

Minutes of the MEETING of the FINANCE AND GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE of Bridport Town Council held at Mountfield, Bridport on Wednesday 16 January 2019 at 7.00 p.m.

PRESENT: Cllr: Maggie Ray (Chairman)

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

Also in attendance: Cllr Dave Rickard and Sarah Williams.

PUBLIC FORUM

There were no speakers in the public forum.

95. APOLOGIES

There no apologies for absence.

96. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

97. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 14 November 2018 were confirmed as a true and correct record and signed by the Chairman.

98. BEST VALUE & SCRUTINY SUB COMMITTEE

RESOLVED: that the minutes of the meeting of the Sub Committee held on 4 December 2018 be received.

(Min. 28) Meeting Date 4 December 2018

The following recommendation was deferred for consideration later in the meeting, as a separate agenda item (see minute 103):

RECOMMEND: that

- (1) Finance and General Purposes Committee meetings be moved to Monday evenings at 7.00pm, to dovetail easily in to the Council agenda setting process.
- (2) The Market and Business Liaison Working Group meetings be held at 4.00pm.
- (3) The Open Spaces Working Group meetings be held at 2.30pm.
- (4) The Budget Working Group meetings be held at 2.30pm.

99. TOWN PLAN PROJECTS UPDATE

Consideration was given to a report of the Town Clerk, ENCL: 3389.

RESOLVED: that the update be noted.

100. LOCAL GOVERNMENT REORGANISATION UPDATE

Consideration was given to a report of the Town Clerk, ENCL: 3390.

The Town Clerk summarised the report, advising that a 'Call to Account' by the Shadow Dorset Council Overview & Scrutiny Committee had resolved that the Shadow Executive had acted according to its principles in not supporting service and asset transfers from West Dorset District Council to town and parish councils. The report also gave details of a draft committee structure for the new Dorset Council.

Members discussed the relative powers of the Shadow Executive and the Shadow Council, and expressed concern that the Call to Account had not scrutinised the Shadow Executive decision satisfactorily.

RESOLVED: that the latest position on local government reorganisation, as set out in the report, be noted.

101. FINANCIAL ESTIMATES 2018/2019 – 3rd REVISION

Consideration was given to a report of the Town Clerk, ENCL: 3391.

RECOMMEND: that the 3rd revision of the estimates for the year 2018/2019 be approved.

102. BUDGET AND ESTIMATES 2019/20

Consideration was given to a report of the Town Clerk, ENCL: 3392.

In considering this item, members noted:

- The position of the current year 2018/19 revenue budget estimates
- The position on the Town Council's finances held in reserves (i.e. not for ongoing commitments, but can be used for one-off expenditure) and proposed Capital Budget
- The recommended revenue budget (estimates) for next year (2019/20) with a commentary on recommended significant variations from this year
- The recommended fees and charges for 2019/20
- Comments of the Budget Working Group
- Medium Term Financial Forecasts
- Summary of Budget Considerations
- Options on the level of precept to fund the budget for 2019/20

The estimates and projects had been considered at the Best Value and Scrutiny Sub Committee and the Budget Working Group.

The Town Clerk highlighted the considerations for members, which included to:

- present a balanced budget

- maintain appropriate levels of reserves and continue to earmark reserves to support project delivery through a capital budget
- make provision for salary, increased in line with the national pay award. There is also provision within the budget to meet the costs of job evaluation
- make provision to continue to deliver Town Plan projects, including the revenue costs of the community bus and public wifi
- continued support for town events
- maintain grant funding for community projects and support of key organisations through service level agreements – Arts Centre, Museum, Leisure Centre, CAB and Youth & Community Centre
- through the delegated services budget, seek to make ongoing revenue provision to meet some of the costs of discretionary services that are likely not to be delivered by the new unitary council and that the Town Council may need to manage e.g. public toilets

The Town Clerk drew members' attention to the options on the precept and advised that whilst the officer recommendation was to set a balanced budget, it was open to members to consider any level of precept. The options put forward were:

- Option 1: increase the precept by £67,798. In total, this would raise £674,179 and provide a deficit budget of £10,000.
- Option 2: increase the precept by £77,798. In total, this would raise £684,179 and provide a balanced budget.
- Option 3: increase the precept by £87,798. In total, this would raise £694,179 and provide a cushion of an additional £10,000 towards future delegated services.

The current Band 'D' Town Council charge was £207.08, resulting in the following annual and weekly increases in Council Tax for a Band 'D' Council Tax Payer:-

	<u>Annual</u>	<u>Weekly</u>	<u>Band 'D'</u>
Option 1	£17.13	£0.33	8.27%
Option 2	£20.46	£0.39	9.88%
Option 3	£23.79	£0.46	11.49%

Following consideration of the report, it was unanimously RECOMMENDED to Full Council:

- (a) that the draft estimates for 2019/20 be approved as set out in Appendix A.
- (b) that the proposed fees and charges for 2019/20 be approved as set out in Appendix B, with a fundamental review of all charges during the year.
- (c) that the draft capital budget and proposed use of reserves for 2019/20 and future years be approved, as set out in section 4 of the report, with a further report back with more detail to the next meeting of this Committee.
- (d) that the Medium Term Financial Plan be approved as a guide for future years as in Appendix C, noting that each year's budget will be subject to separate approval.
- (e) that in terms of the precept, Option 2 be approved, as set out above and in section 10 of the report, which would increase the precept by £77,798 to £684,179 with the annual Band 'D' charge increasing from £207.08 to £227.54, equivalent to 9.88% or 39p per week.

103. MEETINGS CALENDAR

Consideration was given to a report of the Town Clerk, ENCL: 3393.

The Town Clerk advised that Best Value & Scrutiny on 4 December 2018 had recommended a calendar incorporating a number of changes to timing of meetings, and that subsequent to that meeting it had been found that no Planning Committee had been scheduled for March 2020, resulting in a gap of nine weeks between meetings. He advised that this was not desirable, given the requirements for commenting on planning applications. He had therefore added a meeting on 23 March 2020 and a revised schedule had been tabled for approval. He asked members to consider approving the calendar as tabled, alongside the recommendation of the Best Value & Scrutiny Committee.

RESOLVED: that

- (1) Finance and General Purposes Committee meetings be moved to Monday evenings at 7.00pm, to dovetail easily in to the Council agenda setting process.
- (2) The Market and Business Liaison Working Group meetings be held at 4.00pm.
- (3) The Open Spaces Working Group meetings be held at 2.30pm.
- (4) The Budget Working Group meeting be held at 2.30pm.
- (5) The meetings calendar be approved as tabled.

Cllr Williams advised that she had requested that a version of the calendar be circulated and published such that Mayor Making on 30 May 2019 be incorporated into the main table of meetings. The draft version showed this in sub-text to the table, which might not be clear to members and the public. The Town Clerk confirmed that he would publish a revised version.

104. REVIEW OF THE EFFECTIVENESS OF INTERNAL AUDIT AND APPOINTMENT OF AN INTERNAL AUDITOR FOR 2019/20

Consideration was given to a report of the Town Clerk, ENCL: 3394, setting out the arrangements for internal audit, and recommending the retention of the existing auditor, Lightatouch Internal Audit Services.

RECOMMEND: that the existing internal audit arrangements continue for 2019/20.

105. RISK ASSESSMENT AND MANAGEMENT: ANNUAL REVIEW

Consideration was given to a report of the Town Clerk, ENCL: 3395. The report set out the Council's approach to risk management, and included a risk management policy that had been updated to incorporate two newly identified risks relating to the new community bus service and Local Government Reorganisation.

RECOMMEND: that the Risk Assessment and Management Strategy Policy be approved as tabled.

106. SERVICES ADMINISTERED BY THE TOWN SURVEYOR

The Town Surveyor reported on the following matters:

- 3G Sports Pitch. A meeting with Dorset FA and the Football Foundation had outlined the requirements for establishing the proposed location of the pitch as the preferred location. All local teams were supportive, including 19 youth teams and three girls' teams. There was no identified adverse impact on the recently installed pitch in Dorchester, and all other requirements for funding support had been met. The Town Surveyor was hopeful that progress towards the new pitch could now be made. If approved, Dorset FA and the Football Foundation would deal with contractors and others, to help deliver the facility.
- Asset Transfers. A meeting had been held with West Dorset District Council regarding the transfer of seven assets of low or no estimated value, and it was expected that these would now proceed, without conditions, on matters such as future use and charging. A further report would be provided to the next Committee meeting. Cllr Clayton queried works currently being carried out on one of the assets, the Old Railway Line, and the Town Surveyor advised that this was clearance work to facilitate a cycle path, and had been previously approved by WDDC. Cllr Dave Rickard asked whether the Harbour Master would need to be involved in respect of Harbour Green, and the Town Surveyor advised that the Council would work in partnership with him. Cllr Day asked whether income might be derived from the Old Railway Line, and the Town Surveyor advised that it was hoped this would be the case, for this land and for Harbour Green.

RESOLVED: that the update be noted.

107. COMMUNITY BUS UPDATE

Consideration was given to a report of the Town Clerk, ENCL: 3396. The report detailed changes to the bus route and timetable, which would provide more regular journeys to the town centre, and shorten journey times. It was hoped that this would encourage increased use of the service, and the aim was to introduce the new arrangements by late February 2019.

Cllr Williams thanked Bradpole and Allington Parish Councils for their financial contribution to the service, and asked town councillors resident in Bothenhampton & Walditch to press the parish council there for similar support.

Members stressed the need for promotion of the changes, online, around the town, and in particular by First Wessex, the service operator.

RESOLVED: that the current position on the project be noted.

108. EVENTS 2019

Consideration was given to a report of the Town Clerk, ENCL: 3397, which provided details of scheduled public events in Bridport for 2019.

Cllr Massey advised that the date shown for Apple Blossom Day had not yet been confirmed.

The Town Surveyor reported that he would confirm road closure arrangements for relevant events, and that prospects were good for engagement by the Arts Centre in community events. He further advised that he had heard of changes in the Carnival Committee. Cllr Brown advised that she had been made President of the Committee.

RESOLVED: that the report be noted.

109. OPERATION OVERLORD – 75TH ANNIVERSARY

Consideration was given to a report of the Town Clerk, ENCL: 3398, detailing a request from Cllr Ackerman for the erection of a memorial to US soldiers billeted in the Bridport area during WWII, who lost their lives during Operation Overlord. The Royal British Legion had written in support of the proposal. The cost of a memorial and refreshments for an unveiling ceremony was estimated at £800 to £1,000 dependent on the type of memorial. Funding contributions could be sought, and funds were available within the current year budget for such a project.

Members expressed support for the initiative, and considered the creation of a working group to take it forward in time for the 75th anniversary of Operation Overlord on 6 June 2019.

RESOLVED: that the erection of a memorial be approved in principle, subject to approaches to partners for funding contributions.

RESOLVED: that a working group be established to take the project forward, comprising Sheila Meaney, Cheryl Ludgate, & Cllrs Ackerman, Bussell and Williams.

RESOLVED: that up to £1,000 be approved for expenditure on the project.

110. REPORTS FROM OUTSIDE BODIES

The following reports were received:

Community Orchard Group - Cllr Gill Massey reported on the recent Wassailing Day in the Orchard on Sunday 13 January 2019. Over 200 people had attended and it had been very successful.

Bridport Millennium Green Trust – Cllr Massey reported the Trust's thanks to the Town Surveyor and Town Council staff for the new path surface on Coneygar Hill. The Town Surveyor advised that positive feedback had been received. Cllr Massey further reported that the Trust's website was operational but remained a work in progress.

Asker Meadows Nature Reserve – Cllr Massey advised that a public consultation on a management plan for the Meadows would be discussed shortly.

Bridport Twinning Association – Cllr Ackerman reported that a visit from St Vaast La Hougue would take place in June, with a return visit from Bridport in September.

Friends of Millennium Green – Cllr Brown reported that the Twelfth Night event had raised £500 and that £2,000 had recently been donated to the Millennium Green Trust for tree works. She expected that further contributions would be needed and these could be provided, subject to fundraising. The Town Surveyor noted that there may be opportunities for the Trust to raise more income from use of the Green for events.

111. CORRESPONDENCE

Cllr Williams reported that a councillor team was being recruited for the Mayor's Charity Quiz on 1 March 2019 and asked interested members to contact her direct.

112. PAYMENT OF ACCOUNTS

The Town Clerk presented List 4 of the 2018/19 accounts, in the sum of £238,795.86, which had been authorised for payment since the last meeting. This having been tabled for members' information, was approved and signed by the Chairman.

113. 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."

114. COUNCIL BANKING

The Town Clerk reported on the Town Council's future banking arrangements.

RECOMMEND: that the current banking arrangements be retained, pending a review following the Town Council elections in May 2019.

115. PROPERTY MATTERS

The Town Surveyor reported on discussions towards establishing a commercial tenancy.

RESOLVED: that the update be noted.

The meeting closed at **8.38pm**.

The next meeting of the Committee will be held on 20 March 2019