

Dorchester Town Council

Policy Committee

22 January 2019

Present: Councillors R. Biggs, T. Harries, G. Jones, T. Jones and P. Stein.

Apologies: Councillors B. Armstrong-Marshall, A. Chisholm, S. Hosford and D. Taylor.

Also present: Councillors J. Hewitt and R. Potter

24. Minutes

The Minutes of the Committee of 20 November 2018, adopted by Council on 27 November 2018, were taken as read and confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

25. Budget and Medium Term Financial Strategy

The Chairman presented a report covering the Committee's budget and the overall budget and medium term strategy for the Town Council. Key issues for consideration included a one off contribution of £100,000 to the Municipal Buildings Reserve, Elections costs estimated at £20,000, Special Items totalling £18,000, all contributing to an Operational Budget of £1,389,000. With a 3.3% increase in Tax Base and a planned 2% increase in Council Tax this would allow £75,000 to be added to the Corporate Projects Reserve.

The Clerk identified the position regarding the Council's Earmarked and General Reserves and outlined the Medium Term Financial Strategy.

Questions were asked regarding the prospect for the transfer of income generating services by the District Council and the progress of a Reserves funded project to provide infrastructure at Poundbury Cemetery.

Members considered alternative options for the Precept and Council Tax, recognising two different strategies of either building up Reserves and revenue capacity by increasing the Council Tax now or waiting to see the size of cuts to discretionary services by the new Unitary Council.

Recommended to Council

That the Medium Term Financial Strategy and Revenue Budget 2019/20 are adopted as laid out in Appendix 1 to these Minutes, to include: -

- i. A Council Tax Band D charge of £192.78, an increase of £3.78 (2.00%)
- ii. A precept of £1,463,971, an increase of 5.45%

26. Financial Report 2018-19

The Town Clerk provided an update covering the Council's Month 9 spend in relation to the budget, cash, debt and payments positions, as well as outlining a revised statement of policy on Pension Discretions.

Resolved

That the Payments list, totalling £405,884.62, is approved

Recommended to Council

That the Statement of Policy on the Local Government Pension Scheme 2014 Discretions, appended to the agenda of the Policy Committee, is approved

27. Corporate Plan Update at 31 December 2018

The Town Clerk reported on progress against milestones set within the Corporate Plan, in particular focusing on Heritage Tourism Strategy Development and the Transfer of Services and Assets from West Dorset District Council.

He responded to questions regarding the use of external consultants to support the development of the strategy and the process for selecting contractors to support the Strategy development. He also noted a second approach from a local provider who believed they could support parts of the Heritage Strategy development process.

The Clerk confirmed that the Council's officer team had the skills and capacity to take on additional work associated with the transfer of responsibility for supporting the Markets Panel.

Resolved

That Members of the Policy Committee meet with Heritage partners and potential contractors to explore the potential for commissioning work on a Heritage Strategy for Dorchester.

28. 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.

29. Staffing Issue

The Town Clerk reported on a staff grading issue.

A concern was raised that, while case for upgrading the post was strong, it might have implications elsewhere in the organisation's structure.

Resolved

That, subject to validation by South West Provincial Employers, the post of Outdoor Services Manager is regraded to SCP 40-43 wef 1 January 2019, with the current postholder being placed on SCP 40 with annual incremental progression.

30. **St Osmunds School Sports Facilities**

The Town Clerk provided background to a recent decision by St Osmunds Community Sports Centre Trust to cease trading. He also provided details of confidential discussions with St Osmunds School regarding the potential to provide limited continued use of school facilities by community groups.

Several Members noted the use of the facility either personally or by family members. A Member asked for confirmation that there was insufficient capacity elsewhere in the town should the facility be lost. A question was asked regarding the likelihood of support from West Dorset District Council.

Resolved

That, subject to West Dorset District Council making a grant available, this Council makes £5,000 available to St Osmunds School to implement a transition plan, to be agreed by District and Town Council officers, to maintain community group use of the School's leisure facilities.

Chairman

APPENDIX 1

REVENUE BUDGET 2019/20	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20
	Actual	Actual	Budget	Budget
	£	£	£	£
Parks & Open Spaces	581,490	532,915	582,495	605,191
Allotments	3,254	3,738	3,541	4,952
Municipal Buildings	148,740	183,983	187,036	312,528
Cemeteries	66,894	44,908	56,433	51,407
Cultural & Twinning Activities	54,576	56,944	52,370	54,770
Corporate & Democratic Manage.	210,632	204,021	220,174	223,581
Other Services	24,627	100,272	109,029	136,483
Operational Budget	1,090,213	1,126,781	1,211,078	1,388,911
Precept	1,251,000	1,296,336	1,388,243	1,463,971
Transfer to General Reserves	160,787	169,555	177,165	75,060
Subjective Analysis of Revenue				
Employees	642,954	694,035	718,718	729,201
External Payments	462,382	509,860	491,610	548,260
Transfers to Earmarked Reserves	157,505	141,100	144,000	246,800
Capital Financing Costs	54,528	48,500	46,400	44,300
Income	-227,156	-195,160	-189,650	-179,650
Operational Budget	1,090,213	1,198,335	1,211,078	1,388,911
General Reserve				
Opening Balance at 1 April	751,931	464,377	322,261	250,261
Transfer from Ops Budget	160,787	169,555	177,165	75,060
Council Tax Support Grant	46,659	23,329	0	0
To Corporate Projects Reserve	-495,000	-335,000	-249,165	-75,060
Closing Balance at 31 March	464,377	322,261	250,261	250,261
Earmarked Reserves				
Opening Balance at 1 April	613,584	956,392	1,043,492	909,058
Transfer from Revenue Budget	652,856	494,100	534,165	321,860
Expenditure from Reserves	310,048	407,000	668,600	228,750
Closing Balance 31 March	956,392	1,043,492	909,058	1,002,168
All Reserves held at year end	1,420,769	1,365,753	1,159,319	1,252,429
Tax Base	6,950	7,065	7,345	7,594
Band D Charge	180.00	183.50	189.00	192.78
O/s PWLB Debt at 31 March	264,000	230,000	196,000	162,000

Medium Term Financial Strategy	18/19	19/20	20/21	21/22
	£000	£000	£000	£000
Revenue Budget				
Employees	719	729	744	759
External Payments	492	548	534	545
Transfers to Earmarked Reserves	144	247	150	153
Capital Financing Costs	46	44	42	40
Income	-190	-180	-183	-187
New/Transferred Services	0	0	192	200
Operational Budget	1,211	1,389	1,479	1,510
Precept	1,388	1,464	1,493	1,523
Transfer to General Reserves	177	75	15	14
General Reserve				
Opening Balance at 1 April	322	250	250	265
Transfer from/to Operational Budget	177	75	15	14
Transfer to Corporate Projects Reserve	-249	-75	0	0
Closing Balance at 31 March	250	250	265	278
Earmarked Reserves				
Opening Balance at 1 April	1,043	768	861	511
Transfer from Revenue Budget	393	322	150	153
Expenditure from Reserves	-669	-229	-500	-350
Closing Balance 31 March	768	861	511	314
All Reserves held at year end	1,018	1,111	776	592
Corporate Project Unallocated at Year End	179	254	0	0
Outstanding Debt at Year End	£k	196	162	128
Council Tax	£	189	193	197
Tax Base		7,345	7,594	7,594

Notes

1. Inflation at 2.00%, Debt repayment per current debt profiles
2. Precept assumes Council Tax rise @ 2.00% from 2020, no Tax Base growth
3. Best estimate of new or transferred services, driven by cuts in other tiers
4. Operational surplus transferred to Corporate Projects Reserve
5. Corporate Projects Reserve allocated as part of next Corporate Plan
6. Earmarked Reserves expenditure reflects best available knowledge
7. Further savings may be identified in budgets as a result of review processes