

Dorchester Town Council

Policy Committee

15 May 2023

Present: The Mayor (Councillor J. Hewitt) and Councillors R. Biggs, S. Biles, A. Chisholm, F. Hogwood and S. Hosford (Chairman).

Apologies: Councillors T. Harries and G. Jones.

In Attendance

Councillors F. Kent-Ledger, D. Leaper, R. Potter and M. Rennie.

41. Minutes

The Minutes of the Meeting of the Committee held on 20 March 2023, adopted by Council on 27 March 2023, were taken as read and were confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

42. Declaration of Interests

Minute No. 46 - Councillor A. Chisholm declared a pecuniary interest and left the meeting during its consideration.

Minute No. 47 – Councillor M. Rennie declared an interest as a Council representative on the BID. She addressed the Committee and then left the meeting whilst the matter was considered.

Minute No. 51 – Councillor F. E. Kent-Ledger declared an interest and left the meeting during its consideration.

Minute No. 51 – The Mayor (Councillor J. Hewitt) and Councillors R. Biggs, A. Chisholm, S. Hosford, F. E. Kent-Ledger and M. Rennie declared non-pecuniary interests in this matter.

43. Finance Update

Members considered a report by the Finance Officer which:-

- Updated the Committee on the 2022-23 financial year end position.
- Presented the final Internal Audit report.
- Presented the 2022-23 Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) Annual Internal Audit Report, Annual Governance Statement and Accounting Statements.
- Advised on the payments list for the period 1 March to 30 April 2023 and debts over 30 days.

The Finance Officer responded to Members detailed questions on the report.

Recommended

That the Annual Governance and Accountability Return 2022-23, as set out in Appendix 1 to these minutes, be adopted.

Resolved

(1) That the final Internal Audit report and Officer response to it, for 2022-23 be noted.

(2) That the payments list, totalling £321,649.79, be approved.

44. Management Committee Extract

Members considered an item referred to it from the Management Committee requesting that the Committee release £90,000 funding from the Climate Emergency Reserve so as to enable photovoltaic panels to be fitted to the roof of the Borough Gardens House together with air source heat pumps to heat both the House and the Greenhouses. The works subject to receipt of the necessary permissions.

The Committee requested that a record of the Council's carbon savings be made and periodically reported back to the Committee. Climate work with partners also to be recorded.

Resolved

That £90,000 be released from the Council's Climate Emergency Reserve for this project.

45. Cornhill / South Street Task and Finish Group

Members considered the notes of the Task and Finish Group held on 25 April 2023, attached at Appendix 2, established to consider improvements to Cornhill and South Street. The Committee noted the importance of consulting with the BID and other interested parties on the proposals.

Resolved

That the notes of the Cornhill / South Street Task and Finish Group held on 25 April 2023 be agreed.

46. Town Crier Allowance

The Committee considered a report from the Finance Officer proposing that the Town Crier allowance be increased from £552.34 to £600 a year. It was noted that there had been no inflationary rise in the allowance since before 2014. Members requested that a replacement clothing reserve be included in next years budget.

Resolved

That, as from 1 April 2023, the Town Crier Allowance to be increased to £600 per year.

47. Business Improvement District Ballot

The Committee considered authorising the Town Clerk to vote on behalf of the Council in respect of the forthcoming BID ballot.

In discussing this matter the Committee agreed that it would be useful for the appropriate BID Director to attend a future meeting of the Committee to update it on the work of the BID.

Recommended

That, on behalf of the Council, the Town Clerk be authorised to vote in favour of renewing the Dorchester BID.

48. Municipal Buildings Project Outturn

The Committee had before it a report by the Finance Officer setting out the final cost of the Municipal Buildings works. It was noted that, since the report had been written, the Council's Quantity Surveyor had indicated that there was an additional £15,000 of expenditure yet to be paid as a result of some additional non contractual works.

Members requested that further information be sought in respect of the funding package available for the proposed Municipal Buildings front of house works.

Resolved

That the report be noted.

49. BDO LLP Auditors

The Committee was informed that BDO LLP had been appointed as the Council's external auditor. The Council had been requested to confirm that it had no conflict of interest with BDO LLP.

Recommended

That the Council has no conflict of interest with BDO LLP.

50. 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 press representatives be excluded from this meeting during their discussion

51. **Old Tennis Courts, West Walks**

The Committee considered a report by the Town Clerk on a possible temporary use of the old tennis courts off West Walks.

Resolved

That the Town Clerk liaise with the CLT in respect of the possible use in accordance with the suggestion set out in paragraph 5 of the report.

Chairman.....

Annual Internal Audit Report 2022/23

Dorchester Town Council

ENTER PUBLIC WEBSITE ADDRESS <https://www.dorchester-tc.gov.uk/>

During the financial year ended 31 March 2023, this authority's internal auditor acting independently and on the basis of an assessment of risk, carried out a selective assessment of compliance with the relevant procedures and controls in operation and obtained appropriate evidence from the authority.

The internal audit for 2022/23 has been carried out in accordance with this authority's needs and planned coverage. On the basis of the findings in the areas examined, the internal audit conclusions are summarised in this table. Set out below are the objectives of internal control and alongside are the internal audit conclusions on whether, in all significant respects, the control objectives were being achieved throughout the financial year to a standard adequate to meet the needs of this authority.

Internal control objective	Yes	No*	Not covered**
	A. Appropriate accounting records have been properly kept throughout the financial year.	✓	
B. This authority complied with its financial regulations, payments were supported by invoices, all expenditure was approved and VAT was appropriately accounted for.	✓		
C. This authority assessed the significant risks to achieving its objectives and reviewed the adequacy of arrangements to manage these.	✓		
D. The precept or rates requirement resulted from an adequate budgetary process; progress against the budget was regularly monitored; and reserves were appropriate.	✓		
E. Expected income was fully received, based on correct prices, properly recorded and promptly banked; and VAT was appropriately accounted for.	✓		
F. Petty cash payments were properly supported by receipts, all petty cash expenditure was approved and VAT appropriately accounted for.	✓		
G. Salaries to employees and allowances to members were paid in accordance with this authority's approvals, and PAYE and NI requirements were properly applied.	✓		
H. Asset and investments registers were complete and accurate and properly maintained.	✓		
I. Periodic bank account reconciliations were properly carried out during the year.	✓		
J. Accounting statements prepared during the year were prepared on the correct accounting basis (receipts and payments or income and expenditure), agreed to the cash book, supported by an adequate audit trail from underlying records and where appropriate debtors and creditors were properly recorded.	✓		
K. If the authority certified itself as exempt from a limited assurance review in 2021/22, it met the exemption criteria and correctly declared itself exempt. (If the authority had a limited assurance review of its 2021/22 AGAR tick "not covered")			✓
L. The authority published the required information on a website/webpage up to date at the time of the internal audit in accordance with the relevant legislation.	✓		
M. In the year covered by this AGAR, the authority correctly provided for a period for the exercise of public rights as required by the Accounts and Audit Regulations (during the 2022-23 AGAR period, were public rights in relation to the 2021-22 AGAR evidenced by a notice on the website and/or authority approved minutes confirming the dates set).	✓		
N. The authority has complied with the publication requirements for 2021/22 AGAR (see AGAR Page 1 Guidance Notes).	✓		
O. (For local councils only) Trust funds (including charitable) – The council met its responsibilities as a trustee.			✓

For any other risk areas identified by this authority adequate controls existed (list any other risk areas on separate sheets if needed).

Date(s) internal audit undertaken

21/09/22 11/01/23 06/04/23

Name of person who carried out the internal audit

Mrs R Darkin-Miller LLB(Hons) BFP FCA

Signature of person who carried out the internal audit

Date

06/04/2023

*If the response is 'no' please state the implications and action being taken to address any weakness in control identified (add separate sheets if needed).

**Note: If the response is 'not covered' please state when the most recent internal audit work was done in this area and when it is next planned; or, if coverage is not required, the annual internal audit report must explain why not (add separate sheets if needed).

Section 1 – Annual Governance Statement 2022/23

We acknowledge as the members of:

Dorchester Town Council
ENTER NAME OF AUTHORITY

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 2023, 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, as a body corporate, 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 and describe how the authority will address the weaknesses identified. These sheets must be published with the Annual Governance Statement.**

This Annual Governance Statement was approved at a meeting of the authority on:

DD/MM/YYYY

and recorded as minute reference:

MINUTE REFERENCE

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

Chairman

SIGNATURE REQUIRED

Clerk

SIGNATURE REQUIRED

ENTER PUBLIC ACCESSIBLE WEBSITE PAGE ADDRESS
<https://www.dorchester-tc.gov.uk/>

Section 2 – Accounting Statements 2022/23 for

Dorchester Town Council

	Year ending		Notes and guidance
	31 March 2022 £	31 March 2023 £	
1. Balances brought forward	1,149,038	769,584	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	1,516,277	1,581,669	Total amount of precept (or for IDBs rates and levies) received or receivable in the year. Exclude any grants received.
3. (+) Total other receipts	624,957	1,370,293	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	717,804	761,182	Total expenditure or payments made to and on behalf of all employees. Include gross salaries and wages, employers NI contributions, employers pension contributions, gratuities and severance payments.
5. (-) Loan interest/capital repayments	39,116	27,399	Total expenditure or payments of capital and interest made during the year on the authority's borrowings (if any).
6. (-) All other payments	1,763,768	1,496,391	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	769,584	1,436,574	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	820,252	1,530,985	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	8,345,261	7,609,603	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	94,000	70,000	The outstanding capital balance as at 31 March of all loans from third parties (including PWLB).

For Local Councils Only	Yes	No	N/A	
11a. Disclosure note re Trust funds (including charitable)		✓		The Council, as a body corporate, acts as sole trustee and is responsible for managing Trust funds or assets.
11b. Disclosure note re Trust funds (including charitable)			✓	The figures in the accounting statements above do not include any Trust transactions.

I certify that for the year ended 31 March 2023 the Accounting Statements in this Annual Governance and Accountability Return have been prepared on either a receipts and payments or income and expenditure basis following the guidance in Governance and Accountability for Smaller Authorities – a Practitioners' Guide to Proper Practices and present fairly the financial position of this authority.

Signed by Responsible Financial Officer before being presented to the authority for approval

SIGNATURE REQUIRED

DD/MM/YYYY

Date

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

DD/MM/YYYY

as recorded in minute reference:

MINUTE REFERENCE

Signed by Chairman of the meeting where the Accounting Statements were approved

SIGNATURE REQUIRED

Cornhill Task and Finish Group Meeting Notes

Date: 25. 04.2023

Attending:

- Stella Jones, Councillor
- Janet Hewitt, Councillor
- Frances Hogwood, Councillor
- Matilda Manley, Tourism Development Officer
- Emma Scott, Community Development Officer
- Prisha Metha and Isla Finucane, Youth Council Reps

Apologies:

- Susie Hosford, Councillor
- Rory Major, Councillor

The Town Council Officers present gave updates on actions from the previous meeting. The group discussed each of these in turn and agreed follow up actions.

Item 1 - Youth Council

- **Action from previous meeting:** Emma to invite two representatives from the Youth Council to join the task and finish group.
- **Update:** Two representative from Youth Council present at the meeting.

Item 2 – Highway clarification

- **Action from previous meeting:** Emma to speak with Dorset Highways to clarify the traffic regulations and what the access requirements are. Matilda and Emma to find out how pedestrianised shopping streets are managed in other towns such as Sherborne.
- **Update:** Emma has spoken to Sherborne Town Council to find out how bollards are managed there. Their bollards are removable, anyone can take them in and out and the system is not working well there. Emma has spoken to Chris Peck at Dorset Council and some other measures to manage pedestrianised roads are being looked into but couldn't share.
- **Follow up action: Matilda** to contact Dorchester Transport Action Group regarding flow of traffic.
- **Follow up action: Matilda** to check minimum width of access needed for emergency vehicles and find out if there is a restriction on the size of vehicle going down the road.

Item 3 – Cornhill Market

- **Action from previous meeting:** Matilda to speak to Cornhill markets manager about the Cornhill project to ensure design complements the market
- **Update:** Matilda has spoken to Grant and he is happy to come along to a meeting and keen to be involved. Matilda has helped Grant set up a new Facebook page and create a new logo for the Dorchester Cornhill Market.
- **Discussion:** Group pleased that Grant willing to be engaged and would like to invite him to next meeting
- **Follow up Action: Matilda:** Invite Grant to next meeting

Item 4 – Pop-up events and experiences in Cornhill area

- **Action from previous meeting:** Matilda to look at running some pop-up events and experiences in Cornhill area this summer to see how they go down/how they fit in the space.
- **Update:**
 - Dorchester Fringe Festival in the planning stages – being led by Katy Jones - Possible talk of a silent disco, paint by numbers and music.
 - Planning a Town Pump pop up as part of Home of Hillforts and Henges – treasures table and Lego pop up.
 - Sunflower mural painted in area as part of Summer of Sunflowers

Discussion: Group pleased with the activities planned. Group discussed the need to allocate funding and resource to managing events in the space going forward once the planned works are completed. Suggestion that this could be joint funded by the BID. Group discussed what sort of events young people would like to go to. Youth Council reps said that the success of an event for young people would depend on who organised it.

Discussion of a possible event at Cornhill organised by the Youth Council or a board at Thomas Hardy School that young people could use to make suggestions of events/sign up to help organise events for young people.

The possibility of overflow from bands that book the bandstand at Borough Gardens to Cornhill was discussed.

- **Follow up action: Emma Scott and Youth Council reps:** Youth Council to discuss events for young people at Cornhill, possibility of them organising an event and ways in which they could gather information on what events young people would like to see at Cornhill
- **Follow up action: Matilda:** Speak to Steve Newman about bands at Borough Gardens and overflow to Cornhill

Item 4 – Paving

- **Action from previous meeting:** Matilda to research suitable paving fitting agreed brief.
- **Update:** There is already a big mix of paving in the area. The paving on one side of the Cornhill area is 200 by 100 mm block paving. On the other side is 350 by 350 mm slabs. The Cornhill seating area is currently a mix of 350 by 350 mm slabs and cobbles around the actual Town Pump and some drains too (see images below)



Image 1 – current paving at Cornhill

Possible options for going forward:

- Compliment the 350 by 350 mm slab size with the 350 by 350 mm paving rather than adding another size and shape to the mix. The square shape would make it hard to define the areas though and may not compliment the possible curved bench layout.
- Use big 600 by 600 mm slabs so that they can be a better surface for creating temporary art. This will be hard to define the areas though and may not compliment the curved bench layout.
- Create a circular patterns using 200 by 100 mm paving or circular paving sets – these circles could creep out of the rectangular area.
- Repave who width of road at Cornhill so the whole area is not so patchwork.

Marshalls have been as a good supplier of paving that Dorset Council would approve. Priority for paving is that it is accessible and sustainable.

- <https://www.marshalls.co.uk/commercial/product/conservation-x-paving>
- <https://www.marshalls.co.uk/commercial/product/lunar-paving>
- <https://www.marshalls.co.uk/commercial/product/scoutmoor-yorkstone>
- **Discussion:** Group felt that the whole area at the bottom of South Street down to Durngate Street should be repaved to reduce mishmash. Some of the group liked the idea of circle patterned paving and the use of resin. Others like the suggestion of the large 600 by 600 mm square paving slabs. The maintenance of the paving slabs and replacement by Dorset Council was discussed.
- **Follow up Action: Matilda:** Share groups thoughts on paving with the Dorset Council Highways team and get feedback for the next meeting.

Item 5 – Seating

- **Action from previous meeting:** Matilda to research costings for heritage benches, charging benches and bespoke seating.
- **Update:** Curved shape seemed popular at last meeting so Matilda focussed research on that. Despite having found the image below from the internet. Matilda could not find anywhere that actually makes them. Matilda spoke to Broxap (recommended by Outdoor Services Manager) over the phone and they have said that they would recommend steel rather than cast iron benches for curved benches and the cost of curved cast iron would be very high.



Image 2 – curved cast iron bench

Possible seating options that are available off the rack –

1. Easthorpe by Broxap – <https://www.broxap.com/easthorpe.html>

This is made in house therefore can be configured to any shape. The semi-circular timber and steel construction comes in a range of finishes, manufactured to any required dimension. The steel can be lots of colours

The semi circular shape in the main picture below costs - £2,747.00 ex VAT – plus installation and delivery costs



Image 3 - Easthorpe by Broxap



Image 4 and 5 – Alternative Easthorpe configurations



Image 6 – <https://www.marshalls.co.uk/commercial/product/m3-curved-seat>

Option for Changing bench – <https://www.westcotec.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/Westcotec-Urban-Smart-Bench.pdf> - this one has a back rest and is wooden. One of these would cost £2,650 plus installation and delivery.

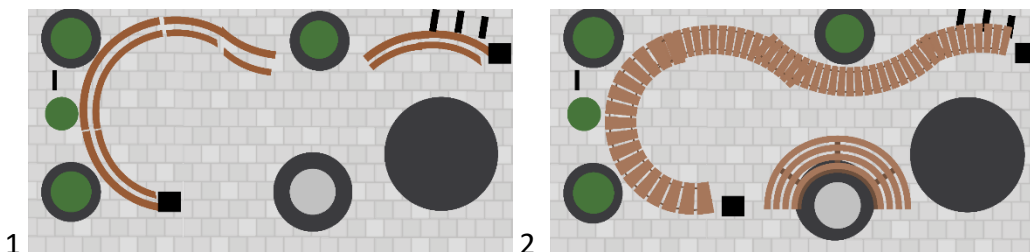
Or <https://www.cyclepods.co.uk/smart-solar-bench/>

Bespoke seating - There are different options for this:

- Option 1 - Buy a bespoke seat <https://www.allurban.co.uk/products/benches/> comes in any colour – concrete and fibreglass
 - Option 2 – Tender and commission a community artist to create a bespoke bench with influence from the community - <https://www.gillespies.co.uk/news/the-designs-for-the-new-benches-in-rochdale-town-square-are-coming-to-life>
 - Option 2 – Tender for a bench. Could use someone like Arts Development Company to do this with us.
- **Discussion:** Group liked the curved shapes but did not like the metal benches -too cold. Would like wood and metal but felt the design of the Easthorpe bench would not suit and would like the design to look more like a heritage cast iron bench. Youth Council representatives liked the <https://www.allurban.co.uk/portfolio-items/boomer-two/> bench design best. A two-sided element to the bench would be preferred. The group acknowledged that some people would like to be able to sit in a big group and some would like to be able to sit alone and this needed to be reflected in the layout and seating design. Group discussed creation of brief for bespoke bench.
 - **Follow up actions: Matilda:** Research more benches following group feedback.
 - **Follow up action: Matilda and Emma:** Create a brief for bespoke bench to share.

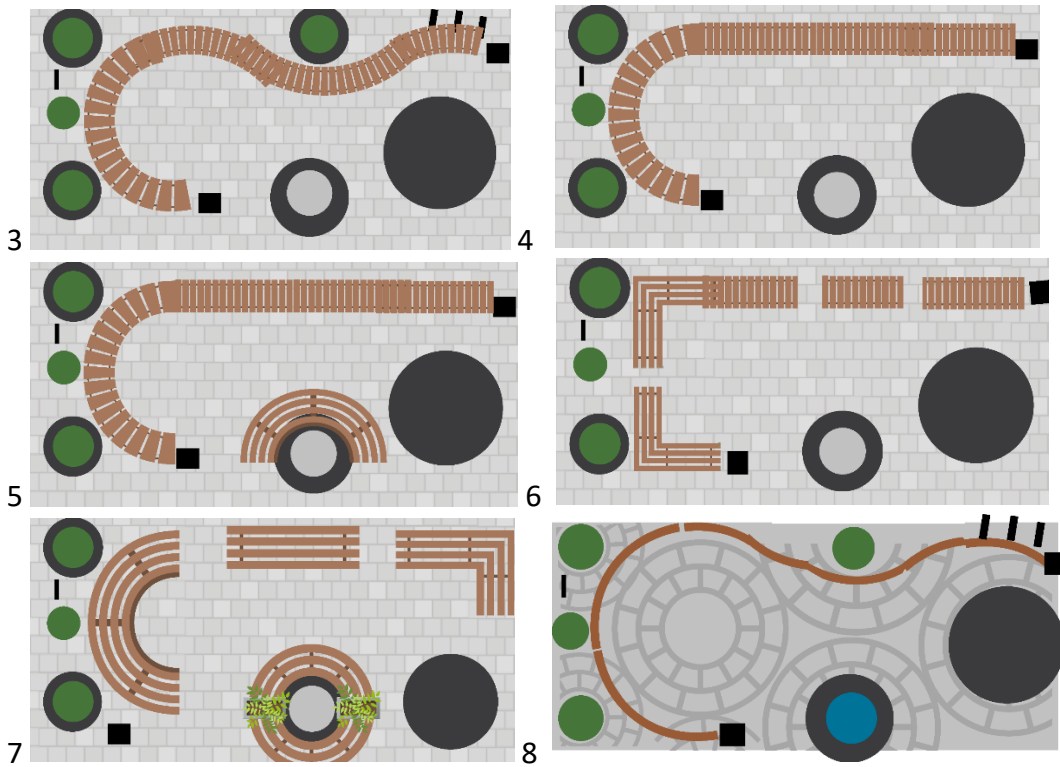
Item 6 – layout

- **Action from previous meeting:** Matilda to scope possible seating layouts to share at next meeting.
- **Update:** Matilda shared the following mocked up layout options and visuals. The green circles indicate trees in planters, the grey squares indicate bins, the large grey circle is the entertainment zone, the small grey rectangles are bike racks.

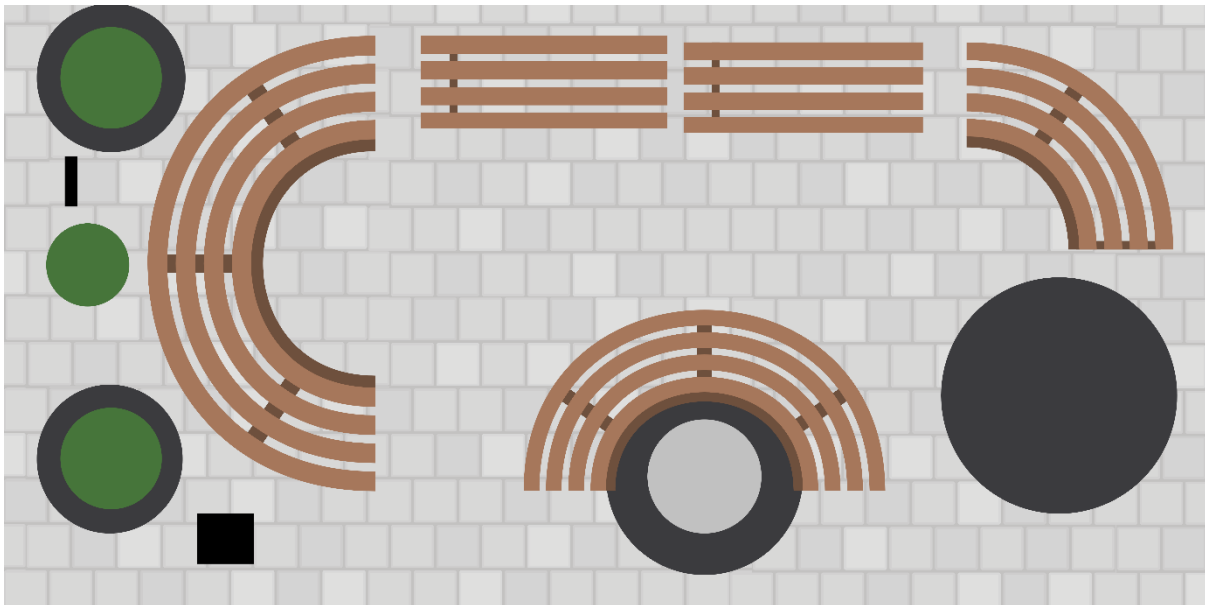


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- Discussion: The group liked the layout of 7 with a curved seat on the right-hand side and a two-sided bench in the middle and a semi-circle round the town pump the best. This is mocked up below:



- **Follow up action: Matilda:** Draw the preferred design to scale in the space and share.

Item 7 - Committee Schedules

- **Action from previous meeting:** Matilda to look at committee schedules to help calculate more definitive project milestones.
- **Update:** Matilda spoke with Dorset Council Highways team and they have said that, in the 1st instance, Dorchester Town Council can go ahead and discuss what they want to achieve, then Corinne Holbrook and Stephen Mephram would take a look at the proposed design from obstruction point of view (and probably involve someone from Alison Curtis team to advise). TC would have to “adopt” furniture etc (same as benches) maintain and cover with their own insurance etc. Highways not sure if design would need planning permission or need to any Dorset Council committees. They are investigating.

Item 8 – Agenda and dates of next meeting

Group would like to meet at The Town Pump for the next meeting in early June. Date to be confirmed.

Group would like to hear updates on actions and focus on lighting and planting at the next meeting. Grant and Carl Dallison to be invited to the next meeting.

Action: Matilda to invite Carl Dallison to next meeting to input on planting

Action: Matilda to check availability of group members and set date for next meeting