

LYME REGIS TOWN COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE FULL COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON WEDNESDAY 6 SEPTEMBER 2023

Present

Chairman: The Mayor, Cllr D. Sarson

Councillors: Cllr C. Aldridge, Cllr B. Bawden, Cllr M. Ellis, Cllr P. Evans, Cllr B. Larcombe, Cllr P. May, Cllr D. Ruffle, Cllr G. Stammers, Cllr G. Turner

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

The Rev C. Martin read out the town prayer.

23/63/C Public Forum

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

23/64/C Dorset Council Matters

Cllr B. Bawden gave the following updates:

- Dorset Council's (DC) Cabinet had been discussing a new reablement centre to be built in Dorset and it was developing detailed plans with the NHS and community hospital partners so people could be discharged there if they were not well enough to go home.
- DC's housing strategy was in the formal consultation stage and would close on 2 October 2023, followed by discussion by Cabinet in December. She said there had been a rise in demand for social housing, nearly 4,000 people were registered homeless, which was up by 600, there were 400 new applications every month to go on the housing register, and DC had built 664 new homes in Weymouth. As a non-property-owning authority, DC's strategy was to work with registered providers to encourage them to match supply with demand. The greatest demand was for one or two-bedroom homes but more three and four bedroom homes were being built. There was a proposal to develop a housing board to look at the issues and a working group involving registered providers would report to the Cabinet.
- A birth to settled adulthood report was being compiled.
- DC had undertaken a parking charges review because Weymouth Town Council had requested a review of the three-tier charging structure, which meant coastal towns were being charged at a higher rate. The review showed parking revenue had increased. DC had introduced a short-stay permit to park in any DC car park for up to two hours a day and a flexible stay permit for residents, workers and businesses for unlimited use in long-stay car parks.
- DC was investing £1million in car park maintenance and as part of this, Holmbush car park was resurfaced and re-lined in June.

- The Local Transport Plan was being developed but detailed guidance was awaited from the Government about what needed to be in the plan, although a vision-led approach had been agreed. The town council's traffic and travel group had met four times and was looking to capture what it would like in Lyme Regis and feed into the process.
- Current public consultations were the Housing Strategy and Call for Sites. The Public Space Protection Order – Dogs consultation had closed in August.
- Work was starting the following week at the Town Mill steps. She had tried to get DC to do the work in October as that was the best month for the businesses at the mill but DC said the work was critical. She had asked for specific signage so people were directed to the mill via Coombe Street. Mill Lane was also going to be closed for one day and two nights so there was a chance of the two closures overlapping. She was pushing hard for bicycle racks and motorcycle spaces rather than the three parking spaces being reinstated in Broad Street car park, although she wasn't getting a very good response.
- Harbour users had asked her to bring senior DC people to Lyme to listen to them but they hadn't agreed to a meeting.
- Speedwatch was going ahead and the 20mph proposal would go ahead, subject to consultation.
- A request had been made to extend the residents' parking area in Queens Walk.

Cllr M. Ellis said she was concerned a lot of young people in Lyme Regis had been forced to leave private rentals because the properties had been turned into holiday rentals. She asked if DC was looking to raise the council tax on these properties because it could provide more funding for housing for young people.

Cllr B. Bawden said there was a mind to keep an eye on properties that were doing this and was an issue which had been raised by members.

Cllr B. Larcombe asked what DC's position was on phosphate offsetting and what it meant for them. He asked if DC was using its reserves to cover ongoing overheads. He also asked if DC had gotten any further with Highways England regarding the A35.

Cllr B. Bawden said she would need to ask specifically about phosphate offsetting. Regarding the reserves, an extra £2million had been put in after the budget-setting process but as far as she was aware, DC was not using its reserves at the moment. She didn't have an update on the A35.

Cllr P. May said it was well known Dorset, and in particular Lyme, didn't have enough grid capacity to meet government strategy to decarbonise homes and transport so he said this should be at the top of DC's agenda.

Cllr B. Bawden said she was assured it was; it was a high priority because this was a national problem.

23/65/C Questions from Councillors

Cllr B. Larcombe

Cllr B. Larcombe asked for an update on the CCTV project.

The town clerk said planning consent had been granted and a contractor appointed. A meeting would be arranged with the contractor by the end of the month, to include a site visit. By the end of September, he hoped to have a definitive timetable for installation as he was conscious of not losing external funding from the police and crime commissioner. He said members would be updated further in the next cycle of meetings.

23/67/C Apologies for Absence

Cllr S. Cockerell – family commitments
Cllr R. Doney – prior commitment
Cllr C. Reynolds – illness
Cllr R. Smith

23/68/C Disclosable Pecuniary Interests

There were none.

23/69/C Dispensations

There were none.

23/70/C To confirm the accuracy of the minutes of the Full Council meeting held on 26 July 2023

Cllr M. Ellis said the reason for her apologies to the meeting was a family commitment and asked for this to be noted in the minutes.

Proposed by Cllr B. Larcombe and seconded by Cllr D. Ruffle, the minutes of the Full Council meeting held on 31 May 2023, with the above amendment, were **ADOPTED**.

23/71/C Matters arising from the minutes of the Full Council meeting held on 26 July 2023

National Grid and Local Grid Capacity

Cllr P. May said he understood the council was going to approach DC about the issue of grid capacity, as well as the parliamentary committee. If that hadn't been done, he asked officers to think about how to raise the issue with DC as a town council.

23/72/C Update Report

There were no updates.

23/73/C Mayor's Announcements

The mayor, Cllr D. Sarson said the 103-year-old gentleman he visited at Lyme Regis Nursing Home had sadly died two days after his visit.

23/74/C Planning Committee

Proposed by Cllr G. Turner and seconded by Cllr P. May, it was **RESOLVED** to note the recommendations made under the chairman and vice-chairman's delegated authority following the cancellation of the meetings on 25 July and 8 August 2023.

Cllr B. Larcombe said there had been a drop in the number of planning applications the town council was being asked to consider and this needed to be reviewed in the context of the frequency of Planning Committee meetings.

Cllr B. Bawden said she had requested a meeting with the head of planning to try and address some of these issues.

Cllr P. May said he didn't think residents were aware of the reasons why some meetings had had to be cancelled and this had led to some unfavourable comments on social media. He asked in future that it was explained the council was cancelling meetings for sensible reasons.

Cllr B. Bawden gave an update on the licencing application from the Black Cow Vodka Bar. As there had been objections to the application, it would go to a hearing in September.

23/75/C Band Mandates

Cllr M. Ellis said she was concerned about reducing the number of bank signatories, especially as the council was coming to the end of a five-year term and it took a lot of time to get the mandates approved. She felt if the council only had three signatories, it could impact on council business and pose a risk if those people were not on the council following the election.

The town clerk said officers had tried in the past to get more members authorised as signatories but most had not returned the required information so they had been relying on only two members for some time. As the council had increased the amount requiring authorisation to £25,000, this was manageable with three members as there weren't many payments over this amount and he was also a signatory.

Cllr M. Ellis said there had been times when the mayor and deputy mayor were also the chairman and vice-chairman of Strategy and Finance so this would leave only two people as signatories.

The town clerk said this was a good point so the qualification should be there were at least three members authorised, which could be another committee chairman.

Proposed by Cllr P. May and seconded by Cllr B. Bawden, members **RESOLVED** to approve removing bank mandates from all chairmen and vice-chairmen, and approve

bank mandates for the mayor, deputy mayor, and the chairman and vice-chairman of the Strategy and Finance Committee, but to always ensure there is a minimum of three members who are authorised.

23/76/C The Guildhall

The town clerk said officers were going to look at the existing equipment to determine if it could amplify meetings, although technology had moved on significantly since it was installed nine years ago.

Cllr B. Larcombe said the Guildhall was a dreadful place to have meetings, especially with members' backs to the public and although acoustics could be improved, the configuration was an issue and he suggested the seating could be changed. He said the Guildhall was the council's place to do business and the council would have to be very clear about why it wanted to move elsewhere, which would come at a cost. He asked if meetings weren't held at the Guildhall, what was its future?

Cllr M. Ellis agreed the council should not move its meetings from the Guildhall and felt the council should try using speakers and microphones to amplify meetings to avoid making changes to the fabric of the building.

Cllr P. Evans said he had found it very difficult to hear others at previous meetings but he agreed the Guildhall was the home of the town council and he wouldn't want to see it moved elsewhere.

Cllr C. Aldridge asked how long the Guildhall had been in use as a council chamber and whether reconfiguring the seating had ever been looked into.

The town clerk said the Guildhall was 140 years old but it was originally a court. He said he could make enquiries about whether the seating could be reconfigured. With regards to the audio equipment, he said increasing the volume didn't always improve the issue but he would look at whether the existing equipment could be used and suggested up to £1,000 could be spent on a more modern solution, which may involve the existing equipment and speakers.

Cllr M. Ellis said the council should be cautious of making too many changes to the inside of the building because it would impact on weddings.

Proposed by Cllr P. May and seconded by Cllr B. Larcombe, members **RESOLVED** to approve a budget of up to £1,000 for probable installation of amplification equipment in the Guildhall and instruct officers to look at the possibility of reconfiguring the chamber so it would be more user-friendly for the public.

23/77/C Recognition of a Local Resident and Volunteer

Cllr P. Evans explained why he had suggested Chris Boothroyd was formally recognised by the council for his service to the town.

Proposed by Cllr P. Evans and seconded by Cllr C. Aldridge, members **RESOLVED** to approve a letter from the mayor on behalf of the council and a plaque to be

presented to Lyme Regis resident and volunteer Chris Boothroyd as formal recognition of his service to the town.

23/78/C Retrospective Approval of Insurance

Cllr B. Larcombe asked what was significant about this event that required the council to insure it.

The town clerk said when organisations held events on town council land they had to have public liability insurance and in this instance, a request was made that the council would pay for the insurance. He said his original response was to refuse as the council's insurer wouldn't cover it but following further discussions with the mayor and deputy mayor, he had sent a briefing note to members to say he intended to approve a payment for insurance as a one-off.

Cllr P. Evans said Richard Austin had asked him to relay his thanks to the council for supporting his exhibition. He said Richard Austin had to print some of the photographs so he would be out of pocket.

Cllr B. Larcombe said it seemed an invitation was extended to Richard Austin from the council to put on the exhibition so he felt the cost of the printing should be added to the amount paid by the council.

It was proposed by Cllr P. Evans to grant retrospective approval for a payment of £423 to Events Insurance to cover the cost of public liability insurance for the Richard Austin photography exhibition and to pay Richard Austin £300 to cover the costs of printing the photographs.

This motion was not seconded.

The town clerk said there had been no request to pay for the costs of holding the exhibition. He said it wasn't a council initiative, the council was approached by a member of the public who suggested the exhibition.

Proposed by Cllr P. May and seconded by Cllr M. Ellis, members **RESOLVED** to grant retrospective approval for a payment of £423 to Events Insurance to cover the cost of public liability insurance for the Richard Austin photography exhibition.

23/79/C Dorset Council's Housing Consultation Strategy

The town clerk said in his opinion, the strategy didn't sufficiently deal with the issue of local people and the issues they had with the housing process and contained very little about the impact of housing on the environment.

Cllr M. Ellis said she felt it was important the council spoke on behalf of residents who wanted to stay in the town but there was nothing in the consultation that allowed a response related to this. She felt the consultation was skewed towards the answers DC wanted.

Cllr B. Bawden agreed DC had shaped the consultation to get the answers it wanted so it was important the town council used this opportunity so DC could see councils and communities felt strongly about issues such as the amount of private rentals turning into holiday rentals, and local people being priced out and not being prioritised in housing allocations. She said there was a feeling among DC councillors cross-party that DC needed to do more but it was unlikely to happen before the 2024 elections, so it was important to get as much in the strategy now so when there was a new administration, they might take a different view on it.

It was agreed the council's response would include the impact of holiday rentals, the need for housing for local people, housing in Lyme Regis not being allocated to local residents, and second home council tax and what that would do for housing supply.

Cllrs G. Stammers, D. Ruffle and M. Ellis agreed to work with the town clerk to formulate the council's response.

Proposed by Cllr P. May and seconded by Cllr B. Bawden, members **RESOLVED** to delegate Cllrs G. Stammers, D. Ruffle and M. Ellis to work with the town clerk to respond to Dorset Council's Housing Strategy Consultation 2023, based on the position agreed at the Full Council meeting on 6 September 2023.

23/80/C Dorset Coast Strategy

It was agreed the town clerk would draft a response to the strategy and circulate it in the members' briefing for comment.

Proposed by Cllr P. May and seconded by Cllr B. Larcombe, members **RESOLVED** that the town clerk should draft a response to the Dorset Coast Strategy and circulate it in the members' briefing for comment.

23/81/C Cover Arrangements

Proposed by Cllr D. Sarson and seconded by Cllr M. Ellis, members **RESOLVED** that under Section 1, Paragraph 2 of The Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960, the press and public be excluded from the meeting for this item of business as it included confidential matters relating to relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person within the meaning of paragraphs 1 and 8 of schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972 (see Section 1 and Part 1 of Schedule 1 to the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985), as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006.

23/82/C Exempt Business

a) Cover Arrangements

In response to a member question, the town clerk said the council's insurance didn't include staff cover arrangements.

Proposed by Cllr B. Larcombe and seconded by Cllr M. Ellis, members **RESOLVED** to approve a budget of £29,000 for cover arrangements during the operations

manager's sickness absence and to approve cover arrangements during the operations manager's sickness absence.

The meeting closed at 8.35pm.