

Minutes of an Extraordinary Meeting of the **FINANCE AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE** held at the Town Hall, Swanage on **WEDNESDAY, 24th JULY 2024** at 11.30 a.m.

PRESENT:- Councillor T. Foster (Town Mayor) – Chairman

Councillor M. Bonfield
Councillor D. Monkhouse
Councillor C. Moreton
Councillor C. Tomes

Also in attendance: -

Councillor J. Lejeune
Dr M. Ayres Town Clerk
Miss A. Spencer Finance Manager

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

1. **APOLOGIES**

Apologies for his inability to attend the meeting were received from Councillor 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.

No declarations were made on this occasion.

3. **TO APPOINT MEMBERS TO THE VEXATIOUS CORRESPONDENCE AND COMPLAINTS POLICY SUB-COMMITTEE**

Consideration was given to the appointment of a Vexatious Correspondence and Complaints Sub-Committee, as required by the Vexatious Correspondence and Complaints Policy which was adopted at the Extraordinary Council Meeting held on 29th April 2024 (Minute No. 219 refers). The terms of reference for the appointment of the sub-committee were outlined and it was noted that this would comprise of three members. It was suggested that the Chairman of the Personnel Committee should sit on the sub-committee, although it was noted that Councillor Trite was absent and could not state his position.

After further discussion, it was proposed by Councillor Tomes, seconded by Councillor Moreton and RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:

To appoint Councillors, Monkhouse, Moreton and Trite to the Vexatious Correspondence and Complaints Policy Sub-Committee; should Councillor Trite not wish to sit on the sub-committee, Councillor Bonfield would be appointed in his place.

Turning to the implementation of the policy itself, Members highlighted the need for the Council to be open-minded and to ensure that pertinent questions or complaints were not dismissed or ignored. A detailed explanation as to the role of the sub-committee and its responsibilities was given and it was noted that some sections of the

policy were open to interpretation, which could make a significant difference as to how the policy would be implemented. It was, therefore, agreed that at the first meeting of the sub-committee the policy should be reviewed to consider whether any changes should be considered by the Finance & Governance Committee.

4. **FINANCIAL REPORTS – Q1 2024/25**

a) **Income & Expenditure – Budget Monitoring Report**

Consideration was given to a report setting out the principal sources of the Town Council's income and expenditure for the first quarter of the 2024/25 financial year. It was noted that the overall position was generally as per budget, with the exception of the additional repairing works to the Boat Park jetty, incurring an additional £40k of unbudgeted expenditure. A resulting overall overspend of £21k had resulted at the end of the quarter.

Car park income was noted as being on budget, despite the inclement weather, although visitor numbers were down on Q1 23/24. With regard to the changes to the charging structure, it was stated that a more realistic assessment of the implementation of these changes would be known at the end of the second quarter, after the summer season.

A significant overspend in legal fees was noted, although it was reported that a substantial portion of this would be recharged, as reflected in an opposing variance in income.

It was noted that the nationally agreed annual pay award was unlikely to be settled before the end of the next quarter, and this may result in variances to budget.

Investment income was noted as above budget, with an average interest rate of 5.09% being attained. It was reported that £7.6k, being the income received above budget, had been appropriated to the Treasury Risk Management Reserve as per policy.

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

b) **Capital Programme Monitoring Report**

Consideration was given to the Capital Programme Monitoring Report for the first quarter of 2024/25. It was noted that there had been limited financial activity during the quarter with only one payment having been made, a deposit for the PV panel installation, ref BF2.

Further to a matter raised regarding electric vehicle charging facilities, it was noted that the installation of chargers would probably take place within the next quarter, with the Council paying for the installation costs for the chargers at the Main & North Beach car parks, which were due to be reimbursed via a grant from Dorset Council. It was noted that there was no other financial commitment due from the Council.

It was reported that all of the project management works were ongoing. A question was raised regarding the required works at Peveril Point Road. It was noted that these works were to stabilise certain parts of the road and adjoining walls, with Dorset Council being engaged to review the scope of works and control costs.

The contents of the report were noted.

5. **TO CONSIDER COUNCIL PRIORITIES/WORK PLAN**

The item was introduced for the benefit of new members of the committee. It was stated that the priorities report was designed to enable Members to ensure that Council resources were focussed on priority matters identified in the corporate plan.

a) **Outturn Winter/Spring 2023/24**

Further to Minute No. 164 of the Council Meeting held on 15th January 2024, the position with regards to the stage of completion of the council priorities for winter/spring 2023/24 were outlined, with several large projects having been completed.

b) **Proposed Plan Summer/Autumn 2024**

The priority list for summer/autumn 2024 was discussed, with most items being noted as a high priority. The matter of the footpath linking Washpond Lane and Northbrook Road was raised as it was perceived to have stalled. It was noted that the Town Clerk would raise this matter once again with Dorset Council. The potential to move forward with smaller goals as set out in the Corporate Plan was raised, with these potentially moving onto the list. The review of the Corporate Plan was noted as starting in early autumn.

The priority list contained a review of the committee structure. It was noted that the structure had been adopted on an interim basis, with a review due to take place 6 months after implementation. However, it was reported that the review had been deferred pending the Council elections. Members were concerned that newly elected Members may not yet be in a position to effectively review the structure, given the limited number of committee meetings that had taken place since the elections. It was, therefore, agreed that this item should be removed from the priority list and reviewed following the next round of committee meetings.

It was proposed by Councillor Bonfield, seconded by Councillor Tomes and **RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:**

TO RECOMMEND

That the draft Council Priority Plan for summer/autumn 2024 be approved.

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

The following were listed as matters for forthcoming agendas.

- a) Review of Corporate Plan and Committee Structure – matter discussed in item 5 b)

7. **TO REVIEW THE TIME OF FUTURE MEETINGS - NEXT MEETING SCHEDULED FOR 11.30 a.m. WEDNESDAY 6TH NOVEMBER 2024**

Members discussed the time of future Finance & Governance Committee meetings. It was noted that some Members had work commitments which meant that meetings were difficult to attend with an 11.30 a.m. start time. It was proposed by Councillor Monkhouse, seconded by Councillor Bonfield and **RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:**

TO RECOMMEND

That Council approves a change in the time of the Finance & Governance Committee meetings from 11.30 a.m. to 2.15 p.m.

The date of the next scheduled meeting was noted as 6th November 2024.

The meeting concluded at 12.25 p.m.
