

DORCHESTER TOWN COUNCIL

POLICY COMMITTEE

21ST JANUARY 2014

At a Meeting of the Policy Committee held on 21st January 2014:

PRESENT The Mayor (Councillor E.S. Jones) and Councillors V.J. Allan, R.M. Biggs, T.C.N. Harries, G.M. Jones, Trevor Jones (Chairman), P.G. Mann and D.S. Roberts.

In attendance:

Councillors R.B. Potter and M.E. Rennie.

26. **MINUTES**

The Minutes of the Meeting of the Committee held on 19th November 2013, having been adopted by Council on 26th November 2013, were confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

27. **MANAGEMENT ACCOUNTS**

The Committee received and noted the Council's Management Accounts for the period 1st April to 31st December 2013. An additional page representing the management accounts in graph form was circulated.

The Town Clerk provided responses to questions from Members in relation to the Town Crier's Uniform Reserve, the Allotments profile, and the relationship between predicted reserve levels and current cash and bank holdings.

The Committee noted the cash position, and that the current position regarding Reserves and Balances was in line with the Medium Term Financial Strategy.

The Committee received and noted progress on the Action Plan set for the Management Team for the period 1 October 2013 – 31 March 2014.

28. **PANEL MINUTES**

Resources Panel

The Committee considered the Minutes of the Resources Panel held on 9th January 2014. The Minutes were amended to note the involvement of Councillor S.C. Hosford in discussions with Funeral Directors about future fee levels.

It was

RESOLVED

That, subject to the amendment set out above, the Minutes be approved so far as this Committee is concerned

29. **MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY AND REVENUE BUDGET 2014/15**

The Town Clerk presented a detailed report regarding the Council's financial strategy, covering the Medium Term Financial Strategy, the precept, the budget for 2014/15, one off items of expenditure, Earmarked Reserves, the Council Tax Support Grant, and the General Reserve.

The Town Clerk also provided a brief update regarding a submission made to the District Council relating to the level of Council Tax Support Grant in 2014/15 and future years, and also in relation to the potential risk of new rules imposed by Government for increases in Band D charges.

After considering all aspects of the report, and on being put to a vote, it was

RECOMMENDED

- (1) That the Council adopt the Medium Term Financial Strategy and Revenue Budget 2014/15 as laid out.
- (2) That for 2014/15 the Council Tax Band D charge be set at £173.12 and that a precept in the sum of £1,162,423 be levied on the West Dorset District Council in respect of the financial year 2014/15 requesting that payment be made in two equal instalments on 1st April and 1st October, 2014.
- (3) That the following Special Items are included in the budget:-
 - Community Speed Watch equipment £1,000
 - Skate Park fencing/access £6,500
 - Cemeteries Memorial stability testing £2,000
 - Corn Exchange works investigations £3,500
 - WW1 Commemorations £5,000
- (4) That, in the event that Government introduces regulations that would alter the process for setting the proposed tax increase, a special meeting of Council be called.

30. **INTERNAL AUDIT REPORT**

The Committee noted the report of the Internal Auditor.

The Committee asked that the current auditor, Henry Lovegrove, be invited to attend a future meeting of Council to receive the Council's thanks for his work over the many years he has provided the internal audit service.

31. **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.

32. **CONTRIBUTION TO CCTV PROVISION IN DORCHESTER**

The Committee considered a report produced on behalf of the Member Scrutiny Group in relation to financial support for CCTV.

The report, and subsequent discussions, covered the role of each partner in the scheme, the attitudes of partners to funding the service, evidence both of the effectiveness and ineffectiveness of CCTV in identifying crime and supporting criminal prosecutions, the limited number of incidents in Dorchester, and the decision of Weymouth and Portland Borough Council to alter the service such that it was less relevant to the needs of Dorchester.

The Committee considered three possible options that the Council could take in the future, and noted that a possible solution offered by the Town Council to Weymouth & Portland Borough Council had been rejected. After a proposal to reduce the annual financial contribution was defeated by vote, it was

RECOMMENDED

That the Town Council should end its contributions to the CCTV scheme.

Chairman

DORCHESTER TOWN COUNCIL

RESOURCES PANEL

9TH JANUARY 2014

PRESENT The Mayor (Councillor E.S. Jones) and Councillors R.M. Biggs, S.C. Hosford, G.M. Jones, Trevor Jones (Chairman) and R.B. Potter.

In Attendance: Councillors V.J. Allan and M.E. Rennie.

6. MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY AND REVENUE BUDGET 2014/15

The Panel received the report of the Town Clerk, plus an update from West Dorset District Council regarding Council Tax Support Grant (CTSG) and the Council Tax Base. Members noted the changes made since the last report to the Panel in November, with regard to pensions, market income and Grass Cutting in Cemeteries.

The Panel received an updated Summary Revenue Budget that, allowing for receipt of £93,000 CTSG, would allow £90,000 to be transferred to the General Reserve in 2014/15, and a Medium Term Financial Strategy that, allowing for no CTSG in future, still had a positive net financial position in each of the next four years.

The Panel agreed that the Town Clerk should respond to the District Council's Revenue Budget consultation in relation to the reduction in CTSG compared to that received in 2013/14.

A full report on the budget and precept would be made to the Policy Committee, which would make recommendations to Council.

7. INTERNAL AUDIT PROVISION

The Panel noted the Town Clerk's report of progress on the procurement of new auditors for the 2014/15 financial year and it was

RECOMMENDED

That the Chairman and Vice Chairman of Policy Committee take part in the interviews for the appointment of the auditor, and that authority to appoint the auditor be delegated to the Town Clerk in consultation with the Chairman and Vice Chairman of Policy Committee

8. FINANCIAL SERVICES PROVISION

The Panel considered the Town Clerk's report regarding an alternative method of delivering the Council's Financial Services requirements, through the direct appointment of a Financial Controller, with aspects of their role covered by other members of the team to replace existing contract arrangements.

The Panel fully considered the advantages and disadvantages of both delivery methods, noting the proposal to integrate financial services provision into the work of the offices team, rather than employ one officer who would exclusively provide the role, and also the potential extra capacity to improve office systems that would result from having an in house resource. The Panel also noted the need for basic financial management skills to be a core element of the role of any future Town Clerk.

Some concern was expressed regarding the risk of non-appointment, and how other tiers of local government might respond given any decision to terminate the existing contract. It was acknowledged that cover for payroll also presented a risk.

It was

RECOMMENDED

That, subject to the receipt of a letter of comfort from Dorset County Council regarding cover arrangements, and subject to the transfer of payroll management to Dorset County Council's Payroll bureau, the post of Financial Controller should be added to the Council's establishment, and in due course the job descriptions of other members of the office team should be renegotiated to include appropriate cover arrangements for the role

9. **OUTDOOR SERVICES TEAM – FUTURE STAFFING ARRANGEMENTS**

The Panel considered and endorsed the report of the Town Clerk, and asked that a report be prepared to the Management Committee covering

- a) The appointment of a foreman for the Depot based Outdoor Services Team
- b) The appointment of an apprentice to the Outdoor Services Team, funded by savings elsewhere in the budget
- c) A review of arrangements for cleaning the Walks

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

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11. **INCOME GENERATION**

The Panel considered proposals for future income generation from direct service users, in order to reduce the burden on Council Taxpayers and it was

RECOMMENDED

- (1) That discussions take place with Funeral Directors regarding future fee levels, prior to a report being made to the Management Committee, and that Councillor S.C. Hosford be involved in those discussions.
- (2) That a report be prepared to the Management Committee regarding revised fees for new allotments tenancies

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