

Dorchester Town Council

Policy Committee

21 November 2022

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

Apologies: Councillors B. Armstrong-Marshall, T. Harries and G. Jones.

In Attendance

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

8. **Minutes**

The Minutes of the Meeting of the Committee held on 18 July 2022, adopted by Council on 25 July 2022, were taken as read and were confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

9. **Declaration of Interests**

There were no declarations of interest.

10. **Finance Update**

Members considered a report by the Financial Controller which updated them on the financial position of the Council as at end of October 2022. The report also gave details about the agreed 2022-23 NJC pay award, the external audit report 2021-22 and the internal audit report 2022-23.

Resolved

- (1) That the payments list, totalling £878,787.03, be approved.
- (2) That the first 2022-23 internal audit report, with officer responses be noted.

Recommended

- (3) That the certified Annual Governance and Accountability Return for the year ended 31 March 2022 is approved and accepted.

11. **Management Committee Extracts**

The Committee considered two items referred to it from the Management Committee in respect of a proposed extension to the Borough Gardens staff accommodation and requesting a representative from the Committee to join the HM King Charles III Coronation Task and Finish Group.

Resolved

(1) That funding of up to £43,000 be agreed from the Parks Premises Reserve for the extension of the staff accommodation at the Borough Gardens.

(2) That Councillors R. Biggs and S. Biles be appointed to the HM King Charles III Coronation Task and Finish Group and that, with the agreement of the Chairman of Management Committee, Councillor D. Leaper also be invited to attend.

(Councillor R. Biggs declared a non-pecuniary personal interest in respect of the proposed extension to the Borough Gardens staff accommodation.)

12. Financing the Municipal Buildings Works

The Committee considered a report from the Financial Controller setting out the costs of servicing a loan to fund the outstanding costs associated with the works undertaken to the Municipal Buildings.

Members noted that the Council was holding sufficient reserves to fund the outstanding costs itself without the need for a loan and thereby saving a significant amount in interest charges.

Recommended

That a loan not be taken out and the outstanding costs of the works undertaken to the Municipal Buildings totalling £650,000 be funded internally from the Corporate Projects Reserve.

13. Non Domestic Rates – The Municipal Buildings

Members considered a report by the Town Clerk informing them the Dorset Council viewed the Town Council, not Dorchester Arts, as the paramount rating occupier of the Municipal Buildings and as such it was the Council which was responsible for paying the non domestic rates - £12,000 per year. The lease with Dorchester Arts indicated that Dorchester Arts would pay the rates on the assumption that it would be classed as the paramount rating occupier in which case discretionary rate relief of 80% would have been applied. Dorchester Arts had agreed to contribute 20% towards the cost of the 2022-23 rates.

Resolved

That the 2022-23 non domestic rates of £12,000, less the contribution of 20% from Dorchester Arts, be paid by the Council from within existing budgets.

14. Corporate Plan Update

The Committee had before it a report by the Town Clerk updating it on the progress being made in respect of the Council's high level 2019-24 Corporate Plan and identified some new projects that might be included.

Resolved

- (1) That Poundbury Cemetery be removed from the list of possible sites to accommodate affordable housing.
- (2) That the Cornhill Project be deferred for consideration by the new Council after the next elections but that consideration be given now to improving the street scene in other ways.
- (3) That a representative of a local Development Trust be invited to talk to the Council prior to the January Full Council to explain further the benefits of establishing such a trust in the town.
- (4) That the revised high level Corporate Plan 2019-24 be agreed.

15. Dorchester and Poundbury Business Awards

The Committee considered whether to sponsor the Dorchester and Poundbury Business awards 2023. It was noted that the awards were due to be renamed the Dorchester Business Awards. Members expressed a preference to sponsor the 'excellence in customer service' category.

Resolved

That the 2023 Dorchester and Poundbury Business Awards be sponsored in the sum of £325.

16. Strategic and Operational Risk Registers

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

The Committee reviewed each of the high level risks included in the report, adding detail to the risk table where considered appropriate. Members felt that the high level risks associated with transition from the previous Town Clerk to the new Town Clerk and the Covid pandemic could now be removed from the Register.

Recommended

- (1) That the assessed high level strategic and operational risks be approved.
- (2) That the high level risks associated with transition from the previous Town Clerk to the new Town Clerk and the Covid pandemic could now be removed from the Register.
- (3) That the Strategic and Operational Risk Registers, as a whole, be approved.

17. Flexi Time Policy – Office Based Staff

The Committee had before it a new Flexi Time Policy and it was

Resolved

That the Flexi Time Policy be agreed and implemented immediately.

18. **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.

19. **Staffing**

Members considered a report by the Town Clerk on a revision to the Council's staffing structure.

Recommended

- (1) That the Financial Controller's job description and salary grade be amended in accordance with option 5 of the report as from 1 January 2023.
- (2) That the Financial Controller be appointed as the Council's designated Responsible Finance Officer as from 1 January 2023.
- (2) That the Outdoor Services Manager's job description, job title and salary grade be changed in accordance with option 5 of the report as from 1 January 2023.
- (3) That the new post of Assistant Town Clerk (Corporate) be agreed along with the post's job description and salary grade.
- (4) That an interview panel consisting of Councillors R. Biggs, S. Hosford, S. Jones, F. Kent-Ledger, and R. Major be established and authorised to agree the appointment process, interview and appoint to the post of Assistant Town Clerk (Corporate).

Chairman.....