

Dorchester Town Council

Policy Committee

20 March 2023

Present: Councillors B. Armstrong-Marshall, R. Biggs, S. Biles, A. Chisholm, F. Hogwood, S. Hosford (Chairman) and G. Jones.

Apologies: The Mayor (Councillor J. Hewitt) and Councillors T. Harries and G. Jones.

In Attendance

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

29. Minutes

The Minutes of the Meeting of the Committee held on 23 January 2023, adopted by Council on 30 January 2023, were taken as read and were confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

30. Declaration of Interests

Minute No. 31 Councillor A. Chisholm declared an interest in respect of 2.2 of the internal audit report.

Minute No. 37 – Councillor A. Chisholm declared an interest as an unpaid Director of Keep106. He addressed the Committee and then left the meeting whilst the matter was considered.

Minute No. 40 - Councillors R. Biggs and M. Rennie declared a non-pecuniary interest as Council appointees to Dorchester Youth Community Centre. They addressed the Committee and then left the meeting whilst the matter was considered.

31. Finance Update

Members considered a report by the Finance Officer which updated them on the financial position of the Council as at end of February 2023. The report also confirmed that there was no debt over 30 days and gave details of the payments list from 1 January 2023 to 28 February 2023. The Finance Officer reported that the March underspend was now likely to be around £40,000.

Resolved

- (1) That the payments list, totalling £247,940.02, be approved.
- (2) That the internal audit report and officer comments be noted.

32. **Cornhill / South Street Task and Finish Group**

Members considered the notes of the Task and Finish Group held on 13 March 2023, attached at Appendix 1, established to consider improvements to Cornhill and South Street.

Resolved

That the notes of the Cornhill / South Street Task and Finish Group held on 13 March 2023 be agreed.

33. **Interview Panel**

The Committee was informed that the Interview Panel had now concluded its work and had appointed Mr Tony Hurley to the post of Assistant Town Clerk (Corporate). Mr Hurley would be taking up his post on 1 May 2023.

Resolved

That the appointment be welcomed.

34. **Management Committee Extract**

The Committee considered an item referred to it from the Management Committee requesting a representative from the Committee to join the Council Chamber / Town Hall Improvements Task and Finish Group.

Resolved

That those Members who were interested in sitting on the Group to inform the Town Clerk and the final membership be agreed at Full Council.

35. **Council Offices 19 North Square**

The Committee had before it a report from the Town Clerk which set out a number considerations in respect of delaying the disposal of the Council Offices at 19 North Square.

Recommended

- (1) That the disposal of the Council Offices at 19 North Square not go ahead at present and remain the operational base for office staff. To be reviewed in three years.
- (2) That the existing Municipal Buildings lease between the Council and Dorchester Arts be amended to make clear that the Council has no rights over the office accommodation or Council Chamber.
- (3) That a report be brought to a future Committee meeting on measures that could be undertaken to reduce the carbon impact of 19 North Square.

36. New Website for the Town Council

The Town Clerk reported that the Corporate Plan identified the need for an improved and accessible Town Council website. Some funding had been set aside for this project in the 2023-24 budget and the Committee was asked to consider establishing a small Task and Finish Group to help guide this work.

Resolved

- (1) That a Council Website Task and Finish Group be established.
- (2) That the Group consist of three Councillors. Those Members who were interested in sitting on the Group to inform the Town Clerk and the final membership be agreed at Full Council.

37. Keep 106 Funding

Members were reminded that the Committee had previously agreed an annual grant of £2,500 to Keep 106. The grant was in recognition of the provision of PA equipment at a number of Council and Community events plus technical advice to the Council. The Committee considered correspondence from Keep 106 requesting an increase in its annual grant which had remained unchanged for three years.

Resolved

- (1) That an annual grant of £5,000 per year be awarded to Keep 106 to be reviewed in three years.
- (2) That the grant be uplifted annually in accordance with CPI.
- (3) That a written grant agreement be put in place with Keep106.

38. Holiday and Food Programme

The Committee considered a report by the Community Development Officer on the Council's involvement with the Holiday and Food Programme.

Resolved

That the report be noted.

39. Sawmills Development Association

Members considered a request from the Sawmills Development Association asking whether the Council would be willing to make two appointments to the SDA's Management Committee in place of Trevor Jones and Len Heath both of whom were retiring from the Committee.

Resolved

That the request from Sawmills Development Association for two Council representatives be included on the list of annual outside bodies appointments which was due to be reviewed in May.

40. **Section 106 Requests**

The Committee considered a report by the Town Clerk on Section 106 funding requests received by Dorset Council. It was noted that the Dorset Council S106 Panel had now met and had agreed, subject to comments from the Town Council, that the applications from Dorchester Youth and Community Centre and the GAP Project be agreed.

Resolved

That the S106 funding applications to Dorset Council from the Dorset Youth and Community Centre and the GAP Project be supported.

Chairman.....

Cornhill Task and Finish Group Meeting Notes

Date: 13.03.23

Attending:

- Susie Hosford, Councillor
- Stella Jones, Councillor
- Rory Major, Councillor
- Janet Hewitt, Councillor
- Frances Hogwood, Councillor
- Matilda Manley, Tourism Development Officer
- Emma Scott, Community Development Officer

1. Purpose of Task and Finish Group.

Group agreed that the purpose of the group is to:

- Explore options for the Cornhill/Town Pump area.
- Decide on way forward for this site (keeping in mind the other identified sites and how they could link holistically).
- Oversee works on the site and ensure that work starts as soon as possible.

2. Involvement of others in the decision-making process.

The group felt that FERIA had already done quite a lot of community consultation to find out how people would like to use the space and what they would like to see there.

The group considered possible consultation fatigue by community and businesses around Cornhill if they were consulted before the design process again.

The group felt they had enough information to come up with a design and plan for Cornhill first and then go out to consultation on this.

The group valued the comments and views the Youth Council had expressed in advance of the meeting about Cornhill and agreed to invite two representatives from the Youth Council to join the task and finish group. The group would also like to invite the Youth Council to join them at Cornhill for a site visit at some point in the future.

Action: Emma to invite two representatives from the Youth Council to join the task and finish group.

3. Elements to consider in the design of the space at Cornhill.

The group agreed that they will look at the following elements to plan the space:

1. Vehicle access restrictions in the space
2. How the design compliments/interacts with the Cornhill market
3. What experiences people want to have in the space/ what do they want to use the space for?
4. Paving/surface
5. Seating
6. Planting
7. Lighting
8. Overhead

The group agreed that the access and environmental impact of the design should be considered throughout the design process.

The group then started to consider these elements in turn.

3.1 Vehicle access restrictions in the space

The group discussed what the traffic restrictions are and felt it was unclear who should be enforcing this, what the status is and whether this could be altered.

Action: Emma to speak with Dorset Highways to clarify the traffic regulations and what the access requirements are.

Matilda and Emma to find out how pedestrianised shopping streets are managed in other towns such as Sherborne.

3.2 How the design compliments/interacts with the Cornhill market

The group are keen for the design to compliment and enhance the Cornhill market and not to negatively impact on it. Group would like to involve Grant who manages the Cornhill markets in the planning, speak to him about the project now and invite him to a future meeting at some point.

Action: Matilda to speak to Cornhill markets manager about the Cornhill project to ensure design complements the market

3.3 What experiences people want to have in the space/ what do they want to use the space for?

The group looked at the following list of experiences that people could have in the space, created by the Tourism Development Officer:

- Meeting point
- Takeaway consumption
- Rest - people watch
- Chat - with friends and passers by
- Bike parking
- Maps and navigation
- Busking and live music
- Feel proud of our town
- Feel connected to heritage and nature
- Use to change seasonally
- Play
- Shelter
- Charge devices
- Instagram opportunity
- New Year Celebration meeting point
- Outdoor theatre
- Outdoor art exhibitions

The group agreed with all apart from outdoor theatre and outdoor art exhibitions, which some felt the current space would be too small for.

The group felt that the Cornhill area shouldn't focus on heritage as this is done in lots of other places around the town already and its nice to do something different.

Traffic noise along High West Street was mentioned as an issue for rest and relaxation in the Cornhill area – plants and trees were suggested to soften this.

The idea from Ferial to create a water feature at the Town Pump was discussed. It was decided that this could be hard to maintain and that installing the water source could be too costly.

The group discussed trialling some different pop-up events and experiences this summer to see how they go down/how they fit in the space.

Action: Matilda to look at running some pop-up events and experiences in Cornhill area this summer to see how they go down/how they fit in the space.

3.4 Paving/surface

Altering the paving in the Cornhill area was suggested by the Tourism Development Officer as an opportunity to celebrate the town and its heritage, zone areas for different uses, improve accessibility and bring colour and vibrancy. The group were shown some examples of street mosaics and other colourful resurfacing options. The following was agreed:

- The paving should not be colourful as this can make the space look smaller and reduce the flexibility of the space. Colour paving could possibly also be an issue with visually impaired. The group felt that colour could be brought in with plants, planters, banners and temporary murals etc. rather than permanent paving.
- The group thought the paving should be replaced in the area, but not too patterned or colourful. Instead, the new paving should focus on accessibility and zoning a performance/entertainment/Christmas tree area.

Action: Matilda to research suitable paving fitting the brief above.

3.5 Seating

For seating, the group would like to re allocate the current seating at Cornhill to elsewhere in the town and start again with new seating.

The group agreed that they would like the seating to be:

- Ergonomic and supportive for older generation.
- Hard wearing and easy to maintain.
- Sociable and maintain flexibility of the space.
- Not anti-homeless seating

The group like the look of the curved heritage benches shared at the meeting and also discussed how they liked the bench that used to be placed outside Waitrose in Dorchester.

The group would like the seating to be high quality. They are willing to explore both iron heritage or bespoke artistic options but they need to compliment the planters and townscape.

Modular, moveable or flexible seating that could be used in different arrangements for different events were discussed.

The group discussed installing solar charging benches for phones and electric bikes but would like to find out more about costs.

Action: Matilda to research costings for heritage benches, charging benches and bespoke seating.
Matilda to scope possible seating layouts to share at next meeting.

3.6 Planting

For planting, the group would like to see trees in large pots that can provide some shelter and shade. They would like to see native shrubs and trees that are easy to maintain and provide year-

round interest rather than colour. They would like to focus on drought resistant planting. They do not want to install anything that the Town Council cannot commit to maintaining itself. Using trees at the High West end of Cornhill to frame the view down the meadows and also soften the noise and harshness of the adjoining road was agreed. The group felt that avenues of trees are such a feature of Dorchester and would like to explore extending this feel along South Street intermittently. The group did not have time to look at lighting or overhead at this meeting.

4. Next steps and project milestones.

At the next meeting (to be held just after Easter) the group would like to:

- Hear an update on actions
- Plan with the model and look at layout options
- Visit Cornhill area as a group as part of the meeting.

The group would like to have a definite plan for the Cornhill area by the Summer that can be taken to committees etc. early Autumn. They would like the works to be carried out this Winter.

Action: Matilda to look at committee schedules to help calculate more definitive project milestones

Meeting notes written by Tourism Development Officer. Notes yet to be agreed by Task and Finish Group members.