

Dorchester Town Council

Policy Committee

19 January 2016

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

Apologies: Councillor T. Jones

In attendance: Councillors J. Hewitt, F. Kent-Ledger and M. Rennie

27. Minutes

The Minutes of the Committee held on 17 November 2015, adopted by Council on 24 November 2015, were taken as read and were confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

28. Finance Report

The Financial Controller presented a finance report covering the 9 months to 31 December 2015. The report gave details of the Council's cash position, reserves, balances and other non-budget expenditure, debtors, included a list of payments from 1 November to 31 December 2015.

The Financial Controller responded to Members detailed questions regarding budget underspends and individual creditor payments.

Resolved

That the Payments list, totalling £185,950.98, be approved.

29. Medium Term Financial Strategy and Revenue Budget 2016/17

The Town Clerk introduced a detailed report regarding the budget and medium term financial strategy, explaining the justification for an increased precept and Council Tax charge. The report made proposals regarding new revenue and capital expenditure, special items and reserves, as well as setting out the factors to be taken into account in setting the Medium Term Financial Strategy.

Members discussed the report in detail, in particularly considering whether resources should be made available for affordable housing, how the Council needed to present the message that the budget recognised the Council's aim of supporting its community when faced with cuts in the level of services provided by other tiers of government and how the Council can continue to develop partnership working within the town.

Recommended

That Council adopt a new Medium Term Financial Strategy and Revenue Budget to include: -

- i. A Council Tax Band D charge of £180.00, an increase of 1.98%
- ii. A precept of £1,251,000, an increase of 3.43%
- iii. 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)
- iv. The transfer of the Service Growth Reserve (£80,000) and a sum from the General Reserve (£420,000) into the Corporate Projects Reserve
- v. The allocation £500,000 from the Corporate Projects Reserve to new Council priorities, being new Tennis Courts on the Borough Gardens Bowling Green (£150,000), Heritage Tourism (£70,000), Major Partner Projects (£50,000), Planning Specialists (£40,000) and the Dorchester Transport and Environmental Plan (£190,000)
- vi. A list of Special Items totalling £18,100

30. Apprenticeships

The Town Clerk introduced a report outlining a possible scheme for apprenticeships in Dorchester for a third year.

Members supported the ambitions of the report. A request was made that consideration be given to working with an Arts provider new to the town and members also asked that the success of the 2015 initiative be given wider publicity.

Resolved

That, subject to Council approval of the Revenue Budget for 2016/17, £15,000 is made available as a one off item to progress apprenticeships, either at Dorchester Town Council or with community and business partners.

31. Community Development

The Town Clerk explained the background to a proposal that the Town Council should engage a new Community Development Officer from April 2016 onwards.

Members discussed the report in detail, considering why a new resource might deliver a more effective service than the current arrangements, how the challenge of covering a diverse range of community needs would be managed with one dedicated resource supplemented by other office staff and how the resource needed to be managed and focused on the Town Council's priorities.

Resolved

- i. That, subject to Council approval of the 2016/17 Revenue Budget, £35,000 is provided to engage a Community Development Officer on a grade to be established for a fixed period of three years (maximum salary £27,000 plus oncosts), to be offset by any saving on the Community Partnership budget and any income from a service level agreement with West Dorset District Council
- ii. That a job description and work plan is developed to be submitted to a future meeting of this Committee

32. 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 representatives of the press be excluded from this meeting during their discussion.

33. Staff Pay and Related Budgets 2016/17

The Town Clerk provided information regarding a number of changes to the staffing budget and specifically with regard to the Council's plans to meet its Living Wage commitment.

In supporting the general principles included in the report it was requested that the Town Clerk take advice with regard to one specific aspect of the Council's staffing contractual arrangements.

Resolved

That a Living Wage supplement is introduced from April 2016 to pay the difference between the hourly rate based on agreed Spinal Column Points for each job and the Living Wage hourly rate.

Chairman

REVENUE BUDGET & RESERVES

	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	Change
	Actual	Budget	Budget	in Budget
	£	£	£	£
Parks & Open Spaces	534,654	558,402	576,572	18,170
Allotments	11,181	4,318	5,729	1,411
Municipal Buildings	140,143	152,026	134,894	-17,132
Cemeteries	62,569	84,131	80,815	-3,316
Cultural & Twinning Activities	57,352	72,052	70,091	-1,961
Corporate & Democratic Manage.	197,634	216,903	226,392	9,489
Other Services	45,885	41,500	82,400	40,900
Operational Budget	1,049,418	1,129,332	1,176,893	47,561
Precept	1,162,423	1,209,555	1,251,000	-41,445
Transfer to/from General	113,005	80,223	74,107	6,116
Subjective Analysis of Revenue				
Employees	594,029	630,357	643,248	12,891
External Payments	466,633	506,705	549,505	42,800
Transfers to Reserves	112,500	132,500	134,600	2,100
Capital Financing Costs	84,577	62,700	58,100	-4,600
Income	-208,321	-202,930	-208,560	-5,630
Operational Budget	1,049,418	1,129,332	1,176,893	47,561
General Reserve				
Opening Balance at 1 April	402,619	608,941	749,152	
Transfer to/(from) Ops Budget	113,005	80,223	74,107	
Likely Operational underspend	0	70,000	0	
To Service Growth/Corp. Projects	0	-80,000	-495,000	
Council Tax Support Grant	93,317	69,988	46,659	
Closing Balance at 31 March	608,941	749,152	374,918	
Service Growth/Corporate				
Opening Balance at 1 April	0	0	80,000	
Transfer from Revenue Budget	0	80,000	495,000	
Expenditure from Reserve	0	0	150,000	
Closing Balance 31 March	0	80,000	425,000	
Earmarked Reserves				
Opening Balance at 1 April	321,898	407,534	462,234	
Transfer from Revenue Budget	112,500	132,500	134,600	
Expenditure from Reserves	26,864	77,800	368,977	
Closing Balance 31 March	407,534	462,234	227,857	
All Reserves held at year end	1,016,475	1,291,386	1,027,775	
Tax Base	6,715	6,853	6,950	
Band D Charge	173.12	176.50	180.00	
Outstanding PWLB Debt at 31	532,000	498,000	264,000	