

# Dorchester Town Council

## Policy Committee

11 May 2020

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

**Apologies:** Councillor T. Harries.

**Attending:** Councillors Hewitt, Leaper and Potter.

### 31. **Minutes and Declarations of Interest**

The Minutes of the Committee of 16 March 2020, adopted by Council on 23 March 2020, were taken as read and confirmed and are to be signed by the Chairman as a correct record once the Covid 19 lockdown has ended.

Councillor Biggs declared an interest as a trustee of the Dorchester Youth and Community Centre and took no part in discussions relating to the Centre during minute 33.

### 32. **Financial Update at 30 April 2020**

The Committee noted the Town Clerk's final report relating to the 2019-20 financial year and the reasons for a net underspend of £29,000.

Members also noted the final internal audit report for the year, including officer comments and the summary report prepared by the Internal Auditor. Members considered the issue of the audit trail required by the external auditor for the publication of the Notice of Accounts.

The Committee considered the Annual Governance Statement for 2019-20 and the Accounting Statement for 2019-20.

#### **Resolved**

- a) That the third Internal Audit report, along with the officer responses, is noted
- b) That the Payments list, totalling £275,066.99, is approved.

#### **Recommended to Council**

- c) That Council considers and approves the Annual Governance Statement for 2019-20 (Appendix 1)
- d) That Council considers and approves the Accounting Statements 2019-20 (Appendix 2)

Members noted the receipt of CIL payments totalling £64,000 in April, primarily relating to the Brewhouse and HMP Dorchester sites. The Committee agreed to consider a report regarding possible CIL schemes at its meeting in July, and that the

Clerk should test out with the Dorset Council which potential projects might be funded by the Dorset Council's Recreation element of the CIL.

**33. Response to the Covid 19 Crisis**

The Committee considered a report relating to non-operational issues resulting from the lockdown in response to the Covid 19 epidemic, covering support for community groups both responding to and likely to be affected by the crisis.

The Committee noted that grants had been paid in advance to partners to assist with their cashflow. Members noted the funding position of a project to provide LED lighting to the Dorchester Youth and Community Centre building, to which the Council had previously awarded a grant of £1,500.

**Resolved**

That a further grant of up to £2,350 is awarded to the Dorchester Youth and Community Centre LED lighting project to ensure its completion before the reopening of the building following lockdown.

The Committee considered and made minor amendments to draft policies focused on support for community groups supporting the public during the lockdown and to community partners during their recovery from lockdown.

The Clerk confirmed that the Town Council's officers were in regular contact with Food Bank and Mental Health Support Groups and that such groups were covered by the policy.

Members considered the level of support for local businesses. While recognising that there was little that the Council could do to assist individual businesses the Committee emphasised a desire to support both those groups that represented the local business sector and to assist the co-ordination of a wider recovery across the town. The Clerk agreed to prepare a paper focused on the co-ordination of discussion between key organisations across the local community focused on supporting the town's recovery from lockdown, and to use the Town Council's media channels to share important messages with local residents. It was accepted that this would naturally have a local focus in the short term but would need to be adapted to encourage visits from further afield in due course.

**Recommended to Council**

- a) That the draft policy (Appendix 3) to support community groups supporting residents during the lockdown period is approved.
- b) That the draft policy (Appendix 4) to support community partners in their recovery from the lockdown period is approved

The Committee briefly considered the Dorset Council Local Planning process and the potential risk to public engagement, the timetable and decision making arising from the lockdown.

34. **Weymouth Avenue Recreation Pavilion Ground Source Heating**

The Town Clerk provided a short update identifying that an Invitation to Tender had been published for the above project, with tenders due back on 29 May and interviews scheduled for early June. The Clerk identified a benefit of appointing a contractor at an early stage. Members discussed a number of technical issues relating to the scheme.

**Resolved**

That the Town Clerk, in consultation with Councillors Biggs and G. Jones, is authorised to appoint a contractor to undertake the Ground Source Heating project

Chairman

## Section 1 – Annual Governance Statement 2019/20

We acknowledge as the members of:

Dorchester Town Council

our responsibility for ensuring that there is a sound system of internal control, including arrangements for the preparation of the Accounting Statements. We confirm, to the best of our knowledge and belief, with respect to the Accounting Statements for the year ended 31 March 2020, that:

	Agreed		*Yes* means that this authority:	
	Yes	No*		
1. We have put in place arrangements for effective financial management during the year, and for the preparation of the accounting statements.	✓		<i>prepared its accounting statements in accordance with the Accounts and Audit Regulations.</i>	
2. We maintained an adequate system of internal control including measures designed to prevent and detect fraud and corruption and reviewed its effectiveness.	✓		<i>made proper arrangements and accepted responsibility for safeguarding the public money and resources in its charge.</i>	
3. We took all reasonable steps to assure ourselves that there are no matters of actual or potential non-compliance with laws, regulations and Proper Practices that could have a significant financial effect on the ability of this authority to conduct its business or manage its finances.	✓		<i>has only done what it has the legal power to do and has complied with Proper Practices in doing so.</i>	
4. We provided proper opportunity during the year for the exercise of electors' rights in accordance with the requirements of the Accounts and Audit Regulations.	✓		<i>during the year gave all persons interested the opportunity to inspect and ask questions about this authority's accounts.</i>	
5. We carried out an assessment of the risks facing this authority and took appropriate steps to manage those risks, including the introduction of internal controls and/or external insurance cover where required.	✓		<i>considered and documented the financial and other risks it faces and dealt with them properly.</i>	
6. We maintained throughout the year an adequate and effective system of internal audit of the accounting records and control systems.	✓		<i>arranged for a competent person, independent of the financial controls and procedures, to give an objective view on whether internal controls meet the needs of this smaller authority.</i>	
7. We took appropriate action on all matters raised in reports from internal and external audit.	✓		<i>responded to matters brought to its attention by internal and external audit.</i>	
8. We considered whether any litigation, liabilities or commitments, events or transactions, occurring either during or after the year-end, have a financial impact on this authority and, where appropriate, have included them in the accounting statements.	✓		<i>disclosed everything it should have about its business activity during the year including events taking place after the year end if relevant.</i>	
9. (For local councils only) Trust funds including charitable. In our capacity as the sole managing trustee we discharged our accountability responsibilities for the fund(s)/assets, including financial reporting and, if required, independent examination or audit.	Yes	No	N/A	<i>has met all of its responsibilities where, as a body corporate, it is a sole managing trustee of a local trust or trusts.</i>
			✓	

\*Please provide explanations to the external auditor on a separate sheet for each 'No' response and describe how the authority will address the weaknesses identified. These sheets must be published with the Annual Governance Statement.

This Annual Governance Statement was approved at a meeting of the authority on:

DORCHESTER

Signed by the Chairman and Clerk of the meeting where approval was given:

SIGNATURE REQUIRED

## Section 2 – Accounting Statements 2019/20 for

## Dorchester Town Council

	Year ending		Notes and guidance
	31 March 2019 £	31 March 2020 £	
1. Balances brought forward	365,753	454,494	Total balances and reserves at the beginning of the year as recorded in the financial records. Value must agree to Box 7 of previous year.
2. (+) Precept or Rates and Levies	1,388,243	1,463,971	Total amount of precept (or for IDBs rates and levies) received or receivable in the year. Exclude any grants received.
3. (+) Total other receipts	329,903	312,144	Total income or receipts as recorded in the cashbook less the precept or rates/levies received (line 2). Include any grants received.
4. (-) Staff costs	659,822	717,634	Total expenditure or payments made to and on behalf of all employees. Include gross salaries and wages, employers NI contributions, employers pension contributions, gratuities and severance payments.
5. (-) Loan Interest/capital repayments	45,333	43,261	Total expenditure or payments of capital and interest made during the year on the authority's borrowings (if any).
6. (-) All other payments	924,250	703,675	Total expenditure or payments as recorded in the cash-book less staff costs (line 4) and loan interest/capital repayments (line 5).
7. (=) Balances carried forward	454,494	766,038	Total balances and reserves at the end of the year. Must equal (1+2+3) - (4+5+6).
8. Total value of cash and short term investments	483,619	893,825	The sum of all current and deposit bank accounts, cash holdings and short term investments held as at 31 March – To agree with bank reconciliation.
9. Total fixed assets plus long term investments and assets	8,032,257	8,132,194	The value of all the property the authority owns – it is made up of all its fixed assets and long term investments as at 31 March.
10. Total borrowings	196,000	162,000	The outstanding capital balance as at 31 March of all loans from third parties (including PWLB).
11. (For Local Councils Only) Disclosure note re Trust funds (including charitable)	Yes	No	The Council, as a body corporate, acts as sole trustee for and is responsible for managing Trust funds or assets.
		✓	N.B. The figures in the accounting statements above do not include any Trust transactions.

I certify that for the year ended 31 March 2020 the Accounting Statements in this Annual Governance and Accountability Return have been prepared on either a receipts and payments or income and expenditure basis following the guidance in Governance and Accountability for Smaller Authorities – a Practitioners' Guide to Proper Practices and present fairly the financial position of this authority.

Signed by Responsible Financial Officer before being presented to the authority for approval

SIGNATURE REQUIRED

Date

TITULARITY

I confirm that these Accounting Statements were approved by this authority on this date:

as recorded in minute reference:

Signed by Chairman of the meeting where the Accounting Statements were approved

SIGNATURE REQUIRED

**RESPONSE TO THE COVID 19 CRISIS**

**SUPPORT FOR COMMUNITY GROUPS PROVIDING ASSISTANCE DURING THE LOCKDOWN AND IMMEDIATE RECOVERY PERIOD**

- 1.1. The Council wishes to support existing and new community groups that are responding to the crisis by providing support to local residents.
- 1.2. The Council will provide assistance to legitimate groups
  - Providing direct support to Dorchester residents
  - To meet the additional costs associated with the support provided, over and above normal operating costs OR to ensure that those groups have sufficient funds to remain operational during lockdown and the immediate recovery period
  - So that no group/volunteer should be out of pocket in helping fellow residents
- 1.3. At the end of the lockdown period the Council's officers will prepare a list of groups who have played a role in supporting the community and Members will consider whether they wish to make any additional award.
- 1.4. Officers and Members will make the Town Clerk aware of potential opportunities to provide support; the Town Clerk will record details of the opportunity in a suitable form and make recommendations based on their contact with the Group.
- 1.5. The Town Clerk will advise all Members of all proposed grants and invite comments within three days. The Clerk will make a grant award based on the comments, recording the outcome for report to a subsequent meeting of the Policy Committee. Where the grant proposed exceeds £1,000 the Clerk will seek confirmation of the final decision from two Councillors from among the Council's Chairs and Mayor.

## **RESPONSE TO THE COVID 19 CRISIS**

### **SUPPORT FOR PARTNER ORGANISATIONS**

- 1.1. The Council is minded to provide support to partner organisations, should it be requested, whose financial operations have been impacted by the C19 outbreak, and who cannot fully recommence service delivery without assistance from the Town Council.
- 1.2. Partner organisations will have
  - Previously worked with the Council to deliver its corporate aims
  - Previously provided services at a community level within Dorchester
  - A recognised organisational structure; in particular they will not be based around the needs of, or be largely controlled by, an individual
- 1.3. The Council will only provide assistance if there is a proven need. To prove need the partner organisation must have first:
  - Conducted its affairs properly in the run up to and during the lockdown period
  - Taken all opportunities of assistance offered by Government and other agencies
  - Worked proactively with its supporters and beneficiaries to have reduced its financial issues
- 1.4. Assistance may be a combination of the following:
  - Cash support – this might be by way of a short or longer term loan or a direct grant
  - Free use of Property – this might be a rent holiday to an existing tenant or hirer, or the opportunity of free events and support on Council premises and land
  - Promotional support, using the Council’s newsletters or other means of communication
  - Support for another organisation to whom the partner is indebted, or who might be able to provide assistance to the partner
- 1.5. Decisions to provide support will be made by the Council’s Policy Committee, who may use all Budgets and Reserves of the Council in its response.