

Minutes of the Meeting of the **POLICY, FINANCE AND PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE** held at the Town Hall, Swanage on **WEDNESDAY, 24<sup>th</sup> JULY 2019** at 9.30 a.m.

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

Councillor A. Harris  
Councillor W.S. Trite  
Councillor M. Whitwam

Also in attendance:-

Councillor T. Foster  
Councillor C. Moreton  
Dr M. Ayres – Town Clerk  
Miss A. Spencer – Finance Manager

In addition to Members of the Council and officers, one member of the public attended the Meeting.

### **Public Participation Time**

The following matters were raised during Public Participation Time:-

- Bandstand replacement, seating & opening ceremony.

The meeting opened at 9.45 a.m.

#### 1. **APOLOGIES**

Apologies for their inability to attend the meeting were received from Councillors Finch and Suttle.

#### 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.

In respect of Agenda Item 7, it was noted that all Members had a non-disclosable pecuniary interest in the terms of issue of parking permits to councillors, and that it was therefore appropriate for a blanket dispensation to be given to all councillors present so that the matter could be discussed and voted upon. It was proposed by the Town Mayor, seconded by Councillor Trite and agreed unanimously:

To grant a dispensation to all Members present  
to enable them to consider and determine  
Agenda Item No. 7.

#### 3. **BUDGET REPORT – INCOME AND EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT Q1 2019/20**

Consideration was given to a report setting out the principal sources of the Town Council's income and expenditure for the 1<sup>st</sup> quarter of the 2019/20 financial year.

It was reported that at the end of the 1<sup>st</sup> quarter of the financial year service costs were £44k under budget, with £22k pertaining to employee costs with several posts being vacant during the period. It was further reported that beach hut income was above budget year to date. The potential for variances in income during the second quarter as a result of the closure of the ferry was noted.

The Finance Manager reported that that the costs of some of the larger items of revenue expenditure, Appendix A, may increase above the budgeted costs once the schemes had been worked up. These costs would be reported to Council for approval should the need arise.

The Budget Report and commentary on the Council's financial activity was received and noted. Members thanked the Finance Manager for producing a high quality and readable report.

4. **TREASURY MANAGEMENT – UPDATE FOLLOWING STRATEGY MEETING**

The Finance Manager gave an update following a strategy meeting that had been held with the Council's Treasury Advisors, Arlingclose, on 27<sup>th</sup> June 2019.

It was reported that information had been requested regarding the Funding Circle and ethical investments. It was noted that Funding Circle comprised of different investment vehicles and more information would be required in order for Arlingclose to provide guidance. It was noted that the Councillor who had requested this information would be contacted directly to confirm the products that were of interest.

It was further reported that although ethical funds are available, they are few and typically do not have the same income focus that most Councils require. ESG (Environmental, Social, Governance) funds offer an alternative and are gaining more traction with investors, however, it was noted that these were not the same as ethical funds. It was recommended by Arlingclose that the Council seriously considers whether it wishes to include ethical funds in its treasury strategy. After a brief discussion it was noted that this matter would be reviewed when considering the Council's treasury strategy for 2020/21.

5. **CAPITAL PROGRAMME MONITORING REPORT**

A Capital Programme Monitoring Report for the 1<sup>st</sup> quarter of 2019/20 was submitted for information.

With regards to the status of the projects, it was questioned as to how this was determined. It was noted that the recently constituted Capital Projects Working Party had met and will meet again next month and that the remit of this Working Party included the prioritisation of schemes included on the capital programme. It was also noted that officers were authorised to work-up these schemes once approved as part of budget setting, and that where there was urgency (e.g. due to land slippage) this would automatically be prioritised.

The Town Clerk further stated that the final account for scheme referenced BF1: Fishermen's Slipway and Huts had not yet been finalised.

The Capital Programme Monitoring Report was received and noted.

6. **FINANCIAL REGULATIONS – CLARIFICATION OF SECTION 12.1**

The Town Clerk reported that the Town Council's Financial Regulations, which were adopted in April 2015, stipulated in section 12.1 a threshold of £60,000 at which the Council would undertake a full tender process. However, the Public Contracts Regulations (PCR) 2015, issued subsequent to the adoption of the Council's Financial Regulations, stated that this level should be set at £25,000, including advertisement on the Contracts Finder website.

The Town Clerk further reported that there was a grey area surrounding the implementation of this threshold and that some larger authorities had set a higher threshold than £25,000 by means of simply including a higher level in standing orders.

The Town Clerk stated that he had hoped to have clarification regarding the legality of setting a higher threshold, outside of the level stipulated in the PCR 2015, however he had not yet received this. It was noted that NALC's legal advice remained that £25,000 was the appropriate threshold.

During discussion of this matter Members supported the Council's existing 'safety first' approach, which recognised the £25,000 threshold for advertisement on Contracts Finder, except for call-downs from existing framework agreements. It was noted that the Financial Regulations would need to be revised to reflect this and that a revised document would be brought to the next meeting of the Committee for consideration.

7. **CAR PARKING PERMITS-CONFIRMATION OF TERMS OF ISSUE**

The Town Clerk reported on the need to confirm the terms of issue of parking permits to Councillors for use in the Council's car parks. It was understood that permits had originally been issued for business use only and that this needed to be reviewed.

During discussion, it was stated that Councillors receive little if any remuneration for their work on the Council. It was stated that, subject to personal use being incidental, that no benefits would arise.

Following further discussion it was proposed by the Town Mayor, seconded by Councillor Trite, and RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:-

That permits issued to Town Councillors to use Council-owned car parks free of charge, are issued on the following terms and conditions:

- Permits are issued for Council business and incidental personal use;
- A permit does not guarantee a parking space in any of the car parks;
- The permit is valid subject to the regulations in force in the specific car park used;
- Failure to display the permit will result in an Excess Charge Notice being issued;
- Permits are non-transferable and may not be used by any other person;
- Permits are valid only for the registration details held on record.

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

**Items of Information**

The Clerk reported that:

- a) The lease/licence agreements for the RNLI building, Market, Angling Club and Bowling Club had been signed.
- b) The asset transfers from the legacy District Council were nearing completion.
- c) Dorset Council had recently instructed solicitors to draft a lease for the transfer of the former St Mark's School Playing Field.

**Matters for Forthcoming Agendas**

- a) Revised Financial Regulations
- b) Capital Policy
- c) James Day Trust
- d) Review of Council Priorities and Projects
- e) Town and Community Partnership Constitution
- f) Ethical Investments

### **EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC**

Proposed by the Town Mayor, seconded by Councillor Harris, 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 item 9 (in relation to legal and commercial confidentiality).

### 9. **SCHEDULE OF DEBTORS**

An aged debtors report at 18<sup>th</sup> July 2019 was submitted for information. It was reported that there was only one debtor of any concern, and that this debtor had previously been discussed at the Committee meeting held 12<sup>th</sup> March 2019.

It was reported that a payment schedule had been submitted by the debtor, although it was noted that they would still owe £1,168 at year-end given this schedule. During discussion it was noted that members supported the repayment schedule in principle, however, it was felt that the repayment sum should be increased to expedite the clearance of the debt.

It was proposed by Councillor Trite, seconded by Councillor Harris and RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:

That the matter be delegated to Officers to request an increase in regular payments by the debtor in order to clear the debt by 31<sup>st</sup> March 2020.

### 10. **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

It was noted that an additional meeting to those scheduled would be held in late August/early September in order to progress some of the items raised in Agenda Item 8. The date would be confirmed, subject to availability and potential dates would be circulated to members.

The meeting concluded at 10.20 a.m.

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