

Minutes of the **FINANCE AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE**
held at the Town Hall, Swanage on **WEDNESDAY,**
19th APRIL 2023 at 9.30 a.m.

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

Councillor J Bishop
Councillor M Bonfield
Councillor A Harris
Councillor C Tomes
Councillor W Trite
Councillor M Whitwam

Also in attendance: -

Dr M Ayres	Town Clerk
Ms G Percival	Assets & Compliance Manager
Miss A Spencer	Finance Manager

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. **MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY 2023/24 TO 2025/26 – TO AGREE NEXT STEPS**

Following the Council's recent adoption of a Corporate Plan, attention was drawn to the importance of reviewing the Council's financial projections for the next three years. It was noted that the Town Council approves a three-year budget each January as part of the estimates process. However, it was agreed that it would be useful to carry out a mid-year review over coming months and publish the outcome as a Medium Term Financial Strategy. It was agreed that a first step would be to arrange a workshop for councillors in June 2023, following approval of the final accounts and AGAR for the 2022/23 financial year.

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

(a) **Outturn Winter/Spring 2022/23**

Further to Minute No. 110 of the Council Meeting held on 12th December 2022, consideration was given to a briefing note 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 18 items agreed as being urgent three had been largely completed and 13 had seen significant progress. During the ensuing discussion it was suggested that consideration be given to the inclusion in future such reports of an assessment of any potential blockages that may delay or prevent the delivery of outstanding items.

(b) **Proposed Plan Summer/Autumn 2023**

Consideration was given to a draft list of Council priorities for the period May – October 2023 and it was noted that this again included a large number of urgent items (19 in total). It was acknowledged that this remained an ambitious target, and that completion of the process of recruitment to vacant posts would be key to successful delivery. It was proposed by Councillor Bonfield, seconded by Councillor Bishop and RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:

TO RECOMMEND:

That the draft priority list for summer/autumn 2023 be approved.

5. **REVIEW OF COMMITTEE STRUCTURE**

Consideration was given to a briefing note setting out potential amendments to the Council's revised committee structure which had been adopted on a trial basis further to Minute No. 78 of the Council Meeting held on 26th September 2022. The briefing note listed some of the improvements delivered by the new structure: improved understanding of the purpose of each committee; clear links between the remit of each committee and the objectives identified in the Corporate Plan; improved budgetary alignment; and positive engagement with outside representatives. Members were asked to consider whether or not to make the new structure permanent and whether further alterations to the committee structure were required.

During the debate, attention was drawn to the fact that the new structure had been in place for little more than six months, and therefore the trial should be extended. It was also suggested that any amendments agreed at this stage should be seen as an interim measure. It was proposed by the Town Mayor, seconded by Councillor Trite and RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:

TO RECOMMEND:

That the trial of the revised committee structure be extended with a further review to take place upon the anniversary of its adoption in September 2023, and that any changes agreed at the current time should be made on an interim basis.

Turning to the specific matters raised in the briefing note, consideration was given to the future role and reporting structure of the Traffic Management Advisory Committee (TMAC). Concern was expressed at the current workload of the Planning & Consultation Committee (as the parent committee), largely as a result of overseeing the Neighbourhood Plan, and it was therefore suggested that traffic management measures should be dealt with directly by the Community Services Committee instead. The Chairman of the TMAC expressed concern about any such proposal and made the case for the retention of the Advisory Committee.

Attention was drawn to a suggestion in the briefing note that the TMAC should undertake a review of its function in light of recent feedback from Dorset Council highways officers. Consequently, it was proposed by Councillor Bonfield and seconded by Councillor Tomes:-

TO RECOMMEND:

That the Traffic Management Advisory Committee should continue to meet and carry out a review of its function, reporting to the Community Services Committee until the completion of the committee review in autumn 2023.

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

Consideration was then given to other changes set out in the briefing note:

- expansion of the remit of the Beach Management Advisory Committee to incorporate coastal change matters including cliff stability, the flood defence scheme and the ongoing review of the Shoreline Management Plan;
- a potential change in the reporting of the Capital Projects Sub-Committee; and
- a change in the name of the Environment Committee to the Environment and Green Spaces Committee to make it clear that this committee oversees the management the Council's parks and gardens as well as delivery of the Environmental Action Plan.

During the discussion it was agreed that the reporting structure of the Capital Projects Sub-Committee should remain via the Finance and Governance Committee at the current time. It was proposed by Councillor Bonfield, seconded by the Town Mayor and RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:

TO RECOMMEND:

That the continued trial of the revised committee structure should include the expansion of the role of the Beach Management Advisory Committee to incorporate Coastal Change matters under the title of the Coastal Change and Beach Management Advisory Committee, and that the Environment Committee should be re-named the Environment and Green Spaces Committee.

Finally, consideration was given to the future role of the Council's 18 working parties and panels. The potential merger of some of the working parties in order to reduce that number was considered. An alternative suggestion was made that all working parties should cease at the end of the current council year and only be re-appointed if required. It was noted that those marked with an asterisk in the briefing note did have an ongoing role. It was proposed by Councillor Bonfield, seconded by Councillor Tomes and RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:

TO RECOMMEND:

That no working parties should be appointed at the annual meeting in May 2023, with the exception of those marked with an asterisk in the briefing note: Community Awards Panel, Environmental Policy Action Plan WP, Events WP, Grants Panel and Property Panel.

6. **HEALTH AND SAFETY REPORT – OCTOBER 2022 TO MARCH 2023**

Consideration was given to a report, prepared by the Assets and Compliance Manager, setting out the number of accidents and incidents involving the Council's workforce during the period October 2022 to March 2023. It was noted that there had been one RIDDOR reportable incident. Training attended by staff members was also reported. The content of the health and safety report was noted.

7. **REVIEW OF COUNCIL RESERVES**

It was reported that at the meeting of the Tourism and Local Economy Committee held on 22nd March 2023 a recommendation had been made to transfer unspent funds on improvements at the boat park to the Council's Committed Revenue Expenditure

(Carried Forward) reserve so that the boat park projects could be undertaken in the 2023/24 financial year. Attention was drawn to a number of other projects that had not been completed in the 2022/23 financial year, the budgets for which could also be transferred to that reserve. It was noted that, in accordance with Financial Regulations, the allocation of funds to reserves had to be agreed by the Council. Therefore, it was proposed by the Town Mayor, seconded by Councillor Harris and RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:

TO RECOMMEND:

That any underspent funds relating to projects that were not completed in the 2022/23 financial year, but which are now planned for the 2023/24 financial year, be allocated to the Committed Revenue Expenditure (Carried Forward) reserve and that delegated authority be given to officers to determine the exact sum to be so allocated.

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

The following were listed as matters for forthcoming agendas.

- (a) Ethical Investments – ESG Report
- (b) Vexatious Correspondence Policy
- (c) Review of Format of Internal Audit Reports
- (d) Service Level Agreement in connection with Grant Support to Swanage & Purbeck Development Trust Wellbeing Project, Chapel Lane

9. **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The date of the next scheduled meeting was noted as 12th July 2023.

The meeting concluded at 10.30 a.m.
