

LYME REGIS TOWN COUNCIL

STRATEGY AND FINANCE COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON WEDNESDAY 30 JANUARY 2019

Present

Chairman: Cllr S. Miller

Councillors: Cllr J. Broom, Cllr R. Doney, Cllr Mrs M. Ellis, Cllr D. Hallett, Cllr P. Hicks, Cllr B. Larcombe, Cllr S. Larcombe, Cllr Mrs C. Reynolds

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

Absent: Cllr P. Ridley

Guests: Mr R. Brown, Mrs S. Brown, Dr P. Kelly (all Dorset National Park team)

18/72/SF Public Forum

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

18/73/SF Apologies for Absence

Cllr O. Lovell

Cllr J. Scowen – holiday

Cllr G. Turner – coastguard training

Cllr S. Williams – holiday

18/74/SF Minutes

Proposed by Cllr J. Broom and seconded by Cllr B. Larcombe, the minutes of the meeting held on 28 November 2018 were **ADOPTED**.

18/75/SF Disclosable Pecuniary Interests

There were none.

18/76/SF Dispensations

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

18/77/SF Matters arising from the minutes of the Strategy and Finance Committee meeting held on 28 November 2018

Audio recording of council meetings

The town clerk said officers would be meeting with API Communications, the company which installed the existing recording system, on 14 February 2019 to discuss whether the existing system could be used.

Cllr D. Hallett asked if other companies should be approached as the existing system had not been up to standard.

The town clerk said the council had invested a lot of money in the system so the first step was to establish if it could be made to work to the council's requirements. If not, other companies would be approached.

Power boat club

The town clerk said there had still been no response from the power boat club's solicitor and as it stood, the Section 25 Notice would be implemented in May 2019. He said he would keep pressing the solicitors.

Hydrock report

The town clerk said Hydrock had identified either 19 or 21 February 2019 for a public consultation event on the draft report.

18/78/SF Update Report

Ambulance service

Cllr Mrs M. Ellis said she was not entirely satisfied with the response from the chief executive of the South Western Ambulance Service NHS Trust and she believed it should be followed up with another letter.

18/79/SF Minutes of the Assets-on-and-around Monmouth Beach Car Park

The town clerk said the bowls club representatives would be informed the issue of the bowls club car park would be discussed by the Full Council on 13 February 2019.

18/80/SF Dorset National Park

Mrs S. Brown gave an update on the proposed Dorset National Park, highlighting two major developments since they had addressed the council in July 2016: the Glover Review which was asked to look at the position of new national parks, including Dorset; and local government reorganisation.

Mrs S. Brown said it would be important to demonstrate community support for the national park and she hoped the council would consider sending a letter of support.

Mrs S. Brown and Mr R. Brown answered questions from members on the following: the history of the campaign to secure a Dorset National Park; how the planning

system would work under a national park authority, including the town council's role; how the national park authority would be funded; how the national park authority members are nominated/elected; how the authority would deal with land slippage and coastal defence works; whether the boundary of the national park would be outside coastal towns or not; and who the authority would be accountable to.

Mrs S. Brown said was Glover Review was expected to make recommendations in the autumn and the Government was expected to make an announcement on those recommendations in October. She said now would be an appropriate time to submit a supportive note of the benefits of a national park, and she would provide the town clerk with the address to submit comments to.

18/81/SF Internal Audit Report, Visit One 2018/19

Proposed by Cllr J. Broom and seconded by Cllr Mrs M. Ellis, members agreed to **RECOMMEND TO FULL COUNCIL** to note the internal auditor's recommendations and approve the management responses.

18/82/SF New Policies

Proposed by Cllr J. Broom and seconded by Cllr Mrs M. Ellis, members agreed to **RECOMMEND TO FULL COUNCIL** to approve the following policies: control of substances hazardous to health (COSHH); Legionella flushing; management of personal protection equipment (PPE); electrical safety; portable appliance testing (PAT); and weed spraying.

18/83/SF Investments, Cash Holdings and Loans

Cllr B. Larcombe suggested the council considered paying off its loan with West Dorset District Council (WDDC) while it had the money, also relieving any future administration of any rise in interest rates on this loan.

The town clerk said the council had project commitments in 2019/20 of around £600k; this would significantly decrease the reserve. He said due to the uncertainty of local government reorganisation and the favourable interest rate on the loan, it was sensible to have money in reserve, rather than paying off the loan.

Cllr S. Miller said when quotes had been agreed for the two main 2019/20 projects – the seafront roof and refurbishment of Guildhall Cottage – the question of whether to pay off the WDDC loan should be brought back to the council. In the meantime, he asked the town clerk to look at the possibility of investing in gilts as there was a possibility this would give the council marginally more return than investing in banks.

Proposed by Cllr J. Broom and seconded by Cllr B. Larcombe, members agreed to **RECOMMEND TO FULL COUNCIL** that the Lloyds fixed-term deposit of £100,900 maturing at the end of January 2019 be reinvested in a similar 12-month deposit at 1.00% (currently 0.65%) and that a further £100k of the balance of £590,312 in the Lloyds instant account be reinvested in a similar 12-month deposit: this will increase the interest on this sum from 0.05% to 1.00%; and that any decision to transfer a further £100k from the Lloyds instant account to a 12-month deposit account be deferred until there is greater certainty about the 2018/19 year-end balance and the cost of the roof repair and office refurbishment projects.

18/84/SF Financial Advice – Arrangement with Arlingclose

Members noted the council's relationship with Arlingclose for the provision of financial advice had ended.

18/85/SF Review of Arrangements with Other Local Authorities

The town clerk said the council needed to give consideration to land relationships with WDDC, beach management and the tripartite agreement. He said although these issues were not on Dorset Council's agenda at the moment, it would be beneficial for the town council to have a clear understanding of what it wanted to achieve in these areas.

Cllr B. Larcombe asked how much the transitional relief was on business rates.

The town clerk said he would find out and report back to members.

Cllr B. Larcombe suggested a working group was formed to further discuss some of the key issues.

Proposed by Cllr J. Broom and seconded by Cllr B. Larcombe, members agreed to **RECOMMEND TO FULL COUNCIL** to form a working group to further consider the town council's relationships with other local authorities and form a clear view of the town council's position.

18/86/SF Tourist Information Centre

Cllr S. Miller said this matter had been brought back to the council as the circumstances had changed; it was previously understood WDDC intended to cease the provision of the tourist information centre (TIC) in Lyme Regis, but it had since confirmed it wanted to transfer it to Dorset Council as a going concern.

As Cllr G. Turner could not attend the meeting, he wrote a letter to members with his view that the council should continue to commit to the refurbishment of Guildhall Cottage, to include the ground floor currently occupied by the TIC, even though this would mean the town council paying WDDC a £16k settlement to vacate. He said the council should use the time between now and September, when the TIC would vacate, to plan and tender for the refurbishment work.

This view was supported by several members. Cllr D. Hallett was concerned this discussion included the possibility of the council office moving to the former Lloyds Bank building, which had already been dismissed by the council.

Cllr Mrs M. Ellis said the decision to refurbish Guildhall Cottage was made with no plans and without an idea of exactly what work would be required. As such, she said allowing the TIC to remain in the building until the end of March 2020 would give the council time to get detailed plans and costings.

Cllr Mrs C. Reynolds said the council should also give consideration to the TIC staff and how allowing the TIC to remain would secure their jobs for a little longer.

Cllr B. Larcombe said due to the failure of the negotiations with WDDC over the transfer of assets and services, he didn't believe there was any value in using the TIC as a negotiating position. He added the town council should not take on the TIC or its staff.

The town clerk confirmed there was no suggestion the council office moved to other premises or took on the TIC or its staff. He said as it was now known there would be material costs associated with serving notice on WDDC and WDDC's future plans for the TIC had changed, there was an obligation on him to bring this information to members.

Cllr R. Doney said he wanted the TIC to be maintained for as long as possible as it was a valuable function, and it should be allowed to remain while the council put together plans for the office refurbishment.

Cllr J. Broom said if the council served notice now, the TIC would still be running through the peak season and the council could then look to run its own tourist information service from April 2020.

It was proposed by Cllr B. Larcombe and seconded by Cllr J. Broom that the council pursues the refurbishment of the ground floor of Guildhall Cottage, to serve notice on West Dorset District Council as planned to vacate the ground floor currently occupied by the tourist information centre, with a view to taking back the space on 1 October 2019.

This motion was not voted on.

Cllr S. Miller said as the council would start a significant project on the roof of the shelters in the autumn, it would be prudent to allow WDDC to pass the TIC on to Dorset Council as a going concern. In the interim, the council could plan what it believed the TIC offering from the premises should be and aim for a negotiated position from 31 March 2020 where the council would not be liable to pay £16k.

Cllr Mrs M. Ellis requested a recorded vote on the following motion:

Proposed by Cllr S. Miller and seconded by Cllr Mrs M. Ellis, members agreed to **RECOMMEND TO FULL COUNCIL** to revisit the previous decision not to renew the lease with West Dorset District Council for the ground floor of Guildhall Cottage, and to allow the tourist information centre to continue operating from the premises for a further 12 months until 31 March 2020.

Voted for – Cllr S. Miller, Cllr Mrs C. Reynolds, Cllr R. Doney, Cllr Mrs M. Ellis, Cllr S. Larcombe

Voted against – Cllr J. Broom, Cllr D. Hallett, Cllr P. Hicks, Cllr B. Larcombe

Abstentions – None

Cllr B. Larcombe asked for confirmation this would not change the existing resolution to refurbish the ground floor of Guildhall Cottage as a council office or re-visit any decision that the town council would not take on the TIC service.

Cllr S. Miller confirmed the TIC service would not be taken over by the town council.

The town clerk said the council would be running an event before purdah on 15 March 2019 for people who were thinking of standing for election to find out more about being a councillor. He said the council was obliged to actively promote the election and encourage people to stand, including promotion on social media and in the monthly newspaper column.

The town clerk spoke about the role of town council staff in the election process, as there was a suggestion the town council could receive nomination papers and hand deliver them to Dorset Council. He advised against this; if anything went wrong, it would be the responsibility of town council staff, and he felt the onus should be on the individual candidates to deliver their nominations.

Members agreed.

18/88/SF Park and Ride 2018 and 2019

The town clerk said the council had allocated an £11k budget to the park and ride for 2018 as it recognised the service may require underwriting. He said the service had operated at a loss during weekends in June and July.

Cllr J. Broom said the group ticket should be changed to include two adults and three children, which members generally agreed with.

It was noted that although the Charmouth Road park and ride had been very successful and this did question the need for the continued use of Sidmouth Road park and ride, the council had previously made a decision to wait for the Hydrock report before making a formal decision on Sidmouth Road.

The town clerk said there had been a few complaints about the pick-up point in Broad Street so officers were looking into a pick-up, as well as drop-off, point at Cobb Gate car park.

Cllr Mrs M. Ellis said the council should consider operating the park and ride on weekends in June and July if there were major events taking place.

Proposed by Cllr S. Miller and seconded by Cllr B. Larcombe, members agreed to **RECOMMEND TO FULL COUNCIL** to authorise officers to negotiate terms for a 2019 park and ride service from Charmouth Road with First Group, the providers of the service in 2018, with discretion to agree terms including group tickets, June and July weekends and pick-up and drop-off points.

18/89/SF List of Payments

Proposed by Cllr B. Larcombe and seconded by Cllr Mrs M. Ellis, members agreed to **RECOMMEND TO FULL COUNCIL** to approve the schedule of payments for September and October 2018 for the sums of £131,500.21 and £68,238.76, respectively.

The meeting closed at 8.59pm.