

Dorchester Town Council

Policy Committee

18 November 2024

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

In Attendance

Councillors P. Farmer, L. Fry, W. Gibbons, F. Hogwood, D. Leaper and M. Rennie.

Apologies: Councillor R. Ricardo.

27. Minutes

The Minutes of the Meeting of the Committee held on 23 September 2024, adopted by Council on 30 September 2024, were taken as read and were confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

28. Declaration of Interests

Councillors R. Biggs, P. Farmer, L. Fry and J Germodo declared an interest in respect of Minute No. 33, Dorchester Youth and Community Centre, and left the room during the consideration of that matter.

29. Finance Update

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

The report also set out the outcome of the procurement exercise for the Council's insurances. Only one insurance provider had opted to quote. It was also noted that the payment from Freedom Group for the use of the old tennis court site had been received and that the first internal audit for 2024-25 had been completed.

Resolved

- (1) That the payments list, totalling £447,141.39 be approved.
- (2) That the report of the internal auditor and officer responses to them be noted.

- (3) That the Council enters into a three year insurance agreement with Clear Insurance Group at a cost of £39,000 per year as from 1 December 2024.
- (4) That the payment from Freedom Group for the use of the old tennis court site, less the Council's administration fee of £1,000, be passed to the DACLT.

30. Corporate Plan First draft

The Committee considered the draft Corporate Plan and High Level Action Plan 2025-29 together with the comments already made on the draft by the Corporate Plan Task and Finish Group.

Members felt that the 'Economy' section should be strengthened to include the Council doing all it can to protect the Town's employment land through the Local Plan process and consider partnering with Dorset Council on projects to improve existing employment land.

Members also wished to see the Council's support and engagement with young people highlighted in the Plan and acronyms removed.

Resolved

That, subject to the comments set out above the Corporate Plan and High Level Action Plan be put to public consultation.

31. Strategic and Operational Risk Registers

Members considered a report of the Assistant Town Clerk (Corporate) relating to the Council's Risk Registers.

The Committee reviewed each of the high level risks included in the report. Members agreed to include a new risk related to Fordington Cemetery Wall.

In regard to the Risk Management Plan, paragraph 4, bullet point three, Members agreed that this should be changed to read 'Taking advantage of opportunities to improve our services'.

Recommended

- (1) That, subject to the amendment above, the assessed high level strategic and operational risks be approved.
- (2) That the Strategic and Operational Risk Registers, as a whole, be approved.
- (3) That the Risk Management Plan be amended as set out above.

32. **Fordington Cemetery Wall**

Members received a report by the Town Clerk which updated them on the financial situation with regard to the Fordington Cemetery Wall collapse.

The Mayor thanked those that attended the German War Memorial service recently.

Resolved

- (1) That the emergency scaffolding costs of £20,000 be paid from the Cemeteries reserve.
- (2) That a further report be presented to the Committee once the additional cost information is available in light of the overall condition of the wall.
- (3) That the excess of £575 be reimbursed to the young driver who had her car written off by the wall collapse, to be reviewed annually.

33. **Discretionary Annual Core Grants**

Further to Minute No. 22/2024 the Committee considered three year annual core grants applications from the Dorchester Youth and Community Centre (DYCC) and the Dorchester Joint Heritage Committee.

In respect of DYCC the Committee expected DYCC to look at increasing its revenue streams and that this would be encouraged and monitored by the Town Council representative on DYCC.

Resolved

- (1) That a three year annual grant of £28,000 per year be paid to the Dorchester Youth and Community Centre as from 2025-26.
- (2) That a three year annual grant of £8,500 (for major events) and £3,000 (for maintenance and small projects) be paid to the Dorchester Joint Heritage Committee as from 2025-26.

34. **Variation to the Former Tennis Court Site S106 Deed of Variation**

The Committee considered whether to agree to the proposed variation of the S106 agreement so as to bring the wording in line with standard clause used to define social rents in this type of agreement. Dorset Council had advised that the variation was acceptable to that authority.

Resolved

That the variation to the S106 Agreement, set out in the report, be agreed.

35. **Financial Regulations**

Members considered revised Financial Regulations which had been based on the April 2024 NALC Model Financial Regulations.

Recommended

That the revised Financial Regulations be agreed.

36. **Standing Committees – Terms of Reference**

The Committee considered revised terms of reference for its standing committees.

Members felt that Economic Development should be included within the Policy Committee's delegated powers.

Recommended

That, subject to the above amendment, the revised terms of reference for the Council's standing committees as set out in the Annexure to these Minutes be agreed.

37. **Plant Based Catering at Council Events**

The Committee had before it a report by the Town Clerk on the possibility of transitioning to plant based food options at Council events where food was served.

Members felt that provision should not be totally plant based but also healthier with reduced ultra processed foods. A healthy mix of foods, including an increase of plant based foods, would be the ideal

Resolved

That officers explore the practicalities and costs of moving to a healthier, more plant based catering at Council events with a report to be presented to a future meeting with the aim of a trial at the 2025 Mayor Making.

38. **Town Centre Working Group**

(a) **Smart Hubs**

Members considered a report by the Assistant Town Clerk (Corporate) on a presentation the Working Group had received from a company called Pulse who specialised in multi-functional digital advertising screens and who were looking to install its smart hubs in towns across the South West including Dorchester.

Members did not support the proposal as there would be no control over the advertisements, they would look out of place in the conservation area and concerns over data collection.

Resolved

That the Council does not lend its support to the initiative.

(b) **Footfall Counter**

The Committee had before it a report by the Responsible Finance Officer reporting on the Working Group's request for part funding towards the cost of continuing with the footfall counter in the town. It was noted that the BID was contributing towards the counter costs but Members felt that it should be encouraged to contribute more. The Town Council representative on the BID to be requested to seek support for this at the next BID meeting.

Resolved

- (1) That the Council fund the footfall counter at a cost of up to £2,200 per year for a three year period starting from the 2025-26 financial year to be reviewed by the Committee prior to the setting of the 2028-29 budget.
- (2) That Dorchester BID be asked to contribute more to the project.

39. **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.

40. **Insurance**

The Committee considered a report by the Assistant Town Clerk (Corporate).

Resolved

That no specialist insurance be taken out, but other security measures be investigated.

41. **Shire Hall Historic Courthouse Museum**

The Committee considered a report by the Town Clerk.

Resolved

That the report be noted.

Chairman.....

Management Committee

Constitution: 11 Members and the Mayor ex-officio.

Delegated Powers: The powers, duties and functions of the Council relating to:

The administration, maintenance and letting of the various facilities provided by the Council including all outdoor spaces.

Arts and cultural activities and other matters relating to the promotion of entertainments and other events.

Organising civic events.

The administration and maintenance of the burial function.

The administration and maintenance of the allotments function.

The administration and maintenance of the administrative offices.

Twinning arrangements and visits.

Revision of Hire Charges.

The small grants scheme and cultural activities grants.

Referred Business To consider and report to the Council on:

Making any necessary recommendations for improvements to services within the Committee's sphere of responsibility as a result of regular monitoring.

The making, adoption or enforcement of byelaws or any other local legislation.

Planning and Environment Committee

Constitution: Up to 19 Members and the Mayor ex-officio.

Delegated Powers: The powers, duties and functions of the Council relating to:

Consideration of Planning Applications and the submission of observations on them to the Local Planning Authority.

Observations (as necessary) to the responsible Authority on matters affecting the environment, traffic management and public transport in the Town.

Footpaths, bridlepaths and rights of way.

Street Naming.

Referred Business: To consider and report to the Council on:

All major development proposals affecting the environment of the Town.

The Local Development Plan

Developments which, in the opinion of the Committee, would be of benefit to the Town.

Policy Committee

Constitution: 8 Members and the Mayor ex-officio.

Delegated Powers:

The powers, duties and functions of the Council relating to:

Investments.

Control of financial income and expenditure within the Estimates approved by the Council.

Policy - consideration for recommendation to the Council of items referred to the Committee by the Council and other Committees.

Appointment of staff.

Ensuring that the maximum possible value for money is achieved by all Committees and that suitable procedures are in place for liaison with the Council's Auditors.

Tourism Development.

Community Development.

Carbon reduction action as set out in the Council's Climate Emergency Plan.

Economic Development

Referred
Business:

To consider and report to the Council on:

Consideration of annual Financial Estimates of Committees prior to their submission to the Council.

Establishment.

Expenditure and income proposed by other Committees other than that included in the current Financial Estimates.

Core revenue grants.

Consideration of the Council's risk management strategy and risk registers.

Considering any performance review recommendations of other committees.

Review (as necessary) of Standing Orders, Financial Regulations and Terms of Reference of Committees.

Review (as necessary) of the Council's Climate Emergency Plan.

Supervising and overseeing the preparation and application of a comprehensive Performance Management System including review of all the Council's policies not specifically mention in these terms of reference.

The preparation, review and oversight of a corporate development plan for the Council.

Consideration of strategic policy documents and consultation papers issued by the Government and other bodies.

Mayoral Selection Committee

Constitution: All previous Mayors serving on the Council and the Mayor ex-officio (The serving Deputy Mayor to be Chairman)

Delegated Powers: The powers, duties and functions of the Council relating to:

There are no delegated powers.

Referred Business To consider and report to the Council on:

The choice of the succeeding Mayor.

Any matters relating to the operation of the Mayoralty including (when necessary) the Mayors Charity and Mayoral budgets.

The creation of Honorary Townspeople as may be required.