

## LYME REGIS TOWN COUNCIL

### MINUTES OF THE FULL COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON WEDNESDAY 8 SEPTEMBER 2021

#### **Present**

**Chairman:** The Mayor, Cllr B. Larcombe, MBE

**Councillors:** Cllr B. Bawden, Cllr J. Broom, Cllr M. Ellis, Cllr C. Reynolds, Cllr D. Ruffle, Cllr D. Sarson, Cllr R. Smith, Cllr G. Stammers

**Officers:** A. Mullins (support services manager, J. Wright (town clerk)

**Absent:** Cllr G. Turner

The Rev. Chris Martin sent his apologies and the mayor, Cllr B. Larcombe read out the town prayer.

#### **21/53/C Public Forum**

##### **N. Ball (read out by an officer)**

N. Ball said it was with sadness he had to write to the newspaper to highlight the problem the council still had with the shelter roof glass. He said there had been a number of breakages on the shelter roof glass and a report to be read out at September's Town Management and Highways Committee was awaited. He asked why there was a wait for the report to be read out, following the independent inspector being unable to attend a council meeting due to Covid isolation. N. Ball said the cost to the tax-payer each time the panels needed replacing was in the region of £1,000 per pane and this problem had been going on for nearly 12 months. He said this was a very serious issue and he was surprised no one had been hurt yet. He said the council stated 'we are where we are' and 'it is what it is' but he interpreted this as the council saying it couldn't do anything about it and it didn't care. N. Ball said the chief council staff took it upon themselves to get this job done and it had turned in to a blame game between all concerned. He said £650,000 had been spent on this project, with ongoing problems with the surface, drainage and glass, yet he felt the easy 'shut-up' answer of 'we are where are' had been made numerous times by senior council staff. N. Ball said this sort of bolshie, cover-up attitude wasn't improving the situation. He said on top of this, the council members were acting in a disjointed fashion, with only a few being able to agree and see the faults that had occurred in this seemingly simple but important project. He said he put it to the voters of Lyme Regis to stand up for the safety of town before there was a fatality. N. Ball said the townspeople were fed up with council members being bad mannered at meetings and putting personality before policy and he felt Lyme Regis deserved better. He said the town had come through some bad times but had succeeded thus far due to a very strong mayor at the helm. He said it was time this issue was brought to a head and dealt with, with no personality contests or who can shout the loudest, showing the youngsters and everyone the members could behave. N. Ball said the council was

heading for a vote of no confidence and he asked members to take stock, as this was a community that needed to work together to make Lyme a safer and more pleasurable place to live. He said the root of the town was the councillors.

## **21/54/C Dorset Council Matters**

Cllr D. Turner sent his apologies and circulated a report prior to the meeting.

The town clerk summarised the report as follows:

- Dorset Council (DC) was continuing with virtual meetings and this would be reviewed in September
- Families were being invited to sign up for free advice, assistance and updates from the Family Information Service
- Foul discharge into the River Lim was being investigated by South West Water and the Environment Agency, which believed there was a private misconnection
- Back Beach was de-designated as a bathing beach with the town council's approval
- Magna Housing, Curo and Swan Housing Association had been allocated £160.4m of grant funding to build 2,425 homes in Dorset and Somerset
- Dorset Council's (DC) research and insight team had produced data on areas of inequality in Dorset, which showed 6% of the population in the Lyme Regis and Charmouth ward were low-income residents.

Cllr R. Smith asked if there was an option for Back Beach to be re-designated as a bathing beach.

The town clerk said there was historically poor water quality on this beach and the easiest way to deal with it was to have it de-designated, on the suggestion of the Environment Agency. He said the council could ask about re-designation but he believed there would continue to be a series of poor assessments.

Cllr B. Bawden said she was aware almost all councils in Dorset were having hybrid meetings because some people didn't feel comfortable attending meetings.

The town clerk said the legislation which allowed virtual or hybrid meetings expired in May 2021 and that they were now illegal. However, although members were required to attend meetings physically, officers could attend virtually.

## **21/55/C Questions from Councillors**

There were none.

## **21/56/C Apologies for Absence**

Cllr R. Doney – holiday

Cllr K. Ellis – attending a meeting on behalf of the council

Cllr T. Webb – personal commitments

Cllr S. Williams – unwell

**21/57/C Disclosable Pecuniary Interests**

Cllr B. Bawden declared an interest in agenda item 15, Lyme Arts Community Trust Grant Agreement, as she worked for the Marine Theatre occasionally.

**21/58/C Dispensations**

There were none.

**21/59/C To confirm the accuracy of the minutes of the Full Council meeting held on 28 July 2021**

Proposed by Cllr J. Broom and seconded by Cllr C. Reynolds, the minutes of the Full Council meeting held on 28 July 2021 were **ADOPTED**.

**21/60/C Matters arising from the minutes of the Full Council meeting held on 28 July 2021**

**Trial of Food Waste to Living Soil Project**

Cllr D. Sarson asked if Dorset Biosolutions had had discussions with commercial organisations about sponsorship for the trial.

Cllr B. Bawden said they had discussed it with several commercial organisations but didn't want to progress too much before permission had been given by the council.

**Granting the Honorary Freedom of the Town of Lyme Regis to Cllr Stan Williams**

Cllr M. Ellis said she was upset councillors had not been invited to the presentation and had found out about it in the local newspaper.

The mayor, Cllr B. Larcombe said he hoped members were sensitive enough to the situation to know why the event had been organised in this way and it was led by the wishes of Cllr Williams' family, who felt it needed to be done immediately. He said he felt it was the right decision under the circumstances.

**21/61/C Update Report**

Members noted the report.

**21/62/C Planning Committee**

Proposed by Cllr J. Broom and seconded by Cllr C. Reynolds, it was **RESOLVED** to receive the decisions made under the chairman's delegated powers following the cancellation of the meeting scheduled to take place on 3 August 2021.

**21/63/C     Axe Valley and West Dorset Ring and Ride Grant Agreement**

The town clerk said the town council had decided to continue paying all term grant recipients but in return, it wanted to see the organisations supporting the Covid crisis, if possible. He said at the end of the summer, officers and the member representatives were able to have discussions with the organisations about putting the grant agreements together.

The town clerk said the grant agreements should have been presented in 2020 for council approval but it was agreed they would not be implemented at that time due to the pandemic. He said the agreements were based on the organisations' ability to return to performing to the grant applications they submitted in February 2020.

The mayor, Cllr B. Larcombe said the agreements were internal documents to inform the council about the working relationship with the grant recipients; they were not something the council would negotiate, they would be presented as the grounds for the grant.

Proposed by Cllr D. Sarson and seconded by Cllr R. Smith, members **RESOLVED** to approve Axe Valley and West Dorset Ring and Ride's grant agreement.

**21/64/C     B Sharp Grant Agreement**

Proposed by Cllr B. Bawden and seconded by Cllr G. Stammers, members **RESOLVED** to approve B Sharp's grant agreement.

**21/65/C     Bridport and District Citizens' Advice Grant Agreement**

Cllr C. Reynolds said the organisation was grateful for the use of the office building for the outreach service and asked if the council could help to promote it.

The town clerk said it could be promoted on the council website and social media.

Proposed by Cllr C. Reynolds and seconded by Cllr R. Smith, members **RESOLVED** to approve Bridport and District's Citizens Advice's grant agreement.

**21/66/C     The Hub Grant Agreement**

The mayor, Cllr B. Larcombe asked if there had been any reduction in funding to The Hub from DC.

The town clerk said he believed there had been no reduction but he would check this and report back to members. He said some organisations had had an influx of funding because of Covid-19 and this could reduce their dependency on the council, although most of the funding was ring-fenced for capital projects.

Proposed by Cllr B. Bawden and seconded by Cllr D. Sarson, members **RESOLVED** to approve The Hub's grant agreement.

*Cllr B. Bawden left the meeting at 7.44pm in line with her pecuniary interests.*

## **21/67/C Lyme Arts Community Trust Grant Agreement**

Cllr M. Ellis was concerned Lyme Arts Community Trust (LACT) had received significant funding during Covid-19 which had bolstered the reserves, while still receiving a council grant although the theatre was closed during the pandemic.

The town clerk said most of the grant funding LACT had received was for capital projects, whereas the council grant was principally to support revenue costs and the day-to-day operation of the theatre. He said the council wanted to encourage organisations to secure grants and shouldn't be punitive towards them. He added that if LACT built up a reserve, they would be able to draw on this in emergencies, rather than coming to the council as a last resort.

Cllr D. Ruffle, the council's rep on LACT, confirmed the funding received was for capital projects and a lot of work had been going on at the theatre.

The mayor, Cllr B. Larcombe reminded members they were not being asked to approve the funding, they were being asked to approve the grant agreement and the terms under which the council would then apply the funding.

The town clerk said LACT had made significant progress in making it a viable organisation, which took the pressure off the council. He said they would be judged against their performance to the grant agreement.

Proposed by Cllr R. Smith and seconded by Cllr D. Ruffle, members **RESOLVED** to approve Lyme Arts Community Trust's grant agreement.

*Cllr B. Bawden returned to the meeting at 7.54pm.*

## **21/68/C LymeForward Grant Agreement**

The town clerk said the council hadn't agreed any objectives for LymeForward and it was intended to have that discussion at the next Tourism, Community and Publicity Committee meeting. As such, members may wish to agree the grant agreement at this meeting subject to agreeing the objectives, or to defer until the objectives had been agreed and could be included in the grant agreement.

Several members questioned why the council would set objectives for LymeForward.

The town clerk said LymeForward was set up as a community engagement vehicle and in the past, the council had set objectives related to community engagement so the two organisations could work together. He said if objectives were not included in the agreement, it would take away some of the council's leverage.

Cllr M. Ellis, the council's rep on LymeForward, said some of the activities listed in the agreement as a variation from the original grant application were no longer correct; she said the Death Café and community lunches would be running again. However, she said in order to run their activities they needed a tenancy agreement

from the council for Unit 1A to understand what they would be allowed to operate and they had been waiting for this since April 2021.

The town clerk said all the issues listed were communicated to the council by a LymeForward director at the recent grant review meeting and he had not been informed of any changes since then.

Cllr M. Ellis asked if LymeForward stated it would carry out community engagement in its grant application.

The town clerk said this was irrelevant as the council was providing grant funding of £10,000 per year and could ask LymeForward to carry out community engagement as a requirement of the funding.

As chairman of the Tourism, Community and Publicity Committee, Cllr C. Reynolds said she would be happy for the committee to discuss any objectives once the agreement had been approved.

Cllr R. Smith said LymeForward members had expressed concerns about the organisation, including visibility of accounts and administrative expenses, their ability to call members' meetings, and that they were now being asked to fill out a membership form and meet certain criteria so the directors could choose the members. He said he would not vote for LymeForward receiving taxpayer's money until these issues were addressed.

The town clerk reminded members they were being asked to approve the grant agreement, not the funding.

Cllr G. Stammers felt it would benefit LymeForward if the council could agree objectives as it would give the organisation clarity of exactly what was expected, and a short delay in approving the agreement wouldn't do LymeForward any harm as the funding wouldn't stop in the meantime.

The mayor, Cllr B. Larcombe felt the approval of the grant agreement should be deferred so the Tourism, Community and Publicity Committee could agree the objectives, which could then be included in the agreement, against which, future grant reviews would be assessed.

The town clerk said as the local area partnership, LymeForward was community driven and responsible for the community plan and the council needed to have a view on what it was looking for in terms of community engagement. He said the most important thing was for the council and LymeForward to have a positive working relationship and to have shared objectives.

Cllr R. Smith felt the directors of LymeForward should be asked to more actively engage with the members.

The town clerk said he and the mayor had been caught in the middle of the dispute between LymeForward members and the directors but their message had always been if there's an issue, the members should go to the Community Interest Company

regulator. He said if the regulator believed there was an issue, he would bring it to members, but he would not act on a handful of allegations or try to micromanage LymeForward.

The mayor, Cllr B. Larcombe said the council's role was to determine if the grant was being spent in the way the council would expect and the agreement was the template against which it could be measured.

Proposed by Cllr G. Stammers and seconded by Cllr D. Ruffle, members **RESOLVED** to defer consideration of LymeForward's grant agreement until after the Tourism, Community and Publicity Committee has set objectives for LymeForward, which can then be included in the grant agreement.

#### **21/69/C Philpot Museum Grant Agreement**

Proposed by Cllr B. Bawden and seconded by Cllr D. Sarson, members **RESOLVED** to approve the Philpot Museum's grant agreement.

#### **21/70/C List of Payments**

The mayor, Cllr B. Larcombe asked if the utilities' payments could be combined into an aggregate sum. The town clerk said he would ask the finance team as they were doing a lot of work to aggregate utilities charges.

The mayor, Cllr B. Larcombe said there was a substantial sum paid to Glen Cleaning and the council needed to review this.

The town clerk said members agreed extra cleaning of the toilets in the summer and this provision had now been stood down because it was no longer peak season. He agreed members needed to discuss the provision for next year, which would be informed by the Covid-19 situation.

The town clerk said there was also the possibility of building urinals as this would take the pressure off the Marine Parade toilets. He said this could be considered as part of the 2022-23 budget setting.

Proposed by Cllr B. Larcombe and seconded by Cllr J. Broom, members **RESOLVED** to approve the schedule of payments for April, May, June and July 2021 for the sums of £134,393.25, £145,728.04, £135,029.39 and £143,982.34, respectively

*The meeting closed at 8.34pm.*