

Minutes of the MEETING of the FINANCE AND GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE of Bridport Town Council held at Mountfield, Bridport on Tuesday 21 January 2014 at 7.00 p.m.

PRESENT Cllr: C.M. Ray (Chairman in the Chair)

Cllrs: G.J. Ackerman	J. T. May
Miss S.A. Brown	Mrs M.J. Ray
Ms G.E. Massey	D.R. Tett
	Ms A-M. A. Vincent

Also present: Cllrs D.G. Rickard and Mrs E.A. Rickard.

PUBLIC FORUM

There were no speakers in the public forum.

99. APOLOGIES

Apologies for lateness were submitted on behalf of Councillor Mrs M.J. Ray.

100. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 20 November 2013 were confirmed as a true and correct record and signed by the Chairman.

The Town Clerk reported for information, under minute no. 88, that Skills Training Bridport had notified him that the funding was in place to enable the co-ordinator post to be appointed. Therefore, in line with the agreed delegation, he was intending to release the Town Council's £1,000 contribution.

101. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

102. CODE OF CONDUCT DISPENSATION REQUESTS

There were no items reported.

103. BEST VALUE AND SCRUTINY AND BRIDPORT AND WEST BAY TOWN PLAN SUB COMMITTEE

RESOLVED: that the minutes of the meeting of the Sub Committee held on 10 December 2013 and reconvened on 13 January 2014 be received.

104. FINANCIAL ESTIMATES 2013/2014 – 3rd REVISION

Consideration was given to a report of the Town Clerk, ENCL: 2769.

RECOMMEND: that the 3rd revision of the estimates for the year 2013/2014 be approved.

105. **BUDGET AND ESTIMATES 2014/15**

Councillors considered a report of the Town Clerk, ENCL: 2768.

In considering this item, members noted:

- the position on the current year's budget
- the level of reserves
- the projects programmed for next year, taken from the draft Town Plan
- the proposed amendments to the budget
- the fees and charges for next year.

This followed discussion of the estimates and projects at the Best Value, Scrutiny and Town Plan Sub Committee.

The Town Clerk drew members' attention to the options on the precept although it was open to members to consider any level of precept. He also highlighted the considerations for members which included:

- increased commitments for the Town Council, including additional land management.
- continuing pressures on the budgets of principal councils and the possibility that the Town Council may be asked to consider providing more services in the area.
- increased pressure on grant funding and potentially on obtaining partnership funding for schemes.
- the Localisation of Council Tax Support Grant reduction in 2014/15 by over £6,000. The indications from the District Council were that this could be the last year of the grant funding, which was over £52,000.
- potential future constraints on the Town Council's ability to raise income through the precept.

Bearing in mind the future challenges for the budget, it was agreed that the Town Council should establish a working group to look in detail, during the next year, at its budget to ensure that it was in a position to address future changes in funding and service delivery.

Following a detailed discussion, members felt that option 2 should be put forward. This would increase the overall precept by £42,529 to £522,761 (including the Local Council Tax Support Grant) and produce a balanced budget. This was moved and seconded, put to the vote and declared to be carried.

Therefore, it was RECOMMENDED:

- (a) that the use of reserves as set out in section 4 of the report be approved for 2014/15,
- (b) that the draft estimates for 2014/15 as set out in Appendix A be approved to deliver the projects in Appendix C,

- (c) that the proposed fees and charges set out in Appendix B to the report be approved for 2014/15, and
- (d) that in terms of the precept, Option 2 in the report be approved, which would increase the precept by £42,529 and, including the Local Tax Support Grant, this would raise £522,761 broken down as follows:

Precept (funded through the Council Tax): £470,753
 Local Council Tax Support Grant: £ 52,008

The annual Band D charge to increase from £148.80 to £161.79.

- (e) that a working party of 5 members be established to look at the budget in detail, during the next year.

106. WDDC BUDGET CONSULTATION

The Town Clerk reported that, bearing in mind the concern regarding the changes to the Localisation of Council Tax Support Grant and after discussion at the Best Value, Scrutiny and Town Plan Sub Committee, he had written to West Dorset District Council on this matter. The letter stated that members were very concerned, both at the reduction in the grant this coming year and the impact of the potential removal of the grant in 2015/16. As part of the District Council's consultation on its budget, the Town Council would wish to ask that the allocation of Local Council Tax Support Grant to local councils be reviewed, to ensure it covers, in full, the reduction in the parish council tax base for 2014/15. It would also welcome confirmation of the position regarding this grant in future years.

RESOLVED: that the letter sent by the Town Clerk be endorsed.

107. SERVICES ADMINISTERED BY THE SURVEYOR

Councillors considered a report of the Town Surveyor, ENCL: 2770.

Updates were provided on the following: -

- (i) Gas Works – the West Allington pinch point had been removed, as requested by the Town Council.
- (ii) Heritage Street Lighting in the town centre was now installed and the next part of the project, was to look at the additional lighting on buildings.
- (iii) West Bay Play Area – the repair works were almost complete.
- (iv) New Zealand – the steering group meets this week to progress the project.
- (v) Salt House – further discussions were to take place regarding the transfer and the need to update the kitchen, prior to the transfer.
- (vi) Skateboard Park – the surfacing was complete and funding options were being looked at for the upgrading works.

RESOLVED: that the updates be noted.

108. YOUTH COUNCIL WORKING GROUP AND ADVISERS

The Town Clerk reported that the next meeting of the Youth Council was to be held on 7 February and it would be asked to consider appointing advisers. The nominations would be reported back to the next meeting of this Committee.

RESOLVED: that the update be noted.

109. LAND TRANSFERS – FOOTBALL GROUND AND CAR PARK

Consideration was given to a report of the Town Clerk, ENCL: 2776.

RECOMMEND:

- (a) to approve the transfer of the Football Club land (from West Dorset District Council to the Town Council) for the purposes set out in the report and the Town Clerk be given delegated authority to finalise the transfer and arrange for the documentation to be sealed.
- (b) that this Committee receive a report back on the terms of a new lease with the Football Club (the Club was seeking a lease of up to 99 years) and the proposed arrangements to manage the car park.

110. DAPTC

The Town Clerk reported that the subscription for DAPTC had increased for 2014/15 to £986.21 but he recommended that the Council continue in membership. Also a nomination for the Royal Garden Party had been requested, which would be included in the ballot conducted by DAPTC.

It was reported also that Code of Conduct training was to be provided by DAPTC in Mountfield on 12 February at 7pm and members were encouraged to attend.

RESOLVED:

- (a) that the subscription to DAPTC be approved for 2014/15, and
- (b) that Cllr G.J. Ackerman be nominated for the Royal Garden Party ballot.

111. UTILITY BILLS

The Town Clerk reported that he was in negotiations to reduce costs of electricity and gas bills for the coming year.

RESOLVED: that the Town Clerk be given delegated authority to agree revised rates for utility provision.

112. WEST BAY WATER SPORTS CENTRE UPDATE

The Town Surveyor reported that discussions with West Dorset District Council for additional S106 funding of the project were due to take place. There would be a delay to starting work on site, but it was hoped, once the additional funding had been identified, that this could commence as soon as possible.

RESOLVED: that the current situation be noted.

113. CHRISTMAS FESTIVAL MANAGEMENT ARRANGEMENTS

Consideration was given to a report of the Town Clerk, ENCL: 2775.

RESOLVED: that the Town Council continue to act as the accountable body for the Christmas Cheer and this Committee receive a report back to its next meeting on the proposed constitution of the Festival Committee.

114. SPIRIT OF BRIDPORT

The Town Clerk reported that all of the Chalk and Cheese funding costs had been reimbursed to the Town Council.

RESOLVED: that the update be noted and it also be noted that the Spirit of Bridport Community Fair was to be held on Saturday 1 February 9am to 3pm.

115. MULTI USE GAMES ARENA – IMPLEMENTATION UPDATE

The Town Surveyor reported that the work was due to start in late January and hopefully the facility would be complete and ready to use by early Spring.

RESOLVED: that the update be noted.

116. REVIEW OF THE EFFECTIVENESS OF INTERNAL AUDIT AND APPOINTMENT OF AN INTERNAL AUDITOR FOR 2014/15

Consideration was given to a report of the Town Clerk, ENCL: 2773.

RECOMMEND: that the arrangements for appointing a new internal auditor for 2014/15 be approved, as outlined in the report.

117. REVIEW OF RISK ASSESSMENT AND MANAGEMENT

Consideration was given to a report of the Town Clerk, ENCL: 2771.

RECOMMEND: that the Risk Assessment and Management Strategy policy document be approved.

118. BRIDPORT CAR BOOT FUND CONSULTATION

Consideration was given to a report of the Town Clerk, ENCL: 2774.

RECOMMEND: that West Dorset District Council be notified that the Council had no comments on the application documents, but felt that the name of the scheme

should remain unchanged as “Bridport Area Community Fund”, as this reflected the purpose and coverage of the scheme.

119. FREEDOM MARCH BY THE RIFLES 2014

The Town Clerk reported that agreement had been reached to stage a Freedom March by the Rifles in Bridport on Sunday 22 June 2014.

RECOMMEND: that the update be welcomed and the proposed Freedom March be supported, with the detailed arrangements for the event to be reported at the next meeting.

120. EVENTS 2014

The Town Surveyor reported that a meeting of all parties involved in event production in the town would be held soon to discuss operational requirements, event planning and working together on issues such as stewarding.

RESOLVED: that the update be noted.

121. COMMITTEE AND OUTSIDE BODY MEMBERSHIPS

RECOMMEND: that

(a) Cllr Mrs E.A. Rickard be appointed to vacancies on the following: Environment and Social Wellbeing Committee, Best Value, Scrutiny and Town Plan Sub Committee, Youth Council Working Group and Christmas Festival Committee.

(b) nominations be sought for members to represent the Town Council on the Bridport Heritage Forum and the West Bay Forum.

122. REPORTS FROM OUTSIDE BODIES

Cllr Ms G.E. Massey reported a very successful Wassailing Day in the Community Orchard on 19 January.

Cllr D.G. Rickard reported in respect of Transition Town Bridport, that the Communities Living Sustainably project was organising two events in the area during Climate Change week, which was 3-9 March.

123. CORRESPONDENCE

The Town Clerk reported that a number of thank you letters had been received from bodies grant aided by the Town Council this year.

124. ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Town Clerk was joined by members in thanking Town Council staff for issuing sand bags in the area, during the recent bad weather.

125. PAYMENT OF ACCOUNTS

The Town Clerk presented List 4 of the 2013/14 accounts, in the sum of £152,002.99, which had been authorised for payment since the last meeting. This

having been tabled for members' information, was approved and signed by the Chairman.

126. PUBLIC BODIES (ADMISSION TO MEETINGS) ACT 1960

RESOLVED: that in view of the confidential nature of the business about to be transacted, it was agreed that in the public interest the public be temporarily excluded, whilst the Committee considered the following matters:

127. PROPERTY MATTERS – MAGISTRATES’ COURT ACCESS

Consideration was given to a report of the Town Clerk, ENCL: 2772.

RECOMMEND: that the proposed grant of a deed of easement of access rights at Mountfield to the Courts Service be approved, on the terms as set out in the report and the Town Clerk be given delegated authority to finalise the agreement, as set out in paragraph 5.1 of the report.

128. STAFFING MATTERS AND PENSIONS

Consideration was given to a report of the Town Clerk, ENCL: 2777.

RESOLVED: that the changes to the pension scheme and the Town Council contributions be noted as in the report and the additional contributions be made through monthly payments and not as a lump sum.

129. INSURANCE

The Town Clerk reported that the recent incident with the Christmas Lights having to be taken down from a building in South Street was being assessed through the Town Council’s insurers, in respect of identifying any potential liability.

The meeting closed at **8.40 p.m.**

The next meeting of the Committee will be held on 26 March 2014