

Dorchester Town Council

Policy Committee

20 September 2021

- Present:** Councillors B. Armstrong-Marshall, A. Chisholm, T. Harries, J. Hewitt, F. Hogwood, S. Hosford (Chair) and G. Jones
- Apologies:** Councillor R. Biggs
- Attending:** Councillor M. Rennie

6. **Minutes and Declarations of Interest**

The Minutes of the Committee of 19 July 2021, adopted by Council on 26 July 2021, were taken as read and signed.

7. **Financial Update at 31 August 2021**

The Committee received the Financial Controller's report on the month 5 financial position, noting actual spending in line with budget. He also noted a successful appeal relating to the Municipal Buildings Rateable Value and the conclusion of the external audit process for 2020/21. Questions were asked regarding the Municipal Buildings Reserve and interest on the Council's bank account.

Resolved

That the Payments list, totalling £470,207.58, is approved

Recommended to Council

That the certified Annual Governance and Accountability Return for the year ended 31 March 2021 is approved and accepted

8. **Municipal Buildings Update**

The Clerk provided a detailed update relating to the current building and theatre improvement contract works, future potential front of house works, additional opportunity works that had been commissioned while the contractor was on site, the legal agreements with Dorchester Arts and the future development of 19 North Square. The Clerk also invited the Committee to consider their options related to the funding of the works using either loans or reserves.

Members discussed the implications of spending above the budget set aside for the works, the potential for sharing heating with other sites, the timing of any planning decision for solar panels and the future closure of the building due to works on the front of house project.

Members also discussed the possibility of an arbitration clause in the partnership agreement with Dorchester Arts, and the residual maintenance obligations that would remain with the Council. An opportunity to visit the site will be arranged.

Members reviewed a previous Council resolution to borrow from the Public Works Loan Board to fund the works, recognising that the delays to the works had reduced borrowing to a level where funding from Reserves might be possible, but which

would in turn influence decision making on other projects. After carefully considering the options the Committee made no recommendation to move away from borrowing as the means of funding the project.

9. **Town Clerk Recruitment**

The Chair updated Members on preparations for the recruitment process. An external advisor, South West Councils, had been engaged to support Members through the process. Council would consider the composition of the Appointment Panel at its meeting on 27 September 2021.

Chairman