

Dorchester Town Council

Policy Committee

20 January 2015

Present: Mayor P.G. Mann and Councillors V. Allan, R. Biggs, T. Harries, G. Jones, T. Jones (Chairman) and D. Roberts.

Apologies: Councillor A. Canning

In attendance: Councillor R. Potter

32. Minutes

The Minutes of the Meeting of the Committee held on 18 November 2014, adopted by Council on 25 November 2014, were taken as read and were confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

33. Finance & Performance Report

The Financial Controller presented a report covering the 9 months to 31 December 2014, identifying an underspend to date of £64,000, leading to a likely underspend at the year end of £50 - £70,000.

In response to a question he provided information about treasury investment returns and outstanding debts.

34. Revenue Budget 2015/16 and Medium Term Financial Strategy

In presenting the budget for 2015/16, the Town Clerk explained the changes from the current financial year. He placed the budget into the medium term context, focusing on the uncertainty surrounding continued service delivery by other tiers of government locally.

Members asked questions about CCTV, Dorchester Market income and the relationship between increased Council Tax Base and the Precept.

Members discussed the need for an increase in the Council Tax, considering the short term surplus on the Revenue budget against longer term issues including pressure on services at other tiers of Government, taking on infrastructure in parts of the town currently under development, the emerging vision for the town, and Government's consultation on referendums for Town Councils.

The Town Clerk explained the factors influencing the Medium Term Financial Strategy, including the impact of the District Council's decision on Council Tax Support Grant. He also outlined the position relating to the Council's Reserves and new spending from the Earmarked Reserves.

Recommended

That Council adopt the Medium Term Financial Strategy and Revenue Budget 2015/16 as laid out in the document to be presented to Council, including:

- a) The Council Tax Band D charge of £176.50
- b) The precept at £1,209,555
- c) A new Service Growth Reserve, with a transfer of £80,000 in 2015/16
- d) The allocation of specific items totalling £18,000 as identified in the Revenue Budget book, in line with a request made by the Management Committee

35. Opportunities to provide Apprenticeships

The Town Clerk updated the Committee on the Council's positive first year of experience in supporting apprentice placements, including funding support given by West Dorset DC and the National Apprenticeship Scheme.

He identified the potential for three new placements across the Town Council's activities in 2015/16, identifying that the cost could be met from existing salary budgets.

In supporting the proposal Members discussed the need to ensure that apprentices did not replace the work of existing staff, that appropriate training should be sourced for the different apprenticeships proposed, and that the appointment of apprentices did not distract staff from their current roles. The Town Clerk undertook to review whether grant funding might be available to reduce the cost of the scheme.

Resolved

That the Council seek to appoint three apprentices during the financial year, one each in the Offices and Borough Gardens teams, and possibly one in the Municipal Buildings in partnership with Dorchester Arts, at a cost not to exceed £13,500 to be met from underspends in staff budgets during the 2015/16 year.

36. Update on relocation of Dorchester Arts into the Municipal Buildings

The Committee noted an update report of the Town Clerk regarding the possible relocation of Dorchester Arts into the Municipal Buildings. Members discussed the need for legal advice on the form of agreement needed for the relationship.

Resolved

That a Special Meeting of Council be held on Tuesday 24 February to decide whether to agree to the relocation of Dorchester Arts into the Municipal Buildings.

37. **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 representatives of the press be excluded from this meeting during their discussion.

38. **Bar Franchise**

The Town Clerk updated the Committee regarding the bar franchise. The Committee noted that a number of options had been identified to ensure that provision of a bar continued in the short term, which would be pursued in the following order: -

- If the operators of the Kings Arms were willing to continue to supply the franchise this would continue until the end of the current franchise
- If the above fails, then in the event that it is agreed that Dorchester Arts move into the Municipal Buildings, they be invited to take over the franchise at an early stage in the relocation process
- If neither of the above is achievable the Town Council take over the bar temporarily until a new franchisee can be found

Chairman