

LYME REGIS TOWN COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE FULL COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON WEDNESDAY 31 MAY 2023

Present

Chairman: The Mayor, Cllr D. Sarson

Councillors: Cllr C. Aldridge, Cllr B. Bawden, Cllr S. Cockerell, Cllr R. Doney, Cllr M. Ellis, Cllr B. Larcombe, Cllr P. May, Cllr C. Reynolds, Cllr D. Ruffle, Cllr G. Stammers, Cllr G. Turner

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

The mayor, Cllr D. Sarson read out the town prayer.

23/01/C Public Forum

There were no members of the public who wished to speak.

23/02/C Dorset Council Matters

Cllr B. Bawden gave the following updates:

- She had attended three Dorset civic services at Sherborne Abbey on behalf of Lyme Regis and Charmouth and as a representative of the Green Party.
- She had attended meetings of the Audit and Governance Committee, of which she was a member.
- She was sitting on a task and finish group on public participation.
- She was about to start on a sub-group about the proposed meeting schedule for committees.
- She was sitting on the appeals committee looking at school transport decisions.
- Dorset Council (DC) had made tangible progress this year in terms of climate and the environment and the majority party's attitude towards its own climate and environmental strategy had changed in a positive way, although there was more to be done in her opinion.
- She had attended financial governance and planning training.
- She was attending as many members' briefings as she could and many of these were being repeated by the Dorset Association of Parish and Town Councils (DAPTC) on the Working Together webinars. She would recommend members attending these as it was also an opportunity to feed things back.
- In Lyme Regis she had been doing case work on anti-social behaviour, some of it drug -related, and she had had a lot of cost of living, council tax and benefits enquiries. She had case work on planning applications, parking and speeding enforcement around the town.
- As part of DC's library strategy, opening hours at Lyme Regis library would be staying the same as they were currently. The strategy would go to the Joint Overview Committee on 7 June 2023, there would be a briefing to DAPTC on

13 June 2023, and DC's Cabinet would consider the strategy on 25 July 2023. She said there would be no library closures and it was generally a positive strategy about how people could use libraries better, engage with communities more and serve as a better focal point for DC services.

- She had been part of a group filmed by ITN about river monitoring.
- She had done an interview for Greatest Hits Radio about the landslide from the old municipal dump.
- Forthcoming public consultations included health, education and social care, and the local transport plan. She was trying to make connections with people in East Devon and South Somerset because she was concerned some of the strategic planning decisions overlooked West Dorset, and the fact there were nearby railway stations in East Devon and South Somerset didn't always fit in with DC and the wider thinking.
- A consultation would be starting soon on the dog-related Public Space Protection Order.

Cllr B. Larcombe said he had received complaints from residents about the River Lym and weeds growing up the banks at Windsor Terrace and he asked if Cllr B. Bawden could pursue this.

Cllr B. Bawden said she had a meeting with the footpaths officer the following week so she would raise it then.

Cllr B. Larcombe asked Cllr B. Bawden if she had pressed for parking restrictions at the bottom of Clappentail Lane.

Cllr B. Bawden said she had had a meeting with the relevant officers and they were coming to assess the area.

23/03/C Questions from Councillors

There were none.

23/04/C Apologies for Absence

Cllr R. Smith – work commitments

23/05/C Disclosable Pecuniary Interests

There were none.

23/06/C Dispensations

There were none.

23/07/C To confirm the accuracy of the minutes of the Full Council meeting held on 17 May 2023

Proposed by Cllr B. Larcombe and seconded by Cllr D. Ruffle, the minutes of the Full Council meeting held on 17 May 2023 were **ADOPTED**.

23/08/C Matters arising from the minutes of the Full Council meeting held on 17 May 2023

Park and ride 2023

Cllr B. Larcombe asked if in future the period of operation could be extended to include the May Bank Holiday.

The town clerk said this had always been the intention and the May Bank Holiday and June and July weekends were included in the original timetable, but First were unable to commit to providing a service this year. He said the minimum requirement for this year was the school summer holidays and any additional dates would be an advantage. He added that officers would start putting arrangements in place for 2024 this year, with the plan to extend the service to Charmouth again.

Questions from Councillors

Cllr R. Doney asked if there was now a mechanism in place for formally recording in the council minutes the departure of a member due to disqualification.

The town clerk said he had done some research into what was required and he agreed there should be some formal notification to the council. He said the report on co-option on the agenda did formally record Tara Webb leaving the council and the reason why, which had triggered a by-election process managed by DC. He said in future, he would make sure a formal notification was brought to the council, although this might be retrospectively so there would be no delay in starting the by-election process.

23/09/C Update Report

There were none.

23/10/C Reaffirmation of the Eligibility Criteria required to hold the General Power of Competence

Proposed by Cllr M. Ellis and seconded by Cllr B. Larcombe, members **RESOLVED** to to reaffirm the council meets the eligibility criteria to hold the General Power of Competence.

23/11/C Appointments to Council Committees

Proposed by Cllr D. Ruffle and seconded by Cllr C. Aldridge, it was **RESOLVED** to appoints members to committees, as follows:

Environment – Cllr S. Cockerell, Cllr D. Ruffle, Cllr G. Stammers, Cllr B. Larcombe, Cllr B. Bawden, Cllr C. Aldridge, Cllr P. May, Cllr R. Smith

Human Resources – Cllr G. Stammers, Cllr G. Turner, Cllr B. Larcombe, Cllr B. Bawden, Cllr C. Aldridge, Cllr M. Ellis, Cllr C. Reynolds, Cllr P. May, Cllr D. Sarson

Planning – Cllr G. Turner, Cllr S. Cockerell, Cllr B. Bawden, Cllr B. Larcombe, Cllr C. Aldridge, Cllr P. May

Town Management and Highways – Cllr G. Turner, Cllr S. Cockerell, Cllr D. Ruffle, Cllr G. Stammers, Cllr B. Larcombe, Cllr B. Bawden, Cllr C. Aldridge, Cllr M. Ellis, Cllr C. Reynolds, Cllr P. May, Cllr D. Sarson

Tourism, Community and Publicity – Cllr R. Smith, Cllr D. Ruffle, Cllr B. Bawden, Cllr C. Aldridge, Cllr M. Ellis, Cllr C. Reynolds, Cllr D. Sarson

23/12/C Reports from External Bodies

Members noted the reports and additional reports which had been sent by email.

23/13/C Appointments to External Bodies 2023-24

It was agreed all organisations under the umbrella of Lyme Regis Development Trust (Lyme Regis Development Trust, The Hub and St Michael's Business Centre Management) should have the same representative(s).

Proposed by Cllr M. Ellis and seconded by Cllr C. Reynolds, members **RESOLVED** to appoint members to external bodies for 2023-24, as follows:

Axe Valley and West Dorset Ring and Ride Service – Cllr C. Aldridge (liaison)

B Sharp – Cllr D. Ruffle (participating)

Bridport and District Citizens' Advice Bureau – Cllr S. Cockerell (liaison)

Charmouth Road Allotments Association – Cllr D. Sarson (participating)

DAPTC (Western Area Committee and Larger Councils) – Cllr B. Larcombe and Cllr C. Reynolds (participating)

LymeArts Community Trust – Cllr D. Ruffle (participating)

Lyme Regis/Barfleur Twinning Association – Cllr R. Doney (liaison)

Lyme Regis Charities – Cllr M. Ellis (four-year appointment) (participating)

Lyme Regis Development Trust, The Hub and St Michael's Business Centre Management – Cllr D. Sarson and Cllr S. Cockerell (participating)

Lyme Regis Fossil Festival – Cllr R. Smith (participating)

Lyme Regis Harbour Consultative Group – Cllr B. Larcombe (participating) and Cllr S. Cockerell (substitute)

Lyme Regis Museum – Cllr D. Ruffle (participating)

Lyme Regis/St George's Twinning Association – Cllr D. Sarson (participating)

Lyme Regis Society – Cllr D. Ruffle (participating)

Plastic-Free Lyme Steering Group – Cllr R. Smith and Cllr G. Stammers (participating)

Regatta and Carnival Committee – Cllr D. Sarson (participating)

RNLI Lifeboat Guild – Cllr G. Turner (participating)

Royal British Legion – Cllr D. Sarson (participating)

Rural Market Town Group – Cllr B. Bawden (participating)

Woodmead Halls Management Committee – Cllr P. May (participating)

Youth Council – Cllr C. Reynolds (participating)

23/14/C Terms of Reference and Scheme of Delegation

The town clerk said he was aware the frequency of Planning Committee meetings every fortnight was an issue for both members and staff. He suggested this was something for the Planning Committee to consider, with a recommendation to the Full Council.

Proposed by Cllr P. May and seconded by Cllr B. Larcombe, members **RESOLVED** to approve the terms of reference and scheme of delegation.

23/15/C Review of the Council's and/or Employees' Memberships of Other Bodies

Cllr M. Ellis asked if all the subscriptions were being used and whether there were any other subscriptions the officers felt were needed.

The town clerk said all the subscriptions were relevant, some more than others, and there were no others officers felt were needed.

Cllr B. Larcombe noted the amount paid to the DAPTC and said he would like to know where it was going, something he might take up directly with DAPTC as the council representative.

The town clerk said the subscription was based on a town's electoral size; he said Lyme Regis had a small electorate but it was the second largest town council in Dorset in terms of budget, so it may not be sensible to question this too much. However, he agreed it was important to know what the subscription paid for.

Cllr R. Doney suggested next year's report could include a brief description of why each subscription was required.

Proposed by Cllr M. Ellis and seconded by Cllr P. May, members **RESOLVED** to approve the annual membership subscriptions for the council and/or employees to advisory and professional bodies.

23/16/C Review of Insurance Cover

Members noted the arrangements for insurance cover in respect of all insurable risks.

23/17/C Co-option

The town clerk said the rules around co-option allowed the council to advertise specific skills as being useful and he asked if this was something members wanted to do. There was also the issue of timing; officers could publish an advert the following day and members could consider the applications at the extraordinary Full Council meeting already scheduled for 21 June 2023. However, he said the co-option process would consume a lot of time at the meeting and the final internal audit and external audit was already on the agenda, followed by a Town Management and Highways Committee meeting. Or the process could be concluded at the Full Council meeting on 26 July 2023 or a separate extraordinary Full Council meeting could be called.

The town clerk also asked members to consider the process and how they would discuss the candidates as he felt it would be difficult for members to have a frank discussion about them if they were present. He felt the council could justify the position of listening to the candidates in open business, going into exempt business to discuss them, and then taking the vote in open business. Whatever the members decided, the town clerk said it was important members agreed a process up front, which would not be changed at any point throughout.

Cllr C. Reynolds asked if this was an opportunity to reduce the number of councillors to 13 as this had been suggested previously.

The town clerk said the council would have to go through a significant process to do this, which would take around 18 to 24 months and would be down to DC to manage.

Cllr B. Larcombe felt the council shouldn't advertise for specific skills as existing members were not subject to this when they stood for election. He didn't feel the council should wait until July as the new member wouldn't have the opportunity to attend a meeting again until September. He also felt the debate about the candidates should take place in open business.

Members generally felt the process should start as soon as possible, but several members felt the discussion about the candidates should take place in private. Cllr R. Doney said he felt the discussion should be confidential as other similar selection processes, such as job interviews, took place in this way and discussion in front of the candidates would be embarrassing for them. He added that the voting should be in public, which members agreed.

Cllr M. Ellis asked if members needed to have any discussion at all. She said members should be able to make their own choices without discussing it with others.

Members agreed there should be no discussion, neither in confidential nor open business, and they should go straight to a vote after the candidates had addressed the meeting.

Members discussed when the meeting would be held and it was suggested it could take place on the same night as the Tourism, Community and Publicity or Environment Committee meetings. It was agreed officers would make a decision about which date was preferable, depending on which agenda was lighter.

The town clerk said if members agreed not to have any discussion on the night about the candidates, it was important members didn't have those discussions between themselves outside the council chamber; any discussions should be collective and no one should be excluded from the process.

Proposed by Cllr P. May and seconded by Cllr B. Larcombe, members agreed to **RECOMMEND TO FULL COUNCIL** to approve the co-option process, that the council should not invite people with specific skills or expertise to apply, that there should be no discussion about the candidates at the co-option meeting, that the meeting should take place entirely in open business, and that the meeting is held on either 28 June 2023 or 5 July 2023, to be decided by officers.

23/18/C List of Payments

Cllr B. Larcombe asked if at some point members could see the total bill for the coronation party, how it compared to the budget and to other similar towns.

The town clerk said a budget estimate was provided to the Tourism, Community and Publicity Committee; £20,000 was allocated and the total spend was just over this. He said there would be a de-brief of the event to the Tourism, Community and Publicity Committee and this would include a detailed breakdown of the budget. The town clerk added it was more difficult to compare the spend to other towns because it would involve a lot of research and most towns didn't put on events; however, the council made a conscious decision to make a budget allocation for an event.

Several members acknowledged the budget was agreed by the council, the event was appreciated by local people and they felt it was worth it for local residents.

Cllr B. Larcombe asked what the payment for pension fund deductions meant.

The town clerk said he would ask the finance manager to respond separately to members with this information.

Proposed by Cllr C. Reynolds and seconded by Cllr M. Ellis, members agreed to **RECOMMEND TO FULL COUNCIL** to approve the schedule of payments in April 2023 for the sum of £90,149.46.

The meeting closed at 8.26pm.