

Minutes of the MEETING of the FINANCE AND GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE of Bridport Town Council held at Mountfield, Bridport on Wednesday 21 January 2015 at 7.00 p.m.

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

Cllrs: G.J. Ackerman	D.R. Tett
Ms G.E. Massey	K.G. Wallace
Mrs M.J. Ray	Ms S.J. Williams (ex officio)

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

PUBLIC FORUM

There were no speakers in the public forum.

116. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Ms A-M.A. Vincent and also Cllr Ms R.C. Kayes.

117. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 12 November 2014 were confirmed as a true and correct record and signed by the Chairman subject to the following amendment:

Cllr D.R. Tett to be listed as being in attendance at the meeting.

118. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

119. CODE OF CONDUCT DISPENSATION REQUESTS

There were no items reported.

120. 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 9 December 2014 be received.

121. FINANCIAL ESTIMATES 2014/2015 – 3rd REVISION

Consideration was given to a report of the Town Clerk, ENCL: 2917.

RECOMMEND: that the 3rd revision of the estimates for the year 2014/2015 be approved.

122. BUDGET AND ESTIMATES 2015/16

Councillors considered a report of the Town Clerk, ENCL: 2918.

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
- the ongoing service review process

(Members asked that, as part of the discussions with the District Council on service reviews, the Town Council enter into discussions regarding the issue of the licence fee for the market).

The estimates and projects had been considered 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 highlighted the considerations for members, which included:

- increased commitments for the Town Council, including additional land management and highway verge cutting.
- continued pressures on the budgets of principal councils and the potential implications for the Town Council in respect of local service delivery.
- the Localisation of Council Tax Support Grant reduction in 2015/16 of over £13,000. This income will continue to reduce by £13,000 per annum up to and including 2017/18, after which point it will cease.
- potential future constraints on the Town Council's ability to raise income through the precept.

On this last point, the Town Clerk emphasised that the Government was still considering whether larger local town and parish councils should be subject to the same referendum principles as principal councils i.e. should the Council wish to increase its Band D precept by 2% or more, it could then be required to hold a referendum. It was understood that this requirement could still be introduced for the 2015/16 budget setting process.

The Town Council, along with many other councils and NALC, had put the case against introducing such a requirement at such a late stage and at a time when local councils were being asked to take on more services. It was understood that an announcement on whether this requirement will be brought in for this current budget process, will not be made until February. Members needed to be aware, therefore, that the extension of the referendum principles to larger town and parish councils, including the Town Council, remained a possibility for 2015/16.

In discussion, members expressed concern that at this late stage there was still no decision on whether the referendum principles would apply to the Town Council. It was asked if further information could be provided to the full Council on the timings of that decision and the deadlines for reporting the level of precept to the billing authority, West Dorset District Council.

It was stated that if members wished to recommend option 1 or 2 (i.e. below 2%), then they would be provided with the necessary amendments to the estimates, to ensure that it remained a balanced budget.

Following a detailed discussion, it was proposed and seconded that Option 3 in the report should be put forward to the Council meeting. This was moved and seconded, put to the vote and declared to be carried by 4 votes to 3, as below.

Therefore, it was RECOMMENDED:

- (a) that the use of reserves as set out in section 4 of the report be approved for 2015/16,
- (b) that the draft estimates for 2015/16 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 2015/16, subject to the addition of a £30 charge for putting up street banners on the town centre lamp posts,
- (d) that in terms of the precept, Option 3 in the report be approved, which would increase the precept by £22,836 and, including the Local Council Tax Support Grant, would raise £532,595 broken down as follows:

Precept (funded through the Council Tax): £493,589
Local Council Tax Support Grant: £ 39,006

The annual Band D charge to increase from £161.79 to £168.78 (4.32%).

123. HIGHWAY VERGE CUTTING – AGREEMENT TO PROCEED

Consideration was given to a report of the Town Surveyor, ENCL: 2929.

RESOLVED: that the Town Council enter into a service level agreement with Dorset County Council for the maintenance of highway verges and the Town Surveyor be given delegated authority to agree the Service Level Agreement and recruit to the new Groundsman post, as set out in the report.

124. REVIEW OF ELECTION RECHARGES

Councillors considered a letter from West Dorset District Council, ENCL: 2930.

Members reiterated their previous objection to the decision to recharge for conducting parish and town elections. It was asked that further discussion take place on the proposals and a response then be approved at the next Finance and General Purposes Committee meeting.

RECOMMEND: that a response on the proposals be approved at the next meeting of this Committee, following further consideration of the details.

125. SERVICES ADMINISTERED BY THE SURVEYOR

Councillors considered a report of the Town Surveyor, ENCL: 2919.

Outdoor Table Tennis Table

RESOLVED: that the installation of an outdoor table tennis table at Plottingham be explored, with costings to be reported back to this Committee.

Updates were provided on the following: -

- (i) Borough Gardens – ongoing works on the Gardens.
- (ii) Millennium Green – northern access would be formally opened on 16 March. The Town Surveyor also reported that a tree survey had identified that there were a substantial number of trees requiring work and this would be reported back to members, bearing in mind the potential costs.
- (iii) Skatepark – work had been completed on the new sections, which were being well used.
- (iv) Planters – it was pleasing that sponsorship offers continued to be received.
- (v) Mountfield Kitchen Extension – proposals and plans were being prepared, to enable the scheme to be taken forward, should funding become available.
- (vi) New Zealand – the new path and bridge were now in place and the Steering Group was to meet on 22 January.

RESOLVED: that the updates be noted.

126. HOUSEHOLD RECYCLING CENTRES CONSULTATION

Consideration was given to a report of the Town Clerk, ENCL: 2921.

Members expressed concern that this consultation was putting forward options to reduce opening hours, or close centres, even before the Broomhills Centre was open. It was asked that, if there was time, a response should be approved by the Environment and Social Wellbeing Committee. The deadline for responses was 13 February 2015.

RECOMMEND: that subject to any comments from the Council meeting, the Environment and Social Wellbeing Committee agree the response to the consultation.

127. YOUTH COUNCIL UPDATE

The Town Clerk reported on the issues raised by the Youth Council at its meeting in November.

It was asked if the Town Clerk could look again at options for involving young people in the work of the Town Council.

RESOLVED: that the update be noted.

128. FOOTBALL GROUND AND CAR PARK UPDATE

Consideration was given to a report of the Town Clerk, ENCL: 2931.

RESOLVED: that the current position on the Football Club car park be noted and the car park fees for 2015/16 be confirmed.

129. DORSET ASSOCIATION OF PARISH AND TOWN COUNCILS – SUBSCRIPTION AND OTHER ISSUES

The Town Clerk reported that the subscription for DAPTC had slightly increased for 2015/16 to £1,008.89 and he recommended that the Council continue in membership.

RESOLVED: that the subscription to DAPTC be approved for 2015/16 and the Town Council meeting be asked for a nomination for the Royal Garden Party 2015.

130. USE OF FISHERMAN'S GREEN, WEST BAY

Consideration was given to a report of the Town Clerk, ENCL: 2927.

RESOLVED: that the Town Clerk be given delegated authority to approve community bookings of the Fisherman's Green at no charge.

131. WEST BAY WATER SPORTS CENTRE UPDATE

The Town Surveyor reported that the work on the centre was now complete and it was hoped that, following confirmation of the leases, the Gig Club and Canoe Club could move in by early February 2015. A formal opening was being planned for later in the year.

RESOLVED: that the update be noted.

132. CHRISTMAS FESTIVAL REPORT BACK

The Town Surveyor reported that the event had been very successful indeed and he thanked all the Committee for their work.

Councillor Mrs E.A. Rickard, the Council's representative on the Festival Committee, thanked the Town Surveyor and Terri Foxwell in particular, for the significant amount of time and effort they had put into the event.

RESOLVED: that the updated be noted.

133. COMMUNITY FAIR

The Town Clerk reported that the Town Council will have a stall at the annual Community Fair in the Town Hall on 7 February between 9am and 3pm. Any member able to help out was asked to let him know.

RESOLVED: that the update be noted.

134. ELECTIONS 2015

Consideration was given to a report of the Town Clerk, ENCL: 2926.

RECOMMEND: that proposals to issue information on standing for election to the Town Council be approved and changes to the meetings timetable for April 2015 also be approved (to be reported to the Council meeting).

135. FLAG FLYING POLICY

Consideration was given to a report of the Town Clerk, ENCL: 2924.

RECOMMEND: that the Town Council's Flag Flying Policy be approved as set out in the report, subject to one addition:

15 September - Battle of Britain Day.

136. FUTURE OF THE QUALITY COUNCIL SCHEME

Consideration was given to a report of the Town Clerk, ENCL: 2920.

RESOLVED: that the introduction of the new Local Council Award Scheme be noted and the Town Council work towards the higher designations under the scheme during 2015.

137. REVIEW OF THE EFFECTIVENESS OF INTERNAL AUDIT AND APPOINTMENT OF AN INTERNAL AUDITOR FOR 2015/16

Consideration was given to a report of the Town Clerk, ENCL: 2925.

RECOMMEND: that the existing internal audit arrangements continue, subject to a further review at the completion of the 2014/15 audit.

138. RISK ASSESSMENT AND MANAGEMENT: ANNUAL REVIEW

Consideration was given to a report of the Town Clerk, ENCL: 2923.

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

139. MAGNA CARTA 2015

The Town Clerk reported that the local committee overseeing possible events to mark this year would have a questionnaire for the Community Fair on people's views on working towards Bridport becoming a "Rights Respecting Town."

RESOLVED: that the update be noted.

140. EVENTS 2015

The Town Clerk reported on the increased work involved in applying for road closures and that a report would come to the next meeting of this Committee, outlining the scope of the Town Council's support for events.

RESOLVED: that the update be noted.

141. REPORTS FROM OUTSIDE BODIES

Cllr Ms G.E. Massey, on behalf of the Bridport Community Orchard Group, reported a very successful Wassailing Day in the Orchard on 18 January.

142. CORRESPONDENCE

There were no items reported.

143. ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Town Mayor reported that she would be attending the annual Snowdrop Service in the United Church on Thursday 5 February, the Pantomime on Friday 6 February and the Community Fair in the Town Hall on Saturday 7 February.

144. PAYMENT OF ACCOUNTS

The Town Clerk presented List 4 of the 2014/15 accounts, in the sum of £160,412.43, which had been authorised for payment since the last meeting. This having been tabled for members' information, was approved and signed by the Chairman.

145. 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:

**146. PROPERTY MATTERS –
UPDATES ON LEASE RENEWALS/RENT REVIEWS AT MOUNTFIELD**

Consideration was given to a report of the Town Clerk, ENCL: 2932.

The Town Clerk reported the proposed terms for the renewal of the lease with West Dorset District Council at Mountfield, which represented an annual increase of £500 on the existing rent stated in the report, for 5 years from 1 April 2014.

Discussions were ongoing with Magna Housing regarding their rent review.

RECOMMEND: that the proposed terms of the renewal of the lease with West Dorset District Council at Mountfield be approved and the Town Clerk be given delegated authority to complete the renewal and conclude the rent review for the Magna Housing rooms.

147. STAFFING MATTERS

Consideration was given to a report of the Town Clerk, ENCL: 2933, which contained more information on the recruitment of a new Groundsman post.

RESOLVED: that the arrangements to establish a new post of Groundsman as outlined in the report at salary scale 11 for three years, be approved.

The meeting closed at **8.48 p.m.**

The next meeting of the Committee will be held on 25 March 2015 (subject to confirmation)