

Minutes of the **FINANCE AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE**  
held at the Town Hall, Swanage on **WEDNESDAY,**  
**22<sup>nd</sup> FEBRUARY 2023** at 9.30 a.m.

PRESENT:- Councillor T Foster (Town Mayor) – Chair

Councillor M Bonfield  
Councillor C Tomes – to 10.45 a.m.  
Councillor C Moreton  
Councillor M Whitwam

Also in attendance: -

Councillor C Finch

Dr M Ayres	Town Clerk
Ms G Percival	Assets & Compliance Manager (during the consideration of item 5)
Miss A Spencer	Finance Manager

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

1. **APOLOGIES**

Apologies for their inability to attend the meeting were received from Councillors Bishop, Harris and Trite.

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 AUDITOR REPORT 2022/23 – VISIT 4 OF 6**

The fourth interim Internal Audit Report of the 2022/23 financial year prepared by Darkin-Miller – Chartered Accountants was submitted for information.

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

- Payments
- Risk Management - minute review (work in progress)
- Income (work in progress)
- Petty cash
- Bank reconciliation and investments
- Town Market
- Car parks income (work in progress).

One high, five medium and four low level recommendations had been made. The management response and implementation dates were noted with satisfaction, and it was AGREED:

That the third interim Internal Audit Report for the 2022/23 financial year be accepted.

#### 4. **FINANCIAL REPORTS**

##### (a) **Income and Expenditure Account Q3 2022/23**

Consideration was given to a report setting out the Council's financial position at the end of the third quarter of the financial year and forecast year-end position. It was noted that at the end of Q3 the Council had a surplus on the general fund of £359k, being £208k above budget. The reasons for the variance were outlined, most notably the higher than budgeted income from car parking and lower than budgeted employee costs. It was noted that the Council generally received the majority of its budgeted revenue during the first half of the financial year, with expenditure predominating in the second half of the year.

The smaller projects being undertaken by the Council were detailed in Appendix A to the report, including a number carried over from 2021/22 and 13 additional projects approved in-year totalling £252k.

Members thanked the Finance Manager for producing a clear and accessible report.

##### (b) **Capital Programme Monitoring Report**

A Capital Programme Monitoring Report for the third quarter of 2022/23 was submitted for information and the contents noted. It was reported that the vast majority of the 18 listed projects had either been completed or were underway. Two had been transferred to revenue because of their lower than anticipated value and one project had been deferred.

#### 5. **TO CONSIDER BUDGET ADDITIONS AND VIREMENT REQUESTS**

##### (a) **Beach Gardens Decking**

Members considered a briefing note, prepared by the Assets & Compliance Manager and the Visitor Services and Business Development Manager, in respect of a proposal to extend the decking outside the Tea on the Green kiosk at Beach Gardens. This proposal had been included in the revenue budgets for 2020/21 but had never been implemented, in large part due to the Covid-19 pandemic. In order to fund the works in the current financial year, Members were asked to consider approving a virement of £3,500 from the Car Parks department, under the Tourism and Local Economy Committee, to Beach Gardens, under the Community Services Committee.

It was proposed by Councillor Bonfield, seconded by Councillor Tomes and RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:

##### **TO RECOMMEND**

That a virement of £3,500 from Car Parks to Beach Gardens be approved to fund the installation of decking at Beach Gardens.

##### (b) **Burlington Chine Toilets**

Further to Minute No. 130 of the Annual Estimates Meeting held on 16<sup>th</sup> January 2023, consideration was given to a briefing note setting out the need for an increase in the approved budget for repairs to Burlington Chine public conveniences. A quote of £8,600 had been received with a budget of £7,000 having been previously approved, an uplift of £1,600.

It was proposed by Councillor Bonfield, seconded by Councillor Moreton and RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY;

To approve an uplift in budget of £1,600 for the repairing works to Burlington Chine public conveniences.

(c) **Parish Slipway, Stone Quay and Coastal Infrastructure**

Further to Minute No. 127(a) of the Council Meeting held on 12<sup>th</sup> December 2022, consideration was given to a requirement to increase the budget allocation for the repairs to coastal infrastructure by £3,000 to provide specialist support for the project. This would facilitate effective construction management and ensure that any re-measurable items within the works are appropriate and agreed.

It was proposed by Councillor Bonfield, seconded by Councillor Tomes and **RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:**

To approve an uplift in budget of £3,000 to engage further specialist support for the repairing works to coastal infrastructure.

6. **DRAFT CORPORATE PLAN - TO CONSIDER AMENDMENTS IN LIGHT OF PUBLIC CONSULTATION**

Further to Minute No. 5 of the Policy, Finance and Performance Management Committee held on 27<sup>th</sup> July 2022 and Minute No. 64 of the Council Meeting held on 27<sup>th</sup> July 2022, consideration was given to a revised version of the Draft Corporate Plan, incorporating updates to background information and changes suggested through the public consultation process. It was reported that 181 people had responded to the consultation and that, although this was a very small percentage of the town's residents, the feedback received was in many cases detailed and thoughtful, covering a very wide range of topics. It was noted that an analysis of the comments received had been carried out, and consideration was given to an overview of the key subjects raised. Overall, very strong support had been expressed for each of the Council's six key priorities, exceeding 90 per cent.

Members considered potential changes to the plan, the most significant of which was incorporating references to improving accessibility for those with impairments within the 'Encouraging Health and Wellbeing and Enhancing Community Safety' section, noting the recent DOTS report and the Council's commitment to work with partners to implement its recommendations.

Consideration was also given as to whether to include examples of improved access from the sea under the 'Promoting Sustainable Tourism and Supporting the Local Economy' section. However, Members concluded that the term should remain open to interpretation so that a range of options could be explored.

Having considered each of the suggested amendments in turn, it was proposed by Councillor Bonfield, seconded by Councillor Tomes and **RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:**

**TO RECOMMEND**

That the amended post-consultation Draft Corporate Plan 2023-25 be adopted, and that a graphic designer be engaged to produce the plan in a professional format, meeting accessibility standards.

In recognition of the importance of considering the comments of local residents, it was **FURTHER RESOLVED:**

That the comments made in respect of each of the Council's priorities should be considered by the relevant Standing Committee.

7. **TO CONSIDER DRAFT REVISED PUBLICATION SCHEME, UNDER FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT 2000**

In light of the increased availability of information about the Town Council on the Council's website, consideration was given to the adoption of a revised 'Guide to

information available under the Freedom of Information Act Model Publication Scheme'. It was noted that the publication of such a document is a requirement of the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) to demonstrate compliance with the Model Publication Scheme, and that information in the Guide is grouped into seven categories, as set out in the template provided by the ICO. Members acknowledged the extensive amount of information available, including minutes, agendas, policy documents and a wide range of financial reports, thus providing a very large degree of transparency to local residents.

It was proposed by Councillor Moreton, seconded by Councillor Whitwam and RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:

**TO RECOMMEND**

That the amended 'Guide to information available under the Freedom of Information Act Model Publication Scheme' be adopted and published on the Town Council's website.

8. **TO CONSIDER DRAFT SCHEME OF DELEGATION**

Further to consideration of draft terms of reference for the Council's committees at the Finance & Governance Committee meeting held on 14<sup>th</sup> December 2022, attention was drawn to the benefits of Council also adopting a policy document to record the delegation of duties to officers. It was noted that the delegation of some decisions is an essential part of the efficient operation of a body with the range of assets and services operated by Swanage Town Council and attention was drawn to s.101(a) of the Local Government Act 1972, under which the Town Council has the power to arrange for the discharge of its functions by a committee, sub-committee or officer of the authority. Delegation to staff members had long been a matter of custom and practice, and an attempt had now been made to record this in a draft Scheme of Delegation.

Members acknowledged that the production of both Committee Terms of Reference and a Scheme of Delegation was a valuable exercise and would play an extremely useful part in the induction process for new councillors after the election in May 2024. It was proposed by Councillor Whitwam, seconded by Councillor Moreton and RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:

**TO RECOMMEND**

That the draft Scheme of Delegation be adopted.

9. **TO CONSIDER THE TITLE GIVEN TO THE COUNCILLOR CHAIRING MEETINGS OF THE TOWN COUNCIL AND ITS COMMITTEES AND THE STYLE TO BE ACCORDED COUNCILLORS ON THE MAYORAL BOARD IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER**

Further to consideration of the Members and Officers Protocol at the Council Meeting held on 26<sup>th</sup> September 2022 (Minute No. 74(a) refers), a request had been made that the Finance & Governance Committee should review the term used to describe the councillor chairing Council and Committee meetings, e.g. Chair/Chairman/Chairwoman/Chairperson. Although all options had been included within the adopted protocol it had been noted that the term used for the person chairing the meeting varied in other Town Council documents and minutes of Council Meetings.

The Committee had also been asked to review the wording on the board recording the names of past mayors in the Council Chamber. Currently male councillors simply had their initials and surname recorded thereon, whilst female councillors also had the title Miss or Mrs. The possibility of including a chosen forename in full was discussed, but it was felt that this would be out of keeping with custom and practice. It was, therefore, agreed that the use of initials should be preserved as a form of continuity, but it was suggested that each individual mayor, regardless of gender, could choose whether or not

to have a title included on the board. It was proposed by the Town Mayor, seconded by Councillor Moreton and RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:

**TO RECOMMEND**

That future additions of names to the mayoral board in the Council Chamber should continue to take the format of initials and surname, with each Town Mayor having the choice of whether or not to have their title included thereon.

Returning to the question of how to refer to the person chairing a meeting a frank but respectful discussion ensued in which a range of views were expressed. It was proposed by Councillor Bonfield and seconded by Councillor Moreton:

**TO RECOMMEND**

That the person chairing a Council or committee meeting be referred to as Chairman or Madam Chairman.

Upon being put to the Meeting, FOUR Members voted IN FAVOUR of the Proposition, and there was ONE ABSENTION, whereupon the Proposition was declared CARRIED.

Councillor Tomes left the meeting at 10.45 a.m.

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

The following matters were listed as matters for forthcoming agendas.

- (a) **Medium Term Financial Strategy 2023/24 to 2025/26**
- (b) **Ethical Investments – ESG Report**
- (c) **Update on Action Points from Internal Audit Report 2021/22**

**EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC**

Proposed by the Town Mayor, seconded by Councillor Moreton and AGREED:-

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 11 (in relation to legal and financial matters).

11. **ANNUAL REVIEW OF RISK REGISTER**

Consideration was given to the Council's Corporate Risk Register. It was noted that, in accordance with the *Practitioners' Guide*, Members were expected to be fully engaged in the annual review of the Council's Risk Register. The register summarises the most significant risks faced by the Council in relation to achieving its objectives and priorities. The register also sets out the control procedures in place to mitigate the risks, and identifies any further action needed to manage the risks effectively. The following significant additions and amendments were raised during the discussion:

<b>Financial Risks</b>	
Efficiency savings are not achieved contributing to reduced general fund balance	Actions: Note the importance of savings being considered by Council and Committee Meetings and then being pursued by management team.

Fraud	Control: Add reference to only nominated officers being authorised to make electronic payments as a control measure alongside nomination of cheque signatories.
<b>Compliance Risks</b>	
Failure to comply with employment law and council policy leads to employment tribunal	Control: Add reference to employment of a dedicated payroll and personnel officer who is undertaking relevant training.
Failure to comply with Freedom of Information Act.	Control: Note that a review of the Guide to information available under FOI publication scheme completed in March 2023.
Failure to comply with procurement processes set out in Financial Regulations and Public Contract Regulations	Control: Amend to record the need to ensure adequate staff training, especially in respect of forthcoming changes to public procurement regulations.
Failure to comply with General Data Protection Regulations	Actions: Add need to adopt up to date Record Retention Policy.
Failure to comply with Health & Safety regulations	Control: Note date of last full review of Health & Safety Policy as May 2022.
<b>Strategic Risks</b>	
Inadequate staff resources result in poor service and prevent Council from efficient delivery of public services and projects	Actions: Add need to complete recruitment to new posts.
Unauthorised occupation of Council-owned land leads to significant disruption and financial loss	Control: Add need to ensure access, with Dorset Police, to Dorset Council's transit site.
Failure to respond adequately to community emergency	Actions: Add undertake joint scenario planning exercise.

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

**TO RECOMMEND:**

That the amended Corporate Risk Register for 2023/24  
be adopted.

12. **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The date of the next scheduled meeting was noted as 15<sup>th</sup> March 2023.

The meeting concluded at 11.05 a.m.

---