

Dorchester Town Council

Policy Committee

15 March 2021

held via Zoom Video Conferencing

Present: Councillors, R. Biggs, A. Chisholm, T. Harries, F. Hogwood, S. Hosford (Chair) and G. Jones
Apologies: Councillor B. Armstrong-Marshall
Attending: Councillors L. Fry, J. Hewitt, S. Jones, F. Kent-Ledger, D. Leaper, R. Potter and M. Rennie

22. Minutes and Declarations of Interest

The Minutes of the Committee of 18 January 2021, adopted by Council on 25 January 2021, were taken as read and confirmed and are to be signed by the Chairman as a correct record once the Covid 19 lockdown has ended.

23. Financial Update at 28 February 2021

The Committee received the Town Clerk's report on the month 11 financial position, noting actual spending at £42,000 below profile. The Clerk highlighted the latest internal audit report and requests from the Management Committee to release funds and for support from Dorchester Cricket Club.

Resolved

- a) That debt totalling £1,167 is authorised for write off
- b) That the Payments list, totalling £322,913.88, is approved
- c) That the Clerk, in consultation with the Chair and Vice Chair of the Committee, is authorised to make financial support available to Dorchester Cricket Club if required
- d) That the report of the Internal Auditor and the associated officer responses are noted
- e) That £8,190 is released from the Parks and Open Spaces Premises Reserve to enable work to the Borough Gardens House during April/May 2021

24. Municipal Buildings Works and Dorchester Arts Update

The Committee considered the report of the Town Clerk, which gave an overview of the current budget and progress relating to a range of works at the Municipal Buildings. The Clerk also provided an update on discussions with Dorchester Arts regarding future management arrangements, as well as an update on the development of an option to dispose of 19 North Square once vacant.

A resident asked questions regarding the potential for alternative choices of heating and their impact on the Air Quality Management Area, the Council's ability to meet its Equal Opportunities obligations to potential new staff and whether the Council was in discussion with Dorset Council regarding future office provision.

Member asked that acoustics in the Corn Exchange be included in the discussions with Dorchester Arts and the Lighting and Sound contractor, sought clarification regarding the

source of wood for the biomass boiler, asked that the Council's historic documents be protected during any relocation from 19 North Square and that further consideration be given to the names used when the building was transferred to the management of Dorchester Arts.

A Member asked whether electric heating had been considered during the development of the biomass proposals; and a question was asked regarding the level of asbestos in the building.

Recommended to Council

- a) That all surplus funds above the £100,000 General Reserve target at 31 March 2021 are transferred to the Municipal Buildings Reserve
- b) That the Clerk, in consultation with the Chair and Vice Chair of Policy Committee, is authorised to use these extra funds to
 - Meet the costs of additional building works identified as improvement opportunities, including those highlighted in the report to Policy Committee
 - Mitigate the impacts of the building being closed for lockdown and building refurbishment purposes on Dorchester Arts
 - Meet the cost of developing feasibility options up to planning application stage for 19 North Square with a local architect

Resolved

- c) That approval is delegated to the Clerk, in consultation with the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Committee, to appoint contractors for the supply of Lighting, Sound and AV and Raked Seating within the budget estimates approved.

25. **Governance Update**

The Clerk listed a number of internal and external processes due to take place over the coming months that would impact on the governance arrangements of the Council, including a new Code of Conduct for Members, a review of Parish Member Allowances and a Dorset-wide Community Governance Review.

Members asked for further information to be provided regarding the impact of lockdown on the Mayor Making event.

Resolved

- a) That the Town Clerk, in consultation with the Chair and Vice Chair of Policy Committee, respond to any requests for views and information arising out of the Dorset Council review of Parish Member Allowances.

Recommended to Council

- b) That the Council meetings calendar for 2021/22 (Appendix 1) is approved.

26. **Dorchester Business Improvement District**

The Committee considered the report of the Town Clerk regarding a previous motion to Council advocating that Dorchester BID be encouraged to undertake an independent review process. The Clerk provided additional information gathered since the motion had been considered at Council.

The Committee highlighted both their positive and negative experiences of Dorchester BID. No further recommendation was proposed to Council.

27. **New Graduate Trainee Officer Post and Apprenticeships**

The Clerk proposed the appointment of a new member of staff to assist the delivery of projects emerging from the Corporate Plan, as well as improving the Council's social media communications.

Members highlighted that the potential for the role to be separated into two part time posts should not be discounted and also invited the Clerk to monitor that the breadth of the role did not result in the postholder struggling to deliver the role effectively.

Resolved

That the post of Graduate Trainee is advertised on a 3 year contract at a starting salary of £18,562 (SCP3), rising to SCP 5.

28. **Confidential Business**

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 representatives of the press be excluded from this meeting during their discussion.

29. **Staff Issues**

The Clerk provided background information relating to a staff issue.

Members asked questions regarding the relative values of the two main roles undertaken by the post and the capacity of the postholder to manage workloads associated with Mayors with different levels of experience.

Resolved

- a) That the post of Planning Committee Administrator and Mayor's Secretary is graded, with the current postholder being advanced to the lowest point on the grade wef 1 April 2021 and then subject to annual increments.

The Clerk provided background information relating to a second, different staff issue.

Resolved

- b) That should the opportunity arise, the Town Clerk is authorised to agree an appropriate arrangement to terminate the employment of the member of staff named in the report.

Chairman

APPENDIX 1

CALENDAR OF MEETINGS 2021-22

	2021								2022				
	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY
COUNCIL	24 MM 25 (Tu)		26		27		22		24		28		23 MM 24 (Tu)
POLICY	17		19		20		15		17		21 MS@ 1830		16
MANAGEMENT	10		12		13		8		10		14		9
PLANNING AND ENVIRONMENT	4 (Tu)	7	5	2	6	4	1	6	4 (Tu)	7	7	4	3 (Tu)
MARKETS JOINT PANEL *		30							27				
HERITAGE JOINT COMMITTEE			20 (Tu)			19 (Tu)			18 (Tu)			19 (Tu)	
SITE VISITS		22 @ 9.30AM		10 @ 4.00PM								12 @ 4.00PM	
CIVIC EVENTS		Hardy Sun 6					Remem. Sun 7					11? ATM	
BANK HOLIDAYS	3,31			30				27,28	3			15,18	2

MM Mayor Making ATM Annual Town Meeting MS Mayoral Selection Committee

Meetings will ordinarily take place at 19.00 in the Council Chamber, Municipal Buildings.

* The dates and timing of Markets Joint Panel meetings are still to be agreed with Dorset Council