

Minutes of the Meeting of the **POLICY, FINANCE AND PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE** held at the Town Hall, Swanage on **WEDNESDAY, 11<sup>th</sup> DECEMBER 2019** at 9.30 a.m.

PRESENT:- Councillor M.P. Bonfield (Mayor) – Chairman.

Councillor C. Finch  
Councillor A. Harris  
Councillor W. Trite  
Councillor M. Whitwam

Also in attendance:-

Councillor T. Foster  
Councillor C. Moreton  
Dr M. Ayres – Town Clerk  
Miss A. Spencer – Finance Manager  
Mr C. Milmer – Visitor Services Manager

There was one member of the public present at the meeting.

1. **APOLOGIES**

None.

2. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Members were invited to declare their interests and consider any requests for Grants of Dispensations in accordance with paragraphs 9 – 13 of the Council's Code of Conduct and regulations made under chapter 7 of the Localism Act 2011.

There were no declarations to record on this occasion.

3. **INTERNAL AUDIT REPORT 2019/20: VISITS 2 & 3 OF 6**

The Town Clerk presented the second and third interim Internal Audit Reports of the 2019/20 financial year prepared by Darkin-Miller – Chartered Accountants.

The following areas had been reviewed during the audit visit:-

Visit 2

- Risk Management
- Income, with specific focus on:
  - (a) Summer Market
  - (b) Cemeteries
  - (c) TIC Cash
  - (d) Car Parks
- Exemption
- Public Rights

Visit 3

- Risk Management
- Income, with specific focus on:
  - (a) Car Parks
  - (b) Winter Market
  - (c) TIC Cash
- Petty Cash
- Bank Reconciliation

Members noted that one medium and two low priority recommendations had been made for visit 2 and three medium priority recommendations had been made for visit 3.

It was proposed by Councillor Finch, seconded by Councillor Trite, and RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:-

That the second and third interim Internal Audit Reports for the 2019/20 financial year be accepted.

4. **MEMBERS' ALLOWANCES – TO CONSIDER RECOMMENDATIONS MADE BY THE DORSET PARISH INDEPENDENT REMUNERATION PANEL**

Consideration was given to recommendations made by the Dorset Parish Independent Remuneration Panel regarding Members' Allowances together with national guidance issued by NALC, Legal Topic Notice 33, Councillors' Allowances. The Town Clerk reported that the recommendation of the Remuneration Panel was based upon the size of a council's electorate, which resulted in Swanage being classed at level 3. It was further reported that the Council should have regard to the panel's recommendations but did not have to adopt them.

The Remuneration Panel's report acknowledged that there may be special circumstances that would lead to a council being more appropriately classified at a different level. It was noted that although Swanage was not large in terms of electorate, it was in the top 10 largest town and parish councils in the country in regards to average annual expenditure. It was noted that the panel were due to review their recommendations in a year and this may lead the Council to review how it is classified in future years.

It was reported that the current allowance was £360 before deductions and it was remarked that this low sum may have stopped people from standing as councillors, given the time that was given to the role, plus costs such as for telephone calls etc. It was generally agreed that the role of councillor should be inclusive and the costs should not be a barrier to standing for election.

Following further discussion it was proposed by Councillor Finch, seconded by Councillor Whitwam and RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:-

**TO RECOMMEND:-**

That, in recognition of the wide range of functions carried out by the Town Council, a Members' Allowance of 5% of Dorset Council's Scheme of Members' Allowances be adopted, level 4 on the Panel's recommendations, equating to £650 for the current year of office.

It was agreed that this would remain payable in one lump sum payment in arrears each May.

Further consideration was given to a Chairman's Allowance. It was noted that the Remuneration Panel recommended that this should be capped at twice the maximum basic allowance. It was noted that the Chairman's role meant that they incurred additional expenditure.

It was proposed by Councillor Finch, seconded by Councillor Harris and RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:-

**TO RECOMMEND:-**

That the Chairman's Allowance be set at twice that of the Council's basic Members' Allowance.

5. **TO CONSIDER FUNDING A SUSTAINABLE SWANAGE OFFICER**

The Town Clerk reported that a request had been submitted from Dorset Coast Forum/Litter Free Coast and Sea for funding of £21,200 for a Sustainable Swanage

Officer and related project costs. It was noted that this sum had been included in the Estimates for 2020/21 only.

The Visitor Services Manager reported that following discussions with the Mayor and Deputy Mayor it had been suggested that a sum of £10,000 be allowed for funding this post with any shortfall being made up with contributions from other sources. It was stated that the proposal did not set out a clear line of control over the work to be carried out by the Officer, and that should the Town Council make such a large contribution then it would require more control over any proposed projects.

A discussion arose regarding the need to implement the Action Plan that will be developed in respect of the evolving Town Council Environmental Policy. It was proposed that a further budget of £10,000 should be included in the Estimates under an Environmental Projects heading to allow the Council to finance and implement the Action Plan and improve the town's green infrastructure.

It was proposed by the Town Mayor, seconded by Councillor Finch, and **RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:-**

To incorporate in the draft Estimates for 2020/21 and forthcoming years funding of £10,000 to Dorset Coast Forum's Litter Free Coast & Sea project towards the costs of a Sustainable Swanage officer post and to include a further £10,000 budget for an Environmental Projects expenditure line.

6. **TO CONSIDER ADDITIONAL BUDGET ITEMS 2019/20**

(a) **SEAT REPAIRS – THE SQUARE**

The Finance Manager reported that a request had been submitted from the Operations Manager for Members to authorise the procurement and replacement of new wooden slats for the seats in the Square, up to £12,000. The seats were noted as being in a state of disrepair. It was further noted that the sum of £12,000 had been included in the estimated out-turn figures for the year.

After a brief discussion it was proposed by the Town Mayor, seconded by Councillor Harris and **RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:-**

To approve a budget of £12,000 for the repair of seats in The Square.

(b) **DE MOULHAM BACK ROADS REPAIRS**

The Finance Manager reported a further request from the Operations Manager to approve expenditure up to £17,000 for repairs to the De Moulham Estate back roads, specifically Walrond Road service lane and Rabling Lane. It was noted that these repairs would be included in the tender for the car park resurfacing works, which had already been approved. It was noted that these repairs had not been included in the estimated out turn figures. However, these works would be funded from an earmarked reserve not the general fund.

After a brief discussion it was proposed by Councillor Finch, seconded by Councillor Whitwam and **RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:-**

To approve expenditure of up to £17,000 for repairs to the De Moulham back roads, and for the scheme to be included in the forthcoming tender for car park resurfacing.

7. (a) **DRAFT ESTIMATES 2020/21**

The Town Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer outlined the contents of the draft budget report, which was the culmination of committee meetings that had been held over the last 8 weeks. If this received the approval of the committee, then the estimates

would be brought forward to full Council for approval at its meeting to be held on 20<sup>th</sup> January 2020, incorporating any changes proposed at this meeting.

Members raised several issues, being the cost of cash collection, NNDR on public conveniences and the cost of seaweed removal. It was noted that cash collection would be reviewed and was due for tender. It was further noted that any decision to introduce mandatory relief from NNDR for public conveniences had been delayed due to the general election and as such a budget for these costs had been included in the estimates. A general discussion ensued with regards to seaweed collection and it was noted that this contract had one more year to run and would be reviewed in 2020/21.

The Visitor Services Manager brought forward a proposal to purchase kayak storage facilities for the boat park. It was noted that costings would be provided for this prior to the Estimates meeting on 20<sup>th</sup> January.

The Town Clerk highlighted sections 4.21 to 4.27 of the report which detailed the grants and contributions to be made to partner organisations. These were noted as:

- Dorset Coast Forum - £13,800
- Dorset Council – Tourism Officer - £8,000
- Litter Frees Coast and Sea: Sustainable Swanage Officer - £21,200 (reduced to £10,000 further to Minute No. 5 above)
- School Crossing Patrol - £3,895
- Citizens Advice Bureau - £1,000
- Small Grants Budget - £10,000

Additionally, it was noted that works for street cleansing to be carried out by STC had been allocated a budget allowance of £14,000.

Following a brief discussion, it was proposed by Councillor Finch, seconded by Councillor Harris and **RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:-**

**TO RECOMMEND** to the Estimates meeting on 20<sup>th</sup> January 2020 that the Council approves the grants budget and contributions to third parties, as set out above.

The Town Clerk reported that the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL), section 5.4 of the report, was set to finance £100,000 for the works to Institute Road and £25,000 to fund the works to the Parade railings. It was further noted that these funds may be used to finance any works at Days Park.

It was proposed by the Town Mayor, seconded by Councillor Trite and **RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:-**

**TO RECOMMEND** to the Estimates meeting on 20<sup>th</sup> January 2020 that the Council approves the use of the CIL reserve to fund works to Institute Road, the Parade and any future Days Park works.

Further to section 6.6 of the report, the Town Clerk reported that the budget included a precept increase of 1%. It was noted that the tax base had not been provided and as such the effect of this increase on individual bills was not yet known.

It was proposed by Councillor Finch, seconded by Councillor Whitwam and **RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:-**

**TO RECOMMEND** to the Estimates Meeting on 20<sup>th</sup> January 2020 that the budget report and book, including the level of precept, Scale of Charges and capital programme for 2020/21, incorporating amendments made at this meeting, be approved and adopted.

Councillor Finch left the meeting at 10.25 a.m.

(b) **RESERVES AND BALANCES POLICY**

Consideration was given to the Council's Reserves and Balances Policy, previously revised and adopted 21<sup>st</sup> January 2019. The Finance Manager reported that no revisions to the policy document had been recommended and the list of earmarked reserves was deemed satisfactory.

Further consideration was given to the adequacy of the Council's projected reserves. It was noted that due to the Council's considerable capital programme, particularly the Spa redevelopment project earmarked for 2021/22, the Council's usable reserves were expected to fall to £2.8m by March 2023. It was reported by the Finance Manager that the FJ Grace reserve would be depleted and removed from the list of reserves following completion of the bandstand project. It was further reported that the Festive Lights reserve had been utilised to part finance the hire and installation of the lights in the current year and that no provision had been made to appropriate funds to this reserve over the course of the next 3 years. This was noted as Council was now hiring the lights rather than purchasing them outright. The reserve heading would be kept should the situation change in future years.

It was noted that an earmarked reserve, Football Club Facilities, which currently held just under £7,000, had initially been established to hold donations made in memory of a local resident for a football pavilion on King Georges/Forres Field. It was noted that these funds could be held in reserve to help fund a future build project on Forres Field, in support of a local youth charity.

It was proposed by the Town Mayor, seconded by Councillor Whitwam, and **RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:-**

**TO RECOMMEND** to the Estimates meeting on 20<sup>th</sup> January 2020 that the suggested movement on reserves be accepted.

8. **ITEMS OF INFORMATION AND MATTERS FOR FORTHCOMING AGENDAS**

**Matters for Forthcoming Agendas**

- a) **James Day Trust** – The need to review the status of the Trust was noted.
- b) **Review of Grant Policy-Grants to Individuals** –The need to formulate a policy in order to regularise grant payments to individuals was noted.

**EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC**

Proposed by the Town Mayor, seconded by Councillor Harris, and **RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:-**

That, under Standing Order No. 1 c), in the public interest, the press and public be excluded from the Meeting in view of the confidential nature of the business to be transacted under agenda item 9 (in relation to legal matters).

9. **INTERNAL AUDIT REPORT 2019/20 - VISIT 3 OF 6: CONFIDENTIAL FINDINGS**

Further to Agenda Item 3, consideration was given to an additional report issued by the Council's Internal Auditor for visit 3 of 6 with a recommendation regarding Income – Car Parking, which was noted as a high priority, confidential finding. The contents of the report were noted.

It was proposed by the Town Mayor, seconded by Councillor Whitwam, and **RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:-**

That the third interim Internal Audit Report 2019/20: Visit 3 of 6: Confidential Findings be accepted.

12. **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

It was noted that the next meeting of the Policy, Finance and Performance Management Committee would be held at 9.30 a.m. on Wednesday, 12<sup>th</sup> February 2020.

The meeting concluded at 10.35 a.m.

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