

Dorchester Town Council

Policy Committee

21 March 2017

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

Apologies: Councillors S. Hosford, and P. Stein.

Also present: Councillors G. Duke, J. Hewitt and M. Rennie.

Declarations: Councillor A. Chisholm declared a non-pecuniary interest as President of Ridgeway Radio

26. Minutes

The Minutes of the Committee of 17 January 2017, adopted by Council on 24 January 2017, were taken as read and confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

27. Financial Report 2016-17

The Town Clerk provided an update covering the Council's Month 11 spend in relation to the budget, bank account, the current debt and payments position, and also the latest audit report.

He responded questions regarding outstanding debtors, the Walks cleaning contract, taxation allowances and the Council's policy in relation to contracts of employment.

Resolved

- a) That the Payments list totalling £212,337.59 be approved
- b) That the Internal Audit report and the officer response is noted

The Town Clerk introduced Minute 76 of the Planning & Environment Committee, regarding the withdrawal of Bus Subsidies by Dorset County Council, and its impact on services 1, 2 and 6 within the town.

The Committee recognised the need to ensure some form of provision across the whole town and noted that provision between Poundbury and the town centre was not at risk. Noting the significant cost of retaining the existing services Members considered options for community transport and also asked for further information regarding services that arrived at the town and then provided a service to residents of the town, particularly the at risk service 101.

Resolved

That the Town Clerk explore options for the Town Council to support alternatives to the number 1/2 bus service through community transport operators, including

using low pollution vehicles; obtain an up to date position regarding the future of service 101; and encourage consideration of options that provide a commercial alternative for the number 6 service

The Town Clerk introduced Minutes 60 and 67 of the Management Committee relating to the replacement of a green waste shredder and works to the Municipal Buildings. The Committee was reassured that there was a plan to build up sufficient Reserves to reroof the Corn Exchange and Changing Rooms within four years.

Resolved

- c) That £35,000 is released from the Municipal Buildings Reserve to undertake external timber repairs, redecorations and window repairs
- d) That £16,700 is released from the Vehicles and Equipment Reserve for the purchase of a new shredder

28. Corporate Plan – Progress against strategic and operational milestones

The Committee received an update report covering progress on Corporate Plan milestones.

Members noted the confirmation of allocation of s106 recreation monies and the Town Clerk explained his understanding of how this affected the County Museum's plans. The Committee considered the ongoing problems associated with the Great Field sports pitches and the Town Clerk agreed to include these in discussions with the Duchy of Cornwall about the future development of the site.

With regard to Heritage Tourism a councillor sought information about the Dorset Tourism Association's event at Kingston Maurward and asked how the Council might support a presence at the annual Portland Port cruise operators' event. The Town Clerk agreed to investigate these events further.

A member asked that consideration be given to reordering the report to better reflect the key priorities in the Corporate Plan. The Chairman agreed to consider this as part of the review of the Plan to start in April.

The Chairman reported on the work of the task group that had reviewed the role of Community Land Trusts in supporting the development of affordable housing.

Resolved

That the formation of a Community Land Trust to address the housing needs of young Dorchester workers be supported.

29. Draft Community Plan

The Town Clerk presented a report regarding progress on the development of a draft Community Plan. The Committee noted progress towards the development of a Community Plan, acknowledged the complexity of producing a document that would be relevant to the whole community, and offered their support to the approach being taken. The Town Clerk would present a further report to the July meeting.

30. Community Radio

The Committee considered a report by the Town Clerk in relation to an initiative from Ridgeway Radio to secure a community radio licence, and how the Town Council might provide practical support. Members spoke in support of the track record and enthusiasm of Ridgeway Radio and the experience of other local towns when they had undertaken similar projects. They also recognised the complexities associated with licencing and the technical aspects of setting up a station.

Resolved

That Ridgeway Radio be encouraged to develop a robust business plan for the delivery of a community radio service and that further discussions take place across the full range of possible financial, promotional and practical support that the Town Council might make available.

31. Town Centre Wi-Fi

The Committee considered an opportunity to join a partnership to develop a town centre wi-fi project. The Committee struggled to understand the benefits that a 3G wi-fi service might bring and were concerned about the cost of the project and how long it might remain relevant. The Committee recognised that there might, however, be some benefit in the future for its corporate plan aim to promote the town as a Heritage and Tourism destination.

While minded not to support the project the Committee were willing to receive a presentation to allow partners to explain how the project might work in more detail and what benefits might accrue.

Chairman