

Minutes of the VIRTUAL Meeting (GoToMeeting ID: 504-458-717) of the FINANCE AND GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE of Bridport Town Council held on Monday 9 November 2020 at 5.30pm.

PRESENT: Cllr: Maggie Ray (Chairman)

Cllrs: Rose Allwork	Martin Ray
Karen Hunt	Anne Rickard
Julian Jones	Sarah Williams (from 6.00pm)
Gill Massey	

Also in attendance: Cllrs Sarah Carney and Dave Rickard

PUBLIC FORUM

There were no speakers in the public forum.

32. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Geoffrey Ackerman.

33. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Cllrs Maggie Ray and Martin Ray declared interests in agenda item 6 (Services Administered by the Town Surveyor, minute 37) as members of the Bridport Young Persons' Action Trust (BYPAT). The item included a proposal to support work by BYPAT on Branden's Trail.

34. MINUTES

RESOLVED: that the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 21 September 2020 be confirmed as a true and correct record and that the Chairman should sign the minutes at the earliest opportunity.

35. MARKET AND BUSINESS LIAISON WORKING GROUP

RESOLVED: that the notes of the meeting of the Working Group held on 20 October 2020 be received and noted.

36. FINANCIAL ESTIMATES 2020/2021 – 2nd REVISION

Consideration was given to a report of the Town Clerk, ENCL: 3558, setting out the income and expenditure for the financial year to date, up to October 2020.

RECOMMEND: that the 2nd revision of the estimates for the year 2020/2021 be approved.

37. SERVICES ADMINISTERED BY THE TOWN SURVEYOR

Consideration was given to a report of the Town Clerk, ENCL: 3559.

The Town Surveyor summarised the report, updating members on the following items:

- (i) Indoor Skate Park. The facility was open, popular and running well. Sustainable financial arrangements were required and a Service Level Agreement Grant had been requested. The Town Surveyor set out the costs, usage and other information.

RECOMMEND: that a grant of £5,000 per annum be agreed to 2020 Skate & Ride, pro rata for the remainder of 2020-21 and for three further years and subject to an agreed Service Level Agreement, delegated to the Chairman of the committee and the Town Surveyor.

Cllr Sarah Williams joined the meeting at this point

- (ii) Branden's Trail. The nature trail being renovated by Bridport Young Persons' Action Trust (BYPAT). Operational support from the Town Council had been requested.

RESOLVED: that operational support be provided for this project.

- (iii) St Mary's Play Area. The play area had been extended, six new pieces of equipment installed, a fence erected and a mural painted.
- (iv) East Street Car Park Toilets. The passageway to King Street had been reopened with warning signs, as no lighting was in place until an electricity supply was available. The public toilets would be opened when the building was transferred to Town Council ownership.
- (v) Plottingham Car Park Solar Panels. The project was progressing through the Climate Action Sub Committee. Funding of up to £50,000 was to be committed from the Climate Emergency reserve, with F&GP Committee approval.

RECOMMEND: that £50,000 be released from the climate emergency reserve for the Plottingham Car Park Solar Panels project.

- (vi) Old Railway Line. Plans were being drawn up to sell access strips to neighbouring properties, once the land was transferred from Dorset Council to the Town Council. Members' approval was requested for this.

RECOMMEND: that the sale of access strips to the Old Railway Line, delegated to the Town Surveyor, be approved.

- (vii) Outdoor Skate Park. A project had been initiated to construct a new skate park, in partnership with Crowdfunder and other local stakeholders. It was recommended that the Town Council reserve for repair of the existing skate park be reallocated to this project.

RECOMMEND: that the Outdoor Skate Park project be authorised to proceed and the available reserve funding be committed as match funding.

- (viii) New Zealand Pond. This project dated back some time and there was now an opportunity to take it forward. Consent Forms had been submitted to the Environment Agency for works to create an overflow pond. The outdoor team would provide operational support.

(ix) West Bay Walkway. A walkway from the Discovery Centre to East Beach toilets was to be constructed, funded by the Coastal Communities Fund. Dorset Works would carry out the works, project managed by the Town Surveyor.

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

38. ANNUAL GOVERNANCE AND ACCOUNTABILITY RETURN 2019/2020

Consideration was given to a report of the Town Clerk, ENCL: 3560.

The Town Clerk reported that the external auditor had examined the AGAR for 2019/2020 and had offered a clean bill of health. He said that this success was thanks to the work and diligence of the Finance & Office Manager, which often went unnoticed. Despite the absence of comment, the report of the auditor would need to be accepted by the Council.

RECOMMEND: that the report and finding of the external auditor in respect of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return 2019/2020 be approved.

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

39. BUDGET WORKING GROUP

The Town Clerk reported that a first meeting of the Working Group had taken place, and it had considered a likely deficit for the current and next year arising from COVID-19. General reserves would be severely affected and possibly used up to cover the deficits. Members had also been advised of a likely reduction in the tax base, which would increase the level of Council Tax, all other things being equal. A draft budget had been drafted subsequent to the meeting, for discussion at the second meeting.

RESOLVED: that the update be noted.

40. TOWN CRIER ENGAGEMENTS

Consideration was given to a report of the Town Clerk, ENCL: 3561.

RESOLVED: that the report of the Town Clerk be noted.

41. REPORTS FROM OUTSIDE BODIES (1)

The following reports were received:

Cllr Gill Massey reported that the Orchard Group's Apple Day had been cancelled. Instead, produce had been sold at the Farmers' Market and a stall was proposed for the Christmas Market.

Cllr Sarah Williams reported on her attendance at the first RSN Rural Market Towns Group meeting, from which she had just arrived. The group would focus on lobbying government, and there would be opportunities to discuss devolution, planning and neighbourhood planning.

Cllr Dave Rickard reported that the DAPTC Town and Larger Parish Councils AGM had taken place, with Cllr Jill Haynes in attendance to discuss Dorset Council's review

of assets. She had indicated that asset transfers to councils would be supported, if services could be transferred alongside any assets. The DAPTC full AGM would take place on 14 November 2020, with two motions from the Town Council.

RESOLVED: that the reports from outside bodies be noted.

42. ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Town Clerk reported that:

- Dorset Council's Dog-Related Public Spaces Protection Order was in place, although the Town Council would be charged for enforcement and other signs. The Town Surveyor was in discussion about this.
- Remembrance Sunday events had proceeded well. Feedback on the physical and virtual events had been very positive. The Town Clerk thanked Claire Peters-Way and other staff involved in their organisation. He also thanked the Mayor, Deputy Mayor and other councillors for their engagement.

43. PAYMENT OF ACCOUNTS

The Town Clerk presented List 3 of the 2020/21 accounts, in the sum of £242,041.33, which had been authorised for payment since the last meeting.

RESOLVED: that accounts list number 3 for 2020/2021 be approved.

44. 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.

45. PROPERTY MATTERS

The Town Surveyor reported on the contractual arrangements for new play equipment, and on a proposed lease of property.

RESOLVED: that the Town Surveyor be authorised to proceed with lease negotiations.

RESOLVED: that the report be noted.

46. CAR PARKING CHARGES

Members considered possible future approaches to charging in its car parks.

RESOLVED: that car parking charges be considered, following a decision by Dorset Council on its charges.

47. TOWN COUNCIL CHARITY

Consideration was given to a report of the Town Clerk, ENCL: 3562 setting out legal advice on options for the creation of a charity to own land and buildings.

Members welcomed and considered the report and legal advice.

RECOMMEND:

- (i) that a working group be established to consider the matter further, comprising Cllrs Rose Allwork, Sarah Carney, Karen Hunt, Maggie Ray and Sarah Williams.
- (ii) that accounting advice be obtained.
- (iii) that a further report be provided to Full Council in January 2021.

48. REPORTS FROM OUTSIDE BODIES (2)

Members considered an update on the future of one body to which it had appointed a representative. Sensitive discussions were ongoing and a further report would be provided in January 2021.

RESOLVED: that the update be noted.

The meeting closed at **8.37pm**

The next meeting of the Committee will be held on 11 January 2021