

Dorchester Town Council

Policy Committee

22 September 2015

Present: Mayor R. Potter and Councillors B. Armstrong-Marshall, R. Biggs, T. Harries, S. Hosford, G. Jones (Chairman) and T. Jones.

Apologies: Councillor A. Chisholm

In attendance: Councillor J. Hewitt

8. Minutes

The Minutes of the Committee held on 23 June 2015, adopted by Council on 21 July 2015, were taken as read and were confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

9. Finance Report

The Financial Controller presented a report covering the 5 months to 31 August 2015, identifying an underspend to date of £32,000 against the revised budget. The report identified the appointment of Arlingclose as the Council's Treasury Advisor and also noted the conclusion of the 2014/15 external audit. He also identified that since the report was completed the Council had received its second half year precept and was now holding over £800,000 in its Lloyds bank account.

He responded to questions relating to the appointment of Treasury advisors and the profile for the Cemeteries budget.

Resolved

- i) That the Payments list be approved.
- ii) That the Council opens a Government Deposit Facility account with the Debt Management Office and transfers £500,000 to the account as soon as possible

Recommended to Council

That the Annual Return for 2014/15 is approved and accepted

10. Review of the Corporate Plan

The Committee noted the programme for reviewing the Corporate Plan, including theme events to be arranged for October 2015.

11. Dorset Local Enterprise Partnership

The Committee noted the Town Clerk's report about activity related to the Dorset LEP.

12. **Refurbishing the Town Walks**

In receiving the Town Clerk's report the Committee noted the costs of resurfacing the Walks in a non-standard colour. There was no proposal to pursue this option. The Town Clerk will now agree a timetable for the works with Dorset County Council.

13. **Review of Committee Arrangements**

The Committee considered the Town Clerk's report and discussed the key issues relating to the Committee.

Recommended to Council

- i) That the terms of reference of the Policy Committee are amended to include reference to managing and monitoring the Corporate Plan, and also the process for determining how strategic policies and strategic sites will be managed between the Policy and Planning & Environment Committees
- ii) That the Risk & Resources Panel be replaced by an Annual Review report to the Committee, supplemented by regular monitoring of key risks by the Committee

14. **Investment to reduce Utility Expenditure**

The Committee considered a request to create a Fund to pursue energy and operational efficiencies with an average 4 year payback.

A Member raised a point about the relevance of Earmarked Reserves in general. The Town Clerk will clarify their role as part of the budget process for 2016/17.

Resolved

That £40,000 is transferred to the Energy and Operational Efficiency Reserve, and that the Town Clerk initiates a programme of works with an average 4 year payback

15. **Consultation regarding the future of Local Area Partnerships**

The Committee considered the revised arrangements proposed by West Dorset District Council.

Members recognised that the Partnership had enabled a number of initiatives and provided a helpful forum over its life, particularly in the early years, which had benefitted the town. They also noted the points that the Town Clerk had included in the report in relation to the geography of the Partnership and the Council's commitment to community development in its Corporate Plan.

They also recognised the need for additional efforts to develop a sense of community within the town as the town continued to grow.

Recommendation to Council

- i) That, when the current funding arrangement from West Dorset District Council comes to an end, Dorchester Town Council should focus on encouraging community development with key partners within the town, rather than becoming directly involved in a Partnership covering a much wider area
- ii) That the Town Clerk should continue discussions with West Dorset District Council about how this new arrangement might fit within an overall framework for Community Enabling within the district

16. Borough Gardens Bowling Green Site

The Committee received the recommendation of the Management Committee seeking funding to develop preliminary designs for a project in the Borough Gardens involving the reuse of the Bowling Green and the provision of new garden space to replace one tennis court adjacent to the Gardens Clock.

The Committee considered the data provided on the use of the tennis courts, and the potential to relocate tennis within the Gardens to break down the visual barrier which the tennis fencing currently created.

They also recognised the potential for growth in tennis court usage, the investment that had been made in the courts in the past, and the unsuitability of the courts in Trinity Street for play at certain times of the year. It was recognised that any change would incur significant expenditure.

While noting the views of the Management Committee in favour of a more comprehensive change the Committee felt that in the first instance the focus should be on the provision of new tennis courts on the Bowling Green, leading to the closure of the Trinity Street courts. The potential for the use of the Trinity Street courts to support other Corporate Plan objectives was noted, as was the constraint of the adjacent scheduled ancient monument.

Resolved

That £5,000 is allocated from the General Reserve to undertake preliminary design and costing options for a scheme which would result in the creation of 2 new courts on the Bowling Green and the loss of two courts in Trinity St.

17. Dorset County Members Divisional Grants Budget

The Committee received a verbal update regarding the plans that the two County Councillors were making to allocate their grants for 2015/16.

18. **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 be excluded from this meeting during their discussion

19. **Town Centre Bollards**

The Committee considered the report of the Town Clerk and, noting the views of the Planning and Environment Committee, emphasised that it was the view of the Town Council that a physical barrier is necessary to maintain pedestrian safety in the town centre.

Resolved

That a request be made that further discussion should take place at the next DTEP Steering Group regarding the reintroduction of bollards for the pedestrianised area

20. **Debt Write-off**

Resolved

That the Financial Controller write off a residual outstanding debt of £670.08, following the receipt of monies in relation to the debt from a third party.

Chairman