

Dorchester Town Council

Policy Committee

20 November 2023

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

Apologies: Councillors G. Jones and T. Harries.

21. Minutes

The Minutes of the Meeting of the Committee held on 18 September 2023, adopted by Council on 25 September 2023, were taken as read and were confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

22. Declaration of Interests

Councillor R. Biggs declared a personal interest in respect of Minute No. 28 below.

23. 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 2023, the level of debt over 30 days and gave details of the payments list from 1 September 2023 to 31 October 2023.

The report also gave details about the agreed 2023-24 NJC pay award, the external audit report 2022-23 and the internal audit report 2023-24.

Resolved

- (1) That the payments list, totalling £259,703.95, be approved.
- (2) That the first 2023-24 internal audit report, with officer responses be noted.

Recommended

- (3) That the certified Annual Governance and Accountability Return for the year ended 31 March 2023 is approved and accepted.

24. Engagement of Internal Auditor

Members considered a report by the Responsible Finance Officer on the appointment of an Internal Auditor for the Council. It was proposed that the existing Internal Auditor, Darkin Miller Ltd, be re-engaged for a period of three years. It was noted that there would be no further extension to the contract at the end of this three year period.

Resolved

That Darkin Miller Ltd are engaged by the Council for a further period of three years after which a competitive procurement process would be undertaken.

25. Planning and Environment Committee Extracts

The Committee considered extracts from the Planning and Environment Committee meetings held on 7 August 2023 and 6 November 2023 regarding the funding of two speed surveys at a cost of £275 per survey.

Resolved

That funding of £550 be approved for speed surveys at Kings Road and Maiden Castle Road.

26. Management Committee Extract

The Committee considered an extract from the Management Committee meeting held on 13 November requesting additional capital funding for the works to extend the staff mess room at the Borough Gardens.

Resolved

That additional capital funding of £20,000 be approved from the Parks Buildings Reserve, so as to enable the works to go ahead to extend the staff mess room at the Borough Gardens.

27. Appointment of New Town Crier

Members had before them a report by the Assistant Town Clerk (Corporate) on the retirement of the Town Crier on New Years Day 2024.

The Committee felt that a new Town Crier should be sought and agreed that an appointments Panel be established to undertake the recruitment process. Members also felt that a budget should be set aside for new Town Crier livery. It was hoped that the new livery could be made locally and the Town Clerk confirmed that it would remain the property of the Council.

Resolved

(1) That a Town Crier Recruitment Panel, to include the present Town Crier and four other Members, be established to oversee the recruitment and selection process for the post of Town Crier.

(2) That an allocation of no more £5,000 be included in the 2024-25 budget to meet the cost of purchasing livery for the new Town Crier.

28. Corn Exchange Front of House Works

The Committee considered a report by the Town Clerk updating it on progress with the Municipal Buildings front of house works, including funding arrangements and appointment of professional services.

Resolved

That the update be noted and that the professional services continue to be provided by Crickmay Stark (Architects), Peter Gunning and Partners (Quantity Surveyors) and Dencher Consulting Engineers (Structural Engineers).

29. 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. In respect of the risk associated with an increase in energy costs it was felt that the wording should be amended to read 'An exceptional and unexpected increase in energy costs'.

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.

30. Dorchester Business Awards

The Committee considered whether to again sponsor the Dorchester Business awards 2024. Members expressed a preference to sponsor the 'excellence in customer service' category.

Resolved

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

31. Council Chamber / Town Hall Refurbishment Task and Finish Group

Members received the notes of the Council Chamber / Town Hall Refurbishment Task and Finish Group held on 18 September 2023.

Resolved

That the notes of the Council Chamber / Town Hall Refurbishment Task and Finish Group held on 18 September 2023, as set out in Appendix 1 to these Minutes, be received.

32. Cornhill / South Street Improvements – Replacement Lamp Posts

The Committee had before it a report by the Tourism Officer on the replacement of seven lampposts in South Street with new lampposts that were able to safely hold hanging flower baskets. The report showed a picture of the proposed replacement lampposts that would be made of steel rather than cast iron the total cost of which would be £28,614.

Members hoped it would be possible to have more discreet identification numbers on the lampposts.

Resolved

That the proposed replacement lampposts be agreed at a cost of £28,614.

33. 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.

34. Staffing

The Committee considered a report by the Town Clerk on the temporary, part time appointment to cover the absence of the Development Assistant.

Resolved

That the arrangements set out in the report be agreed.

35. Carbon Reduction Measures 19 North Square

Members had before them a report by the Town Clerk on the outcome of the tender process to undertake carbon reduction works at 19 North Square. It was noted that it was anticipated that the works would attract a 50% grant from Low Carbon Dorset.

Resolved

That the tender received from G R Edwards in the sum of £43,732 be agreed.

36. Claim for Property Damage

The Committee considered a report by the Town Clerk on a small claim for property damage.

Resolved

That the claim be settled directly by the Town Council.

Chairman.....

Appendix 1

DORCHESTER TOWN COUNCIL

COUNCIL CHAMBER / TOWN HALL TASK AND FINISH GROUP

18 SEPTEMBER 2023

Present: The Mayor (Councillor A. Chisholm) and Councillors L. Fry, S. Hosford, S. Jones and F. Kent-Ledger.

Officers: S. Newman, Town Clerk.

1. Terms of Reference

The Group noted its terms of reference.

2. Council Chamber Refurbishment

Members discussed those changes / improvements they would like to see in the Council Chamber as follows:-

- The far left hand display bay needs reviewing and smartening.
- The twinning memorabilia needs reviewing and rationalising – any memorabilia in storage to be reviewed at North Square in due course.
- The vertical radiator pipes to be painted the same colour as the wall to help them blend in.
- Investigate new 'flexible' tables and chairs to replace the existing furniture.
- Investigate alternative and more accessible for the public, Committee meeting 'styles'.
- Obtain prices for linking the hearing loop to the existing in the tech room.
- Consider having a screen at each end of the room.
- Remove redundant switches from the wall.
- Leave the carpet as it is following a clean.
- New LED spotlights to highlight the plaques and dais.
- Repaint the room using the heritage colours used in the Corn Exchange
- LED lighting for the Seal display.
- Put the Mayor's photo album in the Mayor's draw.
- Create a framed Honorary Citizens list.
- Create a file of historical information on everything that is displayed, including the history of twinning.
- New AV equipment to be fixed to the ceiling and accessed remotely.

3. Town Hall Refurbishment

Members discussed those changes / improvements they would like to see in the Town Hall as follows:-

- Investigate double glazing for the High East Street windows.
- Leave the oriel window as it is.
- Investigate designs to allow for a vestibule and second door to reduce noise intrusion into the Council Chamber via the existing door between the Council Chamber and Town Hall. Designs to include the possibility of increasing storage space.
- No change to the lighting.
- Obtain prices for linking the hearing loop to the existing on the tech room.
- New PA equipment – possibly by using stand alone equipment if it could be linked to hearing loop.
- Review the twinning items attached to the walls.
- Repaint the room using the heritage colours used in the Corn Exchange.
- Install destratification fans.

4. Upper hallway / landing

Members discussed those changes / improvements they would like to see in the upper hallway / landing as follows:-

- Repaint using the heritage colours used in the Corn Exchange
- Check to make sure that the hallway is not damp.

5. Next Meeting

To be arranged as and when necessary.

Steve Newman
Town Clerk