragmatic attitude to partnership working and is both receptive to and proactively working towards building and maintaining	

	<p>it is efficient and effective to do so. It has put in place processes to ensure that they operate effectively in practice.</p>	<p>relationships with other bodies.</p> <p>The Council considers outsourcing where it is efficient and effective to do so; decisions regarding service delivery are informed by the Council's procurement strategy.</p>	<p><i>Procurement Strategy</i></p>
f)	<p>The Council responds positively to the findings and recommendations of external and internal auditors and statutory inspectors and put in place arrangements for the effective implementation of agreed actions</p>	<p>Audit Commission agreed recommendations are absorbed into workload. Follow-up of Audit Commission recommendations is monitored by the Policy Committee and the Town Clerk.</p>	<p><i>Audit Commission opinion</i></p> <p><i>Audit Commission Management Letter</i></p>

3. Structures and Processes		
The Council has established effective political and managerial structures and processes to govern decision making and the exercise of authority within its organisation.		
What?	How?	Where?
<i>Balance of Power and Authority</i>		
a) The Council has put in place clearly documented protocols governing relationships between members and officers.	The Council has approved a Member - Officer protocol, drafted by the Town Clerk.	<i>Member Officer Protocol</i>
b) The Council has ensured that the relative roles and responsibilities of members and senior officers are clearly defined	Powers and Duties of Committees and the Scheme of Delegation set out the roles and responsibilities of the Council and its various committees and senior officers.	<i>Powers and Duties of Committees</i> <i>Scheme of Delegation</i>
<i>Roles and Responsibilities - Members</i>		
c) Members of the Council meet on a formal basis regularly to set the strategic direction of the Authority, to determine policy and to monitor service delivery	A schedule of regular meetings of all Committees and Council is agreed annually in advance.	<i>Calendar of Meetings</i>
d) The Council has developed and maintains a scheme of delegation which includes a formal schedule of those matters specifically reserved for the collective decision of the Authority	The Scheme of Delegation contains a schedule of delegated and reserved powers.	<i>Scheme of Delegation</i>
e) The Council has put in place clearly documented and understood management processes for policy development, implementation and review and for decision making, monitoring and control, and reporting; and formal procedural and financial regulations to govern the conduct of the Authority's business.	Processes are set out in the Council's Powers and Duties of Committees, Standing Orders and Financial Regulations. These also set out detailed rules of procedure for full council, committees, officer employment rules, and contain the financial regulation policy framework.	<i>Powers and Duties of Committees</i> <i>Standing Orders</i> <i>Financial Regulations</i>
f) The Council has put in place arrangements to ensure that members are properly trained for their roles and have access to all relevant information, advice and resource as necessary to enable them to carry out their roles effectively	A members induction pack is maintained by the Council Office staff. This pack contains information on key contacts, organisational and political management structure, forthcoming events, model code of conduct, the Council's Powers and Duties of Committees, Standing Orders and Financial Regulations etc.	<i>Members Induction Pack and initial briefing for new members</i> <i>Codes of Conduct for Members and Officers</i>

<i>Roles & Responsibilities: Officers</i>			
g)	The Town Clerk is responsible to the Authority for all aspects of operational management.	The Town Clerk's responsibilities as head of paid service and overall operational manager are set out in the job description for the post.	<i>Town Clerk's Job Description</i>
h)	The Council has adopted clear protocols and codes of conduct to ensure that the implications for supporting community political leadership for the whole council are acknowledged and resolved.	The Council has adopted a Member - Officer protocol which specifically sets out guidelines for officer support to members and party groups.	<i>Member - Officer Protocol</i>

4. Risk Management and Internal Control

The Council is in the process of establishing a systematic strategy, framework and processes for managing risk.

	What?	How?	Where?
a)	<p>The Council will develop a robust system for identifying and evaluating all significant risks which involve the proactive participation of all those associated with planning and delivering services.</p> <p>The Council will maintain a risk management system</p>	<p>A high-level risk management policy has been developed, and strategic and business risks have been identified by officers.</p> <p>An ongoing risk management system is in the course of preparation.</p>	<p><i>Risk Management Policy</i></p>
b)	<p>The Council has put in place effective risk management systems, including systems of internal control and retains the services of an internal auditor.</p>	<p>The council has a number of risk minimisation/control procedures in place:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Internal audit • Health & safety policy and practices • Insurance policy & practices • Performance appraisal • Financial regulations • Best Value / service review • Performance management reporting <p>An ongoing risk management system is in the course of preparation which, when it is completed, will draw these various elements together.</p>	<p><i>Internal Audit Policy & plan</i></p> <p><i>Insurance Policy</i></p> <p><i>Personnel policies</i></p> <p><i>Financial Regulations</i></p> <p><i>Review Programme</i></p> <p><i>Performance and Policy Plan</i></p> <p><i>Half Year Monitoring Report</i></p>
c)	<p>Services are delivered by trained and experienced people.</p>	<p>The Authority has introduced a full programme of staff appraisal, mandatory for all officers, which ensures officers are aware of their personal objectives, and identifies and addresses all training needs in a specific manner.</p>	<p><i>Personal Achievement and Development Scheme</i></p> <p><i>Corporate Training Plan</i></p>
d)	<p>The Council has put in place effective arrangements for an objective review of risk management and internal control, including internal audit.</p>	<p>The Audit Commission review the Council's risk management arrangements (including internal audit), and report annually to members.</p> <p>The Council's internal auditor reviews risk management and internal control annually.</p>	<p><i>Audit Commission Annual Management Report</i></p>

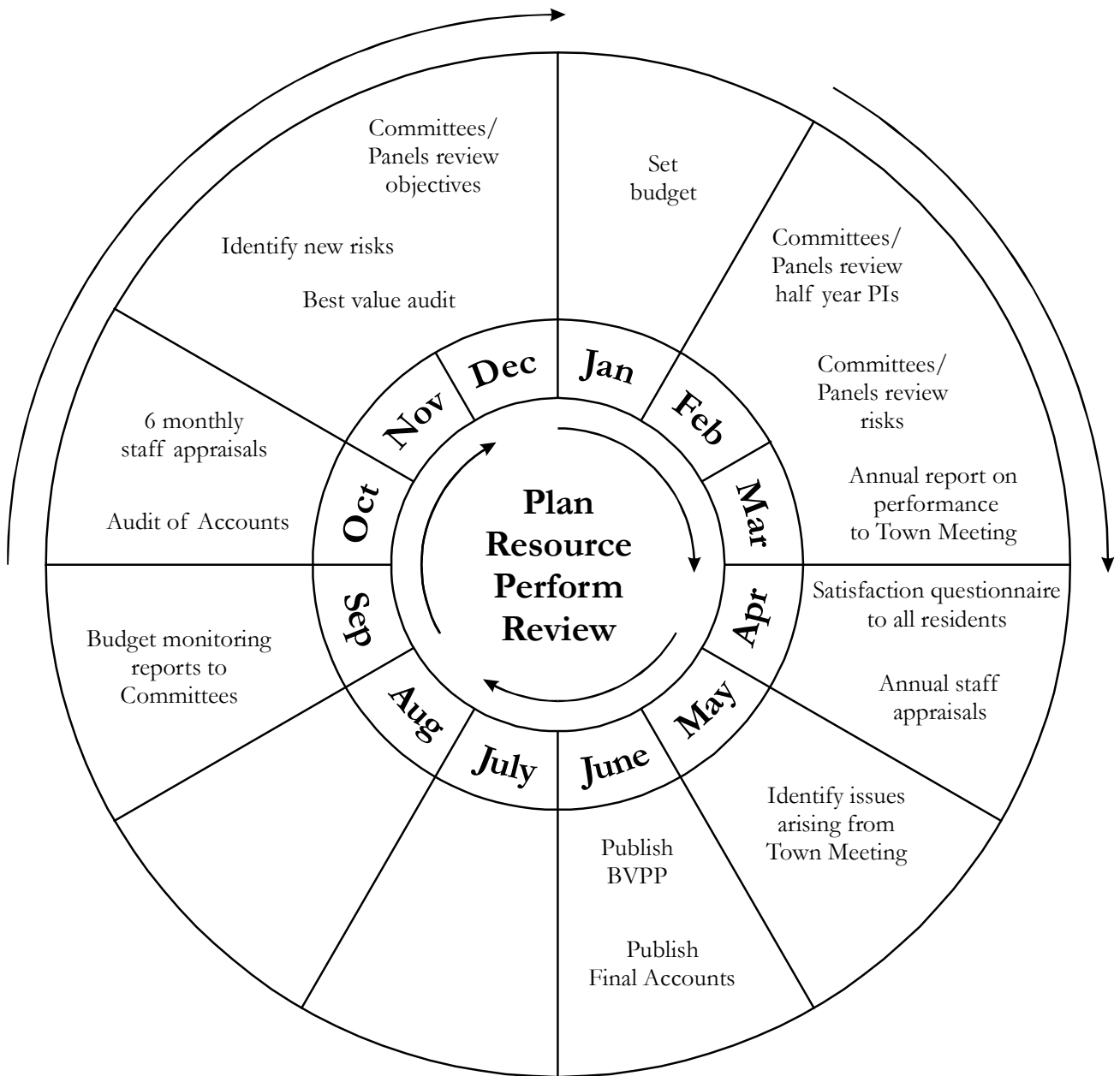
e)	The Council maintains an objective and professional relationship with its external auditors.	From a Council perspective, there is an objective and professional relationship with the District Auditor and Best Value Inspectors.	
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5. Standards of Conduct

The Council is committed to the highest standards of conduct in all its dealings. Members and senior officers are expected to exercise leadership by conducting themselves as role models for others within the Council to emulate, and by defining standards of personal behaviour applicable to all members and staff.

	What?	How?	Where?
a)	The Council has developed and adopted formal codes of conduct defining the standards of personal behaviour to which individual members, officers and agents of the Authority are required to subscribe and put in place appropriate systems and processes to ensure that they are complied with.	<p>The Council has adopted the model code of conduct for members (as issued in the Local Government Act 2000) in its Constitution. The model officer code of conduct is awaited, but the Council has adopted an interim code.</p> <p>The Council has approved a whistle blowing policy which has been communicated to members and staff as applicable.</p> <p>There is a formal complaints procedure in place.</p>	<p><i>Codes of Conduct for Members and Officers</i></p> <p><i>Whistle Blowing Policy</i></p> <p><i>Complaints Procedure</i></p>
b)	The Council has put in place arrangements to ensure that members and employees of the Authority are not influenced by prejudice, bias or conflicts of interest in dealing with different stakeholders and put in place appropriate processes to ensure that they continue to operate in practice.	<p>There are a number of arrangements in place to ensure freedom from prejudice, bias and conflicts of interests for members and officers.</p> <p>The primary document for members is the model code of conduct, which sets out obligations for elected members.</p> <p>Officers will be bound by the national officers' code of conduct when it is received, and in the meantime by the Council's local code, as well as the Council's Standing Orders and Financial Regulations.</p>	<p><i>Code of Conduct for Members</i></p> <p><i>Code of Conduct for Officers</i></p> <p><i>Standing Orders</i> <i>Financial Regulations</i></p>
c)	The Council has put arrangements in place to ensure that its procedures and operations are designed in conformity with appropriate ethical standards, and to monitor their continuing compliance in practice.	<p>The model codes of conduct conform to appropriate ethical standards.</p> <p>See above re monitoring for continuing compliance</p>	<p><i>Code of Conduct for Members</i></p> <p><i>Code of Conduct for Officers</i></p>
d)	Put in place arrangements for whistle blowing to which staff and all those contracting with the Council have access	A whistle blowing policy has been agreed and all staff notified.	<i>Whistle Blowing Policy</i>

PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK



Appendix 1 – Action Plan

Recommendation	Priority 1 = Low 2 = Med 3 = High	Responsibility	Agreed	Comments	Date
R1	2	Deputy Town Clerk	Yes	Will incorporate the recommendation into future plans.	June 2006
R2	1	Deputy Town Clerk	Yes	A different approach based on random sampling throughout the past year will be undertaken.	June 2006
R3	2	Deputy Town Clerk Deputy Town Clerk	Yes Yes	Every effort will be made to use final outturn information. An addendum of any PI's found to be significantly different from those published will be implemented.	June 2006 March/April 2006

Recommendation	Priority 1 = Low 2 = Med 3 = High	Responsibility	Agreed	Comments	Date
R4 All options for the future of services under review should either be referred to in BVRs or otherwise documented.	3	Deputy Town Clerk	Yes	Noted for Best Value Review process.	Ongoing for the future
R5 It is recommended that there should be analysis of the extent to which services would be impacted by alternative delivery mechanisms in future BVRs	2	Deputy Town Clerk	Yes	Noted for Best Value Review process.	Ongoing for the future
R6 As part of future consultations, groups should be offered information on which to base replies eg through advice on where to access information or provision of a summary BVPP.	2	Deputy Town Clerk	Principle accepted	Consideration will be given as to how this can be achieved.	April 2006
R7 There should be comparisons of expenditure, income and net cost as well as prices in future BVRs	2	Deputy Town Clerk	Yes	This information will be included in future reviews.	Ongoing for the future
R8 It is recognised that the cost of proposed actions will not always be known but recommended that some indication of cost is included in future action	1	Deputy Town Clerk	Yes	Some indication as to cost will be included in future action plans.	Ongoing for the future

Recommendation	Priority 1 = Low 2 = Med 3 = High	Responsibility	Agreed	Comments	Date
plans.					
R9 It is recommended that BVRs should conclude whether the services under review are provided in an economic, efficient and effective method.	2	Deputy Town Clerk / Review Panel	Yes	A conclusion of this nature will be included within future reviews.	Ongoing for the future
R10 The proposed revision to performance management arrangements is commended and should be introduced.	2	Deputy Town Clerk	Yes	New Performance Management arrangements are being considered by the Council in March 2006.	March 2006

EMPOWERMENT AND THE DEAL FOR DEVOLUTION

Qu1 What are the current barriers to sharing more power with local people and how can local government, its partners and central government work together to overcome them?

Ans1 The Council perceives the principal barrier as a widely held belief amongst local people that their views are irrelevant and will make no difference to the outcomes. This is created in no small measure by the Government's excessive and growing prescription which means that locally elected representatives do not have the freedom to deliver the services which local people want and are prepared to pay for. There is excessive regulation and ever-increasing bureaucracy which diverts the focus of all public bodies from where it should be – on service delivery. The public sector exists to deliver the services which are either necessary or desirable for a healthy, well-balanced community and which cannot (or should not) be delivered by private enterprise. Increasingly the focus is moving away from service delivery and towards process. Local authorities should be given the freedom to do the things that residents want and are prepared to pay for; only then will more people be enthused to play a significant and meaningful role in their own governance.

Qu2 What are the key factors that will help to make empowerment attractive and accessible to service users and citizens?

Ans2 This is essentially the same answer. People will only be empowered if they feel they can make a difference within a reasonable timescale and that their voices will be heard. Excessive Government interference in local matters can only increase the sense of futility; until this is removed there is very little optimism that citizens can be substantially re-engaged in local issues.

Qu3 How can we rebalance the current performance framework, so that local authorities can better respond to bottom up pressures to improve the quality of public services?

Ans3 By making local authorities answerable to local people, not to a remote and at times ill-informed bureaucracy which frequently shows a failure to understand the issues that are relevant to residents in and around Dorchester: there is a general feeling that the Government's targets and priorities are disproportionately driven by issues arising in conurbations, many of which are at best inconsistent with, and at worst directly contrary to, the best interests of rural communities. This excessive bureaucracy has also increased the number of bodies involved in the decision making process which has introduced further obstacles to speedy and responsive service delivery.

Qu4 What are the implications of more citizen and neighbourhood empowerment for local governance and the role of democratically elected representatives?

Ans4 This is an impossible question to answer without any clear idea of what the Government means by 'neighbourhood'. Is it a significant population

with a common community of interest – Dorchester and its surrounding rural hinterland with a population of 35,000 – or is it one of a number of small areas within the town with a population of 2-3,000? In any event one potential outcome is responsibility for contingent liability if and when neighbourhood arrangements fail. The Council believes that town and parish councils represent people at the most local level and are the ideal building block for the development of meaningful local governance at a level as close as possible to the people they represent. As a first step a power of general competence would be an enormously valuable tool.

Qu5 How cost-effective is empowering users and citizens as a way of driving service improvement?

Ans5 If the question relates to introducing monitoring arrangements to ensure that local authorities are doing their job properly and calling them to account if necessary – the scrutiny role – probably very. If this tends towards the creation of a number of smaller quasi-local authorities all delivering services independently the Council believes that it would be very cost inefficient.

Qu6 How do we ensure that the interests of disadvantaged people and neighbourhoods are addressed and avoid capture by unrepresentative individuals/groups?

Ans6 With great difficulty. There will always be a few people who are motivated to involve themselves for any number of reasons, and almost every organisation will have some experience of their activities being hijacked by those with a specific but narrow interest. The best way to avoid this as an issue is probably to ensure that representatives have a democratic mandate as is the case at present. If not there will be problems of self-interest being perceived as the prime reason for someone's involvement and the population at large will probably become even more disenchanted with their local representation than they are at present.