

LYME REGIS TOWN COUNCIL

BUDGET WORKING GROUP MEETING

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON WEDNESDAY 2ND DECEMBER 2009

Chairman: Cllr K. Meech

Councillors: Mrs. B. Austin, Mrs. A. Bradbury, D. Cozens, Mrs. M. Ellis (Mayor), K. Hitchcock, Ms. S. Holman, Mrs. L. Jenkin, P. Williams and S. Williams

Officers: Mrs. A. Hayward (Finance Officer), Mr. M. Lewis (Town Clerk) and Miss V. Stickler (Admin. Officer)

Guests: Mr. J. Bartholomew (LymeArts Community Trust), Ms. I. Benson (LymeNet), Mrs. W. Davies (Lyme Regis Development Trust), Mr. P. Evans (Woodmead Halls Management Committee), Mr. I. Stephens (Marine Theatre) and Mr. J. Sweetland (Woodmead Halls Management Committee)

09/01/B Election of Chairman

Proposed by Cllr Ms. S. Holman and seconded by Cllr S. Williams, members **AGREED** to **ELECT** Cllr K. Meech as Chairman of the Budget Working Group for this meeting.

09/02/B Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr O. Lovell.

09/03/B Declarations of Interest

Cllr Ms. S. Holman declared a personal and prejudicial interest in agenda item 8 – ‘To consider the method of recharging water consumption by Monmouth Beach chalet and caravan owners’ as she was a Monmouth Beach chalet owner. She would leave the room for this item.

Cllr S. Williams declared a personal and prejudicial interest in agenda item 7 – ‘To consider Woodmead Halls Committee funding request’ as he was the Chairman of the Woodmead Halls Management Committee. He would leave the room for any discussion of this item.

Cllr P. Williams declared a personal interest in agenda item 7 – ‘To consider Woodmead Halls Committee funding request’ as he was a member of the Woodmead Halls Management Committee.

Cllr D. Cozens declared a personal interest in agenda item 7 – ‘To consider Woodmead Halls Committee funding request’ as he was the Lyme Regis Town Council representative on the Woodmead Halls Management Committee.

Cllr K. Meech declared a personal and prejudicial interest in agenda item 5 – ‘To consider LymeArts Community Trust funding request’ as he was the Lyme Regis Town Council representative in the LymeArts Community Trust. He would leave the room for any discussion of this item.

09/04/B Budget comparison for the year ending 31st March 2009 extracted from the financial statements with accompanying explanation of significant variations

Members had previously been circulated with copies of the 'Budget Comparison for the year ended 31 March 2008' extracted from the financial statements which were **NOTED**.

09/05/B

To consider LymeArts Community Trust funding request

Members had previously been circulated with a letter from the LymeArts Community Trust detailing their request for funding for the 2010/2011 financial year.

Mr. J. Bartholomew thanked members for support from the Town Council since the LymeArts Community Trust was established, including the use of the office under the Guildhall. He felt that it was an important priority to arrange a meeting to discuss the Marine Theatre Service Level Agreement with members.

Mr. J. Bartholomew reported that the Trust had been working hard to secure funding from other sources including West Dorset District Council.

He also advised that there was an ongoing strategy with regards to the Marine Theatre building which focused on maintaining links with the Cultural Quarter, developing a plan of costs for improvements to the building and improving the facilities offered by the Theatre.

Mr. J. Bartholomew informed members that the Marine Theatre existed on less than half of the core funding of other similar organisations, but Theatre activities had trebled this year. This was largely thanks to the volunteer workforce. In order to attract further funding from other sources, the Trust had to maintain the quality of productions at the Theatre. Mr. J. Bartholomew felt that a reduction in funding from the Town Council would undermine their ability to secure other funding and impact on the morale of the Theatre team.

Mr. I. Stephens felt that the Theatre made the town an interesting place to be in. He was working to develop the Theatre as an artistic base for the town with in-house shows being produced involving many local people.

Cllr S. Williams asked if the Trust believed that in the future, they would not need to request financial support from the Town Council. Mr. I. Stephens replied that this would not happen as the funding was needed in order to offer the range of facilities and shows for a professional theatre. Any reduction to the Town Council funding would make it harder for the Trust to secure additional funding.

Cllr D. Cozens asked for assurance that the Theatre would continue to accommodate the town's amateur dramatic groups. Mr. I. Stephens felt that it was very important to continue the relationship with these groups and that the improved facilities at the Theatre would benefit them also.

Cllr S. Williams additionally asked if the Theatre building was in a dangerous condition and if an expert could be engaged to survey the property. Mr. J. Bartholomew assured members that the building was not in a dangerous condition and the maintenance programme ensured that any urgent remedial works were carried out. He felt that an expert survey would be a considerable cost.

Mr. J. Bartholomew and Mr. I. Stephens left the meeting.

In accordance with his earlier declaration of interest, the Chairman, Cllr K. Meech left the room for the discussion of item and the Mayor, Cllr Mrs. M. Ellis took the Chair.

Members discussed the request from the LymeArts Community Trust and agreed to **RECOMMEND TO THE POLICY COMMITTEE** that a meeting be arranged to discuss the Service Level Agreement with the Marine Theatre. The meeting would include

discussions on the use of the office below the Guildhall and parking at Woodmead Car Park and to ensure that the Theatre continued to host productions from local amateur dramatic groups.

Cllr Mrs. L. Jenkin felt that members should support the Trust in approaching West Dorset District Council for further funding.

Cllr S. Williams also wished to see a survey of visitors to the Theatre to prove that it was a benefit to the local community. He felt that the ticket prices were set too low and did not generate enough revenue.

The Chairman returned to the meeting.

09/06/B To consider LymeNet funding request

Members had previously been circulated with a letter from LymeNet requesting £10,000 towards to running costs of the community learning centre.

Ms. I. Benson reported that the LymeNet community learning centre was an important resource for the town that was used by businesses, individuals, young people, older residents and visitors. The initial funding secured for the facility had gradually been reduced year on year. LymeNet staff had sought funding from other sources and established DoubleDesign to generate revenue, but the demand for the services had also increased and they were now struggling to survive. Recently, an application had been made to the Big Lottery Fund for a substantial grant.

Mrs. W. Davies reported that the Lyme Regis Development Trust had advanced LymeNet £8,000 which was a large sum for the Trust. They felt that the centre had a viable business model and the staff had worked hard to secure a range of funding streams which allowed them to continue to offer services. They welcomed anyone that needed support and then worked to fit them into the criteria for a funding stream. The LymeNet staff were working with the Development Trust on a 'Plan B' if the Lottery funding was not forthcoming. The Lyme Regis Development Trust could not offer any additional financial support to LymeNet.

The Mayor, Cllr Mrs. M. Ellis asked if the centre catered for users from the areas surrounding Lyme Regis. Ms. I. Benson reported that they could only offer services to users from other areas if the funding criteria allowed this, for example, one source of income was only to be used for West Dorset residents.

Cllr P. Williams felt that funding for Maths and English tuition should have come from the education authority. Ms. I. Benson replied that this was offered to both young people and adults. Funding was available for both from different sources.

Cllr Mrs. L. Jenkin asked if the change in the economic climate had resulted in additional users for the Centre. Ms. I. Benson agreed that there were more people out of work that needed to update their skills and came to LymeNet for training but also for advice on securing new employment.

The Chairman asked if the business would fail if it did not secure this additional funding. Mrs. W. Davies explained that she was confident that there was a viable business model, but if funding was not secured, the centre would face difficulties paying wages. Ms. I. Benson added that government funding was constantly changing and there was no way to predict what would happen with the local and national economy.

Finally, the Chairman asked if LymeNet had considered commercial sponsorship. Ms. I. Benson responded that they were in the process of considering this.

Ms. I. Benson and Mrs. W. Davies left the meeting.

Proposed by Cllr Ms. S. Holman and seconded by Cllr S. Williams, members agreed to **RECOMMEND TO THE POLICY COMMITTEE** that the Town Council make a without prejudice grant to LymeNet of £10,000 in view of the number of people that used and needed to services, but that the grant be returned to the Town Council should LymeNet secure a grant from the Big Lottery Fund.

09/07/B To consider Woodmead Halls Committee funding request

Members had previously been circulated with a letter from the Woodmead Halls Committee requesting funding towards the replacement of the Halls roof.

Mr. P. Evans informed members that the volunteer managed Woodmead Halls played a large role in the local community and had hosted over fifty organisations already this year, however, the roof of the Halls was old and in need of repair. The proposed installation of PV panels to the roof would serve to repair the roof itself, produce electricity, help the environment and save the Town Council money in the long-term. A grant had been secured from the Low Carbon Building programme which was linked to the quoted cost for supplying and installing the panels. Mr. P. Evans advised that the panels would generate enough electricity to power the Halls and make a return to the grid, for which the Halls could be paid for. A Lottery grant had been applied for but had not been forthcoming at the present as proof of community support had been required. Therefore, a one-off grant of £10,000 from the Town Council had been requested which would allow the Committee to apply for matched funding. Finally, Mr. P. Evans reminded members that the solar panels installed earlier in the year had generated enough electricity to power the toilet facilities which had meant that the Town Council had not had to pay for this. The PV panels could save the Town Council around £1,000 in utility costs for the toilets.

Mr. J. Sweetland informed members that the Low Carbon Energy grant was committed to the Halls, and although it had a 'use by' date, this could be extended. He also reported that the existing roof tiles contained asbestos which increased the building costs due to specific removal requirements.

Mr. P. Evans and Mr. J. Sweetland left the meeting.

In accordance with his earlier declaration of interest, Cllr S. Williams left the room for the discussion of this item.

Proposed by Cllr Mrs. B. Austin and seconded by Cllr Mrs. L. Jenkin, members agreed to **RECOMMEND TO THE POLICY COMMITTEE** that the Town Council grant £10,000 to the Woodmead Halls Management Committee on a without prejudice basis for the identified project of repairing the roof of the Halls.

Cllr S. Williams returned to the meeting.

09/08/B To consider the method of recharging water consumption by Monmouth Beach chalet and caravan owners

Members were circulated with an analysis of water consumption for each chalet and caravan.

In accordance with her earlier declaration of interest, Cllr Ms. S. Holman left the room for this item.

Members discussed the water usage of the chalets and caravans and the increased cost to the Town Council and tax payers over the years.

Cllr S. Williams advised that West Dorset District Council had continued to use the Town Council's water supply to full the road sweeper which the Town Clerk had previously asked them not to do. This did not affect the metered usage by the chalets and caravans but increased the Town Council's water bills.

Members discussed the need for a standing charge to cover the administration and maintenance of the water meters and refunding the capital costs of installing the meters.

Cllr S. Williams felt that discussion of charges should be deferred until a detailed survey of site licence fees for other sites could be conducted, but members agreed that this would take several months and would be a task to be carried out over the coming year to be considered for the next year's site licences.

Proposed by Cllr Mrs. B. Austin and seconded by Cllr S. Williams, members agreed to **RECOMMEND TO THE POLICY COMMITTEE** that a working group be established to consider site licence charges and transfer fees.

Proposed by the Mayor, Cllr Mrs. M. Ellis and seconded by Cllr Mrs. A. Bradbury, members agreed to **RECOMMEND TO THE POLICY COMMITTEE** that the chalet and caravan owners be charged a standing charge of £25 p.a. in respect of the water supply to their properties.

Proposed by Cllr D. Cozens and seconded by Cllr Mrs. L. Jenkin, members agreed to **RECOMMEND TO THE POLICY COMMITTEE** that the chalet and caravan owners be charged an additional £10 p.a. to cover the capital costs of the water meters on the properties.

Proposed by the Mayor, Cllr Mrs. M. Ellis and seconded by Cllr D. Cozens, members agreed to **RECOMMEND TO THE POLICY COMMITTEE** that the chalet and caravan owners be re-charged for their individual water usage as identified by the meter on the property, in addition to the agreed charges above and the site licence fee.

Cllr Ms. S. Holman returned to the meeting.

09/09/B To consider supporting information used in the preparation of the Budget:

(a) Budget comparison of income and expenditure to 25th November 2009

Members had previously been circulated with a detailed income and expenditure budget comparison to the 25th November 2009 which was **NOTED**.

(b) Parking income to 31st October 2009

Members were previously circulated with a 'Net Parking Income' report which was **NOTED**. The Town Clerk reminded members that the theft from the Cabanya Car Park ticket machine had impacted on the income received.

(c) Amenity income to 31st October 2009

Members were previously circulated with a 'Net Amenity Income' report which was **NOTED**.

(d) Cemetery Fees 2010/11

Members were previously circulated with a document outlining proposed 'Cemetery Fees with effect from 1st April 2010', reflecting a 1% increase, which was **NOTED**. The charges had been rounded to whole numbers to aid administration.

(e) Review of Charges 2010/11

Members were previously circulated with a comparison of past years charges and proposed charges for 2010/11 which reflected a 1% increase where applicable.

The Mayor, Cllr Mrs. M. Ellis suggested that the Punch and Judy concession be removed from the list.

Proposed by Cllr D. Cozens and seconded by Cllr Mrs. B. Austin, members agreed to **RECOMMEND TO THE POLICY COMMITTEE** that the adults Mini Golf charge be increased to £2.20 per game.

Cllr S. Williams proposed that the Monmouth Beach Day Hut site licence charge be increased by 3%, seconded by Cllr K. Hitchcock. On being put to the vote, this motion was lost.

Proposed by Cllr D. Cozens and seconded by Cllr P. Williams, members agreed to **RECOMMEND TO THE POLICY COMMITTEE** that the site licence charges for the Monmouth Beach, Western Beach and Cart Road Day Huts be increased by 2%. This was agreed with Cllr K. Hitchcock and Cllr S. Williams voting against the motion.

Proposed by Cllr Mrs. A. Bradbury and seconded by Cllr Mrs. L. Jenkin, members agreed to **RECOMMEND TO THE POLICY COMMITTEE** that the charges for parking at the Woodmead Car Park be increased as follows:

Per Hour	80p	
Up to 2 Hours	£1.50	
Up to 4 Hours	£3.00	
Up to 6 Hours	£4.00	
Per Day	£6.00	
3 Day Ticket	£12.00	
Weekly	£25.00	
Residents Annual Permit		£150.00
Non-Residents Annual Permit		£230
Commercial Annual Permit		£350.00

Members **AGREED** for the Town Clerk to ask West Dorset District Council for details of their parking penalty charges before these are discussed.

The Mayor, Cllr Mrs. M. Ellis left the meeting.

09/10/B To consider Draft Revised Budget 2009/10 and Estimates 2010/11

(a) Town Clerk to guide members through a detailed examination of the draft budget/estimates

This meeting offered the opportunity for members not only to examine the draft budget in detail and satisfy themselves as to its scope, but also to appraise the underlying aims and objectives as set out by the Town Clerk in his report. This sustained effort aided the work of the parent committee in formulating a recommendation to Full Council.

Councillors considered the draft budget page by page aided by the explanatory notes with the Town Clerk elaborating further and responding to questions from members.

During discussion, particular reference was made to:

- Bank charges including those levied on the Town Council for taking electronic payments.
- Staff uniform for the Administrative Officer, Finance Officer, Secretary and Administrative Assistant.
- Changing the Town Council's accountancy software to the Sage package.
- Increasing the Mayor's Allowance by 1%.
- Budgeted costs for electricity and gas increasing by 5% as costs had risen considerably.

Proposed by Cllr Ms. S. Holman and seconded by Cllr K. Meech, members agreed to **RECOMMEND TO THE POLICY COMMITTEE** that the Town Council seek a 1% increase in the precept.

In accordance with his earlier declaration of interest, the Chairman, Cllr K. Meech left the room for the following discussion and Cllr Ms. S. Holman took the Chair.

Cllr S. Williams proposed that the Town Council make a £25,000 grant to the LymeArts Community Trust subject to conditions agreed at the future Service Level Agreement meeting. This motion was not seconded.

Proposed by Cllr Mrs. L. Jenkin and seconded by Cllr Mrs. B. Austin, members agreed to **RECOMMEND TO THE POLICY COMMITTEE** that a grant of £32,000 be made to the LymeArts Community Trust subject to conditions agreed at the future Service Level Agreement meeting. Cllr S. Williams abstained from voting.

The Chairman returned to the meeting.

Members agreed to **RECOMMEND TO THE POLICY COMMITTEE** that the charge made for use of Strawberry Field for grazing be set at the peppercorn rent of £1 p.a. on the condition that the use for grazing be stopped should the Town Council wish to use the site for an alternative purpose.

Members agreed to **RECOMMEND TO THE POLICY COMMITTEE** that the Strawberry Field Working Group meet to discuss alternative uses for the middle section of the site.

Proposed by Cllr Mrs. A. Bradbury and seconded by Cllr Ms. S. Holman, members agreed to **RECOMMEND TO THE POLICY COMMITTEE** the adoption of the Draft Revised Budget 2009/10 & Estimates 2010/11 and associated papers, subject to the above agreed amendments.

- (b) Town Clerk to outline planned capital works and other major projects with regard to the proposed budget contributions set out under cost centre 850

With the main items already highlighted in the Town Clerk's report brief discussion ensued following which members expressed satisfaction with the details and explanations given.

- (c) Members to examine and validate the list of reserve holdings set out under cost centres 950 and 951

The Town Clerk explained that members needed to be satisfied that the sums held were for legitimate purposes and he was willing to clarify the basis of any nominal code heading used.

Proposed by the Chairman, Cllr K. Meech and seconded by Cllr P. Williams, members **AGREED** to validate the list of reserve holdings set out under cost centres 950 and 951.