

Dorchester Town Council

Policy Committee

20 November 2018

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

Also present: Councillors G. Duke and M. Rennie.

14. Minutes

The Minutes of the Committee of 18 September 2018, adopted by Council on 25 September 2018, were taken as read and confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

15. Financial Report 2018-19

The Town Clerk provided an update covering the Council's Month 7 spend in relation to the budget, cash, debt and payments positions, plus routine reports from the Internal and External auditor. He answered questions regarding current and year end levels of cash, investment advice and the loss of Arlingclose and the movement of cash between low interest earning funds.

The Town Clerk identified new costs associated with the elections for May 2019, the full repayment of a loan by Dorchester Town Community FC and the use of the remaining free parking days for the financial year. The Committee considered the costs of issuing poll cards and invited the Town Clerk to explore alternative options for promoting awareness of the election.

Recommended to Council

That the certified Annual Governance and Accountability Return for the year ended 31 March is approved and accepted.

Resolved

- a) That the Payments list totalling £230,625.14 be approved
- b) That the Internal Audit report and the response of the Town Clerk is noted

16. Transfer of Services and Assets

The Town Clerk reported that discussions with the District Council regarding the transfer of the Dorchester Market Charter to the Town Council were currently stalled. He provided a draft Memorandum of Understanding, which had been presented to West Dorset District Council, covering the future management of the market.

Members asked questions about the assets included within the Joint Market Panel's operations, the value of external legal advice and expressed concerns and disappointment about the lack of progress relating to the transfer of the Market Charter and related assets.

The Town Clerk confirmed that, failing transfer prior to reorganisation, his key concern related to the availability of staff within the new Dorset Council to undertake duties related to the Market agreements.

Members instructed the Town Clerk to continue to press for transfer of the Market asset.

17. **Dorchester Stations Access Issues**

The Town Clerk presented an update report covering current plans to address access problems at both West and South Train Stations.

Members noted that the latest position for the West Station Access Ramp anticipated construction by end March 2019 and asked for confirmation of the funding sources.

After asking questions regarding a tunnel which had previously existed on the South Station site the Committee also noted and supported the bid for funding from the Network Rail Access for All Fund for a lift-based platform access system.

18. **Dorchester Ballet and Dance**

The Town Clerk presented a report considering the possibility of relocating Dorchester Ballet and Dance to Sandringham.

A number of Members spoke in support of the activities of the Club. Members asked questions regarding the impact on current users of the site.

Resolved

That options are explored to facilitate a permanent base for Dorchester Ballet and Dance within the Sandringham Car Park area and that Councillors Harries and Stein are appointed to a Task and Finish Group to consider the proposal.

19. **Utility Cost Reduction – Battery Operated Grounds Maintenance Equipment and Solar Power**

The Town Clerk reported how the trialling of new battery operated equipment and the purchase of a new battery-operated vehicle for Grounds Maintenance staff had led on to discussions about the potential to install solar on the rooves of buildings owned by the Council.

The business case for solar was, however, much stronger prior to March 2019 due to the removal of feed-in tariff payments from next April. The Council had contacted a local contractor to receive a quote for the installation of panels at the Louds Mill Depot, but financial regulations would need to be waived to allow this to proceed.

Separate discussions had been held with Dorchester Town Community FC about the potential for a loan to the Club to enable them to deliver solar power on the Stadium roof. They have received two quotes for the work and the decision to proceed is theirs.

Members asked questions regarding the charges made by SSE for accepting the power generated into the electricity grid and the impact of the loss of Feed in Tariffs on the business case.

Resolved

- i) Due to the short time available before Feed in Tariffs are removed, and also because of the availability of a local provider, Financial Regulations 9.2 is suspended to provide a package of Solar Panel works at Louds Mill Depot, commissioned from Wessex EcoEnergy at a cost of c. £21,000 plus VAT, to be funded from the Council's Corporate Projects Reserve
- ii) That a loan of up to £50,000 be made available, at 5% interest, to be secured against future FIT payments, should Dorchester Town CFC wish to borrow funds to install solar panels

20. Strategic and Operational Risk Registers

The Committee considered a report of the Deputy Town Clerk which considered the process for the preparation of the Risk Register and focused on the seven high level risks identified that had been monitored in the previous year.

A Councillor raised concerns about risks associated with the bonfire recently held at Elizabeth Place and the Town Clerk summarised how the current informal arrangements had been reached. No change to the scoring of the risk was proposed.

The Committee discussed a potential new risk related to the impact of reorganisation on the future management of the Market and also requested that risks related to IT security be revisited. A Member asked a question regarding whether the Register should continue to be extended to cover Opportunities and the Town Clerk explained the Council currently had the financial flexibility to act more independently.

Recommended to Council

- i) That three risk scores related to GDPR, competition at the Municipal Buildings and football at Weymouth Avenue Recreation Ground be lowered and the resulting assessed high level strategic and operational risks be approved
- ii) That a new risk relating to the future management of the Market be introduced and the scoring of IT security risks be reviewed
- iii) That the strategic and operational risk registers, as a whole, be approved

21. Appointment to New Council Governance Task and Finish Group

Resolved

That Councillors G. Jones and P. Stein be appointed to the Group.

22. **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.

23. **Affordable Housing Initiatives on non-Council-owned Land**

The Town Clerk reported on two possible sites where the Town Council might assist the purchase of land by the Dorchester Area Community Land Trust.

Members noted that one of the pieces of land, currently in the ownership of Dorset County Council, had been sold to a higher bidder.

The Committee discussed the potential to acquire another local plot of land and agreed that the Town Clerk could continue discussions with the present owner.

Resolved

That the Town Clerk be authorised to continue discussions with the current owner of a site in Dorchester to acquire a single plot site suitable for development.

Chairman