

# Dorchester Town Council

## Policy Committee

24 July 2023

**Present:** The Mayor (Councillor A. Chisholm) and Councillors B. Armstrong-Marshall, J. Hewitt, F. Hogwood and S. Hosford (Vice-Chairman in the Chair).

**Apologies:** Councillors R. Biggs, S. Biles, T. Harries and G. Jones.

In Attendance

Councillors L. Fry and M. Rennie.

1. **Minutes**

The Minutes of the Meeting of the Committee held on 15 May 2023, adopted by Council on 23 May 2023, were taken as read and were confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

2. **Declaration of Interests**

There were no declarations of interest.

3. **Finance Update**

Members considered a report by the Finance Officer which updated them on the financial position of the Council as at end of June 2023. The report also set out the level of debt over 30 days and gave details of the payments list from 1 May 2023 to 30 June 2023.

**Resolved**

That the payments list, totalling £251,499.47, be approved.

4. **Cornhill / South Street Task and Finish Group**

Members considered the notes of the Task and Finish Group held on 12 June 2023, attached at Appendix 1, established to consider improvements to Cornhill and South Street. It was noted that Councillor J. Hewitt was in attendance at the meeting.

The Committee felt that it was important to work with Dorset Council to achieve a good outcome with the restrictions that come with the area being classified as highway.

**Resolved**

That the notes of the Cornhill / South Street Task and Finish Group held on 12 June 2023 be agreed.

5. **New Member Induction**

The Committee considered a report by the Town Clerk on the establishment of a Task and Finish Group to review the current new Councillor induction process with the aim of giving new Members the best experience and knowledge for the start of their Council journey.

Membership of the Group to be the Mayor plus four others being a mixture of Policy, Management and Planning and Environment Committee members.

**Resolved**

That a New Councillor Induction Task and Finish Group be established, as set out above, membership of which to be agreed by Full Council at its next meeting.

6. **Standing Orders, Financial Regulations and Data Protection**

The Committee had been circulated with revised draft Standing Orders, Financial Regulations and Data Protection documentation.

**Recommended**

That the draft Standing Orders, Financial Regulations and Data Protection Policy be adopted.

7. **Corporate Plan Update**

Members considered a report by the Town Clerk which enclosed an updated version of the Council's approved high level Corporate Plan. It was noted that the Dorchester Community Land Trust had been established seven years ago and that this should be noted on the Plan. The Town Clerk confirmed that no response had been received from Dorset Council in respect of the Garfield Avenue site.

**Resolved**

That the updated high level Corporate Plan be approved.

8. **Proposal for a Town Centre Working Group**

The Committee had before it a report by the Tourism Development Officer proposing the establishment of a Town Centre Working Group. The key aims of the Group would be to:-

- reduce the number of vacant properties in the town centre;
- improve the town centre experience and public realm for both residents and visitors;
- develop proposals for events and initiatives to attract visitors to the town centre;
- help promote the town centre in order to attract investment.

Membership of the Group to be the Mayor, Chair/Vice Chair of the Joint Informal Markets Panel, the Town Council BID representative, Chair of Planning and Environment Committee plus three other Members.

### **Resolved**

That a Town Centre Working Group be established, as set out above, membership of which to be agreed at the next Full Council meeting.

#### **9. Carbon Reduction – 19 North Square**

Members considered a report by the Town Clerk which set out various options for reducing the carbon footprint of the North Square offices. It was noted that the works would be funded from the Council's Climate Emergency reserve.

### **Resolved**

That the following carbon reduction measures be put in place as soon as possible:-

- Installation of LED lighting throughout the building.
- Insulation of the loft space / secondary double glazing where possible.
- Installation of solar panels and a battery subject to necessary approvals.
- Air source heat pump.

#### **10. Free Parking Days**

The Committee had before it a report by the Town Clerk on the future allocation of free parking days in the town centre car parks.

### **Resolved**

1. That, from next year onwards, the free parking days be allocated by the Committee at its May or July meeting each year.
2. That the Dorchester Joint Heritage Committee be offered a free parking day for its Heritage Open Day event on Sunday 10 September 2023.

#### **11. 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 press representatives be excluded from this meeting during their discussion.

#### **12. Part Time Tourism Development Officer**

The Committee considered a report by the Town Clerk on the Part Time Tourism Development Officer.

### **Resolved**

That the post of part time Tourism Development Officer be made permanent with immediate effect.

### 13. **Pay Grades**

The Committee had before it a report from the Town Clerk in respect of the pay grades for the two Outdoor Services Depot Skilled Workers. Both posts had seen a permanent increase in responsibilities.

### **Resolved**

That the two Outdoor Services Depot Skilled Worker posts be regraded from SCP7 (£22,369 per year) to SCP11 (£24,054 per year) as from 1 July 2023.

The Committee returned to open session.

### 14. **Urgent Item – Closure of Dorchester South Station Ticket Office**

As a matter of urgency, due to the consultation ending on 26 July 2023, the Committee discussed the consultation from South Western Railway on a proposal to close the ticket office at Dorchester South Railway Station. The changes proposed were as follows:-

- Instead of having a ticket office open from 5.50am to 6.15pm on Monday to Friday, Dorchester South would have just one member of staff helping passengers and selling tickets on the platforms from 6am to 12.45pm during the week.
- At weekends, instead of having a ticket office open on Saturdays from 6.45am to 5pm, again, one member of staff will assist passengers with ticket sales from 6am to 12.45pm.
- On Sundays, Dorchester South – which currently has a staffed ticket office from 8.45am to 4pm – will be unmanned.
- During the unmanned hours passengers will be able to use video-calls on the ticket machines to get assistance from a South Western Railway worker at a video call centre.

Members had been circulated with a response to the consultation by the Chairman of the Friends of Dorchester South Station and the Committee agreed with the comments made in that correspondence. Members also wished to comment that Dorchester South was a travel interchange with the town having two stations and passengers needed assistance in respect of their onward journeys. It was also felt that the revised proposals meant that not just those with protected characteristics but those wanting to use the toilet or deal with complicated questions or renew a rail card were disadvantaged.

### **Resolved**

That the Council objects to the proposals for the closure of the booking office at Dorchester South Railway Station as set out above.

Chairman.....

# Cornhill Task and Finish Group Meeting Notes

Date of Meeting: 12<sup>th</sup> June 2023

## Present:

- Emma Scott, Community Development Officer, Dorchester Town Council
- Matilda Manley, Tourism Development Officer, Dorchester Town Council
- Carl Dallison, Assistant Town Clerk, Dorchester Town Council
- Tony Hurley, Assistant Town Clerk, Dorchester Town Council
- Frances Hogwood, Councillor, Dorchester Town Council
- Stella Jones, Councillor, Dorchester Town Council
- Susie Hosford, Councillor, Dorchester Town Council
- Dorchester Youth Council representatives
- Grant, Cornhill Market Manager

## Notes of meeting:

The group met at the Town Pump to visualise their developing plans for the Cornhill area.

The Tourism Development Officer updated on correspondence with Dorset Council regarding the groups proposals:

Matilda met with Stephen Mephram and Corinne Holbrook from Dorset Council Highways Team to sense check the plans that the Task and Finish Group have been developing for Cornhill area.

The following comments were made:

- 1- They are not keen for events to be held at Cornhill – “currently we allow events at Barclays on South St only. I am reluctant to change this to include Town Pump area at present as I feel that this location is very busy for pedestrians and High West / East / South St junction is also the busiest part of town for vehicles. There are a lot of pedestrians crossing High West at this point and I do not feel comfortable adding a distraction (live music, lego tables etc) into this mix.”
- 2- They would be happy with paving supplied by Marshalls as long as it is “type approved”. We would need to buy a surplus stock of paving that they could use for repairs if needed, otherwise the area needing repair would be backfilled with tarmac.
- 3- Initial thoughts were that they liked the proposed seating layout and would be happy if the bins and town trains signs were relocated. However, any new seating or bins would be our responsibility. They thought that Dorchester Town Council owned the current bins and seating.
- 4- The highway element at Cornhill would need to be 3.5 metres minimum in their opinion.
- 5- There are no restrictions on the types of vehicles that can use the highway along South Street during the permitted times.
- 6- They talked about legal changes to the highway. They spoke about the possibility of them making the town pump seating area non highway again. If they did this then they would have to find out who owned it originally, before it became a highway, then the town Council could buy it from them.
- 7- Trees – they would need to know more about the height and leaf fall before they commented.
- 8- Dorset Council will look at the proposal more with us. Then Dorset Council will give a yes or no to the concept. After that we will have to have a site meeting with them and then Dorset

Council will draw up a legal agreement. The construction would have to be carried out by Dorchester Town Council.

- 9- Stephen said not to go any further with exact paving and seating and technical drawings yet, wait for more feedback from Dorset Council first on their initial thoughts.

After the meeting with Stephen Mepham, he sent our last meeting notes and his own comments to colleagues in Dorset Council Highways for initial thoughts. Colin Moors (Highways Improvement Team Leader, Economic Growth and Infrastructure, Dorset Council) and Neil Turner (Service Manager for Network Operations, Dorset Council) have now been assigned to look at the area with us and will be working with the group on the redevelopment plans.

The group discussed the implications of the feedback from Dorset Council on their plans. They also showed the plans for comment to Grant from Cornhill Market and Carl Dallison. The following suggestions were made:

- Put another semi circular bench at the Christmas tree end of the seating area that can be removed for the Christmas tree each year
- Shorten the Cornhill market area so that there is room for a vehicle to pass between the market and the end of the seating area
- Create a planted bed and sign to mark the start of the Cornhill Market. This will help deter vehicles from travelling down South Street between 9:30 am and 4:30 pm. It would also help bring recognition and an identity to the Cornhill market (which is over 100 years old)
- Move the Traffic signs at the Cornhill entrance to South Street and mount them on planters at the entrance instead.

Following this meeting site meetings have been arranged with Dorset Council and a further Task and Finish Group Meeting needs to be arranged.

Matilda Manley  
Tourism Development Officer