

Dorchester Town Council

Policy Committee

15 May 2018

Present: Councillors R. Biggs, A. Chisholm, T. Harries, S. Hosford, G. Jones (Chairman) and T. Jones

Apologies: Councillors B. Armstrong-Marshall and P. Stein

Also present: Councillors J. Hewitt and M. Rennie

34. Minutes

The Minutes of the Committee of 20 March 2018, adopted by Council on 27 March 2018, were taken as read and confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

With regard to Minute 32 the Town Clerk provided an update regarding the ownership of Elizabeth Place play area. He confirmed that it had now been established beyond doubt that Dorchester Town Council had received the site from Magna in 2011. Members asked that this information be made publicly available by a range of media.

35. Financial and Performance Year End Report at 31 March 2018

The Town Clerk reported a £72,000 underspend versus budget, which will be allocated to the Corporate Projects Reserve, bringing the total unallocated Reserve to £328,000. Members sought information regarding the future use of the reserve.

An end of year internal audit was received, with nil recommendations.

The Town Clerk also identified progress against the Corporate Plan milestones, with 17 tasks being completed satisfactorily, while 2 related to affordable housing had been aborted.

A Member requested that a review of the Council's strategy for contributing to the delivery of affordable housing be undertaken, collecting the views of all Members. The Committee discussed the role of other agencies and private owners in delivering affordable housing.

A Member sought further information regarding the planned meeting with West Dorset DC to discuss project management of a Heritage Tourism strategy for the town. Questions were also asked about progress on the Allotment site at Lubbecke Way and on the delivery of the digital mapping exercise.

Recommended to Council

That the Annual Governance and Accountability Return 2017/18, as laid out in Appendix 1 to these minutes, is adopted

Resolved

- a) That the third and final internal audit report for 2017/18 is noted

- b) That a review of Affordable Housing strategy is undertaken, with a view to reporting back to the next meeting of the Committee

36. Financial Report 2018-19

The Town Clerk provided an update covering the Council's Month 1 spend in relation to the budget, as well as its cash position and current debt and payments position.

Resolved

That the Payments list totalling £465,161.56 is approved

The Town Clerk provided an update regarding a successful rating appeal lodged by the Council in respect of the Weymouth Avenue Pavilion, plus an update relating to works to the Pavilion.

The Town Clerk responded to a request from a Member to consider solar panels on the Weymouth Avenue Pavilion.

Resolved

That of the £30,000 rates refund which the Council should now receive

- a) £7,000 is used to meet the net cost of converting the Pavilion for use by the Boxing Club
- b) £5,000 is reserved to undertake works to improve the efficiency of the Pavilion
- c) c. £18,000 is added to the Corporate Projects Reserve for future use

37. Local Government Reorganisation and Cuts to Services

The Town Clerk updated the Committee on the reaction of West Dorset District Council to the Town Council's proposal to transfer a significant package of assets and service delivery prior to reorganisation. He updated the Committee regarding discussions about possible packages of services that negotiations might be based on.

Members expressed concerns about the lack of progress made during discussions, the modest ambitions of the District Council relating to the transfer of assets and services and the imminent imposition of constraints by a new Shadow Authority.

The Town Clerk highlighted discussions with key grant recipients to attempt to clarify future funding levels from the new Unitary Council.

A Member highlighted that the Town Council's position regarding the Market Charter needed to be reinforced to the District Council to avoid misunderstandings. The Town Clerk agreed to circulate a Position Statement developed by Town Council Members of the Joint Markets Panel for formal adoption by Council.

The Committee noted that there may be a need for an urgent meeting should negotiations with the District Council result in a firm proposal.

Recommendation to Council

That the Position Statement developed by Town Council Members of the Joint Markets Panel, at Appendix 2, be debated and formally adopted

38. Community Plan

The Committee received feedback from a Task and Finish Group exercise to review the Plan. The Committee noted the report, including one further meeting of the Task and Finish Group in six months to evaluate how the Plan was being delivered and monitored.

A Member expressed frustration regarding the lack of progress towards the delivery of an access ramp at Dorchester West Station. The Town Clerk agreed to investigate a recent decision by Network Rail that planning permission was now required due to the imposition of new legislation.

39. West Dorset DC Car Parks – Free Days

The Committee received a report on the use of District Council car parks for free parking.

Members recognised the opportunities presented by the offer and endorsed the action taken by the Town Clerk to request free parking on 16 June for Midsummer Madness Day.

A Member raised concerns regarding how such an offer could be misused by regular users of parking facilities in the town. Another Member sought confirmation that community events would be given a chance to benefit from the District Council offer.

Resolved

That, with regard to 2018/19 events, the Town Clerk, following liaison with the Chairman of the Policy Committee, makes requests to West Dorset District Council for the remaining four days available.

40. 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

41. Staffing Issue

The Town Clerk presented a short report relating to the Community Development Officer post, which had initially been appointed on a three year fixed basis.

Resolved

That the post of Community Development Officer is made permanent and that the current postholder is given a permanent contract of employment.

Chairman

Section 1 – Annual Governance Statement 2017/18

We acknowledge as the members of:

Dorchester Town Council

our responsibility for ensuring that there is a sound system of internal control, including arrangements for the preparation of the Accounting Statements. We confirm, to the best of our knowledge and belief, with respect to the Accounting Statements for the year ended 31 March 2018, that:

	Agreed		‘Yes’ means that this authority
	Yes	No*	
1. We have put in place arrangements for effective financial management during the year, and for the preparation of the accounting statements.	✓		<i>prepared its accounting statements in accordance with the Accounts and Audit Regulations.</i>
2. We maintained an adequate system of internal control including measures designed to prevent and detect fraud and corruption and reviewed its effectiveness.	✓		<i>made proper arrangements and accepted responsibility for safeguarding the public money and resources in its charge.</i>
3. We took all reasonable steps to assure ourselves that there are no matters of actual or potential non-compliance with laws, regulations and Proper Practices that could have a significant financial effect on the ability of this authority to conduct its business or manage its finances.	✓		<i>has only done what it has the legal power to do and has complied with Proper Practices in doing so.</i>
4. We provided proper opportunity during the year for the exercise of electors’ rights in accordance with the requirements of the Accounts and Audit Regulations.	✓		<i>during the year gave all persons interested the opportunity to inspect and ask questions about this authority’s accounts.</i>
5. We carried out an assessment of the risks facing this authority and took appropriate steps to manage those risks, including the introduction of internal controls and/or external insurance cover where required.	✓		<i>considered and documented the financial and other risks it faces and dealt with them properly.</i>
6. We maintained throughout the year an adequate and effective system of internal audit of the accounting records and control systems.	✓		<i>arranged for a competent person, independent of the financial controls and procedures, to give an objective view on whether internal controls meet the needs of this smaller authority.</i>
7. We took appropriate action on all matters raised in reports from internal and external audit.	✓		<i>responded to matters brought to its attention by internal and external audit.</i>
8. We considered whether any litigation, liabilities or commitments, events or transactions, occurring either during or after the year-end, have a financial impact on this authority and, where appropriate, have included them in the accounting statements.	✓		<i>disclosed everything it should have about its business activity during the year including events taking place after the year end if relevant.</i>
9. (For local councils only) Trust funds including charitable. In our capacity as the sole managing trustee we discharged our accountability responsibilities for the fund(s)/assets, including financial reporting and, if required, independent examination or audit.	Yes	No	N/A
			✓
			<i>has met all of its responsibilities where it is a sole managing trustee of a local trust or trusts.</i>

*Please provide explanations to the external auditor on a separate sheet for each ‘No’ response. Describe how the authority will address the weaknesses identified.

This Annual Governance Statement is approved by this authority and recorded as minute reference:

dated

Signed by the Chairman and Clerk of the meeting where approval is given:

Chairman

Clerk

Other information required by the Transparency Codes (not part of Annual Governance Statement)
Authority web address

Section 2 – Accounting Statements 2017/18 for

Dorchester Town Council

	Year ending		Notes and guidance
	31 March 2017 £	31 March 2018 £	
1. Balances brought forward	1,365,515	420,769	Total balances and reserves at the beginning of the year as recorded in the financial records. Value must agree to Box 7 of previous year.
2. (+) Precept or Rates and Levies	1,251,000	1,296,336	Total amount of precept (or for IDBs rates and levies) received or receivable in the year. Exclude any grants received.
3. (+) Total other receipts	311,949	224,878	Total income or receipts as recorded in the cashbook less the precept or rates/levies received (line 2). Include any grants received.
4. (-) Staff costs	644,297	654,742	Total expenditure or payments made to and on behalf of all employees. Include salaries and wages, PAYE and NI (employees and employers), pension contributions and employment expenses.
5. (-) Loan interest/capital repayments	254,528	47,406	Total expenditure or payments of capital and interest made during the year on the authority's borrowings (if any).
6. (-) All other payments	1,608,870	874,082	Total expenditure or payments as recorded in the cashbook less staff costs (line 4) and loan interest/capital repayments (line 5).
7. (=) Balances carried forward	420,769	365,753	Total balances and reserves at the end of the year. Must equal (1+2+3) - (4+5+6).
8. Total value of cash and short term investments	399,652	338,400	The sum of all current and deposit bank accounts, cash holdings and short term investments held as at 31 March – To agree with bank reconciliation.
9. Total fixed assets plus long term investments and assets	7,629,538	7,646,278	The value of all the property the authority owns – it is made up of all its fixed assets and long term investments as at 31 March.
10. Total borrowings	264,000	230,000	The outstanding capital balance as at 31 March of all loans from third parties (including PWLB).
11. (For Local Councils Only) Disclosure note re Trust funds (including charitable)	Yes	No	The Council acts as sole trustee for and is responsible for managing Trust funds or assets.
		✓	N.B. The figures in the accounting statements above do not include any Trust transactions.

I certify that for the year ended 31 March 2018 the Accounting Statements in this Annual Governance and Accountability Return present fairly the financial position of this authority and its income and expenditure, or properly present receipts and payments, as the case may be.

Signed by Responsible Financial Officer

Date

I confirm that these Accounting Statements were approved by this authority on this date:

and recorded as minute reference:

Signed by Chairman of the meeting where approval of the Accounting Statements is given

DORCHESTER TOWN COUNCIL'S PANEL MEMBERS' POSITION ON DORCHESTER MARKET

- West Dorset District Council will cease to exist in April 2019
- Dorchester Town Council should receive the Market Charter – it should be returned to Dorchester's control
- There needs to be certainty over where the Wednesday Market and Sunday Car Boot Sale will operate from during the transition and longer term. Our assumption is that current arrangements will stay in place until the end of the current agreement with Ensors in 2026
- We therefore do not support any attempts focused on bringing legal agreements with Ensors to an end or forcing them to relocate against their will in the short term
- Equally we do not support the extension of the Ensors agreement in exchange for their investment in the Fairfield site. At present there is no clear understanding of how this would support the long term vitality of the Wednesday Market or wider retail in the town
- If and when the Town Council receives the Market Charter we would want early discussions with Ensors to establish a shared vision for Dorchester's Wednesday Market and Sunday Car Boot Sale

AS

27/3/18