

Minutes of the Meeting of the **POLICY, FINANCE AND PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE** held at the Town Hall, Swanage on **WEDNESDAY, 11<sup>th</sup> MAY 2022** at 3.00 p.m.

PRESENT:- Councillor A. Harris (Chair)  
Councillor J. Bishop  
Councillor M. Bonfield  
Councillor T. Foster  
Councillor C. Tomes  
Councillor W. Trite  
Councillor M. Whitwam

Also in attendance: -

Dr M. Ayres – Town Clerk  
Mrs E. Evans – Management Support Officer

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

1. **APOLOGIES**

Apologies for his inability to attend the meeting were received from Councillor Moreton.

2. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Members were invited to declare their interests and consider any requests for Grants of Dispensations in accordance with Section 9 and Appendix B of the Council's Code of Conduct.

There were no declarations to record on this occasion.

3. **INTERNAL AUDIT REPORT 2021/22 – VISIT 4 OF 5:**

The fourth interim Internal Audit Report of the 2021/22 financial year, prepared by Darkin-Miller Chartered Accountants, was submitted for information.

The following areas had been reviewed during the audit visit:-

- Payments (work in progress)
- Risk Management (work in progress)
- Budgetary Control
- Income (general testing-work in progress)
- Bank reconciliation

One low level, two medium level, and one high level recommendation had been made. The one high level recommendation related to the accessibility of information on the Council's website. It was acknowledged that although the necessary information was published (largely within Council minutes and agenda papers), accessibility would be improved by the information being located on one relevant webpage.

The management response and implementation dates were noted, and it was AGREED:

That the fourth interim Internal Audit Report for the 2021/22 financial year be accepted.

4. **TO CONSIDER COUNCIL PRIORITIES/WORK PLAN**

(a) **Outturn Autumn/Winter 2021/22**

Further to Minute No. 111 of the Council Meeting held on 13<sup>th</sup>/14<sup>th</sup> December 2021, consideration was given to a briefing note, prepared by the Town Clerk, setting out the progress that had been made in implementing the Town Council's priorities over the preceding six months. It was noted that of the 26 items agreed as being urgent 9 had been largely completed, 15 had seen significant progress and only 2 had seen little or no progress. Committee members agreed that the report was a useful monitoring tool and that this could be improved by the inclusion of an indication of the scale of each task and an estimate of what percentage had been completed.

(b) **Proposed Plan Spring/Summer 2022**

Consideration was given to a draft list of priorities for the period April - September 2022 and it was noted that this again included a large number of tasks assessed as being urgent (21 in total). It was acknowledged that this was an ambitious target, and that the extent to which this could be delivered was in many respects dependent on the recruitment of additional staff. Completion of the staffing review and undertaking recruitment was noted as the most urgent of all the priorities listed. It was AGREED:

**TO RECOMMEND:**

That the draft priority list for spring/summer 2022 be approved.

5. **TO CONSIDER ADOPTION OF INTERIM CORPORATE PRIORITIES AND APPROVAL OF TIMESCALE FOR PREPARATION OF CORPORATE PLAN**

Consideration was given to a briefing note prepared by the Town Clerk, outlining next steps in the preparation and production of a corporate plan. It was noted that Council had agreed to produce such a document in October 2019 (see Minute No. 104 of the Extraordinary Council Meeting held on 17<sup>th</sup> October 2019) in order to communicate the Council's vision for the town to residents and partner organisations, as well as provide direction to councillors and officers. Although an initial councillor workshop had been held the following month, the development of the plan had been halted largely due to the pandemic. It was, therefore, proposed that the preparation of a plan to cover the period 2022-25 should re-commence. Inclusion of the first year of the new Council to be elected in May 2024 would provide some certainty for newly elected councillors in their first year of office.

Further to a review of notes from the initial councillor workshop, held in November 2019, a review of agreed budgets, services, and capital projects the following list of priorities were put forward on an interim basis, pending adoption of the full corporate plan:

- Delivering Good Governance
- Promoting Sustainable Tourism and Supporting the Local Economy
- Providing Opportunities to Improve Health and Wellbeing
- Planning for the Future and Protecting our Past
- Protecting the Natural Environment and Addressing the Climate Crisis

It was envisaged that following a further councillor workshop in late May or early June, a draft plan would be presented to the Policy, Finance and Performance Management Committee in advance of the Council meeting scheduled for 11<sup>th</sup> July 2022. A period of public consultation would then take place in advance of a further report to this committee on any proposed amendments in October, and adoption by Council in November, prior to budget setting for the 2023/24 financial year.

Further to a brief review of the format of other town council corporate plans, a discussion ensued around the style and content of the document and the quantity of information to be included. The consensus was that it should be succinct and relevant, clearly setting out the Council's priorities, including a list of services that the Council had an obligation to deliver, those that it provided on a discretionary basis and those supplied by other authorities.

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

**TO RECOMMEND:**

That the Interim Corporate Priorities, and the revised timeframe for the production of a Corporate Plan, as set out in the briefing paper, be adopted.

6. **TO CONSIDER REVISED COMMITTEE STRUCTURE**

Consideration was given to a briefing note prepared by the Town Clerk, outlining proposals for a number of revisions to the current committee structure. It was noted that this had last been comprehensively reviewed in May 2007. The strengths and weaknesses of the current structure were highlighted with emphasis on a new arrangement providing a better alignment between budget allocation, committee responsibilities and the interim corporate priorities, considered under Minute No. 5 above. It was acknowledged that the proposals were not intended to undermine the work of the existing committees but to initiate discussions around potential improvements.

A lengthy discussion ensued around the roles and responsibilities of the current committees, in particular the Roads and Transport Committee. The briefing note set out a proposal to disband that committee and redistribute its workload to other committees, including traffic management issues being allocated to a re-shaped Planning and Consultation Committee. Significant concern was expressed that this change may confuse local residents and may lead to traffic management measures being inadequately addressed. The committee agreed that residents would require a forum in order to express their traffic/road related concerns and that a good relationship had been built up with the Dorset Council Community Highways Officer in order to convey those issues. A number of suggestions were made, such as the establishment of a Traffic Management working party or a Roads and Transport Advisory Committee. It was acknowledged that these matters required further consideration.

The proposed titles of the revised committees were also discussed, with Members highlighting the need for plain English and a clear correlation between the title and the roles and responsibilities of the committee.

Further to the discussion, it was proposed by Councillor Bonfield, seconded by Councillor Trite, and RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:-

That this item be deferred until a future meeting of the Policy, Finance and Performance Management Committee in order to enable further councillor engagement and the drafting of terms of reference for the proposed new committees.

A brief discussion was held around the ongoing staff vacancies, affecting the finance and administration sections, and a proposal to cancel the June/July committee meeting cycle to enable managers to focus on recruitment. Further to a brief discussion it was proposed by the Town Mayor, seconded by Councillor Bonfield, and RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:-

**TO RECOMMEND:**

That the June/July committee meeting cycle be cancelled, except for Planning & Consultation; Personnel; and Policy, Finance & Performance Management.

7. **TO CONSIDER ADOPTION OF REVISED MEMBERS' AND OFFICERS' PROTOCOL**

Further to Minute No. 9 of the meeting of the Policy, Finance and Performance Management Committee held on 3<sup>rd</sup> November 2021 initial consideration was given to a first draft of a revised Members' and Officers' Protocol, alongside a model document produced by the Society of Local Council Clerks. It was noted that the model document was too long and that further consideration should be given to the draft prior to it being brought back to the next meeting of this Committee.

Consideration was also given to advice provided by Dorset Council's Monitoring Officer further to concerns raised at the Committee Meeting in November 2021 regarding the management of member-to-member communication on Council business outside of formal meetings. It was noted that regulation of this would require amendments to the Members' Code of Conduct and agreed that revisions to Section 2 of the Code - Bullying, harassment and discrimination should be brought before a future meeting of this Committee.

8. **TO CONSIDER ADOPTION OF REVISED HEALTH AND SAFETY POLICY**

Consideration was given to a revised Health and Safety Policy, circulated prior to the meeting. Members had paid particular attention to those pages that set out the management responsibilities for Health and Safety matters across the Town Council. An enquiry was raised regarding First Aid posters in Council workplaces.

Further to a brief discussion it was proposed by Councillor Foster, seconded by Councillor Tomes and RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:-

**TO RECOMMEND:**

That the revised Health and Safety Policy be adopted.

A request was made that a summary of key changes to the document be presented to Full Council prior to its adoption.

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

- a) James Day Trust
- b) Ethical Investments
- c) Freedom of Information Act 2000 – Adoption of revised Publication Scheme

10. **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The date of the next meeting had been provisionally agreed as 20<sup>th</sup> July. However, it was noted that this clashed with Dorset Council's Eastern Area Planning Committee and it was, therefore, proposed that the meeting should be held at 9.30 a.m. on Wednesday 27<sup>th</sup> July 2022.

The meeting concluded at 4.35 p.m.

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