

Dorchester Town Council

Meeting of the Dorchester Town Council

18 May 2020

The meeting was conducted using Zoom videoconferencing.

Present: Mayor R. Biggs and Councillors B. Armstrong-Marshall, S. Biles, A. Canning, A. Chisholm, L. Fry, J. Hewitt, F. Hogwood, S. Hosford, G. Jones, S. Jones, F. Kent-Ledger, D. Leaper, A. Lyall, R. Major, R. Potter, M. Rennie, R. Ricardo and D. Taylor.

Apologies: Councillor T. Harries.

1. **Election of Mayor and related issues during the Covid 19 crisis**

Under the chairmanship of Councillor Stella Jones the Council considered a report by the Town Clerk relating to the appointment of the Mayor.

Resolved

- a) That Councillor Richard Biggs should continue to serve as the Town Mayor for the civic year 2020-21, until the next Annual Meeting of the Council, to be held on 24 May 2021.

Councillor Biggs took the Chair and gave a short speech during which he expressed his thanks to Members for their support.

Members considered the remainder of the report, which discussed the appointment of the Deputy Mayor and the routine business of the Annual Meeting. A Councillor sought clarification regarding the level of support for an alternative approach to the appointment of the role of Deputy Mayor.

Resolved

- b) That Councillor David Taylor should continue to serve as Deputy Mayor for the civic year 2020-21, until the next Annual Meeting of the Council
- c) That all decisions regarding appointments, taken at the Annual Meeting of Council on 21 May 2019, remain in place for the civic year 2020-21

2. **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting of Council held on 23 March 2020 were confirmed and will be signed by the Mayor as a correct record at the next opportunity.

3. **Presentations, Communications, Questions and Motions**

The Mayor thanked those involved in delivering the online events to celebrate VE Day. He also expressed his appreciation to all involved in providing support during the current lockdown and identified he was in regular contact with Chris Loder, MP for West Dorset regarding the impacts locally.

4. **Planning and Environment Committee – 30 March 2020**

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

A Member asked that the Council continue to strengthen its argument regarding the DOR15 Local Plan proposal, taking account of new evidence arising from the current Covid 19 experience. A Member identified that, at Dorset Council, they were a Member of a relevant Executive Advisory Panel considering the Local Plan process.

Resolved

That the minutes of the meeting of the Planning and Environment Committee held on 30 March 2020 be adopted.

5. **Planning and Environment Committee – 27 April 2020**

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 27 April 2020 be adopted.

6. **Management Committee – 4 May 2020**

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

A Dorset Council Member confirmed that progress was being made regarding the appointment of a contractor for works at the Roman Town House.

A Dorset Council Member agreed to investigate progress relating to the tidying up of the area around the collapsed wall in Bowling Alley Walk.

Resolved

That the minutes of the meeting of the Management Committee held on 4 May 2020 be adopted.

7. **Policy Committee – 11 May 2020**

It was proposed and seconded that the minutes of the meeting be adopted, with four recommendations for Council decision.

Council considered the Annual Governance Statement for 2019-20

Resolved

- a) That Council approves the Annual Governance Statement for 2019-20 (Appendix 1)

Council then considered the Accounting Statement 2019-20.

Resolved

- b) That Council approves the Accounting Statement 2019-20 (Appendix 2)

Council considered draft policies to assist community organisations during and after the lockdown period.

Resolved

- c) That the Support for Community Groups and the Support for Partner Organisations (Appendix 3 and Appendix 4) are approved
- d) That the minutes of the meeting of the Policy Committee held on 11 May 2020 be adopted

8. Dorchester Heritage Joint Committee – 17 March 2020

Council noted receipt of the draft minutes.

9. Update from Dorchester Ward Members of the Dorset Council

Councillor Rennie offered to pass on questions from Councillors to Chris Loder MP during their regular meetings and also commended the work of Highways staff during the successful reopening of the Household Recycling Centre.

Councillor Canning noted the significant financial impact lockdown was having on the Dorset Council. He also commended their approach to the management of car parks in tourism areas during the immediate recovery phase.

Councillor S. Jones noted that the Dorset Council were increasingly recognising and appreciating the role of Town and Parish Councils as a result of the crisis. The issue of how car parks were reopening with cashless payments was raised and Council agreed to write to Dorset Council expressing concern that all payment methods should be made available in car parks.

Councillor Fry noted that there were now regular update opportunities being provided for all Dorset Councillors and that the Northern Area Planning Committee had now met for the first time in virtual session, while Councillor Biggs also noted the first scheduled virtual meeting of the Audit and Governance Committee was due within a week.

A Member raised concerns regarding inclusivity and a democratic deficit at the Dorset Council since the introduction of the lockdown.

Mayor

Council rose at 7.40pm.

At a Question Time after the meeting the Council received and responded to two questions related to the creation of a recovery plan from lockdown and the potential for learning to be gained from evidence collected regarding cleaner air during the lockdown related to traffic in High West and East Streets.

Section 1 – Annual Governance Statement 2019/20

We acknowledge as the members of:

Dorchester Town Council

our responsibility for ensuring that there is a sound system of internal control, including arrangements for the preparation of the Accounting Statements. We confirm, to the best of our knowledge and belief, with respect to the Accounting Statements for the year ended 31 March 2020, that:

	Agreed		*Yes* means that this authority:	
	Yes	No*		
1. We have put in place arrangements for effective financial management during the year, and for the preparation of the accounting statements.	✓		<i>prepared its accounting statements in accordance with the Accounts and Audit Regulations.</i>	
2. We maintained an adequate system of internal control including measures designed to prevent and detect fraud and corruption and reviewed its effectiveness.	✓		<i>made proper arrangements and accepted responsibility for safeguarding the public money and resources in its charge.</i>	
3. We took all reasonable steps to assure ourselves that there are no matters of actual or potential non-compliance with laws, regulations and Proper Practices that could have a significant financial effect on the ability of this authority to conduct its business or manage its finances.	✓		<i>has only done what it has the legal power to do and has complied with Proper Practices in doing so.</i>	
4. We provided proper opportunity during the year for the exercise of electors' rights in accordance with the requirements of the Accounts and Audit Regulations.	✓		<i>during the year gave all persons interested the opportunity to inspect and ask questions about this authority's accounts.</i>	
5. We carried out an assessment of the risks facing this authority and took appropriate steps to manage those risks, including the introduction of internal controls and/or external insurance cover where required.	✓		<i>considered and documented the financial and other risks it faces and dealt with them properly.</i>	
6. We maintained throughout the year an adequate and effective system of internal audit of the accounting records and control systems.	✓		<i>arranged for a competent person, independent of the financial controls and procedures, to give an objective view on whether internal controls meet the needs of this smaller authority.</i>	
7. We took appropriate action on all matters raised in reports from internal and external audit.	✓		<i>responded to matters brought to its attention by internal and external audit.</i>	
8. We considered whether any litigation, liabilities or commitments, events or transactions, occurring either during or after the year-end, have a financial impact on this authority and, where appropriate, have included them in the accounting statements.	✓		<i>disclosed everything it should have about its business activity during the year including events taking place after the year end if relevant.</i>	
9. (For local councils only) Trust funds including charitable. In our capacity as the sole managing trustee we discharged our accountability responsibilities for the fund(s)/assets, including financial reporting and, if required, independent examination or audit.	Yes	No	N/A	<i>has met all of its responsibilities where, as a body corporate, it is a sole managing trustee of a local trust or trusts.</i>
			✓	

*Please provide explanations to the external auditor on a separate sheet for each 'No' response and describe how the authority will address the weaknesses identified. These sheets must be published with the Annual Governance Statement.

This Annual Governance Statement was approved at a meeting of the authority on:

DORCHESTER

Signed by the Chairman and Clerk of the meeting where approval was given:

SIGNATURE REQUIRED

Section 2 – Accounting Statements 2019/20 for

Dorchester Town Council

	Year ending		Notes and guidance
	31 March 2019 £	31 March 2020 £	
1. Balances brought forward	365,753	454,494	Total balances and reserves at the beginning of the year as recorded in the financial records. Value must agree to Box 7 of previous year.
2. (+) Precept or Rates and Levies	1,388,243	1,463,971	Total amount of precept (or for IDBs rates and levies) received or receivable in the year. Exclude any grants received.
3. (+) Total other receipts	329,903	312,144	Total income or receipts as recorded in the cashbook less the precept or rates/levies received (line 2). Include any grants received.
4. (-) Staff costs	659,822	717,634	Total expenditure or payments made to and on behalf of all employees. Include gross salaries and wages, employers NI contributions, employers pension contributions, gratuities and severance payments.
5. (-) Loan Interest/capital repayments	45,333	43,261	Total expenditure or payments of capital and interest made during the year on the authority's borrowings (if any).
6. (-) All other payments	924,250	703,675	Total expenditure or payments as recorded in the cash-book less staff costs (line 4) and loan interest/capital repayments (line 5).
7. (=) Balances carried forward	454,494	766,038	Total balances and reserves at the end of the year. Must equal (1+2+3) - (4+5+6).
8. Total value of cash and short term investments	483,619	893,825	The sum of all current and deposit bank accounts, cash holdings and short term investments held as at 31 March – To agree with bank reconciliation.
9. Total fixed assets plus long term investments and assets	8,032,257	8,132,194	The value of all the property the authority owns – it is made up of all its fixed assets and long term investments as at 31 March.
10. Total borrowings	196,000	162,000	The outstanding capital balance as at 31 March of all loans from third parties (including PWLB).
11. (For Local Councils Only) Disclosure note re Trust funds (including charitable)	Yes	No	The Council, as a body corporate, acts as sole trustee for and is responsible for managing Trust funds or assets.
		✓	N.B. The figures in the accounting statements above do not include any Trust transactions.

I certify that for the year ended 31 March 2020 the Accounting Statements in this Annual Governance and Accountability Return have been prepared on either a receipts and payments or income and expenditure basis following the guidance in Governance and Accountability for Smaller Authorities – a Practitioners' Guide to Proper Practices and present fairly the financial position of this authority.

Signed by Responsible Financial Officer before being presented to the authority for approval

SIGNATURE REQUIRED

Date

TITULARITY

I confirm that these Accounting Statements were approved by this authority on this date:

as recorded in minute reference:

Signed by Chairman of the meeting where the Accounting Statements were approved

SIGNATURE REQUIRED

RESPONSE TO THE COVID 19 CRISIS

SUPPORT FOR COMMUNITY GROUPS PROVIDING ASSISTANCE DURING THE LOCKDOWN AND IMMEDIATE RECOVERY PERIOD

- 1.1. The Council wishes to support existing and new community groups that are responding to the crisis by providing support to local residents.
- 1.2. The Council will provide assistance to legitimate groups
 - Providing direct support to Dorchester residents
 - To meet the additional costs associated with the support provided, over and above normal operating costs OR to ensure that those groups have sufficient funds to remain operational during lockdown and the immediate recovery period
 - So that no group/volunteer should be out of pocket in helping fellow residents
- 1.3. At the end of the lockdown period the Council's officers will prepare a list of groups who have played a role in supporting the community and Members will consider whether they wish to make any additional award.
- 1.4. Officers and Members will make the Town Clerk aware of potential opportunities to provide support; the Town Clerk will record details of the opportunity in a suitable form and make recommendations based on their contact with the Group.
- 1.5. The Town Clerk will advise all Members of all proposed grants and invite comments within three days. The Clerk will make a grant award based on the comments, recording the outcome for report to a subsequent meeting of the Policy Committee. Where the grant proposed exceeds £1,000 the Clerk will seek confirmation of the final decision from two Councillors from among the Council's Chairs and Mayor.

RESPONSE TO THE COVID 19 CRISIS

SUPPORT FOR PARTNER ORGANISATIONS

- 1.1. The Council is minded to provide support to partner organisations, should it be requested, whose financial operations have been impacted by the C19 outbreak, and who cannot fully recommence service delivery without assistance from the Town Council.
- 1.2. Partner organisations will have
 - Previously worked with the Council to deliver its corporate aims
 - Previously provided services at a community level within Dorchester
 - A recognised organisational structure; in particular they will not be based around the needs of, or be largely controlled by, an individual
- 1.3. The Council will only provide assistance if there is a proven need. To prove need the partner organisation must have first:
 - Conducted its affairs properly in the run up to and during the lockdown period
 - Taken all opportunities of assistance offered by Government and other agencies
 - Worked proactively with its supporters and beneficiaries to have reduced its financial issues
- 1.4. Assistance may be a combination of the following:
 - Cash support – this might be by way of a short or longer term loan or a direct grant
 - Free use of Property – this might be a rent holiday to an existing tenant or hirer, or the opportunity of free events and support on Council premises and land
 - Promotional support, using the Council’s newsletters or other means of communication
 - Support for another organisation to whom the partner is indebted, or who might be able to provide assistance to the partner
- 1.5. Decisions to provide support will be made by the Council’s Policy Committee, who may use all Budgets and Reserves of the Council in its response.