

LYME REGIS TOWN COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE FULL COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON WEDNESDAY 8 JANUARY 2020

Present

Chairman: The Mayor, Cllr B. Larcombe MBE

Councillors: Cllr Ms B. Bawden, Cllr J. Broom, Cllr R. Doney, Cllr Miss K. Ellis, Cllr Mrs M. Ellis, Cllr D. Ruffle, Cllr D. Sarson, Cllr R. Smith, Cllr Ms G. Stammers, Cllr G. Turner, Cllr S. Williams

Officers: A. Mullins (administrative officer), J. Wright (town clerk)

Absent: Cllr L. Howe

19/122/C Public Forum

Mr J. Dover

Mr J. Dover said he was speaking on behalf of a group of concerned residents and businesses which drew on the tourist information centre's (TIC) services. He said they had recently been made aware that Dorset Council (DC) was currently undertaking a public consultation regarding the future of Lyme Regis TIC, which DC ran and leased the premises from the town council. He said DC had clearly stated its position and future options it was prepared to consider and was now requesting feedback via two public consultation sessions in Lyme Regis and an online survey. Mr J. Dover said a significant number of Lyme residents and visitors were concerned about the potential threat to the future of the TIC, especially as the face-to-face service would cease. He said their current understanding was the lease of the ground floor office space used by the TIC between the town council and DC came to an end on 31 March 2020. Mr J. Dover said they believed the council had not yet made a public statement on its position regarding the future of the service to the town and its tourism economy. He said while the consultation was carried out, they would request parallel dialogue and consultation with the town council is undertaken, aimed at exploring all options, reducing misunderstanding and achieving a win-win, not a lose-lose, situation.

Mr D. Lawrance

As owner of Lewesdon B&B, Mr D. Lawrance said he was speaking as a business owner. He said his guests, particularly foreign visitors, were regular users of the services provided by the TIC, ranging from information about activities in the town and the Jurassic Coast, to travel and walking options in the surrounding area. He said he fully endorsed Mr J. Dover's request for parallel dialogue and consultation with the town council. Mr D. Lawrance said he'd go further and suggest a consultation group is set up comprising a number of council members and a limited group of local volunteers representing all viewpoints of the town. He said it should be a time-limited project and the group should report to the Tourism, Community

and Publicity Committee. He said the objective would be to understand what services the TIC currently provided and commercially analyse the costs and benefits of an information service, so that a solution could be developed that would be a win-win for the town. Mr D. Lawrance said if such a balanced review was not undertaken, he feared there was a danger the TIC issue would become a political football, with many unfounded emotional views being bandied around as fact.

The mayor, Cllr B. Larcombe said there was an unfortunate degree of misinformation in the public domain regarding the TIC. He said the town council had looked at this issue with DC for four years (and its predecessor West Dorset District Council), in conjunction with other DC services, but the town council couldn't compromise the process DC was currently managing as employer.

Cllr D. Turner – Dorset Council

Cllr D. Turner said the TIC consultation was ongoing and once complete, the feedback would be analysed by DC and considered by the cabinet. He said members of the public could speak at cabinet meetings.

Regarding the climate emergency, Cllr D. Turner said DC continued to operate a relatively isolated position and he believed it should be partnering with many other organisations in Dorset.

Cllr D. Turner referred to the number of roadworks currently taking place in Lyme Regis but said it was better to have them planned now than unplanned in August.

Cllr D. Turner said DC had announced a budget of £305million, which included £22million additional money in adults and children's services. He said there was a 4% increase on the precept, which was one of the highest in the country already.

The mayor, Cllr B. Larcombe said once the roadworks had been completed there would be trenches running down Broad Street with temporary re-surfacing, and he asked if there would be proper resurfacing.

Cllr D. Turner said he was aware DC had intended to carry out re-dressing linked to the planned pelican crossing but he would check this.

The mayor, Cllr B. Larcombe permitted members of the public to ask Cllr D. Turner questions.

Mr D. Gale asked if there was any reason why meetings between the town council and DC regarding the TIC couldn't continue while the consultation was taking place.

Cllr D. Turner said there had already been extensive dialogue and other meetings were planned. However, DC needed to see the results of the consultation before the next step.

Mr J. Dover asked Cllr D. Turner if he would be participating in the TIC public consultation sessions in Lyme Regis on behalf of DC.

Cllr D. Turner said he would be attending both but would not be giving his view either way because he is chairman of the Scrutiny Committee, which would consider the results of the consultation.

Cllr J. Broom asked if there would still be a deficit in the budget at the end of the year.

Cllr D. Turner said a deficit was still forecast at the end of this financial year.

19/123/C Questions from Councillors

There were none.

19/124/C Apologies for Absence

Cllr S. Williams – holiday

19/125/C Disclosable Pecuniary Interests

There were none.

19/126/C Dispensations

There were no dispensations.

19/127/C To confirm the accuracy of the minutes of the Full Council meeting held on 20 November 2019

Proposed by Cllr J. Broom and seconded by Cllr G. Turner, the minutes of the Full Council meeting held on 20 November 2019 were **ADOPTED**.

19/128/C Matters arising from the minutes of the Full Council meeting held on 20 November 2019

Lease extension

Cllr D. Sarson asked if there had been a response from DC accepting the conditions of the lease extension for the ground floor of Guildhall Cottage.

The town clerk said he had received a partial response over the Christmas period and this would be included in the members' briefing.

19/129/C Update Report

There were no updates.

19/130/C Mayor's Engagements and Meetings

The mayor, Cllr B. Larcombe said the planned meeting with the highways officer on 31 December 2019 had not taken place on that date and had been re-scheduled.

19/131/C Planning Committee

Proposed by Cllr G. Turner and seconded by Cllr J. Broom, it was **RESOLVED** to receive the minutes of the Planning Committee held on 10 December 2019.

19/132/C Human Resources Committee

It was noted the meeting scheduled for 27 November 2019 had been cancelled.

19/133/C Strategy and Finance Committee

Proposed by Cllr B. Larcombe and seconded by Cllr D. Sarson, it was **RESOLVED** to receive the minutes of the Strategy and Finance Committee held on 17 December 2019 and adopt the recommendations, as follows:

19/57/SF – Dorset Council and Lyme Regis Town Council Assets on-and-around Monmouth Beach

RESOLVED: to instruct the clerk to inform Dorset Council to restore the beach profile lower than the artificially made-up level, re-open access to Monmouth Beach and remove the wooden structure.

RESOLVED: to instruct Dorset Council to remove fishing tackle from the accreted land at Monmouth Beach.

RESOLVED: to defer any future discussions about storage of boats or any other fishing tackle on the accreted land until the town council considers the issue in its entirety, including all adjacent land at Monmouth Beach.

19/58/SF – Appointment of the Internal Auditor

RESOLVED: to appoint Darkin Miller – Chartered Accountants as the council's internal auditors for the financial years 2020-21, 2021-22, and 2022-23 and review the appointment in 2022-23 to consider whether the contract should be extended further.

19/60/SF – Filming Money – Expressions of Interest

Cllr B. Bawden said members of the public had raised concerns about the grant to Axminster and Lyme Cancer Support as it looked as if the council was using the money to pay itself for rental of a beach hut for use by a charity. She was concerned the council was considering giving the charity a beach hut, which was a commercial asset worth around £34,000, as well as potentially subsidising ground rent of around £600, and she asked whether members were aware of these details.

The mayor, Cllr B. Larcombe said the sums were assigned to all three recipients in principle, subject to discussion of the terms under which the funding was given.

The town clerk said more discussions needed to take place with the organisations concerned and he requested a member was involved in these discussions. He said

a report would then be brought back to the council so there was clarity over what was involved and the details could then be signed off.

RESOLVED: that the £15,000 donation from Fossil Films is split equally between Axminster and Lyme Regis Cancer Support, Mary Anning Rocks, and the Mary Anning Scholarship Legacy Fund.

19/61/SF – Motion from Cllr Ms B. Bawden on Planning Regulations for Heritage Buildings

ORIGINAL MOTION: that through DAPTC, the council encourages Dorset Council to exercise the full scope of its authority where there are local variations within the application of the planning regulations.

Cllr B. Bawden said she believed the committee had agreed to go through DAPTC but also to go directly to Dorset Council.

SUBSTANTIVE MOTION: the council encourages Dorset Council to exercise the full scope of its authority where there are local variations within the application of the planning regulations, both via a direct approach to Dorset Council and through DAPTC.

19/62/SF – Grants

RESOLVED: approve the introduction of term grants and community grants.

RESOLVED: to approve in principle a term grants' budget of £60,000 and a community grants' fund of £20,000, subject to stress testing.

RESOLVED: to approve the processes and timetables for inviting grant applications and making decisions on their allocation.

19/63/SF – Lyme Regis Bowling Club Counter-Proposal

Cllr R. Doney asked if the winter parking passes would be issued on the basis they were only to be used when the members were doing work at the bowling club and not at other times and as such, would be clearly marked.

The mayor, Cllr B. Larcombe confirmed the passes would be allocated to allow members to do maintenance work out-of-season.

RESOLVED: to agree to the bowling club's counter-proposals for a 15-year lease and four unreserved winter car parking passes for Monmouth Beach.

19/64/SF – Sea Sports and Adventure Centre Proposal

RESOLVED: to inform Lyme Regis Gig Club the council likes the idea of a sea sport and adventure centre and believes it has merit, but more work needed to be done by the gig club on the proposal in order for the council to consider it alongside other proposals for the Monmouth Beach area.

Proposed by Cllr B. Larcombe and seconded by Cllr B. Bawden, it was **RESOLVED** to receive the minutes of the Strategy and Finance Committee held on 18 December 2019 and adopt the recommendations, as follows:

Cllr M. Ellis asked if there had been a response from the preferred tenant for the Blue Sea Café.

The town clerk said he would check this and update members through the briefing.

Cllr B. Larcombe asked when the letters would be sent to people who had responded to the public consultation on the council's objectives.

The administrative officer said the letter had been drafted and would be set out within the next few days.

19/75/SF – Statement of Internal Control, Risk Management Policy and Annual Risk Assessment

RESOLVED: that the risk management policy and the standard annual risk assessment be approved without amendment.

RESOLVED: that the risk register for 2019/20 be approved subject only to the amendment of the overall risk 'score' for the reputational risk of 'negative council image' being reduced to 12 (Impact 4, probability 3).

19/77/SF – Budget and Precept 202-21 and Five-Year Financial Plan 2020-25

RESOLVED: to approve the 2020-21 budget.

RESOLVED: to approve the 2020-21 objectives and the draft objectives for 2021-25.

RESOLVED: to approve a precept of £132,779 for 2020-21.

RESOLVED: that the proposed five-year financial plan for 2020-25 be approved with the sole amendment that the budget of £8k identified for residents' day in, 2022/23, 2023/24 and 2024/25 be not included at this stage but be looked at in future in the light of the experience and cost of holding the initial event planned for 2021/22.

RESOLVED: that the council's policy on the holding of a reserve be amended, temporarily, to permit a reserve no lower than 20% of annual turnover for the period up until 2024/25.

19/78/SF – Investments, Cash-Holdings and Investments

RESOLVED: that the principle of rationalising accounts and banks be supported subject to a further, more detailed, report to the next meeting of the Strategy and Finance Committee; and no monies be put on fixed-term deposit unless or until cash flow modelling of forthcoming major expenditure on the Marine Parade roof, the office refurbishment and any other agreed projects support such an approach to be prudent.

19/80/SF – Debtor's Report

RESOLVED: that specialist legal advice and action be sought about pursuing the small number of outstanding 2018 debts relating to premises at Monmouth Beach.

19/134/C Tourism, Community and Publicity

Proposed by Cllr K. Ellis and seconded by Cllr B. Larcombe, it was **RESOLVED** to receive the minutes of the Tourism, Community and Publicity Committee held on 11 December 2019 and adopt the recommendations, as follows:

19/35/TCP – Map-Based Marketing Proposal

RESOLVED: to accept the proposal from Coastline Creative for a map-based marketing concept.

19/36/TCP – Tourism Website Contract

RESOLVED: to approve a one-year extension to the contract with Simpleview (formerly NVG) for the tourism website, lymeregis.org, at a cost of £6,550 plus VAT.

19/135/C Town Management and Highways Committee

Proposed by Cllr J. Broom and seconded by Cllr B. Larcombe, it was **RESOLVED** to receive the minutes of the Town Management and Highways Committee held on 4 December 2019 and adopt the recommendations, as follows:

19/52/TMH – Dorset Council Dog-Related Public Space Protection Order

RESOLVED: the town council takes all opportunities available to express its wish to see a dog ban on the Front Beach all-year-round and express it by any means possible, including contacting officers on how this might best be achieved.

Cllr R. Doney asked if DC intended to have identical orders across all areas and if so, he said the town council needed to challenge this as the requirements in Lyme Regis were different to other areas.

Cllr D. Turner confirmed it was the intention to have a single PSPO for the whole of Dorset but he agreed this wasn't practical.

Cllr D. Sarson said he didn't think the signs on the seafront were clear enough about which rules applied in which areas and he would like them to be bigger and more defined.

19/54/TMH – Memorial Benches

RESOLVED: to add 16 memorial benches to the Marine Parade as the provision for 2020.

19/56/TMH – Free Christmas Parking in Lyme Regis

RESOLVED: to allow free parking in the Woodmead car park on 14/15 and 21/22 December to compliment an agreement by Dorset Council to allow free parking in its Cobb Gate, Broad Street and Holmbush car parks in Lyme on the same weekends.

19/57/TMH – Unit 1A, St Michael's Business Centre – Lease Renewal

RESOLVED: to renew the lease in respect of Unit 1A at St Michael's Business Centre for a seven-year term and to give the deputy town clerk discretion to negotiate the rent sum.

19/136/C By-Election

Cllr R. Doney questioned whether the council needed to spend the money on polling cards as the turnout for a by-election was usually quite low and people who would normally vote would vote regardless.

Several members felt polling cards helped remind people to vote, it showed the council was supporting the democratic process, and even if the turnout was low, this by-election was just as important as any other election.

The town clerk confirmed an election had been called following requests from 10 or more Lyme Regis electors, so there was no need to approve a co-option process. He said the final election timetable was expected on 9 January 2020 and it would be provided to members in the briefing.

Proposed by Cllr B. Larcombe and seconded by Cllr M. Ellis, members **RESOLVED** to note the process and outline timetable for a by-election, and to approve the use of polling cards for the by-election.

19/137/C The Election of the Vice-Chairman (Deputy Mayor) of the Council for the Remainder of the 2019-20 Council Year

The town clerk said he had received a nomination for Cllr S. Williams, who had sent apologies for this meeting but had confirmed in writing he would accept the position if offered.

Cllr M. Ellis said Cllr S. Williams had objected in the past to members taking a position when they were not at the meeting.

The mayor, Cllr B. Larcombe said the rules concerned chairmanship of committees when the member was not present to then chair the meeting.

Proposed by Cllr B. Larcombe and seconded by Cllr J. Broom, Cllr S. Williams was **ELECTED** vice-chairman (deputy mayor) of the council for the remainder of the 2019-20 council year.

19/138/C Appointments to External bodies

Proposed by Cllr G. Stammers and seconded by Cllr G. Turner, members **RESOLVED** to appoint Cllr D. Ruffle to LymeArts Community Trust as a participating member.

Proposed by Cllr M. Ellis and seconded by Cllr R. Doney, members **RESOLVED** to appoint Cllr B. Bawden to B Sharp as a participating member.

Proposed by Cllr J. Broom and seconded by Cllr B. Larcombe, members **RESOLVED** to appoint Cllr D. Sarson to Woodmead Halls Management Committee as a participating member.

Cllr Mrs M. Ellis abstained from voting on the final motion due to her pecuniary interests.

19/139/C Budget and Precept 2020-21

The town clerk emphasised the need for the council to stick to its budget and project costs and advised against adding to the list of projects in-year because it would put more pressure on the reserve.

The mayor, Cllr B. Larcombe said in the next financial year, the council would carry out major projects involving two of its assets, the roof resurfacing and the office refurbishment, which would be met from the reserve. He added that although the 10% increase in the precept may appear high, this was only because the level of precept was low and any increase, even modest in real sum terms, would appear as a high percentage.

The town clerk confirmed the council had not increased the precept for at least eight years.

Proposed by Cllr M. Ellis and seconded by Cllr J. Broom, members **RESOLVED** to approve an income budget estimate of £1,565,461 and an expenditure budget estimate of £2,129,689 for 2020-21; to approve a reduced reserve estimate of £454,500 to cover additional expenditure in 2020-21; and approve the 2020-21 precept at £132,779.

19/140/C Postholder 106, Six-Month Probation Report

Proposed by Cllr M. Ellis and seconded by Cllr B. Bawden, 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 an individual 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.

19/141/C Appointment of Business Loss and Claims Adjuster for the Roof Repair Contract at Marine Parade

Cllr J. Broom asked if there was an idea of charges.

The town clerk said he would check and include this in the briefing.

Cllr R. Doney asked if these expenses, as well as any potential business claims, were included in the total budget for this project.

As this would involve commercially sensitive information, it was agreed further discussion would take place in exempt business.

Proposed by Cllr J. Broom and seconded by Cllr G. Turner, 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.

19/142/C Term and Community Fund Grants, Policies and Procedures

The town clerk emphasised the need to stick to the proposed timetable for term grants as organisations needed to know if they had secured long-term funding.

In the Community Fund policy and procedure, Cllr R. Smith said it wasn't clear in paragraph 4.2 if the requirement for 50% match funding referred to the council funding or the total cost of the project.

The town clerk said it referred to the total project cost and he would amend the wording to make this clear.

Cllr B. Bawden asked if the policies and procedures could include a reference to the council's declaration of a climate and environmental emergency and the expectation on organisations to commit to these ethical procedures.

The town clerk said a reference could be included in the grant agreements with each individual organisation. He said the grant agreements would come back to the council to sign off, once they had been drafted and agreed with the individual organisations.

Proposed by Cllr B. Larcombe and seconded by Cllr D. Sarson, members **RESOLVED** to approve the term grant policy and procedure, and the community fund policy and procedure, with minor amendments to paragraph 4.2 to provide clarity on match funding.

19/143/C Exempt Business

a) Postholder 106, Six-Month Probation Report

Members agreed the postholder was an asset to the office team, she had fitted in well and was friendly and helpful.

The mayor, Cllr B. Larcombe wished to record his personal thanks, specifically for the postholder's support in his civic role.

Proposed by Cllr J. Broom and seconded by Cllr G. Turner, members **RESOLVED** to approve postholder 106's continued employment with the council.

b) Appointment of Business Loss and Claims Adjuster for the Roof Repair Contract at Marine Parade

The town clerk said the fee for the loss and claims adjuster was included in the identified budget for professional fees but any potential claims would be in addition to the budget.

The town clerk said officers would be working hard to try and ensure there would be little or no cause for business claims against the council but appointing a loss and claims adjuster at this point was sensible and money well spent.

The meeting closed at 8.22pm.