

# **DORCHESTER TOWN COUNCIL**

## **POLICY COMMITTEE**

**19th JULY, 2011**

At a Meeting of the Policy Committee held on 19th July, 2011:

**PRESENT** Councillors V.J. Allan, R.M. Biggs (in the Chair), T.C.N. Harries, G.M. Jones, P.G. Mann and D.S. Roberts.

**APOLOGIES** for absence were received from The Mayor (Councillor T. James) and Councillor Trevor Jones.

1. **MINUTES**

The Minutes of the Meeting of the Committee held on 17th July, 2011, adopted by Council on 24th July, 2011, were taken as read and were confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

2. **MINUTES OF MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE**

The Committee considered the under-mentioned Minutes of the Management Committee held on 12th July, 2011:

Minute 5 – Panels and Groups

Minute 7 – Land at Elizabeth Place.

It was

**RESOLVED**

- (1) That Minute 5 be further considered at Minutes 4 and 5 below.
- (2) That the offer of Magna Housing Group to convey to the Council the freehold interest in Elizabeth Place Play Area free of consideration be welcomed.

3. **DORCHESTER MARKETS**

The Committee received and noted the Minutes of the final meeting of the Dorchester Markets Joint Committee and of the inaugural meeting of the Dorchester Markets Informal Joint Panel, both of which had been held on 22nd June, 2011.

In response to questions the Town Clerk reported on the background to, and reasons for, the change in status and the practical implications of it. He also referred to the ongoing negotiations with the Market Operator for them to take on a full repairing lease of the market site which would be the subject of a future report to the Joint Panel and, separately, to the constituent authorities.

4. **PANELS 2011-12**

(a) **Membership of Panels – 2011-12**

The Committee considered the allocation of Members of this Committee to Panels following the receipt of Councillors' individual preferences.

It was

**RECOMMENDED**

That the following Members be appointed by this Committee to Panels for the 2011-12 Council Year:

Arts

Councillor V.J. Allan

Borough Gardens

Councillor G.M. Jones

Community Activities

Councillor P.G. Mann

Grants

Councillor V.J. Allan

Outdoor Services

Councillor T.C.N. Harries

Property Management and Maintenance

Councillor D.S. Roberts

Resources

Councillors T.C.N. Harries, Trevor Jones and P.G. Mann

Risk Management

Councillors R.M. Biggs and G.M. Jones

(b) **Appointment of Chairmen and Vice-Chairmen**

Members considered the appointments of Chairmen and Vice-Chairmen to those Panels that were responsible to the Policy Committee. Members agreed not to appoint Vice-Chairmen at this stage.

It was

**RESOLVED**

That the following Chairmen of the Panels stated be elected for the 2011-12 Council year:

Resources

Chairman – Councillor Trevor Jones

Risk Management

Chairman – Councillor R.M. Biggs

5. **ALLOTMENT PROVISION**

The Committee considered a report by the Deputy Town Clerk on the possible establishment of a task and finish group to look at allotment provision in the town and propose a strategy for the future. In considering the report the Committee also took into account the views of the Management Committee sets out at Minute 5(c).

Following discussion it was

**RECOMMENDED**

- (1) That the Committee supports the proposed creation of the task and finish groups and that Councillors P.G. Mann and D.S. Roberts be appointed as this Committee's representatives on it.
- (2) That the Committee does not concur with the view of the Management Committee that it is not necessary for a Chairman of the group to be appointed and that, in the absence of a nomination from the Management Committee, Councillor P.G. Mann be elected Chairman of it.

6. **MANAGEMENT ACCOUNTS**

The Committee received and noted the Council's Management Accounts for the period ended 30th June, 2011.

Arising from the consideration of this item it was

**RESOLVED**

That the Financial Service Provider be requested to include in future Management Accounts comparative figures setting out the position at the same date in the previous financial year.

7. **INTERNAL AUDIT**

The Committee received and noted the reports of the Internal Auditor in respect of both the Council and the Dorchester Joint Burial Committee following his recent visits.

8. **DATA PROTECTION ACT 1998 – COUNCILLORS NOTIFICATIONS**

The Committee considered the report of the Town Clerk recommending that all Members who owned computers should notify the Information Commissioner's Office individually under the Data Protection Act 1998 at a fee of £35 per annum pending a possible relaxation of the requirement at some stage in the future.

The report also invited the Committee to consider whether the Council should reimburse the costs of notification as was the practice in some other authorities.

Following discussion it was

**RECOMMENDED**

- (1) That all Members who own or use computers be recommended to formally notify the Information Commissioner's Office at the earliest opportunity.
- (2) That the Council's Allowances Scheme be amended to provide for the reimbursement of the costs of annual notification to all Members who are not also Members of either Dorset County Council or West Dorset District Council on production of evidence that notification has taken place.

9. **DORSET MARTYRS MEMORIAL**

Further to Council Minute 18(2) the Committee received and noted the report of the Town Clerk on the question of ownership of the Dorset Martyrs Memorial at Gallows Hill. Since the Memorial stood on the Council's freehold land the default position was that the Council also owned the Memorial, and enquiries of those involved in its commissioning and siting revealed that this was their understanding. An insurance valuation was awaited, following the receipt of which the appropriate insurances would be put in place.

10. **EQUALITY ACT 2010**

The Committee received and noted a copy of Legal Topic Note LTN78 issued by the National Association of Local Councils about this Act, most of the provisions of which had come into force on 1st October, 2010. The Act consolidated a number of pieces of previous legislation and introduced new provisions relating to equality, including identifying additional 'protected characteristics' and new offences including 'discrimination by association'. The Public Sector Equality Duty set out in Section 149 of the Act had come into operation on 5th April, 2011 and required public authorities (including town and parish councils) to take into account the needs:

- to eliminate discrimination and harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Act;

- to advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not share it; and
- to foster good relations between those who share protected characteristics and those who do not.

11. **PUBLIC BODIES (ADMISSION TO MEETINGS) ACT 1960**

It was

**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 matter, the public and representatives of the press be excluded from this Meeting during its discussion.

12. **TOWN CRIER**

The Committee considered a letter dated 7th June, 2011 received by the Chairman from the Town Crier following the latter's election on 5th May, 2011 as a West Dorset District Councillor for Charminster and Cerne Valley Ward.

Members were reminded that the Town Crier was independent of, and was not employed by, the Council, although formal adoption as Town Crier was necessary to enable him to enter competitions. The Council only paid a small honorarium to the Town Crier and assisted from time to time with the purchase of clothing and other insignia.

The Committee was of the opinion that it was necessary to separate the roles of Town Crier (which must be apolitical) and District Councillor (which would from time to time be political) and welcomed the assurance contained in the letter that the Town Crier would not act politically in any way when fulfilling the role of Town Crier.

Chairman