

Minutes of the MEETING of the FINANCE AND GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE of Bridport Town Council held at Mountfield, Bridport on Wednesday 14 November 2018 at 7.00pm.

PRESENT: Cllr: Maggie Ray (Chairman)

Cllrs: Geoffrey Ackerman	Keith Day
Derek Bussell	Gillian Massey
Kelvin Clayton	Martin Ray
	Anne Rickard

Also in attendance: Cllrs Dave Rickard and Sarah Williams

## **PUBLIC FORUM**

Mr Bob Driscoll of the Western Area Transport Action Group (WATAG) spoke in relation to the proposed transport solution to Yeovil College from Bridport, following the withdrawal of the existing Dorset County Council Service 40 in October 2018. He expressed concern that there had been no consultation and the decision had been notified to WATAG in September. This he said had led to students and other commuters being disenfranchised in terms of access to education and work. WATAG would be meeting with First Bus to see if services could be improved. Mr Driscoll said that he was concerned that funding for the College only would not help all of those affected by the withdrawal of Service 40. He urged Bridport and Beaminster Town Councils to make the same decision, and said that any support funding should be for the reinstatement of a full service, available to all.

### **72. APOLOGIES**

There were no apologies.

### **73. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Cllr Kelvin Clayton declared an interest in Minute 81, as Chairman of Skills Training Bridport and left the room while a discussion took place and the decision was made.

### **74. MINUTES**

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 12 September 2018 be confirmed as a true and correct record and signed by the Chairman.

RESOLVED: That agenda item 4 (Bridport to Yeovil College Minibus Service) be brought forward to this point in the meeting.

### **75. BRIDPORT TO YEOVIL COLLEGE MINIBUS SERVICE**

Consideration was given to a report of the Town Clerk, ENCL: 3382.

The Town Clerk summarised the report, which detailed a request from Yeovil College for support funding of up to £10,000 for a student-only bus service to replace First Wessex Service 40, which had ended following withdrawal of funding by Dorset

County Council. He also updated members on the geographical coverage of current users from information provided by the College, advising that of 18 postcodes supplied, 3 were in the parish of Bridport.

Councillors considered the request and expressed concerns:

- that the proposed service would only provide a solution for students and not for other commuters;
- that there was not a strong economic argument for providing such a large amount for a small number of Bridport students;
- that other options needed more investigation, such as the existing service used by students of Colfox School, who travelled to the College;
- that legislation required young people to be in education, training or work up to the age of 18, but transport provision was only made for those in education up to the age of 16;
- that one root cause of such problems was that students needed to travel significant distances to access education; and
- that the County Council, the constituency MP and local educational establishments had a moral if not legal obligation to solve the problems caused by the withdrawal of the service.

RECOMMEND: that a contribution towards the proposed service not be supported and that a letter is written in the strongest terms to Dorset County Council and Oliver Letwin MP, urging them to find a solution and to Colfox and Beaminster Schools and Yeovil College, requesting that they work in partnership to achieve a solution that satisfies the needs of students.

The Chairman thanked Bob Driscoll for his attendance.

#### **76. MARKET AND BUSINESS LIAISON WORKING GROUP**

The Town Clerk gave a verbal report on the Working Group meeting held on 16 October 2018, which included an update on the work of the Tourist Information Centre, discussion of policies for Markets, West Bay Car Boot Sale, the use of Bucky Doo Square and an update from Bridport Business Chamber.

Members discussed the merits of party political restrictions on the use of Bucky Doo Square. The Town Clerk advised that this would be considered in further drafting of the policy, which would then be tabled for the Committee.

RESOLVED: that the notes of the meeting of the Working Group held on 16 October 2018 be received and the resolutions therein be adopted.

#### **77. FINANCIAL ESTIMATES 2018/2019 – 2nd REVISION**

Consideration was given to a report of the Town Clerk, ENCL: 3369.

RESOLVED: that the 2nd revision of the estimates for the year 2018/2019 be approved.

#### **78. DIRECT DEBITS**

Consideration was given to a report of the Town Clerk, ENCL: 3370.

RESOLVED: that the continued use of direct debits be supported.

**79. TOWN PLAN PRIORITY PROJECTS – UPDATE**

Consideration was given to a report of the Town Clerk, ENCL: 3371.

RESOLVED: that the update be noted.

**80. BUDGET PROCESS 2019/2020**

The Town Clerk reported on the meetings of the Budget Working Group and outlined the timetable for formal consideration and approval of the budget by the Council in January 2019.

RESOLVED: that the update be noted.

**81. GRANTS**

Consideration was given to a report of the Town Clerk, ENCL: 3373.

The Town Clerk reported that two late submissions had been received and it was:

RESOLVED: that the following grants be made from the smaller grants budget: -

- (i) Skills Training Bridport £425
- (ii) Melplash Agricultural Society £425

*\*\*\*Cllr Kelvin Clayton left the meeting for the duration of the discussion and decision-making on the grant application submitted by Skills Training Bridport\*\*\**

**82. SERVICES ADMINISTERED BY THE TOWN SURVEYOR**

The Town Surveyor reported on the following items.

- (i) WiFi in West Bay, the town centre and Mountfield. Problems with provision of fibre broadband meant that the area to be covered by public WiFi in West Bay would need to be reduced. Surplus equipment would then be available for use in the town centre. The upgraded WiFi at Mountfield was installed and working.
- (ii) Coastal Communities Team. A licence had been issued by WDDC, which would allow works on the former railway line to proceed. Further detail was needed before a similar licence would be granted for works at Harbour Green. A late bid for further funding had not been successful.
- (iii) Plottingham Car Park resurfacing. Pay and display income at the car park over the past two months had been £940, and a further similar amount had been received for permits. On the basis of this level of income, it would be worth investing in the resurfacing of the car park, at a cost estimated at £13,000.

RESOLVED: That capital funding be set aside to resurface Plottingham Car Park.

- (iv) 3G sports pitch. Bridport Football Partnership and Dorset FA had been engaged and the project looked promising, despite a lack of DCC funding.

Talks were also ongoing with WDDC about funding for proposed pitches at Vearse Farm, which could help enable the 3G pitch to proceed. Members asked about the need for a 'plastic' pitch and its lifespan. The Town Surveyor advised that an artificial surface would be multi-use and resilient.

- (v) Sitting Out Licences/A-Boards. Following confirmation that the Town Council had taken over responsibility, all businesses with sitting out facilities had been written to. Bridport Business Chamber had been made aware and had been supportive. Work would begin on the control of A-Boards, once the sitting out licences were all in place.

RESOLVED: That the report of the Town Surveyor be noted.

### **83. COMMUNITY BUS**

Consideration was given to a report of the Town Clerk, ENCL: 3374.

The Town Clerk advised that the Community Bus Working Group wanted to extend the pilot period for Service 7 from six to twelve months, to enable one or more alternative routes to be trialled. In considering this request, members also discussed the possible benefits of offering a free service in the run-up to Christmas.

The Town Clerk further advised that Bradpole Parish Council had contributed £1,100 towards the pilot, and had also spent out £225 on printing and delivering a timetable to all Bradpole residents.

RECOMMEND: that the Bridport community bus pilot be extended from six months to twelve months, with a possible extension to the end of the summer holiday period.

RESOLVED: that passenger fares be waived for the month of December 2018.

### **84. ANNUAL GOVERNANCE AND ACCOUNTABILITY RETURN 2017/2018**

Consideration was given to a report of the Town Clerk, ENCL: 3375.

The Town Clerk reported that the external auditor had examined the AGAR for 2017/2018 and had offered a clean bill of health. He said that this success was thanks to the work and diligence of the Finance Manager, which often went unnoticed. Despite the absence of comment, the report of the auditor would need to be accepted by the Council.

RESOLVED: that the report and finding of the external auditor be approved.

RESOLVED: that Bridport Town Council thanks and congratulates the Finance & Office Manager for this achievement.

### **85. TOURIST INFORMATION CENTRE UPDATE – APRIL TO SEPTEMBER 2018**

Consideration was given to a report of the Town Clerk, ENCL: 3376.

The Tourist Information Centre Manager reported on positive performance by the TIC in the first half of 2017/2018, including increased visitor numbers and more Box Office clients. She further reported that one member of staff had passed the first stage of a

sign language course, and that the Centre had received the gold award at the Dorset Tourism Awards for 2018.

RESOLVED: that the staff of the TIC be congratulated on their achievements.

RESOLVED: that the report be noted.

**86. BUS STATION**

Consideration was given to a report of the Town Clerk, ENCL: 3377.

RECOMMEND: that the remaining £3,029 earmarked reserved for Town Plan Projects, for sketch drawings to illustrate the Town Council's proposals for the Bus Station, be agreed.

**87. LOCAL GOVERNMENT REORGANISATION – SERVICE/ASSET TRANSFERS**

Consideration was given to a report of the Town Clerk, ENCL: 3378.

The Town Clerk reported that, following the decision of the Shadow Dorset Council Executive not to approve a programme of service and asset transfers, the Town Council had now been asked to consider whether it would take over responsibility for public conveniences, without financial support for refurbishment or transition from WDDC control. Separately, the Council had been asked to confirm its interest in seven assets of low or no value.

Members expressed concern at the decision of the Shadow Executive, and welcomed news that it was to be the subject of a call to account by the Shadow Dorset Council Overview and Scrutiny Committee. It was felt that this might have a positive impact on any future similar negotiations.

RECOMMEND:

- (i) that a proposal to transfer responsibility for public conveniences from West Dorset District Council to Bridport Town Council should not be approved at this time.
- (ii) the transfer of assets of low and no value be approved in principle, the land at Victoria Grove being subject to completion of a tree survey and consequent remedial works, and that detailed discussions be delegated to the Town Clerk and Town Surveyor.

**88. TOWN CRIER ENGAGEMENTS**

Consideration was given to a report of the Town Clerk, ENCL: 3379.

Members noted that the Town Crier had received two awards in the year to date.

RESOLVED: that the Town Crier be congratulated on his success in winning two competitions in the year to date.

RESOLVED: that the update be noted.

**89. REPORTS FROM OUTSIDE BODIES**

The following reports were received:

Community Orchard: Cllr Gill Massey reported on the very successful 11<sup>th</sup> annual Apple Day.

Millennium Green Trust: Cllr Gill Massey reported the construction of the new path on Coneygar Hill and that a new web site would soon be in operation.

Food Festival: Cllr Anne Rickard updated on the AGM of the Local Food Group. Takings from the Festival had been up by £3,000 on the previous year, stall bookings up by 43%, and Asker Meadows had been better used, thanks to the work of the Town Surveyor and TIC Manager.

Bridport Area Development Trust: Cllr Sarah Williams reported on the BADT AGM which heard how use of the L&SI was increasing and that the West Bay Discovery Centre had enjoyed a very busy initial period, following its opening in the summer.

**90. ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Town Clerk reported that Bridport Youth & Community Centre had been awarded Section 106 funding by West Dorset District Council, but that a short term loan had been requested to enable the works to take place in advance of claiming the grant. Further details were needed and this matter would be tabled for consideration by Full Council.

The Town Surveyor reported that he was inclined to decline a request for Asker Meadows to be used as the venue for a truck show, as it involved 150 trucks.

**91. PAYMENT OF ACCOUNTS**

The Town Clerk presented List 3 of the 2018/19 accounts, in the sum of £263,528.03, which had been authorised for payment since the last meeting.

RESOLVED: that List 3 of the 2018/19 accounts, in the sum of £263,528.03 be approved and signed by the Chairman.

**92. PUBLIC BODIES (ADMISSION TO MEETINGS) ACT 1960**

*RESOLVED: "That in view of the confidential nature of the business about to be transacted, it is advisable in the public interest that the public be temporarily excluded and they are instructed to withdraw."*

**93. PUBLIC CONVENIENCES**

Consideration was given to a report of the Town Clerk, ENCL: 3380.

RESOLVED: that the previous decision in respect of this matter be confirmed.

**94. TENANCY NEGOTIATION**

Consideration was given to a report of the Town Clerk, ENCL: 3381.

RESOLVED: that the tenancy be approved in principle and detailed negotiations be delegated to the Town Clerk and Town Surveyor.

The meeting closed at **9.11pm**

**The next meeting of the Committee will be held on 16 January 2019**