



# Dorchester Town Council

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17 February 2016

**Agenda** for a special meeting of the **Policy Committee** which will be held in the **Council Chamber, Municipal Buildings, Dorchester** on **Tuesday 23 February 2016** at **7.00pm**.

Adrian Stuart  
Town Clerk

## Public Speaking at the Meeting

The Chairman has discretion to allow members of the public to speak at the meeting. If you wish to speak please ask the Chairman before the meeting starts. We ask speakers to confine their comments to the matter in hand and to be as brief as is reasonably possible.

## Member Code of Conduct: Declaration of Interests

Members are reminded that it is their responsibility to disclose pecuniary or non-pecuniary interests where appropriate.

A Member who declares a pecuniary interest must leave the room unless a suitable dispensation has been granted.

A Member who declares a non-pecuniary interest may take part in the meeting and vote.

## Membership of the Committee

Mayor R. Potter and Councillors B. Armstrong-Marshall, R. Biggs, A. Chisholm, T. Harries, S. Hosford, G. Jones (Chairman) and T. Jones.

1. **Apologies**
2. **Borehole, Soakaway and Water Distribution System in the Borough Gardens** **A**
3. **A project for the provision of affordable housing on a Council owned site** **B**
4. **Dorchester Youth Centre** **C**

**DORCHESTER TOWN COUNCIL**  
**POLICY COMMITTEE - 23 FEBRUARY 2016**

**BOREHOLE, SOAKAWAY AND WATER DISTRIBUTION SYSTEM IN THE BOROUGH GARDENS**

1. In September 2015 the Committee agreed to reserve £40,000 to implement efficiency measures focused on reducing our utility consumption.
2. A number of minor projects have already been initiated across our sites, primarily focused on improved time control over heating systems, reducing gas and electric consumption. These were installed in October 2015 at a cost of £660, prior to the winter period. The payback from the investment should be realised within 2 years.
3. Additionally several basic maintenance issues have been identified and addressed which should reduce water consumption, with a payback of under a year. These have been met from existing budgets.
4. In 2014/15 £17,027 was spent on water and sewerage bills in Parks and Open Spaces, £4,000 over the £13,000 budget, with £11,700 being linked to the Borough Gardens. Through informal discussions with our Pump Maintenance contractor an idea was developed for the introduction of a borehole and soakaway for the children's play fountain. At an estimated cost of £15,000 and with a target saving of £5,000 a year, it was to have a payback of around 3 years. A geological survey was commissioned which concluded that a borehole would be an effective solution.
5. A formal tender process took place during December/January 2016, with a request that tender submissions also consider how the borehole might be linked to works to reduce water consumption more widely in the Gardens. In addition to a notice on our website we contacted 8 specialist suppliers, 6 of whom submitted an interest in tendering for the work. At the closing date 2 submissions were received as follows: -

Supplier	Borehole inc Pump £	Soakaway & Water System £	Total £
Simon Moore Water Services	13,906	17,480	31,386
Geologic Boreholes	15,429	No price	N/A

6. A site meeting was held with Simon Moore to understand their tender submission and the wider water management benefits it might offer. A number of minor modifications were discussed that would increase the cost of the initial installation but which would result in a greater reduction in operational costs. The outcome of the discussions is that for an upfront cost of c. £33,600 and ongoing additional maintenance costs of under £1,000 the Council will remove 3 water supplies to the site and significantly reduce water consumption and waste sewage removal on a fourth, with an estimated saving of £9,500 a year. The payback would be under 4 years and would result in a net saving of around

£50,000 over the first 10 years of operation.

7. In risk terms: -

- There is a 5% chance that the borehole will not generate the required water – the cost of aborting the scheme should the problem be encountered, early on, is c. £5,000
- The installation price would be varied up or down should there be a need to drill to a different depth than the 50m depth planned for
- There will be an additional maintenance responsibility, judged to be minimal
- The borehole will provide water for use in the Staff mess room, with drinking water being UV treated
- The risk of additional cost from mains water supplies associated with malfunctioning equipment or water leaks will be significantly reduced
- The supply would be available during drought conditions
- The bowser used for watering hanging baskets will also use the borehole, reducing consumption at Louds Mill depot (saving not quantified)

8. In environmental terms the use of a borehole will reduce our use of treated mains water consumption by c. 2,500m<sup>3</sup> a year, a 90% reduction in mains water used in the Borough Gardens and 40% of all water consumed providing Council services, and a reduction of sewage sent for treatment of c. 2,300m<sup>3</sup>. Other than electric for the pump and the UV treatment unit there are no negatives.

9. Other options and combinations of options have been tested. The most beneficial element of the scheme financially is the soakaway, which could be done in isolation and has the quickest payback. We are also challenging some of the current assessments for “return to sewer” adopted by Wessex Water, which, if successful, would lengthen the payback. The most effective solution, however, with the largest financial gain over time, is the comprehensive borehole, water system and soakaway solution.

10. Boreholes and wells have a proven track record in Dorchester, with both Dorset County Hospital and Dorchester Town FC owning boreholes used for non-drinking water and the Eldridge Pope site historically using a well for its supply.

**11. It is recommended that the tender price submitted by Simon Moore Water Services, as modified by subsequent discussion, is accepted.**

12. The borehole can be in place for the beginning of the summer period. A method statement has been prepared to minimise disruption caused by the works, which would take place between the Easter and May Half term holidays.

Adrian Stuart  
Town Clerk

**DORCHESTER TOWN COUNCIL  
POLICY COMMITTEE – 23 FEBRUARY 2016**

**A PROJECT FOR THE PROVISION OF AFFORDABLE HOUSING ON A COUNCIL OWNED SITE**

1. In January the Town Clerk made an informal presentation to Members regarding the potential to develop sites in the Council's ownership for affordable housing purposes. The report recognised both a general need for social housing but also the need to find solutions to support young people to be able to live in the town that they work in.
2. Members considered the national and local picture for affordable housing and recognised that the current mix of Government regulations and initiatives, the attitudes of some local RSLs to new housebuilding and the increasing argument regarding viability used by some developers were all barriers to provision.
3. At the same time there were still some positives, with the commitment of the Duchy of Cornwall to meeting affordable housing targets and a proactive attitude among some local RSLs and housing providers being important. Notwithstanding this, any effort that the Town Council could put into assisting the development of new units of affordable housing would be both a positive contribution and an important statement of intent.
4. With property prices locally starting at £150,000 and average earnings at c. £25,000 there is a clear affordability gap for many workers. Our Corporate Plan identified Affordable Housing for Young Workers as a priority, recognising a worsening demographic imbalance and the negative impacts of commuting on traffic and parking in the town and on community cohesion.
5. To deliver Affordable Housing effectively six things need to be in place
  - Land at low/no cost
  - Planning permission
  - A contract to build to an affordable specification
  - A buyer who can afford and wants to buy the property
  - A mortgage lender who is not deterred by any conditions imposed on ownership and resale
  - A mechanism for subsequently reselling the property to a specific target group
6. For the Town Council the nature of its land holdings, planning conditions, current use and the impact on local residents all complicate the picture. None of the sites in our ownership are straightforward, many have potential, most are currently put to a community use with some value.
7. Following informal discussions it was agreed informally to pursue the following strategy: -
  - Hold discussions with West Dorset DC and Hastoe about the potential to develop the Trinity St Tennis Courts site, following the relocation of the courts to the Borough Gardens Bowling Green
  - Hold discussions with a small local housing society regarding the potential development of two small sites in the south east quarter of the town

- Make no decisions about further sites until the above had demonstrated how affordable housing could be delivered
8. Sufficient informal discussion has taken place on the sites listed above to confirm that development might be possible. It has reached the stage where discussions need to be put on a more formal setting.
9. With regard to the Tennis Courts site the next steps would be: -
- Seek discussions with the planning authority (WDDC) to reconsider the terms under which the site was originally transferred to the Town Council for recreational purposes
  - Discuss, with the adjacent car park site owner (WDDC), whether there is potential to work collaboratively across the two sites to maximise development benefit
  - Consider the options for an appropriate vehicle (Community Land Trust or similar model) to which the site would be transferred
  - Apply to the Housing Authority (WDDC) for financial support to develop a suitable scheme
  - Seek agreement with a suitable professional housing provider, e.g. Hastoe HA to act as managing agents for the development at a fee, leading on construction, sales, ongoing management and resales
10. With regard to the smaller sites the next steps would be: -
- Appoint a local Housing provider to take a lead in developing a scheme
  - Seek discussions with the Planning and Housing authority (WDDC) as above
  - If a viable project achieves planning permission seek to transfer the land to the Housing provider at a price that reflects the constraints being placed on it, likely to be minimal charge
- 11. It is recommended that the Town Council pursue the development of the Trinity St site for affordable housing and continue discussions with a local housing provider regarding two other small sites in the Council's ownership.**

Adrian Stuart  
Town Clerk

**DORCHESTER TOWN COUNCIL****POLICY COMMITTEE – 23 FEBRUARY 2016****SUPPORT FOR DORCHESTER YOUTH CENTRE**

1. In November the Council discussed its approach to the threatened withdrawal of funding and management support for Youth Centres by Dorset County Council. At the time the Council formally objected to the proposal but resolved not to commit support for the Dorchester Youth Centre until Dorset County Council had confirmed its position.
2. On 13 January Dorset County Council Cabinet confirmed a change in its strategy to the future provision of youth services, determining that they would no longer support 22 facilities across the county, instead focusing on the “provision of a more proactive and targeted youth service, close to where young people are”.
3. The County Council still intend to provide some form of support to bodies that may wish to take over the running of its Youth Centres, as follows: -
  - The buildings which are currently used as youth centres will be offered for community use, with any operational costs being met by the user - this offer is conditional on Dorset County Council not requiring the building for other purposes
  - £200,000 pa is allocated to support communities across the county that wish to provide places to go and things to do for young people (only guaranteed for 3 years)
  - There is an implied suggestion that there will be an opportunity for the County Council’s residual Youth team to work in partnership with locally operated Youth Centres

A meeting is scheduled with a County Council officer on 15 February which will clarify any issues regarding the availability of support from Dorset C.C.

4. The Council established a Member Task Group to review our role in facilitating a continued youth service, of the Mayor and Councillors R. Biggs S. Jones and Rennie, recently supplemented by Councillor Rice who is our representative on the Youth Centre Management Committee. The Town Clerk and Deputy Town Clerk have been in discussions with both this group and with the Centre Manager about the potential for a management body to be set up to run the Centre in the future and about the degree to which the Town Council might be willing to offer support and commit resources.
5. A member of the Youth Centre Management Committee is preparing a Business Case for a new operation and officers will work closely to assist its preparation. The Business Case will need to cover the service that is to be provided, income and expenditure of the facility, its governance and employment arrangements as well as a number of technical issues related to working with young people. An early discussion with Dorset Youth Association indicates that they are available to advise a new body regarding suitable governance arrangements.

6. The current cost of the Dorchester operation is £93,000 a year, although it is not clear whether this in part meets the cost of outreach at Crossways and to other sites, with 95%+ of the funding coming from the County Council. Even if costs can be reduced significantly, unless the Town Council is willing to play a cornerstone financial funding role there is very limited chance that a new approach will succeed. To make progress with a Business Plan, which needs to be submitted to DCC in late March, an indication of the level of support which the Town Council is willing to commit is essential.
7. Three quarters of the costs of running the current facility are staff, the other quarter being buildings related and equipment. The majority of any savings to be found will result from reductions in staff costs. It is difficult to see how a Centre could operate close to current levels in the long term with much less than £60,000 a year expenditure.
8. Other than Town Council support the primary means of generating funding are from DCC funding, hiring out the building, fees to Youth Centre users and ad hoc fundraising and grant applications. Over time the potential to generate income may grow but in the early days a guaranteed contribution from the Town Council would allow the Centre to operate while other income streams are developed. If the Town Council was willing to commit up to £30,000, 50% of the running cost, for the short term it would buy time for the Youth Centre to develop alternative income streams.
9. Using the above as a starting point the Committee is invited to consider the following proposal:-
  - That for 3 years from 1 April 2016 the Town Council guarantees to meet 50% of total operational costs, capped at £30,000pa, i.e. if total running costs are £50,000 we contribute £25,000, if they are £65,000 our contribution is £30,000
  - The Town Council signals that from 1 April 2019 onwards it expects to meet no more than 33% of total operational costs, capped at £20,000 pa
  - A one off grant of £3,000 is made available immediately to be drawn on should the Management Committee need to get professional advice regarding the setting up of an appropriate body
10. This approach would give some certainty to a new body during the early stages of its development, but set a more challenging long term target for a successful body to work towards within a reasonable time frame. If this approach is accepted in principle then further discussions will take place with the Youth Centre Management Committee regarding how they might set up a suitable body to manage the facility. The Committee's views are sought.

Adrian Stuart  
Town Clerk