

Dorchester Town Council

Policy Committee

21 July 2025

Present: Councillors R. Biggs, S. Biles, G. Jones, V. Lloyd-Jones, K. Reid and D. Taylor.

In Attendance

Councillors L. Fry, W. Gibbons, J. Hewitt, F. Hogwood, S. Jones, D. Leaper and R. Potter.

Apologies: Councillors J. Germodo and R. Ricardo.

1. Minutes

The Minutes of the Meeting of the Committee held on 12 May 2025, adopted by Council on 20 May 2025, were taken as read and were confirmed and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

2. Declaration of Interests

There were no declarations of interest.

3. Finance Update

Members considered a report by the Finance Officer which updated them on the financial position of the Council as at end of June 2025, the amount of earmarked reserves as at the end of June 2025, the level of debt over 30 days and gave details of the payments list from 1 May 2025 to 30 June 2025.

It was noted that following the closure of Lloyds Bank in Dorchester, a review of the Council's bankers was underway. In the meantime, a request had been made to cash access UK to carry out a review of community cash access needs which was the first step in applying for a community banking hub.

Resolved

- (1) That the payments list, totalling £532,973.68 be approved.
- (2) That the remainder of the report be noted.

4. Draft Corporate Plan 2025 – 29 – Outcome of Public Consultation

The Committee received a report by the Town Clerk on the outcome of the public consultation into the draft Corporate Plan. Members were pleased to note that 92% of those that had responded were, in broad terms, in agreement with the Council's strategic

aims. The Committee welcomed the suggestion that an additional strategic aim be included which related to promoting Dorchester as a welcoming and inclusive town for all.

The Committee considered the comments received in regard to the climate emergency strategic action and requested that the wording for this action be reviewed.

Resolved

- (1) That 'Promoting Dorchester as a welcoming and inclusive town for all' be included as a new strategic aim in the Corporate Plan.
- (2) That the wording for the climate emergency strategic action be reviewed and brought back to the next meeting of the Committee.

5. Statement of Reasonable Expectations

Members gave consideration to a draft 'Statement of Reasonable Expectations' which had been produced by DAPTC. This was a high level statement between town and parish Councils and Dorset Council in regard to co-operation and co-working. The document was presently being considered by Dorset Council.

The Town Clerk reported that the DAPTC had commissioned a further study regarding town and parish councils working together in light of the proposed future Wessex Regional Strategic Authority, a report on which would be presented to the next meeting of the Committee.

Resolved

That the 'Statement of Reasonable Expectations' be welcomed.

6. Amendment to Financial Regulations and Standing Orders

The Committee considered a report by the Finance Officer which updated the Council's Financial Regulations and Standing Orders so as to ensure that they complied with the Procurement Act 2023 which came into force in February 2025.

Recommended

That the amendments to the Council's Financial Regulations and Standing Orders, as set out in the report, be agreed.

7. Council Offices – 19 North Square

The Committee considered a report by the Town Clerk which informed it that the Council's appeal against the planning decision to erect solar panels on the roof of 19 North Square had been rejected. The report also set out proposed maintenance work which would now be undertaken. Members also requested that any works to the interior of the building be undertaken at the same time.

Resolved

- (1) That the outcome of the planning appeal be noted.
- (2) That the maintenance to 19 North Square, as set out in the report, be agreed to be funded from the office maintenance reserve.

8. Dorset Council Consultation on its Draft Local Nature Recovery Strategy

Members were informed that Dorset Council was presently running a consultation on its draft Local Nature Recovery Strategy. Members were welcome to respond to the consultation individually. The proposals set out in the report to help stop the decline of areas for nature and wildlife should be supported.

The Committee felt that the wording of the strategy was satisfactory but that whilst there were plenty of potential activities listed it was lacking in strong strategic actions. It also felt that 'Priority 6 – Urban' needed further review.

Resolved

That, following receipt of further information from Councillor F. Hogwood regarding 'Priority 6 – Urban', the Town Clerk inform Dorset Council that this Council broadly supports the Strategy subject to the inclusion of strong strategic actions and comments to be received in regard to Priority 6.

9. Lubbecke 1250th Anniversary Celebration – 15-17 August 2025

The Committee was pleased to note that the Chair of the Management Committee had agreed to represent the Council at this celebration in lieu of the Mayor or Deputy Mayor who were unable to attend. The Council's established policy was to pay travel expenses to the Mayor or Deputy Mayor and the Committee is asked to extend that policy, on this occasion, to the Chair of Management Committee.

Resolved

That the policy to pay travel expenses to the Mayor or Deputy Mayor be extended to the Chair of Management Committee, to enable him to represent the Council at the Lubbecke 1250th Anniversary Celebration in August.

10. Town Centre Working Group

The Committee received a report from the Assistant Town Clerk (Corporate) on a proposal from the Town Centre Working Group for a 'Shopfront of the season' award scheme.

Resolved

That the proposed 'Shopfront of the season' award scheme be agreed.

11. **Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960**

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 press representatives be excluded from this meeting during their discussion.

12. **Development Assistant Post**

The Committee considered a report by the Town Clerk on the Council's temporary post of Development Assistant.

Resolved

That, as from 1 August 2025, the temporary post of Development Assistant be made permanent and graded commensurate with its duties at SCP11.

13. **Dorchester Arts Partner Project**

The Committee considered a report by the Town Clerk on a proposed partner project with Dorchester Arts.

The Chair and Town Clerk to give consideration to signage for the Municipal Buildings.

Resolved

That a contribution of £3,000 be made towards the proposed project.

Chair.....