

LYME REGIS TOWN COUNCIL

STRATEGY AND FINANCE COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON WEDNESDAY 2 MAY 2018

Present

Chairman: Cllr S. Miller

Councillors: Cllr J. Broom, Cllr R. Doney, Cllr D. Hallett, Cllr P. Hicks, Cllr B. Larcombe, Cllr S. Larcombe, Cllr O. Lovell, Cllr J. Scowen, Cllr G. Turner, Cllr S. Williams

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

17/117/SF Public Forum

Mr A. Nabarro

As captain of Lyme Regis Bowling Club, Mr Nabarro said members of the club had attended in numbers to protest at the latest outrageous proposals the committee had been asked to consider. He said for several years the club had asked the council to discuss the amount of spaces in the car park, and after five years and having given a presentation to the council in November 2017, in which the club showed there were 11 spaces against the 24 the council charged for, the council had measured the car park and agreed with the club it was 11 spaces. Mr Nabarro said in autumn 2016 the working group was advised the charges were discussed with the club. He said those charges were 277% higher than the club was currently paying. He said this was not viable for the club and they had requested meetings to discuss it, based on the overcharging for 24 spaces. Mr Nabarro said all the club's requests for meetings had been refused and the only access to the council had been through the public forum at meetings. He said the council had finally accepted the lower amount of spaces, but responded by charging an even higher amount than suggested in November 2016. He said it was unethical to charge the normal commercial value, reduced by 30 to 50%, bearing in mind West Dorset District Council (WDDC) had charged the town council 20% for the skatepark lease on Charmouth Road car park. Mr Nabarro said many councillors had given their support to the club, but when it came to votes, it had evaporated. He said the draconian charges being suggested would mean the club would not survive for long. He said the council was demanding a quarter of a million pounds over the next 10 years and if the council didn't want the club to close, he urged members not to pass the proposal before a meeting was arranged to find a fair solution.

Mrs J. Bishop

Mrs Bishop said she and her husband were members of the bowling club and along with other members, they were concerned about the proposal to increase the rent for the car park. She said despite the club committee providing confirmation from one of the most experienced chartered surveyors in Dorset that the car park contained 11 spaces when using the Dorset County Council (DCC) design rule, the council proposed to charge the club for 12. She said the council's own consultant agreed a

commercial rent would be between 30 and 50% of the income on a public parking space. Mrs Bishop asked how the council could justify why it proposed to charge the club 100% on a figure of £2,000 per space, when the figure was previously £1,750 based on 24 spaces at 50%. She said she understood requests from the club for meetings with the council since February 2017 had been refused. Mrs Bishop referred to government policy which said social and exercise opportunities should be encouraged for older people, and the club had a large number of elderly members who benefitted physically and mentally. She said she expected councillors to follow government policy and make steps to show their support to the club, and not to make it financially unviable. Mrs Bishop said the council had given considerable grants to other organisations, while the bowls club had not asked for or been given money in its 80 years, as well as the clubhouse and grounds being maintained by the members. She said the club was an attraction and an asset to the town, being visited by many clubs and open to the public. Mrs Bishop said she felt by imposing an unreasonable increase to the rent, membership fees would have to go up to an unacceptable level and the future of the club would be threatened if a compromise couldn't be found.

Mrs V. Henson

Mrs Henson reminded members of their duty to the community as outlined in the Good Councillors' Guide, particularly section 3 which stated councillors should represent the interests of the whole community, and understand the needs of different groups such as the young and elderly. Mrs Henson made reference to the Nolan Principles of selflessness, integrity, objectivity, accountability, openness, honesty and leadership. As an ex-civil servant and chairman of governors, she said she felt some of the councillors were not exhibiting those principles in their negotiations with the bowling club.

Mr J. Moseley

Mr Moseley showed a plan of the bowling club car park which he said was a scale plan based on DCC's rules for parking, based on measurements of 2.8m x 4.8m, which took no account of manoeuvring and allowed for 2.4m width for another car. Using that scale, he said the area provided 11 parking spaces, and using the British standard of 1999 produced the same figure. Mr Moseley said if the council implemented the recommendation to charge for 12 spaces, the club would cease to exist in 2021.

Mr C. Barber

Mr Barber showed the same plan of the bowling club car park which he said outlined 11 spaces. He said it was then a simple equation of multiplying the number of spaces by the percentage of income of a space at either 30 or 50%. He said if the council chose to charge the club less than the commercial rate, it could be shown in the accounts as a subsidy. Mr Barber said the club raised £35,000 through its activities to survive, in addition to the membership fees. He said those councillors who believed exercise for older people should be encouraged would want to charge 30% of the income, and those who thought the maximum should always be charged, and who had no guilt about over-charging the club by 100% over the last 25 years, effectively taking £83,000 from the club, would want to charge 50% of the income. Mr Barber

asked the council what it was going to do to off-set the historical over-charging of £83,000. He said a substantial discount from the future fee should be allowed.

17/118/SF Apologies for Absence

Cllr Mrs M. Ellis – family commitments
Cllr Mrs C. Reynolds – attending another meeting
Cllr P. Ridley - holiday

17/119/SF Minutes

Proposed by Cllr B. Larcombe and seconded by Cllr G. Turner, the minutes of the meeting held on 14 March 2018 were **ADOPTED**.

17/120/SF Disclosable Pecuniary Interests

There were none.

17/121/SF Dispensations

There was no grant of dispensations made by the town clerk in relation to the business of this meeting.

17/122/SF Matters arising from the minutes of the Strategy and Finance Committee meeting held on 14 March 2018

Cllr S. Williams asked if all members had seen the bowling club lease.

The town clerk said the lease was only sent to Cllr S. Williams, as requested, but it could be sent to all members.

17/123/SF Update Report

Cllr S. Williams was concerned there was more risk in storing the council's valuable items at the Honiton branch of Natwest.

The town clerk said the council had to accept this position as there was no other bank more nearby the council could deal with.

17/124/SF Minutes of the Section 106 Funding working group meeting held on 27 March 2018

Cllr B. Larcombe asked if there was any progress on the agreed actions from the meeting.

The town clerk said progress would be reported back to the working group, which was intended to take place before 21 May 2018, when West Dorset District Council (WDDC) would write formally to him regarding the available funds. He added that any proposal to WDDC would have to be approved by the Full Council.

Cllr D. Hallett said he had met with the Allotments' Association and they were obtaining prices for projects for which the funding could be used. He also suggested the bowling club looked into applying for funding.

Cllr J. Scowen said he thought a town app had also been one of the suggested projects. The town clerk said the minutes would be reviewed.

Proposed by Cllr B. Larcombe and seconded by Cllr J. Scowen, the minutes of the working group meeting held on 27 March 2018 were **RECEIVED**.

17/125/SF Minutes of the Assets on-and-Around Monmouth Beach Car Park working group meeting held on 10 April 2018

Proposed by Cllr B. Larcombe and seconded by Cllr J. Broom, the minutes of the working group meeting held on 10 April 2018 were **RECEIVED**.

17/126/SF Bowling Club Car Park

Cllr O. Lovell explained the background to the existing arrangements between the council and the bowling club and said the club had willingly signed up to the agreement. He said the recommendation from the working group was the setting out of the council's starting position and a meeting should take place to agree a realistic arrangement, possibly based on the council using the car park in the winter.

Members agreed the council didn't want the club to close down, but acknowledged it also had an obligation to look after the council's money and to be transparent about its assets and any subsidies.

Members discussed whether the council should consider giving the club a grant. Cllr B. Larcombe said the council might not be in a position to give grants in the future so he wouldn't want to see the club becoming dependent on grants, and would rather the council looked at the viability of the club and how the council could support it.

Members agreed there needed to be a meeting between representatives of the council and the club and discussed what authority the councillors would have during those negotiations.

Cllr S. Miller said anything that came out of those discussions would have to come back to the council for consideration.

Proposed by Cllr J. Scowen and seconded by Cllr R. Doney, members agreed to **RECOMMEND TO FULL COUNCIL** to charge the bowling club for 12 spaces at the full market value, but to negotiate a percentage figure if the club is willing to relinquish use of the car park during agreed months, and if the club is willing to break the lease immediately, and to arrange a meeting between representatives of the council and the bowling club to start negotiations.

Cllrs G. Turner, J. Scowen, O. Lovell and B. Larcombe put themselves forward to represent the council.

As it was agreed only two members should meet with the club, it was decided the four names would be put to the Full Council on 9 May 2018 for a decision.

17/127/SF Committee Structure

Members agreed the current committee structure was no longer suitable for the council and it should be changed.

However, some members believed the changes should be made by the new administration in May 2019 so it would not be bound by a decision made by the old administration, while other members believed the changes should be made immediately as the council had been considering this issue for several years without making a decision.

There were several alternative models and suggestions:

- Two full council meetings a month to deal with all business
- Reducing the number of members allowed to sit on a committee
- Giving more delegated authority and delegated budgets to committees, with decisions only being reported to Full Council, and anything beyond the remit of a committee to be approved by the Full Council
- Councillors to have laptops/tablets so agendas didn't have to be printed
- Using Swanage Town Council's structure as a model
- More delegation to officers on day-to-day matters, while councillors concentrate on setting strategies and limits

Concerns were raised about the length of meetings and the number of extra meetings that were arranged at short notice. Day-time meetings were suggested but it was pointed out this would be seen as discouraging working people from being on the council.

Cllr B. Larcombe said delegation to officers would not be possible for planning, due to the council's statutory obligations as a consultee, or human resources matters as they involved the officers.

Cllr S. Miller said as there was a will to change the committee structure, members and officers could go away and inform themselves in preparation for the new administration to make any changes. He suggested councillors got together informally to look at some options for the future to provide to the new administration.

Cllr B. Larcombe suggested putting an outline plan together so the new administration had something to work from.

The town clerk suggested several members worked with officers on this.

Proposed by Cllr B. Larcombe and seconded by Cllr J. Broom, members agreed to **RECOMMEND TO FULL COUNCIL** to defer consideration of a new committee structure but to put together notes of what the current administration had learned, and suggestions for how the committee structure could be improved in the future, to be provided to the new administration in May 2019.

17/128/SF General Data Protection Regulation

Proposed by Cllr J. Broom and seconded by Cllr G. Turner, members agreed to **RECOMMEND TO FULL COUNCIL** to confirm the council's intent to comply with the General Data Protection Regulation and approve the implementation model and timetable.

17/129/SF Budget Performance, 1 April 2017 – 31 March 2018

It was acknowledged the report showed a prudent approach to the finances, but several high expenditure items, such as the contracts' settlement, Marine Parade roof, and asset transfers had not yet been accounted for as the report only went up to 31 March 2018.

The town clerk pointed out this expenditure would incur in 2018/19.

There was discussion about the high level of the reserves the council held and the need to plan ahead better to maintain the council's assets on a more regular programme.

17/130/SF Investments, Cash Holdings and Loans

Members noted the report.

17/131/SF List of Payments

Cllr D. Hallett questioned several payments, including photocopier costs and staff travel expenses.

The town clerk said the finance manager could provide further information on request.

Cllr B. Larcombe raised concerns about the cost of the tourism guide and asked that this was considered in more detail by the Tourism, Community and Publicity Committee.

17/132/SF Debtors' Report

Proposed by Cllr S. Miller and seconded by Cllr J. Broom, 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 information relating to the financial or business affairs of a 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.

17/133/SF Exempt Business

(a) Debtors' Report

Members noted the report.

The meeting closed at 8.42pm.