

DORCHESTER TOWN COUNCIL

POLICY COMMITTEE

21st JULY, 2009

At a Meeting of the Policy Committee held on 21st July, 2009:

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

In attendance:

Ms. S Davies – Chair, West Dorset Standards Committee

Mr. R. Greene – Deputy Monitoring Officer, West Dorset District Council.

APOLOGIES for absence were received from Councillors M.A. Allwood and V. Black.

4. **MINUTES**

The Minutes of the Meeting of the Committee held on 12th May, 2009, adopted by Council on 19th May, 2009, and of the Special Meeting of the Committee held on 25th June, 2009, a copy of which was circulated to every Member, were taken as read and were confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

5. **STANDARDS COMMITTEE – COMPACT PRESENTATION**

The Committee welcomed Sue Davies, Chair of West Dorset Standards Committee, and Roger Greene, Deputy Monitoring Officer to the West Dorset District Council, who addressed the Committee and answered Members' questions on the pilot compact referred to at Minute 62 (2008-09).

It was

RECOMMENDED

That the West Dorset Standards Committee be requested to present a training session to Members on an evening in the Autumn and that the Town Clerk be requested to liaise with the Deputy Monitoring Officer to arrange a mutually convenient date for it.

6. **WEST DORSET DISTRICT COUNCIL**

(a) **Corporate Procurement Strategy – 2009-14**

The Committee received and noted this draft Strategy; Members did not wish to make any comments on it save to suggest that the elements of it referring to the use of local services should be reinforced.

(b) Tourism Services

The Committee considered a letter dated 7th July, 2009 from the Leader of the West Dorset District Council inviting representatives of the Council to meet with representatives of the District Council to explore the potential for co-operation in the provision of tourism services and it was

RECOMMENDED

That the Council be represented at the meeting by the Mayor, the Chairman of this Committee and the Town Clerk and that the West Dorset District Council be informed of this Council's belief that the Dorchester Tourist Information Centre should be relocated to the foyer to the Old Crown Court, at least in the short term..

7. **DORCHESTER MARKETS JOINT COMMITTEE**

The Committee considered the Minutes of the Meeting of the Dorchester Markets Joint Committee held on 4th January, 2009 and it was

RESOLVED

- (1) That the Minutes be noted.
- (2) That no objection be raised so far as this Council is concerned to the specific recommendations set out in Minutes 37 and 38 relating to Market Objectives and Strategy but that the West Dorset District Council be informed of Members' recollection that Objective (a) should read "Preserve the historic Dorchester Market".

8. **PANELS – 2009-10**

(a) Membership of Panels 2009-10

The Committee considered the allocation of Members of this Committee to Panels following the receipt of Councillors' individual preferences.

It was

RECOMMENDED

- (1) That the following Members be appointed by this Committee to Panels for the 2009-10 Council year:

Arts
Councillor C.M. Hebditch

Borough Gardens
Councillor C.M. Hebditch

Community Activities
Councillor V. Black

Grants
Councillor T. Harries

Property Management and Maintenance
Councillor L.M. Phillips

Recreational Activities
Councillor L.M. Phillips

Resources
Councillors M.A. Allwood, V. Black and
Trevor Jones

Risk Management
Councillors M.A. Allwood and R.M. Biggs

(b) Appointment of Chairmen of Panels

The Committee considered the appointments of Chairman of the Resources and Risk Management Panels and it was

RESOLVED

- (1) That Councillor M.A. Allwood be elected Chairman of the Resources Panel for the 2009-10 Council year.
- (2) That Councillor R.M. Biggs be elected Chairman of the Risk Management Panel for the 2009-10 Council year.

9. **ANNUAL REPORT 2008-09**

The Committee noted that the 2008-09 Annual Report had been published by the 30th June, 2009 following its approval by the working group consisting of the Chairmen and Vice Chairmen of the Management, Planning and Environment and Policy Committees.

10. **MANAGEMENT ACCOUNTS**

The Committee received and noted the Council's Management Accounts for the period ended 30th June, 2009.

11. **GENERAL FUND AND SPECIFIC RESERVES BALANCES**

Further to Minute 60 (2008-09) the Committee considered the report of the Financial Service Provider on an appropriate level of General Reserve which it would be prudent for the Council to maintain.

Following discussion it was

RESOLVED

- (1) That the recommendations set out in the report be approved and that the Council maintain a minimum General Reserve in the current financial year of £250,000.
- (2) That this matter be reviewed annually during the preparation of the Estimates and that the basis of calculation set out in the report be approved for this purpose.

12. **ANNUAL MINIMUM REVENUE PROVISION STATEMENT – 2009-10**

The Committee considered the report of the Financial Service Provider on the need to make an Annual Minimum Revenue Provision Statement to comply with the Local Authorities (Capital Finance and Accounting) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2008.

It was

RESOLVED

- (1) That the Council continues with its existing practice which sets the loan principal repaid during a financial year as the Minimum Revenue Provision amount.
- (2) That the Financial Service Provider be requested to invite the Council's External Auditor to explain the significance of this requirement during the presentation of the report on the audit of the Council's Accounts for 2008-09.

(Councillor C.M. Hebditch left the Meeting at this point.)

13. **INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY SERVICE PROVISION**

The Committee considered the report of the Town Clerk on the impact on the provision of the Council's information technology service of the imposition by the Government on principal councils of GCSX which made it difficult for the West Dorset District Council to continue to provide town councils with internet access and e-mail facilities.

The report included a recommendation for the purchase of additional equipment and associated facilities which would be needed to enable the Council to continue to operate its information technology activities and would also afford the opportunity to provide all members with a dedicated Town Council e-mail address. The anticipated capital cost was £8,655 for which no provision had been made within estimates; there would also be ongoing revenue implications but these were not significant.

Following discussion it was

RECOMMENDED

- (1) That the proposals set out in the report approved in principle but that the Town Clerk be requested to take advice on the costs and management of off-site back up and the Chairman and Vice-Chairman authorised to give instructions following the receipt of that advice.
- (2) That a supplementary estimate of £8,655 be granted.

14. **PROVISION OF EMPLOYMENT LAW AND HEALTH & SAFETY SERVICES**

The Committee considered a proposal received from Ellis Whittam for the provision of Employment Law and/or Health and Safety services to the Town Council. The engagement of Ellis Whittam or a similar provider of these services would ensure that the Council's employment documents were kept up-to-date and would also provide assistance and some measure of insurance against employment-related actions.

The Town Clerk reported on the Council's current arrangements for procuring advice in these areas and on his discussions with existing clients of Ellis Whittam.

It was

RESOLVED

That consideration of this matter be deferred until the next meeting of this Committee to enable further investigation of the adequacy of the Council's existing arrangements for dealing with health and safety matters.

15. **DORCHESTER STOP THE DROP**

The Committee considered an invitation from Dorchester Stop The Drop for the Council to nominate a representative to serve on the group and it was

RESOLVED

That the invitation be accepted and that volunteers to represent the Council on Dorchester Stop The Drop be sought at the next Council Meeting.

16. **MEMBER TRAINING**

The Committee considered a request from Councillor C.M. Hebditch for funding to allow her to attend the 21st Century Councillor Local Leadership Conference organised by the Improvement and Development Agency which would be held in Nottingham on 5th November, 2009. The delegate fee was £85 excluding VAT but attendance would also entail the payment of travel costs and subsistence allowances.

It was

RESOLVED

That the request be acceded to and that Councillor Hebditch be requested to submit a written report on the proceedings at the event.

17. **HIGHWAY LENGTHSMAN SCHEME**

The Committee considered a letter dated 1st July, 2009 from the Highways Manager to the Dorset County Council inviting this Council to participate in its Highway Lengthsman Scheme following its successful trial in Ferndown. The Town Clerk reported that some parish councils around Dorchester had expressed tentative interest in entering into a shared arrangement but pointed out the potential financial vulnerability of the Council should either the County Council or any partner parish councils withdraw their support in future.

It was

RECOMMENDED

That this matter be further considered during the preparation of the Budget for 2011-12 and that the Dorset County Council be requested to keep the Council informed of experiences of implementing the initiative in other parts of the County.

18. **CORN EXCHANGE LIFT – FINANCING**

As an urgent item the Town Clerk reported that the Council had now received the loan sanction referred to at Minute 61 (2008-09); it was anticipated that it would be necessary to draw down the loan towards the end of the year.

Chairman