



Dorchester Town Council

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13 March 2024

Agenda for the meeting of the **Policy Committee**, which will be held in the **COUNCIL CHAMBER** at **THE MUNICIPAL BUILDINGS, HIGH EAST STREET, DORCHESTER** on **MONDAY 18 MARCH 2024** at **7.00pm**.

Steve Newman
Town Clerk

Public Attendance and Speaking at the Meeting

The Chairman has discretion to allow members of the public to speak at the meeting. If you wish to speak please **contact the Clerk by 9.00am on the morning of the meeting**. We ask speakers to confine their comments to the matter in hand and to be as brief as possible.

Member Code of Conduct: Declaration of Interests

Members are reminded that it is their responsibility to disclose interests where appropriate. A Member who declares any interest must leave the room. A Member who declares a registerable interest as a Council nominee to a partner organisation may first address the meeting as a member of the public.

Membership of the Committee

Councillors B. Armstrong-Marshall, R. Biggs (Chair), S. Biles, T. Harries, J. Hewitt, F. Hogwood, S. Hosford (Vice-Chair), G. Jones and The Mayor ex-officio.

Agenda

- 1. Apologies**
- 2. Declaration of Interests**
- 3. Minutes**

To read, confirm and sign the Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 22 January 2024 (adopted by Council on 29 January 2024). A copy of the Minutes can be found at <https://www.dorchester-tc.gov.uk/Committees/Management+Committee/Minutes>

- 4. Financial Update – Page 3**

To consider a report by the Responsible Finance Officer (enclosed).

- 5. Treasury Strategy – Page 6**

To consider a report by the Responsible Finance Officer (enclosed).

6. Members Allowances – Page 9

To consider a report by the Responsible Finance Officer (enclosed).

7. Town Centre Working Group – Page 12

To receive an update from the Town Centre Working Group which last met on 11 January 2024 (enclosed).

8. Fairfield Road Public Realm – Page 14

To receive an update from the Town Centre Working Group which last met on 26 February 2024 (enclosed).

9. Management Committee Extracts – Page 16

To consider an extract from the Council’s Management Committee (enclosed).

10. Municipal Buildings Biomass and Solar – Page 17

To note a report by the Director of Dorchester Arts on the operation of the new biomass boiler and solar panels (enclosed).

11. Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960

To resolve “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 representatives of the press be excluded from this meeting during their discussion”.

12. Dorchester Ballet and Dance Club – Page 19

To consider a report by the Town Clerk (enclosed).

DORCHESTER TOWN COUNCIL
POLICY COMMITTEE – 18 MARCH 2024
FINANCIAL UPDATE AT 29 FEBRUARY 2024

1. Financial Position

- Month 11 spend (Appendix 1) £118k under:
 - £68k over on Treasury income
 - £11k over on Markets income
 - £16k up on Cemetery income
 - £21k under Parks R&M, including £4k grant received from Forestry Commission.
 - £8k under on Apprenticeships (apprenticeship came to an end and not replaced).
 - £13K over on Municipal Buildings Repairs and Maintenance (£9k clock & tower repairs, £2k flagpole maintenance, £4k external decorating).
 - All other under and overspends net £5k under

- Cash Position

Account	Balance as at 29/02/24	Balance as at 31/12/2023	Movement	Interest
Lloyds	119,329	94,811	24,518	0%
NS&i	6,739	6,739	0	0.60%
CCLA Deposit	1,800,000	2,150,000	-350,000	5.26%
	1,926,068	2,251,550	-325,482	

- Debt over 30 days = £0, 0 debtors (31 December £1038.80, 3 debtors).
- CIL received in 23/24 £5,187.56, credited to MB Front of House Works earmarked reserve, as per the 23/24 Medium-Term Financial Strategy. Full CIL report published on DTC website.
- Payments list 1 January to 29 February on website. Supporting vouchers available from Financial Controller
 - **RECOMMENDED** that the Payments list, totalling £395,595.23 is approved.

2. Internal Audit Visit, 2 of 3.

- The internal auditor carried out the second of three audit on January. Covering payments, budgetary control, risk management and income.
- 5 Recommendations made, 1 high priority, 2 medium priority, 1 low priority.
- Recommendations and officers responses at Appendix Two.
- It is **RECOMMENDED** that the report, and officer responses are noted.

Nigel Hayes

Responsible Financial Officer

MANAGEMENT REPORT AT 29 FEBRUARY 2024

By Spend Type	Budget	Profile	Actual	-Under/Over
	£000	£000	£000	£000
Staff	895	821	824	3
Capital Financing/Debt	17	15	15	-0
Other Payments	547	489	460	-29
To Specific Reserves	345	345	345	0
Income	-138	-132	-224	-93
Net Budget	1,666	1,539	1,420	-118

By Service	Budget	Profile	Actual	-Under/Over
	£000	£000	£000	£000
Allotments	-11	-11	-8	3
Parks & Open Spaces	164	156	139	-17
Cemeteries	-12	-10	-34	-24
Corp. & Dem. Manage.	39	32	32	-1
Cultural & Twinning	68	53	49	-4
Municipal Buildings	373	365	381	16
Other Services	58	47	-40	-87
Office Team	500	456	434	-22
Outdoor Services	489	450	468	18
Net Budget	1,668	1,539	1,420	-118

	Budget	Profile	Actual	-Under/Over	Balance
	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000
Earmarked Reserves					
Tourist Information	5	5	11	6	5
MB Front of House	250	14	14	0	238
19 North Square Works	11	0	0	0	11
Municipal Buildings	46	13	13	0	50
Parks Premises	50	32	32	0	33
Planning Advice	10	0	0	0	18
Trees	0	0	21	21	9
Vehicles & Equipment	20	20	20	0	97
Play Equipment	0	0	4	4	19
Christmas Lights	0	0	0	0	4
Apprenticeships	0	0	0	0	8
Public Realm	0	0	28	28	435
Climate Emergency	50	50	63	13	79
Corporate Projects	0	0	0	0	385
Cemeteries	30	1	1	0	87
Arts & Cultural	16	16	16	0	0
Net Budget	488	151	223	72	1,478

APPENDIX TWO

Darkin Miller Chartered Accountants
2023/24 INTERNAL AUDIT OF DORCHESTER TOWN COUNCIL - FINAL REPORT VISIT 2 OF 3: 26th JANUARY 2024
Appendix 1 – Recommendations and Action Plan

Recommendation number	Detail	Pr	Management Response	Resp Off	Due Date
2.1 – Amend draft Treasury Strategy and show movements on investments	<p>I checked a sample of payments in the cashbook to confirm that they were supported by invoices, authorised and minuted. I found that all payments were supported by invoice or other appropriate paperwork and all had been authorised. I noted that 7/51 payments, which related to the transfer of funds into the council's CCLA deposit account, were not minuted by Council. As the amounts are not supplier payments they are not shown on the Council's payments lists. The 2019 Treasury Strategy stipulated that the movements should be agreed in consultation with the Chair and Vice Chair of Policy Committee, and retrospectively reported back to that Committee. At present, the payments are authorised in accordance with the Council's Financial Regulations and the month end balance on all bank accounts is reported to each meeting of the Policy Committee.</p> <p>The Responsible Finance Officer noted that an updated Treasury Strategy is due to be considered by Policy Committee in January 2024. This will be amended to note that movements between internal bank accounts will be retrospectively reported to Policy Committee in order to aid transparency.</p> <p>I recommend that the new Strategy is updated as planned in order to ensure that Councillors are aware of investments made and drawn down.</p>	M	Agreed, TS to go to March Policy Committee.	NH	March-24
2.2 – Amend coding	<p>I checked to see that a sample of payments were correctly coded. I found that 50/51 payments were correctly coded, but that one payment relating to Microsoft licences had been coded in error to an allotments code.</p> <p>I recommend that the coding is amended to ensure that all payments are correctly coded in the accounts.</p>	L	Agreed and corrected	NH	Jan-24
3.2 – Sign/initial minutes	<p>I reviewed the minutes to confirm that there was no unusual financial activity. I noted no such activity, and noted that the most recent Council minutes are signed/initialled on every page, but that recommendation 3.1 from visit 1 (which listed unsigned pages from previous minutes) had not yet been addressed.</p> <p>I also noted that the July 2023 minutes of the Dorchester Heritage Committee have been included in the minutes folder, and that only the back page of that set of minutes has been signed.</p> <p>It is a requirement of the Local Government Act 1972 s41 that minutes of the proceeding meeting be signed at the next suitable meeting, and that each leaf of loose leaf minutes be initialled.</p> <p>I recommend that the unsigned minutes noted above and in recommendation 3.1 are signed or initialled as required as soon as possible in order to ensure compliance with the LGA 1972 s41(2).</p>	H	<p>Agreed, all minutes to be signed/initialled.</p> <p>Heritage Committee minutes have been initialled but now taken out of the minute folder to go in their own folder.</p>	NH	Jan-24
3.3 – Consider wording of grants disclosures in newsletter	<p>I checked to see that any financial information published in the Council newsletters was correct. I found that the Winter 2023 newsletter contained a note of some of the grants that had been agreed at three Management Committee meetings during the year, but that the wording implied that the note contained a list of all grants agreed at only two of the meetings.</p> <p>I recommend that either all grants are listed, or that the wording is amended in future newsletters to e.g. 'amongst the grants paid out since the last newsletter are XXX,' in order to ensure that it is clear to the reader whether or not the list is exhaustive.</p>	L	The wording in the Newsletter article will be amended to indicate that the list of featured grants is not exhaustive.	TH	March 2024
5.1 – Consider whether new deed needed, and if increase in rent is due	<p>I checked a sample of income streams to confirm that prices charged agreed with those set by the Council. I found that two of the amounts due were in relation to the lease of a property to Dorset Council, and a deed of grant in relation to a cable passing under land owned by the Council. The agreement with Dorset Council has no end date, and the rent charged has not been increased since the agreement was signed in 2018. The deed of grant was made in 1989 for a period of 25 years, and the amount paid has only been increased once by 4% (by the other party to the agreement).</p> <p>I recommend that the Council considers whether increased rent is due in respect of the lease or deed, and if a new agreement is needed in respect of the deed.</p>	M	Deed in with Vodafone, but will look into another increase. Will contact DC about rent review on BGH, however, they are using it for social housing, one of our Corporate aims, therefore income is not the main driver.	NH	Feb-24

DORCHESTER TOWN COUNCIL

POLICY COMMITTEE – 18 MARCH 2024

TREASURY STRATEGY

1. The Treasury Strategy was last reviewed in 2019.
2. DTC Financial Regulation 7.1 states *'The RFO will produce a Treasury Strategy for all loan and investment activity which shall be in accordance with relevant regulations, proper practices and guidance and is to be reviewed and adopted by Council each May'*.
3. However, the Secretary of State, that the proper practices are based on states *'the strategy should be presented for approval prior to the start of the financial year'* (DLUHC, 2018, s15-16).
4. It is **RECOMMENDED** that the updated Treasury Strategy, attached to this report, is reviewed, and adopted.
5. It is **RECOMMENDED** that DTC Financial Regulation 7.1 is amended to *'The RFO will produce a Treasury Strategy for all loan and investment activity which shall be in accordance with relevant regulations, proper practices and guidance and is to be reviewed and adopted by the Policy Committee each **January**'*

Nigel Hayes
Responsible Finance Officer

**DORCHESTER TOWN COUNCIL
TREASURY STRATEGY 2024/25**

1 Overview

1.1 CIPFA defines Treasury Management as: *‘management of the Council’s cash flows, banking, money market and capital market transactions; the effective control of risks associated with those activities’.*

1.2 A council has the power to:

- Invest surplus funds for: *‘any purpose relevant to its functions or for the purpose of prudent financial management’*¹.
- Participate in schemes of collective investment². It is the council’s role to *‘review and adopt the TS each May’* (DTC, 2023, p9).

1.3 The Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) states a Treasury Strategy should:

- *‘Comment on the corporate governance arrangements that have been put in place to ensure accountability, responsibility and authority for decision making on investment activities within the context of the local authority’s corporate values’* (DLUHC, 2018, s50).
- *‘State the local authority’s approach to assessing risk of loss before entering into and whilst holding an investment’* (DLUHC, 2018, s.41).
- *‘Be publicly available on a local authority’s website’* (DLUHC, 2018, s18).

2 Introduction

2.1 Dorchester Town Council will, for the foreseeable future, owe money on behalf of its taxpayers (debt) and will routinely hold monies on behalf of its taxpayers (investments). This strategy identifies how the council, and its officers will manage debt and investments to minimise financial risk and manage its investments to achieve a financial benefit commensurate with that risk.

3 Debt

3.1 The Council currently has one loan, with the Public Works Loan Board (PWLB), that will be repaid by 2027:

2024/25	PWLB	Maturity	Interest	01-Apr-24	30-Sep-24	31-Mar-25
	Ref		%	£	£	£
2	487126	09/2027	4.625	56,000	49,000	42,000

3.2 The Council may, under certain circumstances, take on new debt, but would only borrow from the PWLB, part of the DLUHC. Any decision to borrow would be taken by the Policy Committee, that would consider the benefits of borrowing against the use of the Council’s investment cash. The Medium-Term Financial Strategy currently shows no plans to borrow.

¹ Local Government Act 2003, s.12

² Trustee Investments Act 1961, s.11.

4 Investments

4.1 The Council's investments are defined as any cash held in its bank accounts, held as deposits in other bodies or in managed funds with third parties, advanced as a loan, or used to purchase bonds.

4.2 On 1 April each year, after adjusting for short term (under 1 year) debtors and creditors, the Council's investments will equal its earmarked and general Reserves. During the year this figure is supplemented by sums resulting from cashflow on the revenue budget, peaking in April and September when the precept instalments are received. There are several reasons for holding investments at any point:

- Sums arising from routine cash flow in year – short term, available when the cash flow profile requires, no longer than six months.
- A sum in the general reserve, held for emergency purposes, calculated annually as part of the budget process (24/25 £100k) to be available at 3 months' notice.
- Sums held in earmarked reserves for spending on a planned project, typically in a 1-to-5-year period.
- Sums held in the corporate projects reserve, awaiting allocation to projects or transfer to the earmarked reserve – this might be invested for up to 5 years, depending on how quickly the council wishes to review and implement its plans.

4.3 Security of the sum is the highest priority when making a decision to invest. The council does not currently take advice from professional advisors.

4.4 Payments in respect of investments, including transfers between bank accounts held in the same bank, or branch, shall be made in accordance with the DTC Financial Regulations.

4.5 The requirement of the council to have funds available to meet its revenue responsibilities is also a priority when determining the period of investment. Investments must take account of the council's cash flow requirements.

4.6 Movements between internal accounts shall be reported retrospectively to the Policy Committee.

4.7 Achieving a return on any investments is the third priority. Any investment return must be consistent with the need to preserve the security of the principle sum and meet payments owed by the council.

5 Policy

5.1 This Strategy is to be reviewed every January by the Policy Committee as part of the budget setting process.

Nigel Hayes
Responsible Finance Officer
18 March 2024

DORCHESTER TOWN COUNCIL

POLICY COMMITTEE – 18 MARCH 2024

Member Allowance Scheme

Under the Local Authorities (Members' Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003, Dorchester Town Council has the power to issue allowances to its members.

1. The Members Allowance Scheme was last reviewed in 2019, where Council agreed to continue with the 2011 Members Allowance Scheme.
2. In 2019 Dorset Council established the Dorset Parish Independent Remuneration Panel (DPIRP) to make recommendations to introduce a consistent approach to the payment of allowances across the county.
3. On the 21 March 2022, Policy Committee considered the findings of the DPIRP and agreed that having taken into consideration the scale of the councils revenue budget, and the complexity of operations delivered by the council, as well as the role that the council is required to play to facilitate and support infrastructure required for the future growth of the town, the basic allowance be set at £1,069 for 2022/23. In line with subsequent pay awards, the rate for the 2023/24 financial year is £1,174.80.
4. As set out by the DRIRP, the basic allowances to be annually indexed, in line with pay inflation.
5. An updated Members Allowance Scheme is attached.

It is **RECOMMENDED TO COUNCIL** that the updated Members Allowance Scheme it adopted, to be reviewed in 2028.

Nigel Hayes
Responsible Financial Officer

DORCHESTER TOWN COUNCIL**MEMBER ALLOWANCE SCHEME**

Dorchester Town Council, in exercise of the powers contained in the Local Authorities (Members' Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003 makes the following scheme:

1. Parish Basic Allowance

- Elected members of Dorchester Town Council receive a basic allowance to recognise the time devoted to carrying out their work as councillors, including attendance at meetings, and civic activities. It is also intended to cover incidental costs such as in-area subsistence, use of members' homes, private telephones, and any IT consumables.
- In 2019 Dorset Council established the Dorset Parish Independent Remuneration Panel (DPIRP) to make recommendations to introduce a consistent approach to the payment of allowances across the county.
- On the 21 March 2022, Policy Committee considered the findings of the DPIRP and agreed that having taken into consideration the scale of the councils revenue budget, and the complexity of operations delivered by the council, as well as the role that the council is required to play to facilitate and support infrastructure required for the future growth of the town, the basic allowance be set at £1,069 for 2022/23.
- As set out by the DRIRP, the basic allowances will be annually indexed, in line with pay inflation.

2. Parish Travelling and Subsistence Allowance

- The Parish Travelling and Subsistence Allowance shall only be payable for attendance at approved duties outside the town boundary.
- The council will only pay allowances in connection with the performance of an ongoing or specific role approved by the council.
- The allowance paid will be consistent with the approved scheme for officers of the Town Council at the time that the allowances was claimable.

3. Claims and Payments

- The basic allowance shall be paid monthly through payroll, subject to PAYE and National Insurance regulations in place at that time.
- Claims for payments of Parish Travelling and Subsistence Allowance shall be paid through the payroll system.

4. Records of Allowances

- Records of Allowances made will be available for inspection by any local government elector for Dorchester, with a copy of such records provided on request.
- The council will publish a notice on its website stating the sums paid annually to each councillor in respect of the Basic Allowance.

5. Non-Payment of Allowances

- Members may, if they wish, forgo all their entitlement to the basic allowance by giving notice in writing to the Responsible Financial Officer.
- Where a member is suspended, or partially suspended from their duties as a Dorchester Town councillor, in accordance with Part 3 of the Local Government Act 2000, or regulations made under that part, the parts of the allowances payable to them in that period shall be withheld.

6. Other Allowances

- The council pays no specific Chairman's Allowance. Separate to this scheme of allowances, the council does retain a c. £12,000 budget to enable the Mayor to fulfil their duties. Part of this is paid direct to the Mayor, through payroll, and subject to PAYE and NI deductions

Last Reviewed: 25 March 2024

Next Review Due: March 2028

Dorchester Town Council
Town Centre Working Group

Minutes of meeting on 26th February 2024

Present: Cllrs L. Fry (chair), J. Hewitt, A. Chisholm, M. Rennie and F. Hogwood.

Apologies: Cllrs D. Taylor and R. Ricardo

Officers: T. Hurley, N. Hayes, E. Scott and M. Manley.

1. **Notes of last meeting.** Noted.
2. The working group discussed the following proposals for action, developed on the basis of previous discussions with the BID and Chamber:
 - a) **Proposal:** Promotion of Dorchester town centre as a place to start up a business via short form video interviews with owners / managers of businesses that have opened/moved to Dorchester and showcase these via an appropriate online platform.
 - b) **Proposal:** Identify and approach the owners of vacant shop units most in need of repair/maintenance with the aim of encouraging investment.
 - c) **Proposal:** Business mentoring.
 - d) **Proposal:** Grants for shop front maintenance – proposal from Phil Gordon.

Members considered aspects of the above proposals. There was a desire to see any promotional videos to be professionally produced but perhaps jointly-commissioned with Dorset Council in order to link with its work on economic development of market towns. Matilda Manley suggested that any promotional material ought to be informed by market research and having a better understanding of the target audience. Discussions with local property agents might help refine the proposal. Cllr Rennie suggested that the managers of Brewery Square could share their understanding of why businesses are attracted to Dorchester.

Cllr Hogwood recommended that the scope of any work should be beyond the limits of the BID area and that residents should be engaged as part of the process.

Cllr Rennie recommended that the group needs to develop a more refined brief any promotional work, and town centre support in general, and that this should be developed through discussions with Dorset Council's Service Manager for Growth & Economic Regeneration.

The concept of 'wrapping' vacant shops was discussed and generally supported. The proposal of a small grant scheme was also discussed but it was felt that it should be a partnership scheme, perhaps also including Dorset Council.

3. **Next steps.**

It was agreed that officers would arrange a meeting with the Dorset Council's Service Manager for Growth & Economic Regeneration along with Cllrs Les Fry and Molly Rennie.

4. **Reporting back to Policy Committee.**

It was considered important that the working group develop an evidence base of any proposals, and to explore partnership with Dorset Council, before reporting to Policy Committee.

5. **Date of next meeting.**

To be agreed following meeting with Dorset Council.

DORCHESTER TOWN COUNCIL

MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE 11 MARCH 2024 & POLICY COMMITTEE 18 MARCH 2024

FAIRFIELD ROAD IMPROVEMENTS

1. Members will have seen the highways works undertaken by Dorset Council to improve Fairfield Road. These works include:
 - A dedicated footway along Fairfield Road
 - A way to access the car park directly from the railway station (Copper Street)
 - Safer crossing points across Fairfield Road at junctions
 - Restricting vehicle access to Fairfield Road (Weymouth Avenue)
 - Improved street lighting
2. The highways scheme creates a public space at the Weymouth Avenue end of Fairfield Road. Whilst Dorset Council has funds to undertake the highways work it does not have the funds to undertake additional public realm work such as a different surface, benches, planters, trees, rain garden to help drainage and habitat improvements.
3. The Planning and Environment Committee established a task and finish group to work with Dorset Council on the highways scheme and public realm proposals. The task and finish group agreed the ideas put forward for the public realm area.
4. A concept plan for the area is below. The exact planting scheme has yet to be finalised and discussion about the tree species is ongoing. Once the works have been completed the Town Council will be asked to undertake ongoing maintenance of the area, excluding the trees which would be managed by Dorset Council.
5. The cost of the public realm improvements will be in the region of £90,000. Dorchester Joint Markets Panel has agreed to investigate whether it could fund a share of the cost, Dorset Council is also looking at ways to fund a share and the Town Council is being asked if it would also consider funding a share of the cost.
6. If a funding package can be put together it hoped to undertake the works as soon as possible but that is unlikely to be before the Autumn.
7. The Policy Committee is asked to consider contributing to the scheme up to a maximum of £30,000. Funding to come from the Public Realm reserve.
8. The Management Committee is asked to agree that the Town Council undertakes future maintenance of the area (excluding trees) once the work is completed.

Steve Newman
Town Clerk

DORCHESTER TOWN COUNCIL

POLICY COMMITTEE – 18 MARCH 2024

MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE - EXTRACT FOR CONSIDERATION

“53. Vehicle Procurement

Carl Dallison outlined his report and the benefits of the proposed use of a procurement framework for acquiring a new electric vehicle for the Outdoor Services team. The alternative of hydrogen powered vehicles was discussed but not considered viable. The Committee expressed its support for the move to electric vehicles as a contribution to the Council’s agreed carbon reduction programme.

Resolved:

- a) *That the use of TPPL to undertake to a framework procurement exercise to obtain quotations for the supply of electric vehicles be agreed and that, once completed, the vehicle should be purchased.*

- b) ***That the Policy Committee be requested to agree to release up to £70,000 from the Vehicle and Equipment Replacement Reserve to fund the purchase of the electric vehicle.”***

DORCHESTER TOWN COUNCIL

POLICY COMMITTEE – 18 MARCH 2024

Report by Dorchester Arts on the outcomes to date of the switch to biomass and installation of solar panels at The Municipal Buildings

Biomass

1. After some initial teething problems (such as a faulty motherboard) the biomass boiler and associated systems have been very successful, both operationally and financially.
2. Dorchester Arts staff and the Town Hall Keeper have adapted quickly to the various tasks associated with the boiler and no issues have been encountered in terms of regular tasks such as the emptying of the ash bin. The amount of ash produced is very small (maximum of 25ltrs/week) and disposal in our normal waste bin has proved to be an effective solution.
3. We are getting used to the need for regular chip deliveries and can now accurately judge when the next load is required by monitoring the level in the storage space. After some initial issues with dust penetration into the boiler room, the deliveries are now happening without any issues and have proved to be much quieter and less disruptive than we had feared. The dust issue has been solved by delivering at lower pressure and using a different grade of chip that produces less dust.
4. We continue to use a local chip supplier. The costs of chip has risen, as might be expected, but we are happy with the quality of their supply and really value the fact that this supplier is based less than 50 miles away and use sustainable chip from a local sawmill.
5. The new heating controls with room-by-room zoning and one-week forward programming have proved invaluable and have transformed our ability to manage the heating of the building, with benefits for users (more flexible and accurate temperature control) and for us (financial benefits due to far less wasted heating time).
6. Financially, the benefits have been considerable. In the original projections supplied by the previous Town Clerk, the gas energy consumption for heating the Corn Exchange was estimated at 258000kWh per annum. Based on the figures since the installation of the biomass boiler, annual energy consumption has reduced to 101164kWh. We suspect that this is for two reasons: firstly, the huge leap in energy efficiency when comparing the brand new biomass boiler with the ageing gas boilers previously in service, and secondly our ability to micro-manage the heating of the building and therefore target the heat where is needed at the time. In terms of carbon reduction, on the current annual consumption, this represents a saving of around 23,400kg of CO2 every year.
7. In terms of finance, a substantial saving has been made by replacing gas with biomass. The overall expenditure on biomass since installation has been £16,489, and this has generated 151747kWh of heating energy, resulting in a cost of £0.108 per kWh. For our final period of gas usage, the cost per kWh was £0.196. With recent variations in energy prices we could possibly have found a cheaper deal for gas and direct comparison is

therefore difficult, but had we been obliged to remain on the same tariff for gas, this would represent a saving of £13,250 over 18 months (assuming of course that new, equally efficient gas boilers has replaced the old, energy-hungry ones).

Solar panels

8. The solar panels have also contributed substantially to reducing our carbon footprint and saving money. Though they have operated well since the outset, the project has not been without its issues, namely the unintentional disconnection of the panels for 6 weeks following electrical works and a lengthy battle with EDF (involving Ofgem) to secure a solar export agreement.

9. Since installation, the panels have produced 12.035 MWh of power (12035 kWh). This represents a saving of 2325.1kg of CO₂.

10. As with the biomass v gas calculations, direct comparisons are difficult because at this stage we are not able to track how much power is produced and sent back to the grid rather than being used within the building. Our current analysis suggests that almost all the output is used within the building and based on this, the financial savings (using our current tariff for grid supply from EDF) will have been around £4934 over 18 months. The additional contribution from solar export is likely to be modest, but we will only be able to judge this after a full year of export.

Dorchester Arts 03-2024