

Dorchester Town Council

Policy Committee

23 September 2024

Present: The Mayor (Councillor R. Potter) and Councillors S. Biles (Chairman), J. Germodo, G. Jones, V. Lloyd-Jones, K. Reid, R. Ricardo and D. Taylor.

In Attendance

Councillors F. Hogwood, D. Leaper and M. Rennie.
Giles Watts, Climate Action Network – Minute No. 21.

Apologies: Councillor R. Biggs.

14. Minutes

The Minutes of the Meeting of the Committee held on 22 July 2024, adopted by Council on 29 July 2024, were taken as read and were confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

15. Declaration of Interests

Councillor M. Rennie declared an interest and left the room during the consideration of Minute No. 21 below.

Councillor D. Taylor declared a non-pecuniary interest in respect of Minute No 26. below.

16. Finance Update

Members considered a report by the Finance Officer which updated them on the financial position of the Council as at end of August 2024, the level of debt over 30 days and gave details of the payments list from 1 July 2024 to 31 August 2024.

The report also set out the outcome of the completed 2023-24 external audit which had no amendments but one comment recommending that when minuting the appointment of the internal auditor the Council record that they have considered the independence of the appointed auditor on an annual basis.

Resolved

That the payments list, totalling £330,864.35 be approved.

Recommended

That the certified Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) for the year ended 31 March 2024 be approved and accepted.

17. **Annual Review of Asset Register**

The Committee considered a report by the Responsible Finance Officer which reviewed the Council's Asset Register as at 31 March 2024. It was noted that the Frink statues had been gifted to the town and should be included in the Register.

Resolved

That, subject to the inclusion of the Frink statues, the Asset Register, as at 31 March 2024, with a total value of £7,711,155 be agreed.

18. **Cornhill Improvements Update**

Members received a report by the Tourism Development Officer on the progress being made in respect of the Cornhill enhancement scheme.

Resolved

- (1) That quotes be sought from architectural practices in order to develop the designs of the Cornhill enhancement scheme to a sufficient level to enable the necessary permissions to be sought from Dorset Council.
- (2) That up to £5,000 be allocated from the Public Realm reserve to enable the scheme to be commissioned.

19. **Town Centre Working Group**

The Committee considered the notes of the Town Centre Working Group meeting held on 2 September 2024.

Resolved

That the notes of the meeting of the Town Centre Working Group be received.

20. **Council Chamber and Town Hall Refurbishment**

Members considered a report by the Town Clerk which updated them on the actions for improvement identified by the Task and Finish Group.

Recommended

- (1) That new LED lighting for the Lozenges, Seals and Regalia cabinets be agreed at a cost of £4,000.
- (2) That the existing Council Chamber desks and chairs be retained.

- (3) That investigations be made into a new PA system for the Council Chamber that could be used for meetings.
- (4) That quotes be sought for relocating the Council Chamber radiator pipework.
- (5) That the Dorchester history tapestries be fixed to the stair walls on either side of the the landing half way up the stairs to the Town Hall.
- (6) That the painted ornamental wall panels on the stair walls not be reinstated following decoration.
- (7) That Dorchester Arts be requested to keep its tapestry on display if at all possible.
- (8) That the report as a whole be received.

21. **Carbon Reduction Works – 19 North Square**

The Committee had before it a report by the Town Clerk on the refusal of planning permission for solar panels on the roof of the Council Offices at 19 North Square.

Giles Watts, Climate Action Network, addressed the Committee and urged Members to appeal the refusal of planning permission.

Members agreed that this decision should be appealed and that a split decision be authorised so that if the Planning Inspector could not support solar to the front façade approval could be granted for the rear.

Resolved

That Crickmay Stark Architects be appointed to appeal the refusal on behalf of the Council as set out above at a cost of £1,500.

22. **Discretionary Core Grants**

The Committee considered a report by the Responsible Finance Officer setting out the Council's key annual core grants which required reviewing. The grant recipients were the Dorchester Youth and Community Centre, Dorchester Joint Heritage Committee and Citizens Advice central Dorset. The report also set out a request from the Management Committee to support a new annual grant to People Need Nature for an ongoing project at the Great Field.

Resolved

- (1) That those organisations set out in the report be requested to submit fresh applications for funding for the next three years for consideration by the Committee prior to the 2025-26 budget setting process.

- (2) That the grant request from People Need Nature for £4,000 per annum be agreed. To be reviewed in three years.

23. **Dorchester Business Awards**

The Committee considered whether to again sponsor the Dorchester Business awards 2025. Members expressed a preference to sponsor the ‘excellence in customer service’ category.

Resolved

That the 2025 Dorchester Business Awards be sponsored in the sum of £335.

24. **Meeting Venue**

Members were informed that the Council Chamber may not be available for use for the January 2025 meeting.

Resolved

That if the Council Chamber is not available for the January 2025 meeting the Committee meets at the Borough Gardens House instead.

25. **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.

26. **Shire Hall Historic Courthouse Museum**

The Committee considered a report by the Town Clerk.

Resolved

- (1) That the Chairman, Vice-Chairman and Town Clerk work with Shire Hall Museum to produce a more detailed business case for the future of the Museum.
- (2) That a special meeting of Council be held in the second half of October to consider a revised application for funding.

Chairman.....