

LYME REGIS TOWN COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE FULL COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON WEDNESDAY 11 DECEMBER 2024

Present

Chairman: Cllr P. Evans

Councillors: Cllr C. Aldridge, Cllr G. Caddy, Cllr M. Ellis, Cllr S. Cockerell, Cllr D. Holland, Cllr S. Larcombe, Cllr P. May, Cllr C. Reynolds, Cllr G. Turner, Cllr A. Wood

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

Guests: Cllr B. Bawden (Dorset Council ward member)

Absent: Cllr G. Turner

The mayor, Cllr P. Evans read out the town prayer.

24/110/C Public Forum

K. Gollop

K. Gollop said he hoped the council would make sure the town was tidy and welcoming for visitors next year, not looking as it did last season with weeds growing out of the ground, and pallets and bins on Gun Cliff. He said the town was in a terrible state in April and May, which wasn't all the town council's fault, some of it was Dorset Council's (DC). He said Lyme Regis didn't have a good reputation for tidiness and people looked at the old parts of the town such as Bagster's Steps, the Cobb which was falling down, and the Three Cups which had been derelict for 30 years.

The mayor, Cllr P. Evans said the town council was trying hard to work with DC to solve some of the issues K. Gollop raised and it was a priority to rectify these issues.

24/111/C Dorset Council Matters

Cllr B. Bawden presented her report. She asked for a copy of the town council's response to the Dorset Council Plan, for reference.

Other updates since writing her report included:

- DC's chief executive Matt Prosser was leaving his post
- DC's budget café had been cancelled pending the announcement on the local government finance settlement and DC had been talking about service cuts
- Environment Agency cuts were likely to affect future capital programmes in Lyme Regis, including the phase 5 improvement works to the Cobb. There was also no confirmed funding allocation for the beach management/harbour

dredging works in spring 2025 and DC had asked the town council for a contribution to this.

Members asked questions about other towns' contributions to harbour dredging, early years' provision, waste management, and the phase 5 repairs.

Cllr B. Bawden said she would find out what other towns contributed to harbour dredging, she confirmed discussions had taken place with St Michael's Primary School about early years' provision, and that she was struggling to get local businesses engaged about changes to waste management.

A member said the lights in Broad Street car park were still not working, despite being reported to DC.

24/112/C Questions from Councillors

There were none.

24/113/C Apologies for Absence

Cllr G. Stammers – illness

24/114/C Disclosable Pecuniary Interests

There were none.

24/115/C Dispensations

There were none.

24/116/C To confirm the accuracy of the minutes of the Full Council meeting held on 4 September 2024

Proposed by Cllr A. Wood and seconded by Cllr C. Reynolds, the minutes of the Full Council meeting held on 23 October 2024 were **ADOPTED**.

24/117/C Matters arising from the Full Council meeting held on 23 October 2024

Grant Request for the Hire of a Dementia Bus

It was noted the wellbeing event at the Woodmead Halls was well attended and the dementia bus, which was partly funded by the council, was a success, with many positive comments.

Dorset Council's Draft Council Plan

The town clerk said the plan had been approved by DC's Full Council. He would take a report to the Strategy and Finance Committee on 29 January 2025 to allow members to consider issues in the plan that would potentially affect Lyme Regis. This

would allow members to have the discussion before DC's leader Cllr Nick Ireland attended the Full Council meeting on 12 February 2025.

24/118/C Update Report

Councillor vacancy

The support services manager said DC had confirmed it had received the required 10 requests from Lyme Regis electors to hold an election to fill the councillor vacancy. The election would be held on 13 February 2025.

24/119/C Mayor's Announcements

The mayor, Cllr P. Evans clarified the Lyme Regis/St George's Twinning Association coffee morning did not take place.

The mayor, Cllr P. Evans congratulated the Christmas Lights Committee for this year's display and the switch-on event.

24/120/C Planning Committee

Proposed by Cllr P. May and seconded by Cllr S. Larcombe, it was **RESOLVED** to receive the minutes of the meetings held on 15 October, 5 and 26 November 2024, and to note the committee's comments made on planning applications under the power delegated by Full Council.

24/121/C Environment Committee

Proposed by Cllr S. Cockerell and seconded by Cllr P. May, it was **RESOLVED** to receive the minutes of the meeting held on 20 November 2024, and adopt the recommendations, as follows:

24/43/ENV – To receive a report from the River Lim Action Group

A member asked what the group would use the funding for.

It was noted this information had been provided to the Environment Committee, which was satisfied with the request. It was agreed this information would be re-sent to members.

RESOLVED: to approve the funding request from the River Lim Action Group for the sum of £7,908.32 for works in 2024/25.

24/45/ENV – Consultation on the Reform of the Bathing Water Regulations 2013

RESOLVED: that the response to the Consultation on the Reform of the Bathing Water Regulations 2013 be delegated to three members and officers so that the response would be in on time, taking into account the input of the River Lim Action Group.

24/122/C Human Resources

It was noted the Human Resources Committee meeting scheduled to take place on 30 October 2024 had been cancelled.

24/123/C Strategy and Finance

Proposed by Cllr P. May and seconded by Cllr C. Aldridge, it was **RESOLVED** to receive the minutes of the meeting held on 27 November 2024, and adopt the recommendations, as follows:

24/44/SF – Introduction of lost property policy

RESOLVED: to approve the proposed lost property policy.

24/45/SF – Fixed Assets Policy

RESOLVED: to approve the fixed assets' policy.

24/46/SF – Allocation and Distribution of Grant Funding

RESOLVED: to approve a five-year annual grant budget of £140,000 from 1 April 2025 until 31 March 2030 and within that budget approve an annual allocation of £100,000 to term grants, an annual allocation of £25,000 to large capital grants and an annual allocation of £15,000 to community grants; to approve a large capital grants' policy and procedure; to approve changes to the existing term grants' policy and procedure; and to approve changes to the existing community grants' policy and procedure.

24/47/SF – Budget and Precept 2025-26 and Five-Year Financial Plan 2025-30

RESOLVED: to approve a budget for 2025-26 including the proposed priority 1 and 2 objectives with the following exceptions:

- Remove the £25k for the continuation of the council's budget to carry out the climate action plan
- Defer renewable energy projects, of £15k, until better defined
- Remove installation of more LED lighting, £3k
- Defer waste initiatives of £10k, until better defined
- Remove electric trimmers at £12k

to allocate £5k from the 2024-25 climate action plan budget for signage in the seafront gardens; to approve a precept of £163,254 for 2025-26; and to approve the five-year financial plan for 2025-30 and note the impact on the council's forecast reserve over that period.

24/48/SF – Charges for Filming on Town Council Land

RESOLVED: to approve the proposed charging structure for filming on town council land.

24/49/SF – Consultation by Dorset Council about the local adoption of Street Trading legislation

RESOLVED: to instruct officers to respond to Dorset Council's consultation about the local adoption of Street Trading legislation in consultation with the chairman of the Strategy and Finance and Town Management and Highways Committees and in line with the views expressed by the Strategy and Finance Committee.

24/50/SF – Enabling Remote Attendance and Proxy Voting at Local Authority Meetings

RESOLVED: that Cllrs S. Cockerell, P. Evans and P. May work with the town clerk to draft a response to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government's open consultation on 'Enabling Remote Attendance and Proxy Voting at Local Authority Meetings', to be considered by the Full Council on 11 December 2024.

24/51/SF – List of Payments

RESOLVED: to approve the schedule of payments in April and October 2024 for the sums of £171,716.16 and £325,515.12, respectively.

24/124/C Tourism, Community and Publicity Committee

Proposed by Cllr P. Evans and seconded by Cllr C. Reynolds, it was **RESOLVED** to receive the minutes of the meeting held on 13 November 2024, and adopt the recommendations, as follows:

23/129/TCP – Dorset Town of Culture 2026

RESOLVED: not to submit an expression of interest for Lyme Regis to become the Dorset Town of Culture 2026.

24/125/C Town Management and Highways Committee

Proposed by Cllr P. May and seconded by Cllr A. Wood, it was **RESOLVED** to receive the minutes of the meeting held on 6 November 2024, and adopt the recommendations, as follows:

24/51/TMH – Future Use of Langmoor Room

RESOLVED: that a concerted effort is made to better market and promote the use of the Langmoor Room to local community and other groups and to school groups visiting the town, noting the lack of level and fully DDA compliant access, and to review its use in summer 2025.

24/126/C To receive the minutes of the Gardens Working Group meeting held on 26 November 2024

Proposed by Cllr C. Reynolds and seconded by Cllr P. May, it was **RESOLVED** to receive the minutes of the Gardens Working Group meeting held on 26 November 2024.

24/127/C Appointments to Council Committees

Proposed by Cllr P. May and seconded by Cllr A. Wood, members **RESOLVED** to appoint Cllr Matthew Denney to the Environment Committee, Planning Committee, Tourism, Community and Publicity Committee and Town Management and Highways Committee.

24/128/C Policy and Procedure for the Appointment of Non-Members to Council Committees

One member felt people should not be appointed to any committees but should be invited to speak at meetings if they had a specialist interest. Otherwise, they should be elected to the council or speak in the public forum.

The town clerk said the Environment Committee's current terms of reference allowed for non-members to be appointed to the committee but there was a suggestion this be extended to all committees.

Some members were concerned the proposed policy and procedure was too onerous and would deter people from being co-opted to committees. There were concerns the requirements of the policy would normally apply to people being co-opted to the council with voting rights, rather than non-voting members on committees.

There was also concern a person would be automatically co-opted if there was only one candidate, but this wasn't what the Environment Committee wanted.

The town clerk said his advice was based on the appropriate national policy for the appointment of non-members and the only difference between his proposal and what some members wanted was the issuing of a public notice to allow people to express their interest in being appointed. He said it was important to have a transparent procedure and to give everyone an equal opportunity to apply to protect both non-members and members from allegations of favouritism.

A member asked if a notice had been issued to co-opt members to the committee.

The town clerk said there was no notice, no prior discussion and no decision to start a process to select non-members. He had received three unsolicited emails from members of the public to be appointed to the Environment Committee.

However, a member pointed out that the Environment Committee's terms of reference were on the council website, which stated it could co-opt up to six non-members and which was seen by the three individuals who sought more information.

A member emphasised that the non-members were non-voting members who couldn't influence decisions of the committee. However, another member said just because they couldn't vote, it didn't mean they couldn't influence.

It was proposed by Cllr P. May and seconded by Cllr C. Aldridge that the proposed Policy and Procedure for the Appointment of Non-Members to Council Committees is returned to officers for further review, especially to take into account feedback by the Environment Committee and the issues raised at the Full Council meeting on 11 December 2024.

This motion was not carried.

It was proposed by Cllr M. Ellis not to allow the co-option of non-members to council committees, other than the Environment Committee as this is already in the terms of reference, and to approve the proposed Policy and Procedure for the Appointment of Non-Members to Council Committees.

There was further debate about the proposed policy and procedure as there was concern it meant if there were fewer candidates than the number of places, the council should automatically accept them, which the Environment Committee was not in favour of.

The town clerk said although he didn't agree with it, these were the rules around elections and co-option that meant a 'sole' candidate is elected. He said he had created a policy and procedure that was consistent with this.

Cllr M. Ellis withdrew her proposition.

24/129/C Information about meetings held by LRTC officers with members in the council office

A member suggested, in the interests of transparency, members should know what meetings officers were having with other members and roughly what the content was. It was suggested officers' diaries or the meeting room diary could be shared with members.

Some members were concerned about how this would add to officers' workload and questioned what the aim of this was if the content of the meetings would not be shared.

The town clerk said he had no issue with sharing his diary, although there would need to be some sensitivity around any personal appointments included in it. He said there was no meeting room diary but meetings and events were already included in the members' briefing. He said it was important for officers to build relationships with members and he didn't feel comfortable reporting on meetings; he suggested if

members wanted to know what a meeting was about, they should approach the member(s) involved directly.

The town clerk said he felt the suggestion was setting the wrong tone and culture and would create more bureaucracy and work.

A member said even if a diary of meetings was shared with members, members often called into the office unplanned to talk to an officer or spoke to them on the phone, so this wouldn't be recorded in the diary.

It was proposed by Cllr P. May and seconded by Cllr S. Cockerell that members are given access to the town clerk's diary but the access is limited so members do not see sensitive information.

This motion was not carried.

24/130/C Proposed Response to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government's Consultation on Enabling Remote Attendance and Proxy Voting at Local Authority Meetings

Members supported the proposed response to the consultation.

Further information was needed from members to complete question 5 regarding the likelihood of members attending meetings remotely, and it was agreed it would be 'more than 10% but less than 50%'.

Proposed by Cllr P. Evans and seconded by Cllr C. Aldridge, members **RESOLVED** to approve the proposed response to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government's consultation on Enabling Remote Attendance and Proxy Voting at Local Authority Meetings, and on question 5 to answer 'more than 10% but less than 50%'.

24/131/C Budget and Precept 2025-26

The town clerk drew members' attention to the officer recommendation to bring forward landslip works scheduled for 2025-26 to 2024-25 in light of recent land movement in Cobb Road and on the advice of the council's geotechnical engineer. He said there was scope in the 2024-25 to do this and officers would look to award the work by contract negotiation, in order to start as early in 2025 as possible.

Proposed by Cllr P. May and seconded by Cllr M. Ellis, members **RESOLVED** to maintain the council's reserve at £1million for 2025-26; for 2025-26, approve an income budget estimate of £2,252,456 and an operational expenditure budget estimate of £2,083,971 in 2025-26, i.e., a surplus of £168,485; approve up to £418,308.32 for projects and objectives in 2025-26 (the projects are funded from £126,642 from the forecast reserve at 31 March 2025, £168,485 from 2025-26 budget surplus and £120,000 from the sale of two day huts, with the difference of £3,181.32 being taken from the reserve); approve the 2024-25 precept at £163,254; to note the outline five-year financial plan; and to approve bringing forward landslip works scheduled for 2025-26 to 2024-25.

24/132/C Investments and Cash Holdings

Proposed by Cllr P. May and seconded by Cllr M. Ellis, members **RESOLVED** to note the cash position at the end of November 2024.

24/133/C List of Payments

Proposed by Cllr M. Ellis and seconded by Cllr G. Caddy, members **RESOLVED** to approve the schedule of payments in November 2024 for the sums of £271,594.39.

24/134/C Relocation of Council Offices and Disposal of Existing Building and Site

Proposed by Cllr M. Ellis and seconded by Cllr S. Larcombe, 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.

24/135/C Woodmead Car Park Tenders for Drainage Works

Proposed by Cllr M. Ellis and seconded by Cllr S. Larcombe, 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.

24/136/C Wedding Stewards' Rate of Pay

Proposed by Cllr M. Ellis and seconded by Cllr S. Larcombe, 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.

24/137/C Postholder 226, Six-Month Probation Review

Proposed by Cllr M. Ellis and seconded by Cllr S. Larcombe, 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.

24/138/C Exempt Business

a) Relocation of Council Offices and Disposal of Existing Building and Site

The town clerk said officers were in discussions with Lyme Regis Museum to confirm the date they would be moving out of Unit 1. Officers were also in discussions with Lyme Regis Development Trust about the opportunity to acquire a further unit at St Michael's Business Centre to provide space for meetings, including council meetings.

The town clerk said officers needed guidance from members on whether to sell the land adjacent to the office building as part of the sale of the offices.

There was concern about the lack of parking at St Michael's Business Centre, although it was noted if the council took another unit, officers would look to open negotiations about an additional parking space. It was also noted there would continue to be parking at the Guildhall and cadet hut.

In response to member questions, the town clerk confirmed access to the Marine Theatre and access through the archway under the Guildhall would be maintained.

It was suggested valuations were sought for the building on its own and the building with the land before a decision was made about whether to include the land in the sale.

The town clerk said the current value estimates were within a range and were yet to be determined. He said the deputy town clerk would like an in-principle decision to sell the office with the land and he could then obtain indicative values. However, it was believed the land could be worth as much as the building, and marketing them together would significantly enhance the value of the whole site.

Proposed by Cllr P. May and seconded by Cllr S. Larcombe, members **RESOLVED** to market the sale of the existing council office building and additional area of adjoining town council-owned land.

b) Woodmead Car Park Tenders for Drainage Work

The town clerk said further discussions had taken place with the lowest tenderer and they maintained they could complete the works in three weeks. However, they had since provided a price for the work over six weeks, which was still significantly lower than the other two tenders.

Proposed by Cllr M. Ellis and seconded by Cllr P. May, members **RESOLVED** to appoint N & G Groundworks Ltd, Lyme Regis, to carry out works to improve the surface water and general drainage at the Woodmead car park, up to the revised tender amount if the duration of the work extends to six weeks, and to employ Geoff

Bennett of Seaton to ensure full compliance with Construction (Design and Management) Regulations 2015 at a cost of £1,500.

c) Wedding Stewards' Rate of Pay

Proposed by Cllr S. Larcombe and seconded by Cllr G. Caddy, members **RESOLVED** to approve an increase to the rate of pay for wedding stewards to £31.53 per ceremony.

d) Postholder 226, Six-Month Probation Review

Proposed by Cllr P. May and seconded by Cllr A. Wood, members **RESOLVED** to confirm post holder 226's appointment for the remainder of the fixed-term contract and to agree an increase in their salary from SCP 21 to 22, backdated to 1 November 2024.

The meeting closed at 8.33pm.