

Dorchester Town Council

Policy Committee

17 November 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: Councillor J. Hewitt.
L. Low and F. McLaren, Friends of the Borough Gardens.

21. Minutes

The Minutes of the Committee held on 22 September 2015, adopted by Council on 29 September 2015, were taken as read and were confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

22. Request from Management Committee – Old Bowling Green, Borough Gardens

The Committee considered a report by the Town Clerk which informed it that at its last meeting the Management Committee had agreed:-

“That the Policy Committee be requested to consider agreeing to the project being undertaken in one phase and that the budget previously allocated to also be used to carry out design works for the project as a whole.”

The Town Clerk’s report confirmed that, other than routine cleaning and the introduction of the fob gate (funded via an LTA grant), there had been no significant expenditure on the clock tower court for over a decade.

Representatives of the Friends of the Borough Gardens addressed the Committee in support of undertaking the project in one phase.

Some Members expressed concern about losing a tennis court and felt that both existing Gardens courts should remain. It was noted that the tennis data confirmed that three courts, all open all year round, would be sufficient and that the LTA were agreeable to removing the clock tower court.

The Committee felt that it would be beneficial for the £5,000 previously allocated by the Committee to also be used to carry out design works for the project as a whole.

Resolved

That the £5,000 previously allocated by the Committee to also be used to carry out design works for the project as a whole.

(Councillor T. Jones voted against the above decision.)

23. Finance Report

The Financial Controller presented a finance report covering the 7 months to 31 October 2015. The report gave details of the Council's cash position, reserves, balances and other non-budget expenditure, debtors, included a list of payments from 1 September to 31 October 2015, reported on the outcome of a meeting with Arlingclose together with a new draft Treasury Strategy and also enclosed the first internal audit report of 2015-16.

The Financial Controller responded to Members detailed questions on the report. In respect of the proposed Treasury Strategy it was felt that the decision to invest be transferred from the Committee to the Town Clerk but only after the Town Clerk had consulted with the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Committee.

Resolved

- i) That the Payments list, totalling £259,804.41, be approved.
- ii) That the Internal Audit Report, the actions recommended by the Internal Auditor, and the responses of the Officers responsible, be noted.

Recommended to Council

That the draft Treasury Management Strategy, as amended and attached at Appendix 1 to these Minutes, be adopted by the Council.

24. Review of the Corporate Plan

The Committee considered a report by the Town Clerk which updated it on the progress made in reviewing the Corporate Plan. The report included the outcome of two theme group meetings, the views of which were generally supported by the Committee.

It was noted that a draft revised Corporate Plan would be brought to the next meeting of the Committee and that, if approved, the draft would be the subject of a public consultation between January and May 2016 with the formal plan being adopted by Council in May 2016.

Members expressed caution with regard to seeking professional advice and felt that this should only be done when there was a tangible benefit. With regard to affordable housing it was agreed that it would be helpful to have up to date figures which highlighted the need for affordable housing in the town.

The Committee also felt that a project to facilitate or provide a single website, complimented by a social media strategy, which would provide information about all of the town's events and activities should be included within Appendix 2 of the report.

With regard to Youth Services it was reported that Dorset County Council had just issued a consultation on a proposal that it stops funding any youth centres and stops managing youth clubs. The County Council would instead support communities which wanted to provide youth clubs to run them by providing advice and guidance. Members felt that this consultation should be considered at the next full Council meeting.

Resolved

i) That the Corporate Plan be revised in line with views expressed above and in the theme groups and a draft revised Corporate Plan be presented to the next meeting of the Committee.

ii) That the Dorset County Council Youth Services consultation be discussed at the next full Town Council meeting.

25. Risk Registers

The Committee considered a report by the Deputy Town Clerk on the Council's arrangements for risk management. The report set out the Council's risks which had previously been scored as 'high' and invited Members to re-assess those risks. The Committee also gave consideration to any new risks/opportunities that might need to be added to the registers which included how the Council might deal with those risks which were extremely difficult to predict, the possible change to local government organisation in the county and Dorchester Arts vacating the Municipal Buildings with short notice. Members also requested that some additional controls be included with the 'Serious incident at Council run outside events' risk.

It was suggested that new emerging risks could be identified through the Committee process.

It was noted that at present the biggest opportunity open to the Council was to decide how it wished to target its resources and this opportunity was being considered through the emerging Corporate Plan which would, in turn, inform the Council's Opportunity Register.

Recommended to Council

i) That the assessed high level strategic and operation risks be approved and that those new risks identified above be included within the registers.

ii) That the strategic, operational and opportunity risk registers, as a whole, be approved.

26. Working Together

Members noted a report prepared by a group of Dorset Town Clerks on how relationships between the County Council and Local Councils could be improved.

Chairman

DORCHESTER TOWN COUNCIL**TREASURY STRATEGY 2015/16****1. Introduction**

- 1.1. Dorchester Town Council will, for the foreseeable future, owe money on behalf of its taxpayers (Debt) and will routinely hold monies on behalf of its taxpayers (Investments). This document identifies how the Council and its officers will manage debt and investments to minimise financial risk; it also identifies how it will manage its investments to achieve a financial benefit commensurate with that risk.

2. Debt

- 2.1. The Council's current debt portfolio is attached at Appendix A. The current schedule will result in all debt being repaid by 2027.
- 2.2. The Council may, under certain circumstances take on new debt, but would only borrow long term from the Public Works Loans Board, part of HM Government's Debt Management Office. Any decision to borrow will be taken by the Policy Committee, who will consider the benefits of borrowing versus using the Council's investment cash. The Medium Term Financial Strategy currently shows no plans to borrow.

3. Investments

- 3.1. Any cash held in the Council's bank accounts, held as deposits in other bodies or in managed funds with third parties, advanced as a loan, or used to purchase bonds will be defined as an investment.
- 3.2. On 1 April each year, after adjusting for short term (under 1 year) debtors and creditors, the Council's investments will equal its Earmarked and General Reserves. During the year this figure is supplemented by sums resulting from cash flow on the Revenue Budget, with peaks in April and September when precept income instalments are received ahead of routine payments for staff and supplies. There are thus several reasons for holding investments at any point, being:-
- Sums held in Earmarked Reserves for spending on a planned project, typically within 1 – 5 years
 - An element of the General Reserve held for emergency purposes, calculated annually as part of the budget process, which needs to be available at 3 months' notice
 - The remainder of the General Reserve, awaiting allocation to projects or transfer to the Earmarked Reserve – this might be invested for up to 5 years depending on how quickly the Council wishes to review its plans
 - Sums arising from routine cash flow in year – these need to be available when the cash flow profile requires, no longer than 6 months
- 3.3. The investment profile for sums held at 30 September 2015 is included at Appendix B and is based on known and anticipated uses of Reserves.
- 3.4. Security of the principal sum is the highest priority when making a decision to invest. The Council takes advice from Arlingclose, an independent advisor to the local government

sector. Arlingclose provides a list of financial investment instruments that it considers suitable to meet the needs of our investment timeframe. Arlingclose will review this list regularly and a summary of the most recent list will be appended to the Treasury Strategy. The current list is included at Appendix C.

- 3.5. Following consultation with the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Policy Committee, the Town Clerk is authorised to use the investment instruments contained in Appendix C and must report any purchase or sale of instruments to the next meeting of the Policy Committee following the transaction taking place.
- 3.6. The requirement of the Council to have funds available to discharge its revenue responsibilities is also a priority when determining the period of an investment. Investments must take account of the Council's cash flow requirements.
- 3.7. Achieving a return on the investment is the third priority. Any investment return must, however, be fully consistent with the need to preserve security of the principal sum.

4. Budgets

- 4.1. The Treasury budgets for the current financial year, 2015/16, are: -

	£
• Principal Debt Repaid	34,000
• Interest on Outstanding Debt	28,700
• Total Debt Charges	62,700
• Interest earned on Investments, after deduction of Treasury Advice	-7,000

5. Policy

- 5.1. This Policy is to be reviewed each May by the Policy Committee as part of the financial year end process.

Adrian Stuart
Town Clerk
November 2015