

Minutes of the Extraordinary meeting of the **FINANCE AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE** held at the Town Hall, Swanage on **MONDAY, 17th JUNE 2024** at 4.30 p.m.

PRESENT:- Councillor T Foster (Town Mayor) – Chair

Councillor D Monkhouse
Councillor C Moreton
Councillor W Trite

Also in attendance: -

Dr M Ayres	Town Clerk
Mr C Milmer	Visitor Services and Business Development Manager
Ms G Percival	Assets & Compliance Manager
Miss A Spencer	Finance Manager

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

Public Participation Time

The following matters were raised during Public Participation Time:-

- In regard to a change in opening hours at Swanage Library, a question was raised as to whether the Council had been approached by Dorset Council for a contribution towards funding of Swanage Library. It was noted that the Council had not been approached for any funding within recent times.

1. **APOLOGIES**

Apologies for their inability to attend the meeting were received from Councillors Bonfield and Tomes who were away on holiday.

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. **CAPITAL PROJECTS SUB-COMMITTEE**

a) **Appointment of the Capital Projects Sub-Committee 2024/25**

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

That Councillors Bonfield, Foster, Monkhouse and
Tomes be elected to form the Capital Projects Sub-
Committee for 2024/25.

b) **To receive the Minutes of the Meeting held 6th March 2024**

Members reviewed the Minutes of the Capital Projects Sub-Committee held on 6th March 2024. By way of an update, it was reported that the Day's Park lighting issues had been resolved and that the Boat Park jetty repairs had recently been completed.

4. **TO CONSIDER AN INCREASE IN BUDGET:**

a) **Prince Albert Gardens pathway repairs**

Further to the Capital Projects Sub-Committee Meeting held on 6th March 2024, Members considered a briefing note prepared by the Assets and Compliance Manager relating to quotes received for repairing works to the pathways at Prince Albert Gardens. It was reported that quotes received for the works exceeded the allocated budget of £40,000. It was noted that a further £7,000 was required in order to complete the works, given current tarmac pricing. It was further reported that, should members be minded, a further £2,750 would be required to replace the existing wood edging with granite edging on one section of the pathways.

In order to fund the additional costs Members considered options for a budget virement from projects approved for 2024/25 but which were unlikely to proceed within the current financial year. It was proposed by the Town Mayor, seconded by Councillor Monkhouse and RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:

TO RECOMMEND:

That Council approves the additional budget of £7,000 for pathway repairs at Prince Albert Gardens, to be funded from a virement from the Environment Committee budget for electricity works in Parks & Gardens.

Members further discussed the requirements for the replacement of edging and after due consideration it was proposed by Councillor Monkhouse, seconded by the Town Mayor and RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY

To not proceed with the additional edging works.

b) **Beach Gardens Kiosk awning**

Members considered a briefing note prepared by the Visitor Services and Business Development Manager relating to quotes received for the installation of an awning at the Beach Gardens kiosk. An initial budget of £3,000 had been allocated for the project, with the cheapest quote of £4,270 having been received. The importance of this project in terms of staff welfare was highlighted. Members again considered financing the additional budget requirement from projects approved for 2024/25 but unlikely to proceed within the current financial year. It was proposed by Councillor Moreton, seconded by Councillor Monkhouse and RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:

TO RECOMMEND:

That Council approves the additional budget of £1,270 for the installation of an awning at the Beach Gardens kiosk, to be funded from a virement from the Environment Committee budget for electricity works in Parks & Gardens.

5. **NATIONAL NON-DOMESTIC RATES REVALUATION-UPDATE ON CHECK AND CHALLENGE PROCESS**

Further to Minute No. 3(d) of the Finance & Governance Committee meeting held on 13th December 2023, Members were updated as to the Council's National Non-Domestic Rates (NNDR) review which had been underway since January 2023. Members were informed that several refunds had been received in relation to historical factual errors pertaining to Spa Bungalows and Victoria Avenue public conveniences, as set out in the briefing note that had been circulated prior to the meeting.

It was reported that in relation to Shore Road and Spa beach huts, a check had been carried out by the Valuation Office Agency (VOA) and a decision would now need to be made as to whether or not to proceed with a challenge. A comprehensive report

was considered by Members, which set out both the potential benefit and the financial risks of challenging the rateable value (RV) assigned to the Council's beach huts following revaluation from 1st April 2023. It was reported that nationally large increases had been assigned to the RV of beach huts and that as a percentage of revenue, the RV of the Council's beach huts was proportionately low compared to similar sites. Members were informed that a challenge to the RV carried a risk of the property being assigned to a different valuation scheme with a higher base rate ceiling than that of the current scheme used to determine the council beach huts RV. Members were also informed that should a challenge prove successful it was estimated that it would be unlikely to result in any significant reduction in the RV and consequentially the NNDR payable as transitional relief had been applied up to 2025/26 and a revaluation was anticipated in 2026.

In relation to submitting a challenge and the need to provide evidence of comparable sites within the same scheme, it was noted that only one comparable site could be drawn upon as evidence in order to challenge the assigned RV.

Having given due consideration to the balance of risks in submitting a challenge to the RV of the Council's beach huts, it was proposed by Councillor Trite and seconded by Councillor Moreton:

That no formal challenge to the rateable value of the Council's beach huts be submitted.

Upon being put to the Meeting, THREE Members voted IN FAVOUR of the proposition, and there was ONE ABSTENTION, whereupon the Proposition was declared CARRIED.

6. **TO CONSIDER THE PURCHASE OF NEW CAR PARK TICKET MACHINES**

Members considered a briefing note outlining proposals to expedite the purchase of new pay & display machines in some of the council's car parks for operational purposes. It was noted that this would be funded from the Car Park Pay & Display Machine earmarked reserve which currently held £44,000. It was proposed by Councillor Moreton, seconded by Councillor Monkhouse and RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:

TO RECOMMEND:

That Council approves the addition of the procurement of Pay & Display machines to the Council's capital programme 2024/25, with a budget allocation of up to £44,000.

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

- New Project Approval Process - Members were informed that officers were developing a Project Initiation Form which would be used by Councillors and Officers to formally put forward project proposals to Committees/Sub-Committees and be monitored by the Finance and Governance Committee.
- Finance and Governance Committee Meeting times- Councillor Monkhouse requested that the time of the Committee meetings be reviewed.
- Swanage Library Opening Hours – This item to be placed on a future meeting of the Council further to comments made during public participation time.

8. **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The date of the next scheduled meeting was noted as 24th July 2024.

The meeting concluded at 5.30 p.m.