

Dorchester Town Council

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> > 13 January 2021

Agenda for the meeting of the Policy Committee, which will be held via Zoom video conferencing on Monday 18 January 2021 at 7.00pm.

You will be able to join the meeting at https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82347775260

	А	drian Stuart
		Town Clerk
	Public Speaking at the Meeting	
The	Chairman has discretion to allow members of the public to speak at the meeting. I	f you wish
to sp	beak please contact the Clerk by 9.00am on the morning of the meeting . We ask s	peakers to
conf	ine their comments to the matter in hand and to be as brief as is reasonably possib	ole.
	Member Code of Conduct: Declaration of Interests	
Men	nbers are reminded that it is their responsibility to disclose pecuniary or non-pecur	niary
inter	ests where appropriate. A Member who declares a pecuniary interest must leave	the room
unle	ss a suitable dispensation has been granted. A Member who declares a non-pecu	niary
inter	rest may take part in the meeting and vote.	
	Membership of the Committee	
May	or R. Biggs and Councillors B. Armstrong-Marshall, A. Chisholm, T. Harries, F. Hogw	ood,
S. Ho	osford (Chairman) and G. Jones.	
1.	Apologies, Declarations of Interest & Signing of Minutes	
	To confirm that the Chair may sign Minutes of the meeting of 16 November 202	0, adopted
	by Council on 23 November 2020, at the next available opportunity.	
2.	Financial Update at 31 December 2020	А
3.	Tourism Services in Dorchester	В
4.	Budget and Medium Term Financial Strategy 2021/22	С
5.	A National Park for Dorset	D
6.	Corporate Plan Update at 31 December 2020	Е
7.	Markets Panel – To note minutes of the meeting of 16 December 2020	F

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DORCHESTER TOWN COUNCIL

POLICY COMMITTEE – 18 JANUARY 2021

FINANCIAL UPDATE

1. Financial Position

- Month 9 spend (Appendix 1) net £17k below profile
 - General underspends (£15k) plus delayed replacement and pension savings for Outdoor staff (£30k) and increased Cemeteries income (£10k)
 - Offset by full year net extra cost due to Covid 19 (£40k)
 - Year-end position likely to be in the range £0 £20k saving
- Spending of Reserves has increased above the Original Estimate due to
 - Commencement of Municipal Buildings Reroofing project (originally planned for 2021/22)
 - Weymouth Avenue Ground Source Heat Pump project (which will generate an ongoing income over the next 20 years)

Cash Position	£000	
Lloyds Bank	243	Nil interest
Payden Global	1,000	c. 0.70% return
National Savings and Investments	250	0.01% interest
CCLA Deposit Account	1,000	0.15% avge
Total Cash	2,493	(31 Oct £2,760k)

Note: £500k was transferred between the Council's NS&I account and CCLA account during the period

- Debt over 30 days = £1,233, 2 debtors (30 Jun £1,299, 3 debtors)
- Payments list 1 Nov 31 Dec 20 on website. Supporting vouchers available from Financial Controller. RECOMMENDED that the Payments list, totalling £332,561.91 is approved

MANAGEMENT REPORT AT 31 DECEMBER 2020

By Spend Type	Budget	Profile	Actual	-Under/Over
	£000	£000	£000	£000
Staff	858	674	638	-37
Capital Financing	41	38	38	0
Other Payments	561	421	393	-28
To Specific Reserves	216	216	216	0
Income	-177	-137	-89	47
Net Budget	1,499	1,213	1,195	-17
By Service	Budget	Profile	Actual	-Under/Over
	£000	£000	£000	£000
Allotments	-6	-7	-6	1
Parks & Open Spaces	123	60	73	13
Cemeteries	-3	4	2	-2
Corp. & Dem. Manage.	37	24	23	-1
Cultural & Twinning	35	31	12	-19
Municipal Buildings	270	241	263	22
Other Services	231	231	236	5
Office Team	376	295	292	-3
Outdoor Services	438	333	300	-33
Net Budget	1,499	1,213	1,195	-17
Earmarked Reserves with	Budget	Profile	Actual	-Under/Over
budgeted Expenditure In Year	£000	£000	£000	£000
Play Equipment	25	11	11	0
Parks Premises	0	0	2	2
Municipal Buildings	24	24	88	64
Cemeteries	30	0	0	0
Public Realm	250	10	10	0
Heritage Tourism PM	35	21	21	0
Dorchester West Ramp	10	0	0	0
Climate Emergency	20	20	36	
Christmas Lights	8	0	0	0
Planning Advice	10	1	1	0
Net Budget	412	87	169	82

DORCHESTER TOWN COUNCIL

POLICY COMMITTEE – 18 JANUARY 2021

TOURISM SERVICES

- 1. Council Minute 2020/30g, adopted in November, resolved
 - That the Town Clerk, in consultation with the Chairman of the Committee, write to Dorset Council acknowledging the likely loss of the Dorchester TIC, but seeking financial support for a transition to a new model of tourism information delivery to be co-ordinated by the Town Council
 - That the Town Clerk prepare a report identifying costed options for future delivery of local tourism information services within the town, including the coordinator/partnership approach advocated by the Tourism Strategy developed by the Dorchester Heritage Joint Committee

Tourism Development – Basic Service

- 2. The Heritage Joint Committee has recommended a (Heritage) Tourism Strategy which requires the Town Council to employ a Tourism Development Officer with a project budget (£30,000 a year) sufficient to develop a basic Tourism Information service, which would consist of
 - A network of partners from the Cultural, Retail and Hospitality sectors offering face to face contact to answer basic tourism enquiries as part of their routine operations
 - A training package available to staff and volunteers from the network to enable the service to be provided consistently to a good standard
 - An information package on which the staff and volunteers could draw. This would consist of a website, app and limited paper materials
 - Support for the network and development of new initiatives in line with the adopted Tourism Strategy
- Separately Dorset Council consulted the Town Council regarding the future (closure) of the Dorchester TIC. In line with Minute 30g the Clerk responded to the Dorset Council seeking £45,000 over 3 years, being half of the cost of employing a Tourism Development Officer with a project budget sufficient to develop the basic Tourism Information service.
- 4. Noting that they will not make a formal decision regarding the future of the Dorchester TIC until March 2021 Dorset Council have offered £20,000 as a one off contribution to help set up the service outlined above.
- 5. It is **RECOMMENDED** that the Council implements the Tourism Development element of the (Heritage) Tourism Strategy and makes appropriate budget provision in the Medium Term Financial Strategy and 2021/22 Revenue Budget for the first three years of the service.

Tourism Development – Enhanced Service

6. Council also resolved that the Clerk report back on options for an enhanced service, focusing on those elements of the current Dorchester TIC service that the basic service above cannot deliver.

- 7. An analysis of the current Dorset Council Dorchester TIC service has identified that the basic service above would not cover the following:-
 - Phone and e-mail advice to visitors prior to their visit to Dorset, either before or after the visitor has committed to a visit (c. 15 contacts per day)
 - Other services provided by Dorset Council (parking permits and general enquiries)
 - Advice regarding other Dorset destinations, from both residents and visitors
 - Tickets for Dorchester Arts, Dorset County Show and occasional commercial events
 - Tickets for National Coaches and occasional other travel tickets
 - Face to face accommodation bookings (as opposed to enquiries resulting in visitor selfservice) – predominantly summer based, last minute and often linked to Dorset festivals such as Steam Fair and Bestival
 - Charity Christmas Cards (it is not clear whether this finished in 2019)
- 8. It would not be reasonable to pass such requests on to partners, although it is inevitable that the lack of a TIC would result in some direct contacts of a more complex nature. Some of the above requirements could be met by better information provision; some will move online and some might result in other parties coming forward if the TIC closes. Dorset Council have restated their commitment to the Visit Dorset service which focuses on first contact for those considering a visit.
- 9. As District Councils reined in spending on discretionary services a patchwork of provision has emerged over the county, as follows, with the Town Council either merging a TIC service with other frontline services (Bridport and Swanage), providing grant support (Blandford, Shaftesbury, Wimborne) or making no provision at all (Lyme Regis from now, Weymouth):

Town	Provided By	Town Council Support
Blandford Forum	Volunteer run Trust	£2,000 grant
Bridport	Town Council (also provides Promotion & Market service)	Net cost £105,000pa - provides some additional services
Dorchester	Dorset Council operated at £80,000 pa	
Lyme Regis	None – closed by Dorset Council in 2020	
Shaftesbury	Volunteer run Trust	Possible grant
Sherborne	Dorset Council operated – under consultation	
Swanage	Town Council operated (also provides profit generating Beach services)	Net cost £30,000pa due to significant beach activities income not available in Dorchester
Wareham	Dorset Council operated – under consultation	
Weymouth	None – closed 2013	
Wimborne	Run by Museum of East Dorset	Possible grant support by WTC & WBID

10. With the exception of Lyme Regis all decisions regarding provision were made prior to the growth in online service provision, and more recently the increased public adoption of online

services accelerated by lockdown. It is not clear which of the "at risk" services at 7. above would still be looked for by users in the new post Covid environment, or how quickly users would adapt to their loss. None of the above towns have sought to introduce the "networked Tourist Information Point" model that has emerged through our Tourism Strategy.

- 11. There are three options that Members may wish to consider
 - A Town Council provided model effectively a direct replacement of the Dorchester TIC at broadly the same cost c. £80,000pa (this cost is consistent with the Bridport/Swanage experience)
 - Grant support for another body logically this would be Dorset County Museum, Shire Hall or Dorchester Arts – cost would be in the range £0 - £80,000pa depending on what role the partner was willing to pay. It would however destabilise the TIP network if one partner became a funded "first among equals"
 - No extra provision allow the "at risk" services identified at 7. to adapt to the new norm and focus attention on making the networked TIP approach a success – no additional cost, but Members might wish to set a timescale for a review of the approach
- 12. No recommendation is made. Members are invited to consider the options and whether to propose a sum to be included in the Medium Term Financial Strategy and Revenue Budget. In doing so Members should be aware that the Council's resources are not unlimited, and that any sum allocated to an enhanced Tourism service will inevitably not be available to develop other services.
- 13. The Budget report at Item 4. on today's agenda includes provision for the basic service but makes no allowance for an enhanced service.

DORCHESTER TOWN COUNCIL

POLICY COMMITTEE – 18 JANUARY 2021

MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY & REVENUE BUDGET 2021/22

- 1. The officer team have reviewed the Medium Term Financial Strategy and a budget for the next financial year within the context of current year spending and the external environment.
- 2. The element of the budget relating to the **Policy Committee** is included at Appendix 1. The cost of services provided by the Committee has risen from £503k to £507k (£4k), the key changes being: -
 - Inclusion of a Tourism Development budget (+£30k)
 - Reduced reliance on income from Dorchester Market (+£10k)
 - The removal of the contribution to the Climate Emergency Reserve, which was agreed for last year only (-£125k)
 - The inclusion of a contribution to a Development Support Reserve (+£90k). If the allocation is accepted in principal a report will be prepared to the March Committee with a proposal that the Council uses this to recruit a graduate trainee on a 3 year fixed contract to carry out support work for those leading on Community, Tourism and Environmental projects and to assist improve the Council's communications
- 3. The **Management Committee** budget was approved at a meeting on 11 January 2020 and totals £1,009k (2019/20 £1,000k), an increase of £9k. Included in the budget is a top up of £100,000 to the Municipal Buildings Reserve; this will allow the Council to meet more of the refurbishment works up front, lowering our long term debt charges.
- 4. As a result of the above the operational **Revenue Budget for 2021/22** (summary at Appendix 2) has increased from £1,503k to £1,516k, up by £13k (0.8%). This takes account of all inflationary and other pressures. Note that pay inflation has been allowed in line with national Government plans (being £250 for lower paid staff only).
- 5. The **Tax Base**, at 7,650, is up 4 (0.0%), the first time for many years that the tax base has not increased in percentage terms. New property growth has been offset by new benefit claimants and a reduced collection rate determined by Dorset Council.
- 6. The MTFS assumed a 2% **Council Tax increase** in 2021/22. Inflation is currently below 1.0% and our pay bill, our biggest cost, would rise by 0.8% if Government pay criteria are applied. The Committee may wish to consider the following alternative approaches to the level of Council Tax charged
 - A 2.0% increase in line with our MTFS (also likely to be the capping limit for upper tier authorities Government has confirmed our sector will not be capped this year) it is difficult to justify an increase at this level this year as inflation is well below the normal 2.0% range

- A 0.8% increase, in line with our actual budget increase and broadly in line with inflation levels over the last few months **the budget has been prepared on this basis**
- A 0% Council Tax increase if this approach is applied the proposed precept would reduce by £13k. While this could be accommodated this year the option has the potential to result in a permanent loss of £13k a year if Members do not implement an above inflationary increase in a future year. This option is not consistent with the policy adopted for the MTFS last year
- 7. Whichever decision is taken regarding the setting of Council Tax the Town Council remains in a solid position financially. With the introduction of the Tourism Development budget and the transfer of management of the Municipal Buildings to Dorchester Arts, the Council is now actively responding to decisions by the Dorset Council, which faces a significant budget deficit, to cut discretionary spending. The Council's officers are trying to predict which other services are likely to be cut over the next few years and the Council's current budget is based on high levels of contributions to Reserves that can be scaled back if required. No matter how strong its position is, it is unlikely the Town Council will be in a position to mitigate all of the impacts of future cuts made at the Dorset Council level. While not significant long term, Covid is again likely to be a factor affecting the 2021/22 budget and will need to be carefully managed.
- 8. The **Medium Term Financial Strategy** (Appendix 3) lists the assumptions taken account of in its preparation. The key assumptions are that
 - The Town Council will deliver new services or support services that lose Dorset Council support at an additional cost of £190,000 pa from 2022/23 onwards
 - The Corporate Projects Reserve will be allocated during 2021/22 and spent from 2022/23 onwards. It should be noted that the potential to create a Reserve of this scale again is diminishing
 - Debt Charges associated with the Municipal Buildings refurbishment are included from 2022/23, offset by reduced supply expenditure on 19 North Square and lower contributions to the Municipal Buildings Reserve. It has been assumed that the debt of £890k will be paid off within 15 years – this could be extended if circumstances require it
- 9. The **General Reserve** is held to deal with problems and opportunities that might arise. It should reflect the operational environment and the economic circumstances within which the Council operates, and the level of Earmarked Reserves held.

In 2020/21 Council took the decision that, with a number of mitigating measures in place that could be implemented should a major disaster occur, it would operate with a minimum Reserve at £100,000 (7% of its combined gross Expenditure and Income budgets). One year later, having faced the full impact of the Covid 19 epidemic, the Reserve remains unused.

 Earmarked Reserves (Appendix 4) will total £1,680k at April 2021, following major spending on the Municipal Buildings project, offset by delays on other projects. An additional £362k will be added in 2021/22 (being £172k regular contributions and £190k one-off contributions).

Expenditure totalling £793k is planned for 2021/22: -

	£000
Municipal Buildings works	345
Cornhill Environmental works	278
Climate Emergency projects	50
Poundbury Cemetery Fence and Wall Repairs	30
Development Assistant (1 st of 3 yrs employed)	30
Vehicles and Equipment	20
Planning advice & all other uses of Reserves	40
Total	793

At March 2022 Earmarked Reserves are estimated at £1,249k to be used broadly as follows

	£000
Conversion of Corn Exchange for arts purposes	250
Future Public Realm, Climate Emergency & Development Support	193
Unallocated Corporate Projects Reserve	582
Reserves for all other projects and replacements	224
Total	1,249

- 11. **Current Debt** will total £94,000 at 31 March 2022 and will be fully repaid by 31 March 2027. It is planned that **new long term Debt** totalling £890,000 will be arranged to service the cost of the Municipal Buildings refurbishment. The cost of the new debt repayments and the equivalent reductions and income increases in other budgets have all been factored into the Medium Term Financial Strategy.
- 12. It is **RECOMMENDED TO COUNCIL** that the MTFS and Revenue Budget are adopted as laid out in the Appendices, to include: -
 - A Council Tax Band D charge of £198.21, an increase of £1.57 (0.80%)
 - A precept of £1,516,277, an increase of 0.80%
 - The inclusion of one-off contributions to a new Development Support Reserve (£90,000) and a continuation of a higher contribution to the Municipal Buildings (£100,000).

	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22
	Actual	Budget	Budget
CORPORATE & DEMOCRATIC	£	£	£
Members Allowance	21,113	21,600	22,200
Members Training (inc CRB) & Travel	1,287	500	500
Civic & Ceremonial Expenses	1,603	1,000	1,000
Mayoral Expenses	10,090	12,200	12,400
Town Crier	552	600	600
Entertaining & Gifts	501	400	400
Youth Council & Democracy Day	151	200	200
Office Team	187,772	193,730	193,979
Met by Precept on Taxpayer	223,069	230,230	231,279
OTHER SERVICES			
Tourism Development	0	0	30,000
Sawmills rent	7,560	8,500	8,500
To Public Realm Reserve	18,800	52,600	53,600
To Clim. Emerg./Development Reserve	0	125,000	90,000
Youth Centre support	23,350	20,400	20,800
Dorchester Cricket Club	6,000	4,000	2,000
Apprenticeships	11,039	15,000	15,000
CCTV/Video Recording	0	5,000	5,100
Election Costs	9,733	0	0
Debt Charges	43,261	41,200	39,100
Staff - Community Development	41,567	42,990	42,941
Total Expenditure	161,310	314,690	307,041
Treasury Interest - Net of Arlingclose	62	-7,000	-7,000
Sawmills rent recharged	-3,780	-4,200	-4,300
Market Income	-38,334	-30,000	-20,000
Total Income	-42,052	-41,200	-31,300
Met by Precept on Taxpayer	119,258	273,490	275,741

	2040/22	2020/24	2024/22
	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22
	Actual	Budget	Budget
OFFICES TEAM	£	£	£
Salaries	222,305	226,227	226,909
Overtime	207	0	0
Employers National Insurance	21,327	22,292	22,378
Employers Superannuation	48,941	49,770	49,920
Training Courses	1,117	1,000	1,000
Travel & Subsistence	875	1,500	1,100
Subscriptions (Professional Bodies)	3,216	3,600	3,600
Cleaning Materials	1,150	1,200	1,200
Rates	6,136	6,300	7,200
Gas	1,174	1,200	1,200
Electricity	1,836	1,600	1,600
Water	515	500	500
Repairs & Maintenance	2,814	2,700	2,700
Financial Services inc Audit, Bank & Sage	7,832	8,500	8,500
Employment Law and H & S	2,863	3,000	3,000
Legal & Professional Fees, Advertising	593	1,000	1,000
Insurance	32,189	34,000	34,000
Printing & Stationery	1,054	1,000	1,000
Newsletter	2,676	5,000	4,200
Office Equipment & IT	5,786	5,500	5,500
Telephones	1,749	1,900	1,900
Photocopier Charges	690	800	800
Postage	1,004	1,000	1,000
Total Expenditure	368,049	379,589	380,207
Recharge to Dorcheter Markets Panel	-1,655	,	- 1,700
Net Expenditure recharged to Services	366,394	377,889	378,507
Recharged to			
Corporate & Democratic Management	187,772	193,730	193,979
Allotments	3,574	3,658	3,693
Community Development	41,567	42,990	42,941
Cemeteries	25,362	26,061	26,200
Parks & Open Spaces	54,696	56,455	56,504
Municipal Buildings	40,002	41,162	41,325
Cultural Activity & Twinning	13,421	13,832	13,864
	366,394	377,888	378,507
	300,334	377,000	0,000

REVENUE BUDGET 2021/22	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22
	Actual	Budget	Budget
	£	£	£
Parks & Open Spaces	572,405	542,608	546,125
Allotments	3,029	3,394	3,177
Municipal Buildings	324,094	321,198	308,839
Cemeteries	51,099	65,328	66,536
Cultural & Twinning Activities	67,089	67,932	84,564
Corporate & Democratic Manage.	223,069	230,230	231,279
Other Services	119,258	273,490	275,741
Operational Budget	1,360,042	1,504,180	1,516,261
Precept	1,463,971	1,503,515	1,516,277
Transfer to General Reserves	103,929	-665	15
Subjective Analysis of Revenue			
Employees	730,279	734,520	731,832
External Payments	511,788	511,860	505,560
Transfers to Earmarked Reserves	246,800	394,000	362,100
Capital Financing Costs	43,261	41,200	39,100
Income	-172,086	-177,400	-122,330
Operational Budget	1,360,042	1,504,180	1,516,261
General Reserve			
Opening Balance at 1 April	250,261	100,000	100,000
Transfer from Ops Budget	103,929	-665	15
To Corporate Projects Reserve	254,191	-665	15
Closing Balance at 31 March	100,000	100,000	100,000
Earmarked Reserves			
Opening Balance at 1 April	1,204,233	1,637,631	1,679,866
Transfer from Revenue	513,553	393 <i>,</i> 335	276,900
Other Income & Transfers	118,592	84,000	0
Expenditure from Reserves	198,747	435,100	663,100
Closing Balance 31 March	1,637,631	1,679,866	1,293,666
All Reserves held at year end	1,737,631	1,779,866	1,393,666
Tax Base	7,594	7,646	7,650
Band D Charge	192.78	196.64	198.21
O/s PWLB Debt at 31 March	162,000	128,000	94,000

Medium Term Financial Strategy		20/21	21/22	22/23	23/24	Yoy %
		£000	£000	£000	£000	Change
Revenue Budget						
Employees		735	732	746	761	2.00
External Payments		512	506	501	511	2.00
Transfers to Earmarked Reserves		394	362	118	121	2.00
Capital Financing Costs		41	39	109	95	-
Income		-177	-122	-121	-123	2.00
New/Transferred Services		0		190	194	2.00
Operational Budget		1,504	1,516	1,543	1,558	
Precept		1,504	1,516	1,547	1,578	
Transfer to General Reserves		-1	0	3	19	
General Reserve						
Opening Balance at 1 April		100	100	100	100	
Transfer from/to Operational Budge	et -	- 1	0	3	19	
Transfer to Corporate Projects Rese	rve	-1	0	3	19	
Closing Balance at 31 March		100	100	100	100	
Earmarked Reserves						
Opening Balance at 1 April		1,638	1,680	1,249	670	
Transfers/Payments in to Reserves		477	362	122	140	
Payments/Transfers out from Reser	ves	435	793	700	400	
Closing Balance 31 March		1,680	1,249	670	410	
All Reserves held at year end		1,780	1,349	770	510	
Corporate Project Unallocated at Ye	ar End	582	582	50	100	
Outstanding Debt at Year End	£k	128	94	900	826	
Council Tax	£	197	198	202	206	
Tax Base		7,646	7,650	7,650	7,650	

Notes

1. Inflation at 2.00%, Debt repayment based on new Municipal Buildings debt

2. Precept assumes Council Tax rises @ 2.00% from 2022/23, no Tax Base growth

3. Assumes significant new services or response to cuts at Dorset Council

4. Reducing operational surplus is transferred to Corporate Projects Reserve

5. Corporate Projects Reserve to be allocated in 2021 as part of Corporate Plan

6. Earmarked Reserves expenditure reflects best available knowledge

7. General Reserve reduced due to other mitigation measures in place

8. Budgets savings are now marginal without reducing services

APPENDIX 4

RESERVES	Cttee	Balance	Paid In	Spend	Balance	Paid In	Spend	Balance	
		Mar 20	20/21	20/21	Mar 21	21/22	21/22	Mar 22	Reason for holding Reserve
Earmarked Reserves		£	£	£	£	£	£	£	
Infrastructure & Equipment									
Cemeteries	Man	32,973	15,500	0	48,473	15,800	30,000	34,273	Buildings/infrastructure refurb.
Municipal Buildings & Maltings	Man	564,805	51,600	199,000	417,405	178,000	345,000	250,405	Reroofing, Lift, Heating, etc
Borough Gardens	Man	33,423	5,100	0	38,523	5,200	0	43,723	Buildings/infrastructure refurb.
Play Equipment	Man	55,184	0	25,000	30,184	0	0	30,184	Equipment replacement
Public Realm	Pol	309,843	52,600	20,000	342,443	53,600	278,000	118,043	Improvements to town centre
Vehicles & Equipment	Man	42,392	19,200	0	61,592	19,500	20,000	61,092	Fleet & equipment replacemen
Dorchester West Rail. St'n	Pol	10,000	0	0	10,000	0	10,000	0	Williams Ave Access Ramp
Cultural									
Arts & Culture	Man	12,007	0	0	12,007	0	5,000	7,007	Various
Christmas Lights	Man	10,553	0	0	10,553	0	10,000	553	Replace lights every 5 years
Miscellaneous Reserves									
New Corporate Projects	Pol	457,484	124,335	0	581,819	0	0	581,819	Own or partner capital projects
Planning Advice Reserve	Pol	32,000	0	6,000	26,000	0	10,000	16,000	Local Plan & other advice
Climate Emergency Reserve	Pol	0	125,000	60,000	65,000	0	50,000	15,000	Own or partner Climate project:
Development Reserve	Pol	0	0	0	0	90,000	30,000	60,000	Temp staff to develop services
Community Infrastructure Levy	Pol	43,814	84,000	125,000	2,814	0	0	2,814	Recreation infrastructure
Treasury	Pol	19,000	0	0	19,000	0	5,000	14,000	To offset losses on asset sale
Graves In Perpetuity	Man	14,152	0	100	14,052	0	100	13,952	Maint. and flowers on 6 graves
Total Earmarked Reserves		1,637,630	477,335	435,100	1,679,865	362,100	793,100	1,248,865	
General Reserve	Pol	100,000	-665	-665	100,000	0	0	100,000	General Emergency Fund
Total Reserves		1,737,630	476,670	434,435	1,779,865	362,100	793,100	1,348,865	

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DORCHESTER TOWN COUNCIL

POLICY COMMITTEE – 18 JANUARY 2021

A NATIONAL PARK FOR DORSET

Background

1. At its 28 September meeting Council resolved

"That the Town Clerk be invited to prepare a report to the next meeting of the Policy Committee considering the impacts of a National Park for Dorset on Dorchester."

The report was subsequently delayed to allow Members to observe a relevant meeting of the Civic Society in December.

- 2. This report has invited material from a number of sources to supplement that already received from the National Park for Dorset team and summarises the issues that Members might want to consider as part of their response to two questions:
 - Does the Town Council wish to support a National Park for Dorset, largely based on current AONB boundaries?
 - Does the Town Council wish to ask for the boundary to be extended to include Dorchester in the National Park area?
- 3. The Clerk requested views from colleague clerks at Councils within or adjacent to England's youngest (South Downs) and oldest (Peak District) National Parks. Additionally the Clerk received a submission from Dorchester Civic Society (DCS), listened in to a presentation from Andrew Lee of South Downs NP to Dorchester Civic Society, reviewed Dorset Council's position and has also sought comment from local MP Chris Loder.

Summary of Views Received

- 4. The views of colleague Town Clerks have been anonymised and summarised into a table at Appendix 1, presented in a format that picked up on both the main comments made by Members during discussions in September and additional comments made by the clerks. The views endorse both the positives and negatives that Members have identified previously.
- 5. Andrew Lee's presentation focused on the benefits and processes that have resulted from having a National Park for the South Downs for the last 10 years, The National Park Authority (NPA) has
 - Promoted the area to significant numbers of visitors and improved managed access to the park
 - Delivered a high volume of project work, particularly involving environmental conservation and the rural economy
 - Worked with and through 15 local planning authorities to deliver the Development Control (Planning application) service
 - Not been required to deliver to government targets in Local Plans, but still delivered significant numbers of housing based on local need

- Worked with local communities to assist the development of their Neighbourhood Plans and the introduction of Community Infrastructure Levy
- 6. Dorchester Civic Society have produced a detailed note explaining why it feels Dorchester should be included in the National Park. Importantly it's tone and thought process echoes that of Lewes Town Council over a decade ago, with the focus being on an "intimate connection", the strong heritage and environment relationship that has existed over the centuries between the town and its rural hinterland. It does not approach the issue from a policy or impact position.
- When Council received the original presentation in September the meeting was attended by Chris Loder, MP for West Dorset. Chris has since summarised his views which are presented at Appendix 2. The views expressed are very similar to the downside views expressed by other Town Clerks.
- 8. Thus far Dorset Council has consciously not declared its position on the National Park, instead choosing to focus on the delivery of its Local Plan by 2024 (Cabinet Minute, November 2019). The lack of a clear strategic view from the governance body with most to gain and lose from the implementation of the National Park leaves a gap in the evidence that would help the Town Council come to a view.

Conclusions and Options

- 9. In summary, the additional research undertaken by the Town Clerk has broadly confirmed all of the positives claimed for the National Park as well as reinforcing and clarifying concerns raised previously by the Council.
- 10. The positives are based on additional Government resources coming to the area enabling a greater focus on encouraging and managing tourism and environmental conservation. The negatives are based on the added bureaucracy associated with an extra, non-elected, local body being introduced to into the governance mix in Dorset. It should be noted that many other benefits ascribed to National Parks already arise from AONB status, however there is a risk that financial pressures may force Dorset Council to scale back on some of the work it has previously achieved within the AONB.
- 11. The Committee is invited to make a recommendation to Council based around the two questions at 2. above. The options you may wish to consider include:-
 - Offer full support for a National Park, coupled with a request for Dorchester to be included to benefit from the tourism and environmental possibilities it offers
 - Oppose the proposal for a National Park for Dorset because of its impacts on governance and democracy locally
 - Offer full support for a National Park because of wider economic and environmental benefits to the rural area, but stopping short of a request for Dorchester to be included because of the impacts on governance locally; with a commitment to work proactively with a future NPA on tourism issues should it be created
 - Take no position on the proposal, possibly deferring a decision until Dorset Council makes its position clear, likely to be no earlier than 2024

COMMENTS BY CLERKS AT SIX TOWN COUNCILS BASED ON THEIR EXPERIENCE OF WORKING WITH THEIR LOCAL NATIONAL PARK

Issue	Comments
Affordable Housing	 Strong focus on Affordable Housing It is not clear whether this delivers more or fewer houses than could otherwise be expected
Economy & Tourism	 Significant benefit for jobs focused on the rural economy NP Teams have little interest in supporting job creation and businesses in sectors other than in the rural economy Towns within NPs recognised the significant tourism benefits brought by the NP. They also recognised the significant extra costs associated with managing tourists and one was concerned the NP area risked becoming a rural theme park Towns outside NPs recognised the additional benefit to their existing
	tourism offer by its proximity to the NP. They also recognised the additional traffic and other burdens from increased tourism
Governance	 There is a clear democratic deficit There are no directly elected ward councillors Instead appointments are a mix of Ward councillors appointed by upper tier Councils Local Parish Councillors (elected by ballot?) Ministerial appointments Thus there is a clear gap between the NPA and the local community, a significant weakness when determining planning applications There is no additional layer of bureaucracy But the existence of the NPA does cause new issues Confusion for applicants to the Planning system Relationships between NPA and upper tier Councils are not always strong, often with duplication of effort from two teams
Boundaries	 There is no/minimal contact between the NPA and Councils adjacent to/outside the NP boundary Areas outside but close to the NP boundary are disproportionately impacted by development that is restricted within the boundary
Planning	 Planning team is much more responsive that the previous District Council based team. The quality of applications received is of a higher standard The Planning approach can be impractical and idealistic One Council viewed the NP as a barrier to large scale development. Another recognised that "welcomed" large scale planning applications took significant time to go through the planning process

Community, Environment and Other Issues	 A number of initiatives have been achieved that would not have been delivered without leadership from the NPA. Includes Dark Sky, Climate and Zero Carbon projects and a series of heritage and environmental microprojects The NP Team, through both planning and operations staff, maintains a very strong control over landscape quality. However control through AONB teams was also traditionally very good The NP Team have a detailed knowledge on how land is used within the park area The NPA is not interested in issues that affect NP towns which are not part of its own brief. A town recognised that it struggled to influence NPA strategy
Funding	• The NPA brings in significant additional resources from Government
Other	 The NPA has been in place for so long that it is now impossible to think of it not being there It took 8 years between the first report going to our Town Council and the establishment of South Downs NP

Comments from Chris Loder, MP for West Dorset

- Dorset already has a designated Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty that serves us well and balances the needs of the local economy with the protection of our beautiful landscape.
- Prior to being elected MP for West Dorset, I served on the West Dorset District Council. We spent many years developing a proposal and implementing a unitary authority in Dorset, to reduce bureaucracy, streamline spending and to deliver better services to local communities. The new unitary Dorset Council has responded dynamically to the coronavirus crisis and this dynamism will be essential to the county's economic recovery in the wake of the pandemic. Having spent years streamlining the system, I do not believe it sensible to now add an additional bureaucratic body back into the mix, in the form of a National Park Authority
- Local government must be democratic to ensure it properly represents the people it serves. Dorset Council has dedicated councillors with deep local knowledge. Given that a National Park Authority is not a fully elected body, it is less democratic than typical forms of local government, and therefore the people of my constituency would have much less influence over planning policy than they do today. Unlike other National Parks that are more sparsely populated, such as Dartmoor and Exmoor, Dorset is a living environment with homes and businesses spread across the whole expanse of land. It is important to the people of Dorset that they maintain democratic control of their local authorities.
- I am greatly concerned that the creation of a National Park would push housing quotas to areas just outside the boundaries of the protected landscape, such as Dorchester, leading to mass development in the equally beautiful countryside surrounding our county town. Providing Dorset's housing supply should be collaborative and sustainable – not about turning half of Dorset into a museum whilst imposing mass development on our historic county town and other communities outside of the designated National Park area. The current National Park proposal will, in my opinion, almost certainly make the north of Dorchester development a foregone conclusion if the proposal is realised.
- In the context of increasing second home ownership and the resulting inflation in house prices, our rural villages need modest development to ensure the sustainability of communities and local amenities. Local people should be able to afford to live in the area where they grew up. I am concerned that placing Dorset villages in the control of a National Park Authority will prevent sensible development, whilst National Park status concurrently inflates the price of existing housing stock further still. This would hit low-income, local people the hardest and have a knock-on impact on Dorchester.

Chris Loder MP for West Dorset 9 January 2021

DORCHESTER TOWN COUNCIL

POLICY COMMITTEE - 18 JANUARY 2021

CORPORATE PLAN UPDATE

Background

1. Policy Committee received a report in September 2020 reviewing progress on the Corporate Plan. The Committee made amendments to the high level focus of the document to reflect the impacts of Covid and lockdown on the town and these were subsequently accepted by Council. A consultation strategy involving the public was planned for Autumn 2020.

Consultation

- 2. There were 3 strands to consultation on the Corporate Plan
 - Discussion with Dorset Council not yet undertaken due to their focus on other priorities
 - Discussion with local groups Groups were encouraged to complete the online public survey, but further opportunities will still be sought
 - Public Consultation A survey was included in the Autumn 2020 newsletter. The results from responses to the survey have been analysed (see below)
- 3. The Autumn 2020 Newsletter was delivered (via Royal Mail) to c. 10,000 residents in the DT1 area in the first week of November. The newsletter included a summary of the Corporate Plan High Level Aims plus questions to prompt a response. Residents were encouraged to photo and text a response or complete an online questionnaire. Both methods were used, as well as return by post, with 90 questionnaires being received.
- 4. Key findings from the survey were:
 - The overwhelming majority of residents (87%) agreed with the High Level Aims of the Plan
 - A question was asked relating to priorities that might be missing from the Plan
 - 14 respondents wished to see a greater emphasis on supporting retail and 13 respondents wished to see a greater emphasis on transport issues. While both of these issues are out of the Town Council's immediate control, the comments made echo those made by Members previously and Council may wish to review its position in these areas.
 - $\circ~$ A number of other issues were raised by smaller number of respondents
 - A question was asked relating to High Level Focus Aims that might be removed from the Plan
 - o 81 residents (88%) made no proposals to remove any of the Aims
 - \circ $\;$ Four residents challenged the need for future growth
 - The majority of residents (80%) agreed with the Council's Financial Strategy of modest tax increases with savings being reinvested into new services
 - Those that disagreed with the proposal were evenly split between those wishing to see a higher tax to pay for more services and those that wished to see a lower tax or service reductions

- 5. A second survey was conducted in the newsletter to help gain an understanding of the impacts of Covid 19 and the lockdown. Key findings from this survey were:
 - 36 respondents (40%) noted social isolation as an important issue and 13 (14%) recognised mental health, during lockdown
 - On a positive note 27 respondents (30%) noted improvements in physical wellbeing, while 14 (15%) welcomed reductions in traffic
 - When invited to identify what the Town Council should focus on longer term residents responded as follows
 - \circ 56% suggested we focus on town centre tourism and retail
 - 46% identified Arts and Culture, and Transport, Walking and Cycling as a priority
 - 40% suggested we focus on the Climate Emergency and 32% on our Open Spaces
 - There was much less support (21% being the highest) for suggestions that we focus particularly on the needs of Young and Old People, Community Organisations and Communications
 - When asked to name something that was missing from the town 29 (32%) respondents volunteered retail and 13 (15%) each suggested an Arts Centre and Walking/Cycling. A number of quite specific suggestions will be considered as part of our routine operational response
 - From both surveys we picked up pieces of feedback that will be redirected to Dorset Council ward councillors
- 6. In summary, while public feedback to the consultation was relatively modest (about 1% of all residents), those that did choose to engage were largely supportive. The impacts of Covid and lockdown, particularly relating to town centre retail and walking/cycling should be considered for inclusion in the next, more detailed iteration of the Plan. Further opportunities will be sought to engage with local partners and the Dorset Council.

Next Phase of Development

7. The next phase of work is to add specific projects and milestones to each of the aims. With other work commitments, particularly in relation to the Municipal Buildings project, the Local Plan, and with the ongoing disruption of work and ability to meet face to face due to Covid lockdowns, a first draft of this work is unlikely to be available until May at the earliest.

Legacy Projects

8. In the meantime work continues on projects carried over from the 2014 Corporate Plan, some of which will continue to be included in the next Corporate Plan. An update is included at Appendix 1.

CORPORATE PLAN 2014 – LEGACY PROJECTS UPDATE

Task	Latest Position
Explore opportunities to improve Market	Constructive discussions regarding transfer of
operations	administration duties for DMJP under way. Need for
	discussion re longer term role of Markets flagged up.
Develop & implement (Heritage) Tourism	Positive response to consultation.
Strategy	Proposal for resources to move to implementation
	phase on today's agenda – implement from Apr 21
Influence delivery of Traffic/Parking strategy	No progress on Strategy development due to
	reorganisation of Dorset Council/Covid.
	Hospital Multi-Storey construction 2021.
Develop Trinity St tennis courts with DACLT	No new progress. Awaiting Planning decision
Support delivery of Great Field	Delivery ongoing.
	AET Pavilion area works due Spring 21
Municipal Buildings Refurbishment	Roof commenced - aiming to complete Mar 21
(4 new roofs, Extension for Biomass and Offices,	Awaiting planning decision re Extension & Biomass
refurb of rear ground floor spaces)	Procurement of Arts equipt commenced
Support delivery of improved Arts offer in town	£1.0M secured for Mun Bldgs/THS
	DA secured reduced DC Arts grant - £20k pa
	Transfer MoU agreed – due for tfr Apr 21
Refurbish Town Pump public realm	Consultation continues
	Difficulties engaging DC Highways
Respond to Local Plan (North Dorchester)	Specialist engaged to support our response to
	DOR13 by Mar 21

DORCHESTER MARKETS INFORMAL JOINT PANEL

NOTES OF MEETING HELD ON WEDNESDAY 16 DECEMBER 2020

Present: Cllrs Jean Dunseith, Alistair Chisholm, Janet Hewitt, Susie Hosford,

Tony Lyall, Robin Potter, Dave Bolwell, Jill Haynes, Nick Ireland, Molly Rennie, Jane Somper, Roland Tarr and John Worth

Apologies: Cllrs Simon Gibson

Officers present: Adrian Stuart - Clerk to Dorchester Town Council, Graham Duggan, Bill Wilberforce and David Northover

1. Election of Chairman

Resolved

That Councillor Mollie Rennie – Dorchester Town Council – be elected Chairman for the remainder of the year 2020/21.

2. Appointment of Vice-Chairman

Resolved

That Councillor Jill Haynes – Dorset Council – be appointed Vice-Chairman for the remainder of the year 2020/21.

3. Apologies

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Simon Gibson – Dorset Council.

4. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 29 January 2020 were confirmed.

5. **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of pecuniary interests.

6. **Public Participation**

There was no public participation at the meeting.

7. Terms of Reference

The Panel's Terms of Reference was noted. Whilst understanding the need for and importance of political proportionality on both Coucnil's Committees and Panles The panel recognised – if at all practicable - the need for it to be representative of those with a affiliation forDorchester and the wards served by it Whilst this was provided for in the TOR, currently this was unable to be put into practice. This was acknowledged with the means for this being achieved in the future being actively pursued so as to ensure the Panel was as representative of the town as it could be.

8. Presentation of an overview of Dorchester Markets

The Panel received a presentation updating on the fundamentals of the market – its purpose its heritage and its legacy – and what it had to offer to the town in terms of economic, social and civic benefits. How it had been managed, how it was being managed and what visions there were for its future were all detailed.

As a market town, of the County Town, it was something of which to be rightly proud and was considered an asset, on Council owned land, in supporting other Council activities. It provided an opportunity for traders, a boost for the local economy and was a business seedbed. It attracted footfall locally and from visitors afar and acted as a social service - providing value for money goods that were not necessarily able to be sourced by other means. It was community focused, vibrant and stimulated local contact, being adaptable in reflecting changing needs and trends.

In terms of finances, the net surplus distributed was allocated 65% to Dorset Council, 35% to the Town Council, this being some £123k in 2018/19, with the net surplus from the Car Boot being distributed as community grants – some £19k in 2018/19.

However, there were issues which needed to be addressed these being falling footfall and income; Ensors' contract ending in 2026 and the management arrangements at Fairfield, with limited offer and loss of retail offer being of concern at the Cornhill site.

To address these issues, engagement in partnership with Dorset Council was needed on an asset review so as to:• develop a strategy for the markets

- improvements to the communication with the Fairfield operator
- planning for the end of the current Fairfield operator contract
- a review of markets management arrangements

• engagement with stakeholders about Cornhill/South Street offer and how to improve this.

The Panel appreciated this review of issues considering that, as well as the economic benefits to be gained, the social and welfare benefits of the market were of considerable value too.

It was accepted that the Fairfield market should be invigorated so as to provide something unique and relevant to the customer of today, to meet their expectations - were that be more street food outlets, demonstrations or heritage exhibitions.

This would go a long way to ensuring the market's viability was maintained and gave a valid reason for people to continue to visit it in the numbers previously seen. It was accepted that the pandemic had seriously affected what could be done in the recent past, but they saw no reason why this trend couldn't be reversed going forward.

Given that during that period the market still operated as best it could and attracted custom, there was an obligation to ensure this loyalty was recognised in the coming months and years so that it remained a place attractive to go and spend time.

The Panel noted the differing scenarios with regard to trade and performance of the different market entities. It was disappointing to see the decline in performance and returns from the

weekly Dorchester market but the reasons for this were understood and recognised. However, the Panel considered that, in recent years, significant investment had been made in the infrastructure of the site to benefit Ensors and what it was able to offer. What options there were for the market's operations and management in the future and how this could be best achieved needed to be identified and assessed, which would serve as some basis for how the market could operate successfully going forward.

The Panel acknowledged the benefits of the market and what it not only had to offer in itself as an entity – as a means of trading goods, services and produce which might not otherwise be readily accessible directly between suppliers and public - but its wider value and contribution too, in attracting visitors to the town and what that too had to offer. Moreover, in being an historic market town, the essence of maintaining a viable and successful market was critical to the fabric and vitality of Dorchester. Issues for consideration would be how the market operated; how it could best adapt to meet the needs of today's consumer; what the means of doing this would be; what arrangements were necessary to achieve this; what rental, licencing and contractual arrangements were necessary to secure its continuation; and how it could improve its efficiency to ensure its viability was maintained. The Panel wanted it to be successful and continue contributing to the economy of the town and be seen as a social and community asset for years to come.

Whilst recognising the challenges the market faced as a commercial enterprise the Panel considered that there was a considerable will to see it succeed. Maintaining a positive relationship between both Councils and Ensors was essential in this being achieved and members saw no reason why this shouldn't be the case. It was in the interests of all parties for this to happen and, it was anticipated that a means of doing this might be identified so as to ensure the long term successful future of this valued asset.

The Panel considered that issues at their meeting in January should be made readily accessible as normal, and as far as practicable, but it was recognised that some part of that meeting should be held in confidential session so that finances and commercial contract arrangements could be discussed whilst respecting the sensitivities of this.

9. Financial Outturn 2019-20

The Panel considered the Financial Outturn 2019/20 and were asked to approve the income and expenditure statement for 2019/20.

What the operational issues had been, the reasons for this and how these had been managed were described, together with what influences there had been on the accounts being presented - with the total income for the year being £160,546 compared to the budget of £182,374. The main variance was a reduction in the fee paid by the market operator, with the decrease from the Cornhill Traders related to a credit note of £4,329, relating to 2018/19. How these issues were being managed and addressed were noted.

What was happing with town centre retail and custom and significant changes to retail habits accounted for much that was being seen, as well as the part the pandemic was to play in the ability to operate the markets as before and the consequent reduction in footfall.

Whilst disappointing, the Panel recognised, and accepted, the reasons for this and the bearing this had on the budget.

Resolved

That the income and expenditure statement for 2019/20 be approved.

Reason for decision

To enable the Panel to consider and approve the Accounts for the year ending 31_{st} March 2020 and ensure the budget was being managed as well it might.

10. Market Management Report

The Panel received the Dorchester Market Operator's Report from Ensors' for the period 1st April to 30th November 2020, with the:-

• Income and Expenditure – Wednesday Market - the gross income totalling £44,167, compared with a figure of £ 91,367 for the same period in 2019.

• Income and Expenditure – Sunday Car Boot Sale - the gross income totalling £12,883, compared with a figure of £32,267 for the same period in 2019.

Understandably this had been an exceptionally difficult year for trading due to the Covid-19 pandemic, which had necessitated the closure of the market for short periods during lockdown followed by lengthy periods of restrictions on selling "essential items" only, resulting in a substantial drop in income.

Given this and in view of the substantial reduction in income of the market this year, and the fact that restrictions were to be in place until at least Spring 2021, the operators considered that their monthly payments on account should be agreed at £3000.00 per month.

That being said, they hoped that normality would resume during the latter half of 2021 and were committed to discussing the future of the market and making any necessary improvements.

Ensors' report confirmed that they were wholly committed to the market and were avidly trying to encourage new traders to attend to support the market.

The Panel were pleased to see this commitment and noted the benefits this would bring. It was recognised that trading in open air markets during the pandemic was seen to be safer than shopping in-store and that the operators had rigorously ensured compliance with the Covid-19 regulations in the working practices of its traders.

The Panel noted that with the hiatus in trading of the Farmers Market and Cornhill operating when it was able, the Fairfield site provided a regular weekly commitment in ensuring locally sourced produce, goods and services could still be obtained during the pandemic and what benefits were gained from this. Whilst this was a long established location, it was recognised that a high street setting might lend itself more readily to attracting more modern retail practices in meeting the needs of passing trade.

Officers confirmed that they would assess the request for a monthly payment reduction and report to the January Panel meeting on this.

The Panel considered this to be a practical and reasonable way forward in managing the situation.

11. Car Boot Fund

Distribution of Grants from the Dorchester Market Car Boot Fund for the Financial Year 2019/20

The Panel received an update on the distribution of grants awarded from the Dorchester Car Boot Fund during 2020, together with an illustration of the type of organisations; local projects; initiatives and activities which benefited from the fund, as a result of the income generated by the weekly Sunday Car Boot Sale held at Dorchester Market. The Dorchester Market Car Boot Fund was financed entirely by the income from the car boot sales.

The Grant Awarding Panel had met during the summer to consider the applications, and assessed them against the necessary criteria and on the merit of each, being allocated on their relevant necessity and benefit. How initiatives were being delivered and the benefits they brought were critical considerations in the way in which the fund was allocated. In total, 11 community and voluntary organisations had been successful, and the total amount awarded was c. £13k.

The Panel were pleased to see how the fund was being used and how beneficial this would be to the viability and success of projects and initiatives in them being able to contribute towards what Dorchester had to offer.

Resolved

That the distribution of the Dorchester Market Car Boot Fund for the financial year 2019/20 be endorsed.

Reason for Decision

So as to ensure the available funding was allocated so as to be as beneficial as it could be to Dorchester.

12. Market matters

The opportunity to raise other market matters was not needed as all had been covered previously in the meeting.

13. Date of next meeting

The date of the next meeting was confirmed as Wednesday 27 January 2021.

14. Urgent Items

There were no urgent items for consideration at the meeting.

Duration of meeting: 2.00 - 4.00 pm

Chairman

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