

Minutes of the Meeting of the **FINANCE AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE** held at the Town Hall, Swanage on **WEDNESDAY 26th FEBRUARY 2025** at 2.15 p.m.

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

Councillor M. Bonfield
Councillor C. Tomes
Councillor W. Trite

Also in attendance: -

Councillor C. Sutton
Councillor S. Vile

Dr M Ayres	Town Clerk and RFO
Ms G Percival	Assets & Compliance Manager
Miss A Spencer	Finance Manager

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

1. **APOLOGIES**

Apologies for their inability to attend the meeting were received from Councillors Monkhouse and Moreton.

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. **TO RECEIVE THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE CAPITAL PROJECTS SUB-COMMITTEE HELD 19TH FEBRUARY 2025 AND CONSIDER ANY RECOMMENDATIONS**

It was noted that two recommendations had been made by the Capital Projects Sub-Committee, regarding the following matters:

3. Peveril Point Road Stabilisation Scheme

It was noted that this was due to be discussed under agenda item 8.

4. Adoption of Panorama Road and Cow Lane

In accordance with the Sub-Committee's Terms of Reference, this matter had been considered by the Town Council at its meeting held on 24th February 2025.

4. **FINANCIAL REPORTS**

(a) **Income and Expenditure Account Q3 2024/25**

Consideration was given to a report setting out the Council's financial position at the end of the third quarter of the financial year and forecast year-end position.

It was noted that at the end of Q3 net expenditure was £4.2k over budget in total.

It was reported that surplus income from investments of £61.8k had been appropriated to an earmarked reserve, as per the reserves policy. A further £61.4k, being a gain on the sale of units in the CCLA property fund, had been appropriated to the Green Seafront Stabilisation Scheme earmarked reserve.

Members noted the contents of the report.

(b) **Capital Programme Monitoring Report**

A Capital Programme Monitoring Report for the 2024/25 financial year was submitted for information. It was reported that five projects had been completed, with all other projects being either ongoing or deferred to 2025/26. The contents of the report were noted.

5. **UPDATE ON ACTION POINTS FROM INTERNAL AUDIT REPORTS 2023/24**

Members reviewed the updates on the high and medium level recommendations that had been made by the council's internal auditor contained within five Internal Audit reports issued relating to the 2023/24 financial year. The status updates on the recommendations made in those reports were noted.

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

The following matters were listed for forthcoming agendas.

- **Review of Corporate Plan and Committee Structure** – It was agreed that the Council's Committee Structure and Terms of Reference should be included as an agenda item for the next meeting of the Finance & Governance Committee. Particular emphasis was placed on the importance of reviewing the role of Town Council working parties. Concerns were raised that there are too many working parties which may place an onerous burden on council officers, that some working parties address matters outside of the Town Council's jurisdiction and that some would be better established on a fixed-term basis, along the lines of a task and finish group. It was noted that consideration should be given to criteria which could be used to determine whether or not a working party should be reappointed at the Annual Meeting in May.
- **Internal Audit Report 2024/25 - Visits 4 & 5 of 6** - Members were informed that an Internal Audit report for visits 4 & 5 had been received, with 4 low level recommendations to be addressed by officers.

EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

Proposed by Councillor Bonfield, seconded by Councillor Tomes 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 items 7 and 8 in relation to contractual, legal and financial matters.

7. **ANNUAL REVIEW OF RISK REGISTER**

Initial consideration was given to the Council's Corporate Risk Register. It was noted that, in accordance with the *Practitioners' Guide*, Members were expected to be fully engaged in the annual review of the Council's Risk Register. It was noted that the register summarises the most significant risks faced by the Council in relation to achieving its objectives and priorities, sets out the control procedures in place to mitigate those risks, and identifies any further action needed to manage the risks effectively.

Following the election in May 2024, Members discussed the risks associated with non-compliance with the Model Code of Conduct and requested that further training be given in this matter. It was noted that the level of risk should be revised from Medium to High.

A question arose as to whether the Council's Social Media Policy applied to Members and it was agreed that an update on this matter would be provided to a future meeting of this Committee.

It was agreed that Members' initial comments would be considered, and further suggestions would be brought back to the Finance & Governance Committee meeting to be held on 12th March 2025.

8. PEVERIL POINT ROAD STABILISATION SCHEME – TO CONSIDER OPTIONS APPRAISAL

Further to Minute No. 3 of the Capital Projects Sub-Committee Meeting held on 19th February 2025, consideration was given to a report produced by the Dorset Council Highways Team providing an options appraisal and estimated costings to carry out work on a section of Peveril Point Road.

The report highlighted significant challenges arising from groundwater and recommended action to improve drainage to address the runoff of water into the area from the Local Nature Reserve. It was noted that the 2025/26 capital programme contained a budget of £200k for the project and the recommended option had a cost estimate of £140k. After careful consideration, it was proposed by Councillor Bonfield, seconded by Councillor Tomes and **RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:**

To accept the recommendation made by the Capital Projects Sub-Committee at its meeting held on 19th February 2025, that 'Option 3 – Do Minimum Option' should be further explored by Dorset Council's Highways Team, including further work to assess the feasibility of the proposed drainage improvements and the assessment of the proposals regarding retaining wall structures by a structural engineer.

It was also suggested that the introduction of trees and planting that would aid in land drainage could be considered.

9. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The date of the next scheduled meeting was noted as 12th March 2025.

The meeting concluded at 3.15 p.m.
