

Minutes of the Meeting of the **POLICY, FINANCE AND PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE** held at the Town Hall, Swanage on **WEDNESDAY, 8th NOVEMBER 2017** at 9.30 a.m.

PRESENT:- Councillor M.P. Bonfield (Mayor) – Chairman.

Councillor J. Bishop
Councillor C. Finch
Councillor G. Green
Councillor A. Harris
Councillor T. Morris
Councillor M. Whitwam

Also in attendance:-

Councillor A. Lejeune

Dr M. Ayres – Town Clerk

Miss A. Spencer – Finance Manager

There were no members of the public present at the meeting.

1. **APOLOGIES**

None.

2. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Members were invited to declare their interests and consider any requests for Grants of Dispensations in accordance with paragraphs 9 – 13 of the Council's Code of Conduct and regulations made under chapter 7 of the Localism Act 2011.

There were no declarations to record on this occasion.

3. **INTERNAL AUDIT REPORT 2017/18 VISIT 1.**

Consideration was given to the 1st Internal Audit report for the 2017/18 financial year, submitted by the Council's internal auditor. It was noted that there were six audit recommendations in total: one high, two medium and three low risk. Members commented that they were happy with both the content and format of the reports, which they found concise and informative.

It was proposed by the Town Mayor, seconded by Councillor Green, and
RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:-

That the first interim Internal Audit Report for the year 2017/18 be accepted.

4. **BUDGET REPORT – INCOME AND EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT AND TREASURY REPORT 2017/18**

Consideration was given to a budget report detailing the Council's income & expenditure for the first half of the financial year, noting any significant variances.

Overall there was a surplus on the general fund of £441k against a budgeted surplus of £393k, resulting in a positive variance of £48k. This was mainly attributable to positive variances in income from the Council's car parks and lower than budgeted employee costs overall, offsetting a large negative variance from the Boat Park.

It was stated that the Council's new investments with M&G and Investec had performed well and that the interest rate on the Council's Lloyds investment account had been reduced to 0%. It was noted that alternative accounts for short term investments would be identified.

The Budget Report and Council's financial activity was noted.

The Town Clerk informed Members that a virement was required to finance additional expenditure on some budget headings. Additional budget provision was found to be required for IT costs across most departments. This was due to the implementation of improved security measures, the introduction of public Wi-Fi, the movement of e-mail from server based to cloud based and the purchase of a new server, to facilitate an accounting package upgrade.

Further budget provision was also required in the Tourist Information Centre for printing and stationery, and materials and equipment; the former due to the increased costs incurred in printing accommodation lists for visitors and the latter due to a new sign being installed on the building following refurbishment. It had been identified that this could be financed with a virement from the Central Services employee costs budget, which was currently underspent by £16.5k.

It was proposed by the Town Mayor, seconded by Councillor Green, and
RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:-

That a virement from the Central Services employee costs budget be approved to:

- £3.5k TIC Stationery & Printing
- £2.4k TIC Materials & Equipment
- £10k – IT (across all departments)

A discussion regarding the level of stock to be held at the TIC took place. It was noted that the budget for stock purchases was over spent. However, this was offset by an increase in stock sales. It was noted that further purchases would be required to 31st March 2018.

A proposed uplift to the stock purchasing budget for the TIC was also discussed. It was noted that stock levels had been run down prior to the refurbishment of the TIC last winter, and that a new approach to retail had been introduced by the Visitor Services Manager and his team, prioritising the sale of locally produced products. During the debate Members sought engagement in formalising a retail policy for the TIC.

It was proposed by the Town Mayor, seconded by Councillor Finch and
RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:

That the stock purchase budget for the TIC be increased to £13,000 p.a. and that the Tourism Committee be asked to consider the establishment of a working party to liaise with the Visitor Services Manager to establish a retail policy for the Tourist Information Centre.

5. **CAPITAL PROGRAMME MONITORING REPORT**

The Capital Programme Monitoring Report was submitted for information. The Town Clerk reported that several of the larger capital projects were progressing well. It was noted that the in-year additions to the programme plus increased costs on programmed projects had led to projected additional capital expenditure of £600k. The potential impact upon the Council's long term investments was highlighted. The Capital Programme Monitoring Report was noted.

The requirement to develop a long-term strategy was discussed, identifying the long term aspirations of the Council and addressing how these could be met financially. The use of reserves to facilitate those aspirations was also discussed.

It was AGREED:

That the Council's use of reserves be discussed at the next meeting of the Committee.

The replacement of the railings on the Parade was discussed as a possible addition to the capital programme. It was AGREED:

That the General Operations Committee be asked to give consideration to this matter at its next meeting.

6. **BUDGET SETTING 2018/19 – AGREEMENT OF BUDGET PRINCIPLES.**

The Finance Manager outlined draft budget setting principles for 2018/19 and the subsequent two years. It was noted that these would be used to prepare the draft 2018/19 estimates for consideration at the Policy, Finance and Performance Management Committee meeting to be held on 13th December.

It was AGREED:-

That the budget setting principles for 2018/19 be approved.

7. **REFORM OF DATA PROTECTION LEGISLATION**

Further to Minute 6 of the Policy, Finance & Performance Management Committee held on 28th July 2017, the Town Clerk updated Members on developing plans for the implementation of the General Data Protection Regulation that will come into force on 25th May 2018. It was noted that the Council would need to appoint a Data Protection Officer (potentially shared with other Councils), carry out an audit of the personal information that it holds and update its privacy notices.

8. **ITEMS OF INFORMATION AND MATTERS FOR FORTHCOMING AGENDAS**

The recent announcement by the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, giving approval in principle to the creation of a unitary council for Dorset, was noted. The need for the Town Council to be closely involved in any discussions surrounding the potential devolution of services, transferal of assets and establishment of new governance arrangements was emphasised.

EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

Proposed by the Town Mayor, seconded by Councillor Poultney, and RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:-

That, under Standing Order No. 1 c), in the public interest, the press and public be excluded from the Meeting in view of the confidential nature of the business to be transacted under agenda items 9, 10 and 11 (in relation to legal and financial matters).

9. **INSURANCE-CLAIMS UPDATE**

Members were updated on two cases that had an "open" status on the insurance file. The first was only as a matter to note, as this incident should be indemnified by a third party. It was reported that the second listing was a public liability claim brought against the Council that would be heard at the County Court in January/February 2018.

10. **AGED DEBTORS REPORT**

An aged debtors report as at 31st October 2017 was submitted. It was noted that there was only one debtor of any concern, and that this would be managed in line with the Town Council's adopted policy. The content of the Aged Debtors Report was noted.

Further to Minute 136 of the Monthly Council Meeting held on 30th October 2017, the Town Clerk reported that the agreed charge of £360.00 for the use of the North Beach car park in relation to the recent Swanfest event was unlikely to be recoverable from the organisers. It was further noted that attendance at the event had been much lower than anticipated and that the car park had not been heavily used.

In light of the likely costs that would be incurred in recovering this sum, it was proposed by the Town Mayor, seconded by Councillor Finch and **RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:**

That the charge of £360.00 be written off.

11. **REVIEW OF COUNCIL PRIORITIES AND PROJECTS**

An updated schedule of Council Priorities and Projects was submitted for information, including updates on ongoing legal matters. During the ensuing discussion, the following items were highlighted:-

- Future third party involvement in procurement would require careful management;
- Replacement of the Bandstand project was progressing well, the Council working jointly with the Friends of Swanage Bandstand;
- Useful discussions had been held with Dorset County Council regarding the length of lease available in respect of the former St Mark's School Playing Field;
- Money was being received from the District Council arising from the Community Infrastructure Levy, and this would increase in coming years due to the construction of the town's settlement extensions;
- Contact to be made with the District Council regarding lack of progress in delivering a larger supermarket as proposed in the Swanage Local Plan, and associated redevelopment of Kings Court/Depot;
- Urgent requirement to deliver affordable housing in Swanage was highlighted and potential creation of a community land trust needed to be progressed.

In respect of the list of significant capital projects, it was noted that work was being undertaken by the Dorset Coast Forum to support a bid for funds from the Fisheries Local Action Group for improvements to the fishermen's slipway. It was noted that, depending on the level of Town Council involvement in this project, it may need to be added to the list for future meetings.

12. **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

It was noted that the next meeting of the Policy, Finance and Performance Management Committee had been scheduled for Wednesday, 13th December 2017. If more time was required to prepare the draft budgets, it was agreed that this meeting should be postponed until Wednesday 3rd January 2018.

The meeting concluded at 11.45 a.m.
