

# Dorchester Town Council

## Policy Committee

20 January 2020

**Present:** Councillors B. Armstrong-Marshall, R. Biggs, A. Chisholm, T. Harries, F. Hogwood, S. Hosford (Chair) and G. Jones

**Attending:** Councillors J. Hewitt and D. Leaper

### 21. Minutes and Declarations of Interest

The Minutes of the Committee of 18 November 2019, adopted by Council on 25 November 2019, were taken as read and confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

Councillor R. Biggs declared a non-pecuniary interest as a trustee of Dorchester Youth and Community Centre in relation to item 24 Revenue Budget 2020/21 and Medium Term Financial Strategy.

### 22. Finance Update at 31 December 2019

The Committee noted the Town Clerk's update covering the Council's Month 9 budget, cash, debtors and payments position.

A Member asked a question regarding a specific debtor and the Committee reconfirmed its approach.

#### **Resolved**

That the Payments list, totalling £217,184.31 is approved.

### 23. Climate Emergency - A Preliminary Response

The Committee considered a document focused on reducing the Council's carbon footprint, assisting community partners to consider and reduce their CO2 emissions and working with the community to educate and initiate changes in the ways that residents and workers act.

The Town Clerk identified progress on developing ideas for a key project relating to the heating of the Municipal Buildings, explaining the need for the urgent appointment of specialist architect support. Members considered the alternative outcomes of waiving standing orders or going to competition for the appointment.

The Committee considered examples of the success and failure among emerging alternative heating technologies and the evidence gathering exercise currently underway.

A minor rewording was made to clarify that no decision had yet been made to vacate 19 North Square. A Member asked that Dorchester's ward councillors invite the

Dorset County Pension Fund to consider its position relating to investments. Members agreed to retitle the document to reflect that it was likely to evolve over time. Members also considered how to share best practice with peers and the wider community.

### **Resolved**

- a) Due to the specialist architectural knowledge accumulated of the grade 2\* Municipal Buildings, due to the need to expedite the work in order to secure grant support, and noting that the fee proposal is in line with industry standards for this form of work, Crickmay Stark are appointed as architects for the Municipal Buildings Heating project

### **Recommended to Council**

- b) That £100,000 is transferred to the Municipal Buildings Reserve to fund a new low carbon heating system
- c) That A new Climate Emergency Fund is created, with an initial contribution of £125,000, to be used to support the delivery of the Climate Emergency Preliminary Response document
- d) That the Climate Emergency Preliminary Response, included in the Policy Committee agenda with amendment, be approved and subjected to consultation in order to be adopted by May 2020.

## **24. Medium Term Financial Strategy and Revenue Budget 2020/21**

The Town Clerk introduced a report which covered the Committee's own budget, the Council's overall budget, explained the Council's approach to the management and use of Reserves and placed all of these into the context of the Medium Term Financial Strategy.

The Committee discussed the changes made to the budget and clarified that they had the ability to make further changes in year if required. They also discussed the needs of residents in the different property bands and noted the small increase in the tax base for 2020/21. A Member sought clarification that the sums held in Earmarked Reserves were currently based on estimated costs only. It was agreed that the term Cornhill Environmental Improvements should in future be used for works around the Town Pump.

Members asked for an update regarding The Maltings project and the Town Clerk agreed to provide one once it became available.

### **Recommended to Council**

That the Medium Term Financial Strategy and Revenue Budget 2020/21 are adopted as laid out in Appendix 1 to the Minutes of the Policy Committee, to include: -

- A Council Tax Band D charge of £196.64, an increase of £3.86 (2.00%)

- A precept of £1,503.515, an increase of 2.70%
- The inclusion of one-off contributions to a new Climate Emergency Reserve (£125,000) and the Municipal Buildings Reserve for climate emergency related works (£100,000).

#### **25. Corporate Plan: 2019 – 2024 Development and 2015 – 2019 Update**

The Town Clerk provided a revised High Level Focus document which would identify the key messages to be developed in the new Corporate Plan.

The Committee agreed some additional amendments to the document.

#### **Recommended to Council**

That the Corporate Plan High Level Focus, included at Appendix 2, is adopted for consultation with partners and the community.

The Committee then noted updates regarding projects that remain outstanding from the previous Corporate Plan.

Chairman

## Appendix 1

<b>REVENUE BUDGET 2020/21</b>	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
	Actual	Budget	Budget
	£	£	£
Parks & Open Spaces	480,463	566,091	558,832
Allotments	3,289	4,952	3,331
Municipal Buildings	202,438	312,528	320,441
Cemeteries	42,284	51,407	64,921
Cultural & Twinning Activities	67,045	57,770	49,039
Corporate & Democratic Manage.	213,132	226,981	228,972
Other Services	143,545	169,183	273,202
<b>Operational Budget</b>	<b>1,152,196</b>	<b>1,388,912</b>	<b>1,498,739</b>
Precept	1,388,243	1,463,971	1,503,515
<b>Transfer to General Reserves</b>	<b>236,047</b>	<b>75,059</b>	<b>4,777</b>
<b>Subjective Analysis of Revenue</b>			
Employees	656,483	729,202	729,078
External Payments	418,922	529,460	511,860
Transfers to Earmarked Reserves	216,657	265,600	394,000
Capital Financing Costs	45,333	44,300	41,200
Income	-185,199	-179,650	-177,400
<b>Operational Budget</b>	<b>1,152,196</b>	<b>1,388,912</b>	<b>1,498,739</b>
<b>General Reserve</b>			
Opening Balance at 1 April	322,261	250,261	100,000
Transfer from Ops Budget	236,047	75,059	4,777
To Corporate Projects Reserve	308,047	225,320	4,777
<b>Closing Balance at 31 March</b>	<b>250,261</b>	<b>100,000</b>	<b>100,000</b>
<b>Earmarked Reserves</b>			
Opening Balance at 1 April	1,043,492	1,204,233	1,729,608
Transfer from Revenue	524,704	490,920	398,777
Other Income & Transfers	0	78,912	0
Expenditure from Reserves	363,963	44,457	412,482
<b>Closing Balance 31 March</b>	<b>1,204,233</b>	<b>1,729,608</b>	<b>1,667,403</b>
<b>All Reserves held at year end</b>	<b>1,454,494</b>	<b>1,829,608</b>	<b>1,767,403</b>
Tax Base	7,345	7,594	7,646
Band D Charge	189.00	192.78	196.64
O/s PWLB Debt at 31 March	196,000	162,000	128,000

<b>Medium Term Financial Strategy</b>	19/20	20/21	21/22	22/23
	£000	£000	£000	£000
<b>Revenue Budget</b>				
Employees	729	729	744	759
External Payments	529	512	522	533
Transfers to Earmarked Reserves	266	394	177	180
Capital Financing Costs	44	41	39	28
Income	-180	-177	-181	-185
New/Transferred Services	0	0	200	200
<b>Operational Budget</b>	<b>1,389</b>	<b>1,499</b>	<b>1,501</b>	<b>1,515</b>
Precept	1,464	1,504	1,534	1,564
<b>Transfer to General Reserves</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>50</b>
<b>General Reserve</b>				
Opening Balance at 1 April	250	100	100	100
Transfer from/to Operational Budget	75	5	33	50
Transfer to Corporate Projects Reserve	225	5	33	50
<b>Closing Balance at 31 March</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Earmarked Reserves</b>				
Opening Balance at 1 April	1,204	1,681	1,667	1,177
Transfers/Payments in to Reserves	571	399	210	230
Payments/Transfers out from Reserves	94	412	700	400
<b>Closing Balance 31 March</b>	<b>1,681</b>	<b>1,667</b>	<b>1,177</b>	<b>1,007</b>
<b>All Reserves held at year end</b>				
Corporate Project Unallocated at Year End	467	471	33	83
Outstanding Debt at Year End	£k	162	128	94
Council Tax	£	193	197	201
Tax Base		7,594	7,646	7,646

#### Notes

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

## **DORCHESTER TOWN COUNCIL**

### **HIGH LEVEL FOCUS OF THE CORPORATE PLAN**

#### **AFFORDABLE HOUSING**

- Work proactively with the Dorset Council to develop stronger policies to support the delivery of truly affordable housing
- Focus resources and effort into working with key partners on a programme of unlocking and developing sites across the town for affordable housing

#### **COMMUNITY, CULTURE, HEALTH AND WELLBEING**

- Working with other agencies and community partners, develop our understanding of the general needs of our community and the specific needs of vulnerable groups
- Maintain and, where appropriate, adapt the Council's Community, Sports, Cultural and Health & Wellbeing service delivery to meet the requirements of the town's residents and visitors, either directly or working with local partners
- Resolve the future of the Municipal Buildings to make a relevant and environmentally efficient contribution to the town's community

#### **THE ENVIRONMENT**

- In response to the declared Climate Emergency, proactively support practical steps to reduce the impact that the Council and the town's community has on its environment
- Focusing in particular on the Town Centre, support the introduction of sustainable practices that assist the town's community and other key partners to improve the town's appearance

#### **LOCAL ECONOMY, TRANSPORT AND PARKING**

- Working with other agencies and business representatives, develop our understanding of how the town's economy can be strengthened
- Working initially with the town's Heritage and Tourism sectors, develop a holistic strategy to maximise the benefits of tourism to the town
- Work with the Dorset Council to agree and implement a new Transport and Parking strategy that resolves the competing demands of residents, workers and visitors to the town

#### **FUTURE GROWTH OF DORCHESTER**

- Develop the Town's existing response to the pressure for development of new housing emerging through the Local Plan process

#### **GOVERNANCE AND ADMINISTRATION**

- Ensure that the Council's governance, communication and administration arrangements remain relevant to the needs of the town and are delivered efficiently and effectively