

Dorchester Town Council

Policy Committee

18 September 2018

Present: Councillors, B. Armstrong-Marshall, A. Chisholm, T. Harries, G. Jones, P. Stein and D. Taylor.

Apologies: Councillors R. Biggs, S. Hosford and T. Jones.

Also present: Councillor R. Potter

7. Minutes

The Minutes of the Committee of 17 July 2018, adopted by Council on 24 July 2018, were taken as read and confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

8. Financial Report 2018-19

The Town Clerk provided an update covering the Council's Month 5 spend in relation to the budget, cash, debt and payments positions. He answered questions regarding the details that lay behind some of the terms in the Management Report and plans for the levels of and use of Reserves.

The Town Clerk identified a debtor who was struggling to meet their room hire payments and the options open to the Committee. He also provided further detail regarding changes to the funding of Christmas Lights and confirmed the repayment of £30,000 of loan to Dorchester Town Community Football Club, with the £30,000 balance anticipated imminently.

Resolved

- a) That the Payments list totalling £303,364.46 be approved
- b) That the Town Clerk take a supportive approach in managing the current debt outstanding for room hire
- c) That the Town Council budget for Christmas Lights is increased by £1,500 to £4,500, subject to Dorchester BID also increasing their budget by £1,500

9. Corporate Plan Review

The Committee received and noted the report from the Town Clerk regarding performance against its Corporate Plan milestones.

The Town Clerk also advised the Committee regarding the background to the relocation of Dorset County Museum to the second floor of 19 North Square, noting the approach to taken by the Town Clerk.

10. Local Government Reorganisation and Cuts to Services

The Town Clerk reported the very recent decision of the Dorset Council Shadow Executive Committee to reject West Dorset's plans to transfer assets and services to Town Councils. There had been no discussions with the District Council since the decision.

Members considered a detailed report comparing discretionary service provision by West Dorset DC with that of other Districts, recognising the very real risk attached to continue delivery of these services in the long term. They also noted the decision of the Shadow Executive to maintain support for the financial year 2019/20 while conducting a detailed review that would impact on service provision from 2020/21 onwards.

11. Public Realm Improvements

The Town Clerk presented an update report covering works undertaken partnering with Dorset Highways on The Walks and in South Street. The Town Clerk focused particularly on a proposal by Dorset County Council Highways to improve pedestrian safety at the Princes Street/Albert Road junction and also how to integrate the development of a refurbishment project for the Town Pump area into West Dorset's Town Centre Masterplan.

Progress ahead of schedule on The Walks was noted. A Member asked that the Town Clerk invite Dorset Highways to consider maintenance of the link footpath towards Lidl's from Northernhay.

Members welcomed the Dorset Highways initiative for Princes Street, particularly the positive impact the project would have for pedestrian safety. A Councillor asked that the Town Council ensure that the entrance to the Gardens reflects the same quality as that to be introduced immediately outside the gates.

Members re-emphasised their desire to see improvement at the Town Pump, and also at Southgate, but recognised that the scheme needed to be properly integrated into a wider masterplan for the area. A Member commented in favour of the reintroduction of water in some form to the site, recognising its historic role at this site.

Resolved

- i) That up to £10,000 is allocated from the Public Realm Reserve to introduce quality materials that will enhance a DCC led highway project at the Princes Street/Albert Road junction
- ii) That discussions take place with West Dorset DC to integrate a Town Pump refurbishment project into the Town Centre Masterplan process

12. Heritage Tourism Strategy Development

Following consideration of a draft document at its July meeting the Committee received an updated briefing document for a Heritage Tourism Strategy. The Committee considered a request from the Town Clerk for resources to move the project forward with a tourism advisor who had previous experience of both Dorchester and market town initiatives. The

Town Clerk emphasised that this piece of work was discrete and would be limited to high level strategic idea development.

Resolved

That the Town Clerk be authorised to use up to £3,000 from the Heritage Tourism budget to progress the project.

13. Governance Arrangements for the new Council

The Committee considered a report from the Town Clerk relating to the Council's own future governance arrangements from May 2019 and how governance arrangements are likely to change with the reorganisation of local government.

The Committee considered the benefits of undertaking a review of arrangements prior to the new Council being elected, while recognising that any ideas emerging from the review would need to be considered by the new Council. Members noted the need for a balance of participants with different experiences of the current governance arrangements.

Recommended to Council

That during the November cycle of meetings each Committee appoints two Members to take part in the review, to be concluded by the March 2019 cycle of meetings.

Chairman