

Minutes of the Meeting of the **POLICY, FINANCE AND PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE** held at the Town Hall, Swanage on **WEDNESDAY, 16th FEBRUARY 2022** at 9.30 a.m.

PRESENT:- Councillor J. Bishop
Councillor M. Bonfield
Councillor T. Foster
Councillor C. Moreton
Councillor C. Tomes
Councillor M. Whitwam

Also in attendance: -

Dr M. Ayres – Town Clerk
Miss A. Spencer – Finance Manager

There were no members of the public present at the meeting.

In the absence of the Town Mayor, Councillor Foster (Deputy Mayor) assumed the Chair.

1. **APOLOGIES**

Apologies for their inability to attend the meeting were received from Councillors Harris and Trite.

2. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Members were invited to declare their interests and consider any requests for Grants of Dispensations in accordance with Section 9 and Appendix B of the Council's Code of Conduct.

There were no declarations to record on this occasion.

3. **INTERNAL AUDIT REPORT 2021/22 – VISIT 2 OF 6:**

The second interim Internal Audit Report of the 2021/22 financial year prepared by Darkin-Miller, Chartered Accountants, was submitted for information.

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

- Income, with specific focus on:
 - (a) Allotments
 - (b) Beach Gardens
- Petty Cash

Three low and seven medium level recommendations had been made. The management response and implementation dates were noted, and it was AGREED:

That the second interim Internal Audit Report for the 2021/22 financial year be accepted.

4. **FINANCIAL REPORTS**

a). **BUDGET REPORT – INCOME AND EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT Q3 2020/21**

Consideration was given to a report setting out the Council's financial position at 31st December 2021 and the forecast year-end position.

It was noted that at the end of Q3 the Council had a surplus on the general fund of £452k, being £406k above budget, with the forecast for year-end, a deficit of £54k being largely unchanged from when this was discussed at the Estimates meeting in January.

It was reported that further variances may occur as any expenditure not committed year to date will almost certainly be deferred to the next financial year, given the proximity to year-end.

Members discussed the relevance of Appendix A to the Budget Report, listing progress against budget of Significant One-Off Items of Revenue Expenditure. The role of the committee in scrutinising expenditure and budget variances was considered and, after discussion, it was agreed to continue to report this matter for monitoring purposes.

The Budget Report and commentary on the Council's financial activity were received and noted.

b). **CAPITAL PROGRAMME MONITORING REPORT**

A Capital Programme Monitoring Report for 2021/22 was submitted for information. It was noted that although there had been little financial activity, with only three projects being either active or completed, there was considerable work ongoing in moving the projects forward. It was also noted that many projects would now be deferred to the next financial year.

The Capital Programme Monitoring Report was received and noted.

5. **MEMBERS' ALLOWANCES SCHEME – RECOMMENDATION OF THE DORSET PARISH INDEPENDENT REMUNERATION PANEL NOVEMBER 2021**

Members discussed a report 'Members' Allowances – Recommendations of the Dorset Parish Independent Remuneration Panel' which had been issued following a review of the panel's initial recommendations made in 2019. A survey of town and parish councils had been conducted with officers from several town councils, including Swanage being interviewed.

It was noted that the recommendations were generally as per those made by the panel in 2019, and which were adopted by the Town Council in December 2019. It was noted that at that time Members had agreed to adopt a basic Member Allowance of 5% of the Dorset Council Basic Allowance, being level 4 on the panel's recommendations, with the Chairperson receiving no more than twice the basic allowance.

The recommendations made by the Remuneration Panel were noted as being based upon electorate levels, with Swanage being level 3 based upon this criterion (£534 p.a.). However, the remuneration panel stated that all town councils that had been surveyed had requested that the scheme allowed for some flexibility to enable individual circumstances to be recognised, including factors such as budget size, number and complexity of operations and breadth of commercial activity being relevant. The Panel stated that no basic allowance would expect to exceed the next level as set out in the table in the report. It was noted that for Swanage Town Council this was level 4 (£668 p.a.).

The importance of providing an allowance to Members was highlighted, and it was felt that any lower sum could deter 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.

It was proposed by Councillor Foster, seconded by Councillor Moreton and RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:

TO RECOMMEND:-

That the basic Members' Allowance level be maintained at level 4 (i.e. 5% of Dorset Council's basic allowance), with the Chair being to be entitled to an Allowance of twice that of the Town Council's basic Members' Allowance.

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

Matters for Forthcoming Agendas

- a) James Day Trust- It was reported that a review of the Charitable Trusts overseen by the Council was underway, with initial questions having been submitted to the Council's appointed solicitor in these matters. Members will be updated in the next few months.
- b) Corporate Plan 2021/25
- c) Ethical Investments-ESG
- d) Freedom of Information Act 2000 - Adoption of revised Publication Scheme

EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

Proposed by the Councillor Foster, seconded by Councillor Bonfield, 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 7 (in relation to contractual matters).

7. **MANAGEMENT AGREEMENT – CO-OPERATIVE CAR PARK**

Members considered the management agreement made between the Council and the Co-operative in 1995 for the Council to manage the 'Central' car park on behalf of the Co-operative. Attention was drawn to the operational and administrative demands on the Council's staff of managing the Car Park and it was agreed that the management arrangements should be reviewed. It was noted that a minimum of 6 months' notice would be required to terminate the current agreement. Consequently, it was agreed that Officers should make initial contact with the Co-operative to start a dialogue regarding the future management of the car park, and that a report should be made to the Car Parking Working Group in due course.

8. **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The date of the next scheduled meeting was brought forward from 16th March to 9th March 2022 at 1.30 p.m. in order to formulate recommendations required to be considered at the meeting of Full Council on 14th March 2022.

The meeting concluded at 10.15 a.m.
