

Dorchester Town Council

Policy Committee

23 June 2015

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

In attendance: Councillors J. Hewitt and M. Rennie

1. Minutes

The Minutes of the Committee held on 17 March 2015, adopted by Council on 24 March 2015, were taken as read and were confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

2. Finance Report

The Financial Controller presented a report covering the 2 months to 31 May 2015, identifying an underspend to date of £27,000 against the revised budget, which was £24,000 lower than the initial budget set.

He responded to questions relating to the level of cash held with the Council's bank and one item on the payments list.

Resolved

That the Payments list be approved.

The Committee considered the current level of General Reserves, likely to reach £700,000 by the end of the financial year and recognised the potential that the Reserves had for bringing in match funding for projects.

Recommended

That a review of the Corporate Plan take place with the aim of allocating up to £500,000 to new corporate projects and commencing consideration of Service Growth issues

The Committee considered the request of the Management Committee to allocate funds towards a project to refurbish John's Pond. A member asked that the ditches from John's Pond be checked to make sure they can cope with the outflow from the pond. Another member expressed support for an event to be held to celebrate the restoration.

Resolved

That £5,600 be allocated to fund the restoration of John's Pond

3. **Refurbishing the Town Walks**

The Committee considered a plan to refurbish the Town Walks, focusing in particular on the first phase of works between Hardy's Statue and Trinity Street.

Noting the risk of changing personnel at Dorset County Council during the extended timescale of any phased implementation of the scheme a member asked that the Town Clerk secure a Memorandum of Understanding that covered the whole transfer.

A member asked that the costs of an enhanced finish to the pathway be provided. The Town Clerk undertook to ascertain the upfront and subsequent maintenance costs of an alternative finish and provide the information to a future meeting.

Resolved

That, subject to obtaining a memorandum of understanding with Dorset County Council covering the whole scheme, the Town Council adopt a strategy to refurbish and transfer responsibility for the Town Walks as follows:

- a) Undertake phase 1 works (Hardy's Statue to Trinity Street plus the access point at Northernhay) at a cost of c. £150,000, to be funded by a contribution of £45,000 from Dorset County Council, the balance to be met from the Town Walks Reserve, including the transfer of the footpath to the Highway Authority
- b) Once Phase 1 is completed, consider options for funding further stretches of the Walks in South Walks Road, followed by Colliton Park and ultimately East Walks

4. **Review of the Committee and Panel Process**

The Town Clerk reported to the Committee regarding Council's current governance arrangements covering Committees and Panels. The Committee considered the options that would be available if Council wished to alter those arrangements and indicated a preference for a comprehensive review of governance arrangements.

The Committee considered how best to ensure that all members of Council were given an opportunity to feed into the review. This will be achieved by having a preliminary discussion at Council on 21 July, followed by a questionnaire to all members, and a discussion as part of each Committee meeting during the September cycle.

A member proposed that the Policy Committee undertake the review on behalf of the Council, in preference to establishing a separate Task and Finish Group. On being put to a vote it was

Recommended

That the Policy Committee facilitates a comprehensive review of member governance processes, with any proposals for change to be reported to Council on 29 September.

5. **Utility Expenditure Review**

The Committee considered a report by the Town Clerk in relation to the Council's utility usage, and noted the action being taken

A report commissioned from Dorset County Council's Sustainable Property Team identified an Action Plan to deliver modest reductions in consumption through investment in better control systems, delivering a payback of around 5 years, had now been received. The Town Clerk identified his intention to report to a future Committee to request a budget to carry out energy efficiency measures, and agreed to include an assessment of the environmental benefit of the changes to be made.

The Committee considered the need for a new telephone system, recognising that while the existing system was operating satisfactorily, it was no longer maintained and was at risk of a failure that would interrupt normal working.

Resolved

That £4,000 is reserved to replace the telephone system

6. **Use of Section 106 Contributions for Recreational Purposes**

The Committee considered the report of the Town Clerk, and noted that West Dorset DC staff would provide further information regarding options for use of s106 monies at a meeting on 21 July.

Members requested that the presentation by West Dorset DC staff include information regarding any restrictions on the use of the money, and a clear definition of the term Recreation.

Members supported the view that the Town Council may have a role to play in facilitating discussions between sports users and providers, noting this issue would be considered further as part of the Corporate Plan review process.

7. **Dorset County Members Divisional Grants Budget**

The Committee received a report regarding the plans that the two County Councillors were making to allocate their grants for 2015/16.

Resolved

That the approach being taken by the two Dorset County Council members for Dorchester regarding their grants for 2015/16 be supported

Chairman