

Dorchester Town Council

Policy Committee

20 March 2018

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

Apologies: Councillor G. Jones

Also present: Councillors G. Duke and M. Rennie

28. Minutes

The Minutes of the Committee of 23 January 2018, adopted by Council on 30 January 2018, were taken as read and confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

29. Financial Report 2017-18

The Town Clerk provided an update covering the Council's Month 11 spend in relation to the budget, cash position, current debt and payments position and noted a number of large projects currently underway and impacting on both cash flow and the budget.

The Town Clerk responded to questions regarding budgets and preparations for World War 1 commemorations and the value of the projected £50,000 underspend in per capita and Council Tax terms.

Members asked that their thanks be recorded to staff involved in delivering services during the recent spells of bad weather.

Resolved

- a) That the Payments list totalling £400,817.26 is approved
- b) That Councillors Harries and Hosford are appointed to the Municipal Buildings Task and Finish Group

30. Corporate Plan – Progress against Strategic and Operational Milestones

The Committee received a report from the Town Clerk regarding progress on tasks identified in the Corporate Plan and discussed more detailed information regarding progress on projects in relation to Dorchester Town Community FC Avenue Stadium 3G pitch and Lower South Street Street Furniture.

In relation to the 3G pitch project a Member provided additional information regarding a recommendation to be made to the District Council Strategy Committee to provide additional s106 funding to the project.

A Councillor sought information regarding the paving now completed outside Shire Hall and also highlighted continuing problems with vehicles accessing South St to deliver goods during hours when the street is closed to vehicles.

Resolved

- a) That the Town Clerk is authorised to extend a loan of up to £30,000 to Dorchester Town Community FC for up to 1 year, to help manage cashflow issues resulting from VAT and other contributions, to be secured against income raised from the use of the 3G pitch
- b) That £10,000 of the Public Realm Reserve is allocated to the Lower South Street Street Furniture project, to be supplemented by partner contributions if they can be achieved.
- c) That work on the Cornhill refurbishment project be commenced, with a specific requirement to review access by large vehicles into South Street from High Street

The Town Clerk noted ongoing difficulties arranging a second meeting of the Heritage Tourism Ideas Group

31. Local Government Reorganisation and Cuts to Services

The Town Clerk reported on a formal approach from West Dorset District Council to consider the transfer of assets and services in the lead up to reorganisation, and provided a draft response for consideration. A schedule of assets and services delivered by the District Council in Dorchester was tabled.

Members discussed the draft letter and the need to document the wider ambitions of the Town Council, while at the same time needing a pragmatic solution to minimise loss of service to residents of Dorchester and visitors.

A Member noted the need for a dowry to undertake improvement works to public conveniences in the town, should they be transferred. A Member was provided with assurances that the Town Council held sufficient reserves to seek professional support or advice regarding service transfers if required. A Member noted the need to open up a discussion with local Parishes regarding funding for services which have a wider benefit.

The Committee discussed appropriate governance arrangements for supporting the decision making process.

Resolved

- a) That the response drafted by the Town Clerk be submitted as the Council's response to the letter received from West Dorset District Council
- b) That additional monthly meetings of the Policy Committee be scheduled, to be cancelled should there be no urgent business relating to Local Government Reorganisation

32. **The possible use of Play Areas and Open Spaces to deliver Affordable Homes for Young Workers**

The Town Clerk provided feedback from the consultation events led by Magna Housing in February, acknowledging that the level of opposition to development was significant.

The Mayor responded to the feedback with a proposal to curtail further action to develop ideas for affordable housing. Members noted that, while there might be a willingness from some residents to accept partial development of some sites, generally opinion was strongly against any development and in favour of the retention of green spaces. A Member noted that at no point had any plans been developed for the use of the pieces of land, contrary to some claims made. Finally a Member noted that the Council had made a serious attempt to make a contribution to resolving the housing crisis by the reuse of public land.

Recommended to Council

That, in view of the levels of opposition expressed by local residents to the proposals to explore the development of sites owned by this Council at recent consultation events, this Council takes no further action to bring forward more detailed proposals for the sites.

The Committee considered Elizabeth Place, understood to be owned by Magna Housing, noting again the level of opposition to proposals to develop the site, that Magna had a wider land ownership portfolio that needed to be considered and that any proposal would be subjected to the planning process to which the Council would be a consultee. The Committee made no recommendation to reconsider the previous position of Council.

Note: Minute 37/2018 records discussions of Council on 30 January 2018, where a proposal to give full recognition to a covenant supporting recreation on the Elizabeth Place site was rejected by Council.

Finally Committee supported a request made by the Mayor that the minutes record the appreciation of the Council for the work undertaken by Magna Housing during the consultation process.

33. **Trustee Appointments at Dorchester Municipal Charities**

The Town Clerk reported a request received from Dorchester Municipal Charities to reduce the number of trustees appointed directly by the Council, due to changes in regulations governing the influence of local authorities on social housing bodies.

Members discussed the need for the Charity to satisfy itself that serving councillors who had been appointed by the Charity rather than by this Council were not considered to have an influence on behalf of this Council.

The Chair of the Charity Trustees, Councillor Rennie, emphasised the wish of trustees to maintain a close relationship with the Town Council.

Recommended to Council

That the Council work with Dorchester Municipal Charities to implement an Action Plan as outlined by the Charity in order to properly observe The Regulation of Social Housing (Influence of Local Authorities)(England) Regulations 2017

Chairman