

Minutes of a Meeting of the FINANCE AND GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE held at Mountfield on Monday 13 March 2023 at 7.00pm.

PRESENT Cllr: Sarah Williams (Chairman)

Cllrs: Geoff Ackerman	Gill Massey
Rose Allwork	Maggie Ray
Karen Hunt	Martin Ray
Julian Jones	Anne Rickard

Also in attendance: Cllrs Dave Rickard (ex-officio), Paul Fuszard (Finance and Office Manager), Daryl Chambers (Town Surveyor) and Will Austin (Town Clerk).

PUBLIC FORUM

There were no speakers in the public forum.

64. APOLOGIES

There were no apologies for absence.

65. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

66. MINUTES

RESOLVED: that the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 16 January 2023 be confirmed as a true and correct record and signed by the Chairman.

Responding to a query in respect of minute 58, the Town Clerk advised he would request an update from Bridport Community Kitchen, regarding proposals for homeless 'pods'.

67. BEST VALUE AND SCRUTINY SUB COMMITTEE

RESOLVED: that the minutes of the meeting of the Sub Committee held on 7 March 2023 be received and adopted, and that the following recommendations be approved:

(min. 30)

RESOLVED:

Investments Review 2022/23 and Strategy 2023/24

- (i) that the investments made in 2022/23 be noted as in the report; and
- (ii) that the Investment Strategy for 2023/24 be approved as drafted.
- (iii) Further consideration be given to ethical investments and a report to be brought back to a future meeting.

(min. 31)

Asset Register

RESOLVED: that the Asset Register be approved and the Town Clerk be given delegated authority to make any final amendments, before it is signed by the Chairman of the Finance and General Purposes Committee and the Town Clerk.

68. MARKET AND BUSINESS LIAISON WORKING GROUP

The notes of the Working Group held on 7 February 2023 were presented. There were no recommendations arising from the meeting.

RESOLVED: that the notes of the meeting of the Market & Business Liaison Working Group held on 7 February 2023 be received and noted.

69. ENVIRONMENT AND SOCIAL WELLBEING COMMITTEE

The Town Clerk reported that there were no recommendations to the Finance & General Purposes Committee, from the Environment & Social Wellbeing Committee meeting held on 8 March 2023.

70. SERVICES ADMINISTERED BY THE TOWN SURVEYOR

Consideration was given to a report of the Town Surveyor, ENCL: 3795. The Town Surveyor summarised the current position in respect of a number of ongoing projects, as follows:

- **Community Governance Review.** An informal meeting with parish councils was convened in March, and the Town Surveyor would now enter into fact-finding discussions with Chairs and Clerks.
- **Sitting Out Arrangements.** Discussions were ongoing with Bridge House Hotel to extend the current arrangement, and approval to negotiate a licence or lease under delegation was sought.
- **Changing Places Toilet.** Works were due to commence later this year at West Bay. Funding for a second facility at the Bus Station had been approved.
- **Verge Maintenance.** A three-year contract extension, and a 10% fee increase had been agreed with Dorset Council.
- **Old Dairy Site.** The Council was working with Bridport Museum.
- **Mountfield Accommodation.** Town Council staff had moved to the ground floor, and reception was open 5 days a week. The second floor was to be let.
- **West Bay Traffic Order.** Temporary traffic arrangements were to be repeated as per 2022, with permanent changes expected in Autumn 2023.
- **The Mound Toilets.** These had been closed by Dorset Council, to enable repair works to the harbour wall. The Town Council was in discussion regarding the provision of temporary toilets on Fisherman's Green.
- **Events.** Jurassic Fields was expected to proceed near Broomhills Farm. The Folk Festival was not expected to go ahead, for this year only. Preparations for the Food Festival and Community Charter Fair were progressing well.
- **Bridport FC Car Park.** Surveys were underway to establish requirements for resurfacing.
- **Solar Car Ports.** Agreement on contracts for provision of public EV charging points was being negotiated.
- **Car Park Ticket Machines.** Replacement had been delayed by Dorset Council tender issues, and the matter was being pursued.

- **Harbour Green.** Competitive tenders for the use of Harbour Green had been received on the day of the meeting, and members were asked to resolve to meet in private to consider them.

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 and press be temporarily excluded and they are instructed to withdraw.

RESOLVED: that the tender proposed by the Town Surveyor be approved, subject to detailed discussions.

RESOLVED: that the public and press be readmitted.

RESOLVED: that the Town Surveyor be granted delegated authority to enter into initial discussions regarding a licence or lease for use of an area of Riverside Gardens by the Bridge House Hotel.

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

71. FEES AND CHARGES

Consideration was given to ENCL: 3796.

The Town Clerk reported that the budget-setting process had highlighted a need to improve revenue generation from fees and charges, and that these had not increased significantly for several years. Following discussions at the last meeting and subsequently between officers and the Chairman, an updated schedule of fees had been drafted and was presented for consideration. The Town Clerk also asked that a delegation be granted to vary fees and charges where this was deemed to be financially beneficial. Following discussion, it was

RESOLVED: that the fees and charges for 2023/24 be approved, subject to further consideration of fees for car park season tickets, under delegation by the Town Surveyor and Town Clerk.

RESOLVED: that the Town Clerk and Town Surveyor be granted delegated authority to vary fees and charges in exceptional circumstances, where this is deemed beneficial to the Council.

72. BUDGET 2022/23 – EARMARKING

The Finance and Office Manager reported that, in line with previous years, budget headings underspent may be reserved, to help finalise the budget outturn for the current financial year budget and to give flexibility for spending, outside of the formal annual accounts cycle.

RESOLVED: that the earmarking be carried out under delegation, in line with the approach set out by the Finance and Office Manager.

73. PENSIONS DISCRETIONS POLICY – REVIEW

Consideration was given to a report of the Town Clerk, ENCL: 3797.

RESOLVED: that the existing Pensions Discretions Policy be confirmed, with no changes.

74. REPORTS FROM OUTSIDE BODIES

There were no reports.

75. COMMUNICATIONS

The Town Clerk reported that the Annual Town Meeting would take place in the Town Hall on Tuesday 21 March 2023 at 7:00pm.

76. PAYMENT OF ACCOUNTS

The Town Clerk presented List 5 of the 2022/23 accounts, in the sum of £200,653.72 which had been authorised for payment since the last meeting. This was tabled for members' information, and it was

RESOLVED: that List 5 of the 2022/23 accounts be approved and signed by the Chairman.

77. 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 and press be temporarily excluded and they are instructed to withdraw.

78. STAFFING MATTERS

The Town Clerk and Town Surveyor each reported on a staffing matter.

RESOLVED: that the retirement arrangements for one employee be approved, as presented by the Town Clerk.

RESOLVED: that changes to the Grounds Team arrangements be noted.

The meeting closed at **8.40pm**.

The next meeting of the Committee will be held on 12 June 2023