

**Dorchester Town Council**

**Policy Committee**

**16 November 2020**

**held via Zoom Video Conferencing**

**Present:** Councillors B. Armstrong-Marshall, R. Biggs, A. Chisholm, F. Hogwood, S. Hosford (Chair) and G. Jones  
**Apologies:** Councillor T. Harries  
**Attending:** Councillors Hewitt, S Jones, Kent-Ledger, Potter and Rennie

**10. Minutes and Declarations of Interest**

The Minutes of the Committee of 21 September 2020, adopted by Council on 28 September 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.

**11. Financial Update at 31 October 2020**

The Committee received the Town Clerk's report on the month 7 financial position, noting actual spending at £5,000 below profile. The Clerk responded to a question regarding cash flow and the precept.

**Resolved**

- i) That the Payments list, totalling £260,012.13, is approved.

The Clerk noted receipt of signed Returns for 2019/20 from the External Auditor.

**Recommended to Council**

- ii) That the certified Annual Governance and Accountability Return for year ended 31 March 2020 is approved and accepted

**12. Municipal Buildings Works and the Relationship with Dorchester Arts**

The Town Clerk provided an update regarding work on Council minute 2020/15, related to project work to both improve the Municipal Buildings and the implications for the future of 19 North Square. He advised that a detailed report on tenders received for the Municipal Buildings works would be provided to Council. Several Members advocated the reuse of 19 North Square as affordable housing, while also recognising the difficulties in adapting the building.

A resident asked questions regarding the additional carbon emissions likely to be generated in constructing the new rear extension and invited the Council to consider whether a previously explored option to build a smaller extension might be more carbon neutral. The Town Clerk provided a response to the questions and Members reaffirmed their commitment to the current proposed rear extension.

The Committee discussed draft heads of terms for the transfer of the operational management of the Municipal Buildings to Dorchester Arts, seeking clarification

regarding the legal nature of the agreement and how it would be monitored, the internal appearance of the front of the building, the use of the Council Chamber and the continuing role of the Task Group. A Member requested that the benefits of the agreement, particularly in relationship to a wish to see greater community use of the building, be incorporate into the agreement.

**Recommended to Council**

- i) That a full report regarding tender submissions, to be circulated prior to Council, is considered by Council
- ii) That the future disposal of 19 North Square is confirmed; that the Town Clerk seek opportunities to work with partners to develop the building as affordable housing; and that should a suitable scheme not be identified within a maximum of 12 months the property be disposed of on the open market
- iii) That the Draft Heads of Terms of the agreement with Dorchester Arts be amended to include a section focusing on the aims of the parties signing the agreement, in particular the increased use of the building for community purposes
- iv) That, to enable continuity, the current Dorchester Arts Task Group members remain in place for the remainder of the implementation period and for the first year of monitoring of the agreement

**13. Tourism Service Delivery**

The Clerk provided a report covering the Tourism service historically operated in Dorchester, noting that consultation had commenced regarding the future of the TIC service in the town. He also provided a summary of the work of the Heritage Joint Committee to develop a Tourism Strategy based initially on the town's heritage offer.

The Committee considered its response to the Dorset Council consultation. Members advocated a range of different approaches to the future delivery of an information service including a volunteer led approach, a professional approach, specific TIC provision and a network of properly trained and co-ordinated providers, as well as the importance of proper signing.

Members recognised that in the current climate it was appropriate for the Town Council to take a lead in developing an alternative service, but this should be on the understanding that the business community will make contributions at a later date.

**Recommended to Council**

- i) That the Town Clerk, in consultation with the Chairman of the Committee, write to Dorset Council acknowledging the likely loss of the Dorchester TIC, but seeking financial support for a transition to a new model of tourism information delivery to be co-ordinated by the Town Council

- ii) That the Town Clerk prepare a report identifying costed options for future delivery of local tourism information services within the town, including the co-ordinator/partnership approach advocated by the Tourism Strategy developed by the Dorchester Heritage Joint Committee

14. **Strategic and Operational Risk Registers**

The Committee considered a report of the Deputy Town Clerk relating to the Council's Risk Registers. The Town Clerk suggested that Members may wish to recognise a new risk related to the reputational damage that the Council would suffer should it not play its part in a co-ordinated response to the longer term impact of the Covid 19 lockdown. Members discussed the social, business and health impacts of the lockdown.

**Recommended to Council**

- i) That the assessed high level strategic and operational risks be approved
- ii) That an additional risk related to the reputational damage that the Council would suffer should it not play its part in a co-ordinated response to the longer term impact of the Covid 19 lockdown be added to the register
- iii) That the Strategic and Operational Risk Registers, as a whole, be approved

Chairman