

Dorchester Town Council

Meeting of the Dorchester Town Council

26 January 2016

Present: Mayor R. Potter and Councillors B. Armstrong-Marshall, C. Biggs, R. Biggs, A. Canning, A. Chisholm, J. Hewitt, S. Hosford, G. Jones, F. Kent-Ledger, M. Rennie, K. Rice and P. Stein.

Apologies: Councillors G. Duke, T. Harries, S. Jones, T. Jones, A. Lyall and D. Taylor.

36. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of the Meeting of Council held on 24 November 2015 were confirmed and signed by the Mayor as a correct record.

37. Police Issues

Inspector Marsh provided an update regarding crime issues in Dorchester. There had been a downward trend in numbers of residential and vehicle crime, but a significant increase in shoplifting, bicycle theft and commercial burglary. Police were investigating whether the increase was linked to an increase in drug dealing in the town, with the consequent impact on users using crime to fund their drug habit.

Questions were asked regarding the definition of assault, levels of night-time crime, misuse of the Linneys area, homeless people, police numbers and the closure of the Dorchester Youth Centre.

Inspector Marsh announced that he would shortly be retiring from Dorset Police and was to be replaced by Inspector Mike Darby who currently managed the Bridport team. The Mayor offered the thanks of the Council to Inspector Marsh for the years he had spent leading the Dorchester team and for his regular attendance at Council meetings and offered the Council's best wishes to Inspector Marsh for the future.

38. Communications & Questions

The Mayor reminded Councillors of the event to commemorate Holocaust Memorial Day on Friday 29 January 2016.

He also reminded Councillors regarding the Special Meeting of the Planning & Environment Committee to consider the Dorchester Prison site planning application on Wednesday 3 February and the fourth City and Country open event on site on Thursday 4 February.

39. Planning and Environment Committee – 30 November 2015

It was proposed and seconded that the minutes of the meeting be adopted.

Resolved

That the minutes of the meeting of the Planning and Environment Committee held on 30 November 2015 be adopted.

40. Planning and Environment Committee – 4 January 2016

It was proposed and seconded that the minutes of the meeting be adopted.

Resolved

That the minutes of the meeting of the Planning and Environment Committee held on 4 January 2016 be adopted.

41. Management Committee – 12 January 2016

It was proposed and seconded that the minutes of the meeting be adopted.

Linda Poulson of the Dorset Mammal Group welcomed the Council's interest in the group's activities. She invited the Town Council to involve its staff in training on hedgehog issues and asked whether the Planning & Environment Committee would consider the role of hedgerows when considering planning applications. Responses would be provided on these issues.

Resolved

That the minutes of the meeting of the Management Committee held on 12 January 2016 be adopted.

42. Policy Committee – 19 January 2016

It was proposed and seconded that the minutes of the meeting be adopted.

The Chairman introduced the Revenue Budget 2016/17 and Medium Term Financial Strategy and commented on the Corporate Plan review process that the Council had undertaken since its election, the stability of the operational budget and the growth in the precept driven by an increase in property numbers and the Council's "little but often" approach to raising the precept.

Having identified that this would generate a surplus the Chairman then proposed that this should be allocated to an Apprenticeships programme and a new post of Community Development Officer, while some of the surplus should be placed in the Corporate Projects Fund, pending receipt of new infrastructure from the Duchy of Cornwall and further information about service cuts at county and district level.

He then went on to outline the allocation of £500,000 of Reserves to five new projects to improve tennis provision in the Borough Gardens, fund environmental improvements within the DTEP programme, support heritage tourism and major cultural initiatives and obtain specialist advice in regarding new housebuilding targets and neighbourhood planning.

Finally he noted that the Medium Term Financial Strategy had been developed on the basis of stable service provision and continued modest increases in Council Tax.

Resolved

That Council adopt a new Medium Term Financial Strategy and Revenue Budget 2016/17 (laid out at Appendix 1 of the minutes of the Policy Committee of 19 January 2016) to include: -

- a) A Council Tax Band D charge of £180.00, an increase of 1.98%
- b) A precept of £1,251,000, an increase of 3.43%
- c) New Revenue budgets totalling £125,000 a year for Apprenticeships (£15,000), Community Development (£35,000) and transfers to the Corporate Projects Reserve pending the takeover of services at Poundbury (£30,000) and support for parts of the community affected by cuts initiated by other tiers of government (£45,000)
- d) The transfer of the Service Growth Reserve (£80,000) and a sum from the General Reserve (£420,000) into the Corporate Projects Reserve
- e) The allocation of £500,000 from the Corporate Projects Reserve to new Council priorities, being new Tennis Courts in the Borough Gardens (£150,000), Heritage Tourism (£70,000), Major Partner Projects (£50,000), Planning Specialists (£40,000) and the Dorchester Transport and Environmental Plan (£190,000)
- f) A list of Special Items totalling £18,100.

While supporting the proposal to introduce a new Living Wage supplement to maintain the Council's commitment to pay in line with the minimum wage a Member asked that consideration be given to whether the Council should continue to do so in future years should the Living Wage continue to increase faster than other inflationary factors and the new National Living Wage.

Resolved

That the minutes of the meeting of the Policy Committee held on 19 January 2016 be adopted.

43. Draft Corporate Plan

The Town Clerk outlined the events that had led to the production of the Draft Corporate Plan submitted to the Council.

A Councillor asked that when the pages related to the 'Summary of our Aims over the short medium and long term' were redrafted, the need for a parking strategy in the town and for a resolution on the future of the Charles Street site should be emphasised.

Council considered how some of the governance arrangements that helped share information about the Corporate Plan could be improved, in particular focusing on the role of the Annual Town Meeting and how to keep all Members up to date with information provided by District and County Councillors. The Town Clerk agreed to provide further information on these issues.

Resolved

- a) That the draft Corporate Plan is adopted for consultation.
- b) Further outstanding work is completed as outlined by the Town Clerk in his report, in consultation with the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of Policy Committee, to produce an updated document for the March Policy Committee to review.
- c) The next newsletter is used to summarise and highlight key elements of the Corporate Plan.
- d) A programme of consultation is developed, to be implemented from late March to late April, with feedback presented to Policy Committee in May 2016.

The Council rose at 8.05pm.

Mayor