

FINANCE AND GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE

Minutes of a meeting of the BEST VALUE AND SCRUTINY SUB COMMITTEE held at Mountfield on Tuesday 5 March 2024 at 11.00am.

PRESENT Cllr Sarah Carney

Cllrs: Sandra Brown Dave Rickard
 Anne Rickard Sarah Williams

Also in attendance: Will Austin (Town Clerk) and Paul Fuszard (Finance & Office Manager).

PUBLIC FORUM

There were no members of the public present.

27. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs Maggie Ray, Martin Ray and Steve Williams.

28. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

29. MINUTES

RESOLVED: that the minutes of the meeting of the Best Value and Scrutiny Sub Committee held on 5 December 2023 be confirmed as a correct record, and signed by the Chairman.

The Town Clerk advised that the first meeting of the Community Engagement Task and Finish Group had been scheduled for 18 March 2024.

30. WEST BAY CAR BOOT SALE GRANTS PANEL

Consideration was given to the notes of the West Bay Car Boot Sale Grants Panel meeting held on 20 February 2024, ENCL: 3878.

Members thanked the panel for its work, and

RECOMMENDED: that

(a) Grants totalling £6,750 be awarded, covering 16 organisations as follows and subject to (b) and (c) below:

Ref	Applicant and Grant Purpose	£
A1	Read Easy Bridport – Recruitment and training ten coaches.	250

Ref	Applicant and Grant Purpose	£
A2	The Stepping Out Cancer Rehabilitation Community Group - An exercise and wellbeing programme helping recovery, during & after a diagnosis of cancer.	500
A4	The Cowshed, Bridport Health & Wellbeing Champions Project – Extend and replace original resources including pathways and raised bed frames and to cover the annual compost costs.	250
A5	Bridport Millennium Green Trust – Completion of the entrance restoration at Mountfield.	500
A6	Bridport Refugee Support Campaign on behalf of Jurassic Multicultural – Running costs of the adult group including venue hire, refreshments, promotion and activities.	500
A7	Chancery Trips - Door to door transport service led by volunteers to provide day trips.	500
A8	Friends of West Dorset Present A Common Woman – creative workshops.	500
A9	ASCape – Mini-ASCape Six Saturday morning activity sessions for families.	500
A10	Bee Friendly Bridport – Creation of a bee and bug trail throughout the town and trail guide leaflet.	500
A11	Bridport Youth and Community Centre – Purchase new safer table for the BYCC Stay and Play toddler group.	500
A12	West Dorset Western Area Transport Action Group – Running costs and room hire.	200
A14	Friends of Bridport Primary School – To purchase a new shed.	500
A15	Gateway Club (West Dorset Mencap) – Club nights and transport.	500
A16	Bridport Community Orchard – Gravel paths around the new raised bed area.	200
A17	Intermediate English Lessons for Ukrainian Refugees – English lessons.	500
A18	Bridport Heritage Forum – “A House and Street Through Time”. Research to be presented to Bridport residents in accessible printed format and in pop up exhibitions in the town’s quadrants, and to also be available on the web.	350
	Total Grants approved	£6,750

- (b) Application 3, Bridport Community Charter Fair be supported by the Town Council, as the from an alternative budgetary source;
- (c) Application 4, The Cowshed, be advised to approach Bridport Town Council for materials to support delivery of the project;
- (d) Application 13, Park Yoga, be not supported at this time, noting that Bridport Town Council makes no charge for the provision of a venue, but that information be requested in respect of deprivation impact and the applicant be encouraged to consider funding via user donations; and
- (e) Application 12, WATAG, be advised to contact parish councils for funding in future, in addition to any request to the Town Council.

31. INTERNAL AUDIT

Consideration was given to a report of the Town Clerk, ENCL: 3879.

The Town Clerk reported on the second visit for 2023/24 that the internal auditors, Lightatouch, had made in February 2024.

He summarised the report and highlighted recommendations relating to:

- The community governance review, and in particular the need to encourage the affected parish councils to ensure their accounts and audit arrangements were up-to-date by the end of March 2024;
- The Town Council debit card transaction limit, which should be reviewed with a view to raising it; and
- The Council's asset register, which would need to be approved by 31 March; and
- Standing Orders and Financial Regulations, which should be reviewed to ensure they catered for the requirements of the expanded Town Council from April 2024.

The Town Clerk noted that the asset register and Standing Orders had been tabled for consideration later in the meeting. Financial Regulations had been reviewed previously and were considered to be fit-for-purpose for the expanded Town Council.

The Auditors reported that whilst checking the period October to December 2023, the records and procedures in place continue to provide a good standard of control.

Members thanked the Finance and Office Manager for all his work, and discussed:

RECOMMENDED: that the internal audit report and recommendations be received and approved.

32. INVESTMENT REVIEW 2023/24 AND STRATEGY 2024/25

The Town Clerk summarised a report setting out the Council's investments over the past year, and a draft investment strategy, ENCL: 3880.

Members considered:

- Investment income over the past year, and the Council's proposed future investment strategy.
- The deferral of actions in relation to ethical investments so that these could be considered alongside the existing arrangements of parish council as part of the Community Governance Review, and noting current difficulties in obtaining new accounts from those banks with a higher ethical rating.

The Town Clerk reported that the Chairman had rightly raised with him a need to consider how the year's investments met key policy requirements of security, liquidity, and yield. He reported that credit ratings had been assessed against alternatives and all were found to be satisfactory, indicating a good level of security. Appropriate liquidity had been maintained, with deposits on notice limited to ensure urgent availability of funds if needed. Yield had been assessed by comparison with other investment vehicles, and interest rates had been found to be broadly favourable.

The ethical aspects of the council's investment policy would be considered after the elections, as previously resolved by members.

RECOMMENDED that:

- (i) the investments made in 2023/24 be noted as in the report;
- (ii) the Investment Strategy for 2024/25 be approved as drafted; and
- (iii) banking arrangements be reviewed in the financial year 2024-25.

33. ASSET REGISTER

Councillors considered the Asset Register, ENCL: 3881. The additions and disposals in the year were summarised since the previous year's register. Other minor changes might be required before the financial year end.

RECOMMENDED: 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.

34. ANNUAL TOWN MEETING ARRANGEMENTS

Consideration was given to the draft agenda, ENCL: 3882.

RESOLVED: that the agenda and arrangements for the Annual Town Meeting be agreed.

35. STANDING ORDERS

Consideration was given to the Standing Orders, ENCL: 3883.

RECOMMENDED: that the draft Standing Orders be approved, and that the next review should include greater clarification of the role of the Council Leader.

36. MEDIA POLICY AND SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

Consideration was given to a report of the Town Clerk, ENCL: 3884.

RECOMMENDED: that the draft Media and Social Media Policy be approved.

37. MENOPAUSE POLICY

Consideration was given to a report of the Town Clerk, ENCL: 3889.

RECOMMENDED: that the menopause policy be approved.

The meeting closed at **12:07pm**

The next meeting of this Sub Committee will be on 4 June 2024