

## LYME REGIS TOWN COUNCIL

### STRATEGY AND FINANCE COMMITTEE

#### MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON WEDNESDAY 24 APRIL 2019

##### Present

**Chairman:** Cllr S. Miller

**Councillors:** Cllr J. Broom, Cllr R. Doney, Cllr D. Hallett, Cllr P. Hicks, Cllr B. Larcombe, , Cllr Mrs C. Reynolds, Cllr J. Scowen, Cllr G. Turner, Cllr S. Williams

**Officers:** Mr J. Wright (town clerk), Mr M. Green (deputy town clerk), Mr. M. Stainer (temporary finance manager)

**Absent:** Cllr P. Ridley

##### 18/104/SF Public Forum

No members of the public present wished to speak in the public forum for this meeting.

##### 18/105/SF Apologies for Absence

Cllr Mrs. M. Ellis – civic duties  
Cllr S. Larcombe – work commitments  
Cllr O. Lovell

##### 18/106/SF Minutes

Cllr J. Scowen felt that comments he had made concerning minute 18/95/SF (Hydrock report) warranted recording. This was not supported.

Proposed by Cllr B. Larcombe and seconded by Cllr Mrs. C. Reynolds, the minutes of the meeting held on 13 March 2019 were **ADOPTED**.

##### 18/107/SF Disclosable Pecuniary Interests

There were none.

##### 18/108/SF Dispensations

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

**18/109/SF Matters arising from the minutes of the Strategy and Finance Committee meeting held on 13 March 2019**

**Audio recording of council meetings**

Several members questioned why audio recording was not being trialled at this meeting, as stated in the agenda report.

The town clerk said that an inexpensive device for audio recording had now been purchased and would be used at the meeting of Full Council on 1 May.

**Hydrock report**

Several members, including Cllr B. Larcombe and Cllr J Scowen, reiterated their concerns the report had taken so long and remained incomplete. Given the forthcoming elections, this might mean that some existing councillors would not now have the opportunity to participate in the production of the final version of the report. They also questioned why it had not yet been circulated to them and why the consultants had been paid if the work was considered unsatisfactory.

The deputy town clerk said officers also had concerns about the time taken to carry out the work but that stage payments were part of the agreed contractual arrangements and a significant amount of work had been undertaken; particularly data collection and analysis. A significant sum was retained against the satisfactory completion of the contract and this would not be released unless or until the various concerns were addressed.

The town clerk said that a meeting was being arranged between the consultants, deputy town clerk and Cllr J. Broom and the various concerns would be dealt with at that meeting.

Cllr J. Broom reinforced his concerns about the current form of the report and assured other members that he would robustly represent their and his concerns.

The chairman undertook to circulate the draft the report to members this week.

**Minutes of the Dorset Council working group meeting held on 26 February 2019**

In response to a question from Cllr B. Larcombe, the town clerk said the meeting scheduled for 30 April clashed with a meeting of the Planning Committee and would be re-scheduled early in the new administration.

**Dorset and East Devon National Park Proposal**

Cllr B. Larcombe questioned whether this council had been formally consulted about the national park proposal and, if so, what the response had been. He suggested that Lyme Forward might be engaged to carry out any consultation on the council's behalf.

The town clerk believed the consultation on the Glover Report had ended on 18 December and that the town council had not been formally requested to respond. His view was that the council had not reached a position and wanted the opportunity to consider the matter further. He was not aware of any formal consultation which was

specific to the Dorset and East Devon proposal; the Glover Report was a wider and non-area-specific national exercise.

Cllr R. Doney mentioned that the Lyme Regis Society was hosting a presentation by the proposers of the Dorset NP. The talk would follow the LRS AGM which started at 2.30pm on Tue 30th April at Woodmead Halls.

## **18/110/SF Update Report**

### **Ice Cream Parlour**

In response to questions and concerns expressed by Cllr S. Williams, the deputy town clerk explained that there was a long list of parties interested in taking on the ice cream parlour. The intention was to re-let it as soon as works to the leaking roof and interior had been completed.

Beach hut keys would no longer be administered from the café, this arrangement had never been entirely satisfactory for anyone involved. Keys were now held in individual key safes in the adjacent kitchenette. Daily bookings, which were currently being administered from the office, would change to an online booking system later in the year.

### **Power Boat Club**

Cllr D. Hallett was concerned that the council was treating the club differently to other organisations or individuals in a similar position.

In response to questions and concerns from members, the town clerk explained that no further response had been received from the club or their representatives and he was taking advice from the council's solicitors about the correct next steps. It was important that the council followed the correct legal procedures and it might be that the matter would need to be brought back to the first appropriate meeting of the new administration. An extraordinary meeting would be arranged if necessary.

### **Park and Ride**

In response to questions, the deputy town clerk referred to the planning requirement to carry out reinstatement works at the Sidmouth Road site and stated that the council would not be paying rent for the whole of the current year, given the decision not to re-submit a planning application for the continued use of the site.

## **18/111SF Internal Audit Report, Visit Two 2018-19**

Cllr B. Larcombe asked why there had been problems with bank reconciliation given the employment of a finance locum to assist in the office. He also asked whether the stated timescale for the production of electronic leases was realistic, given workload and priorities in the office and the inability to meet the previous deadline.

The town clerk explained that the locum had been employed for two days per week and only a part of that limited time had been office-based. The last 9 months had been a challenging time given a combination of workload, staff absences and staff turnover in the office. He emphasised the auditor's comments that 'given the loss of a critical

full-time member of staff, I consider that the Council's systems are operating more effectively than I would have expected'.

He introduced Michael Stainer, the new temporary finance manager who explained that his immediate priority was ensuring completion of year-end accounting. He stated that the reconciliation issue referred to by the auditor had now been resolved and that any others were being dealt with.

The town clerk stated that he would be happy for the deadline to produce electronic versions of all leases to be extended, although some preliminary work had already taken place.

Members agreed that the deadline to produce electronic versions of all leases be extended to 30/12/2019.

The chairman emphasised his commitment to ensure that no further issues with bank reconciliation occurred in future.

Members **NOTED** the Internal Audit Report, Visit Two 2018-19

#### **18/112/SF Budget Performance, 1 April 2018 to 28 February 2019**

Several members raised a variety of issues concerning the budget statement, including:

- the danger of becoming overdependent on raising car park income, which could not be increased every year,
- the need for a proper asset management and maintenance plan which included anticipated annual expenditure requirements which could then be properly budgeted for,
- the need for the new administration to fundamentally review the council's commitment to major grants to local organisations post 2020,
- the risk of some unforeseen and major problem, such as a landslip, affecting town council-owned and income-generating assets.

The town clerk emphasised the council's strong financial position and the significant improvement in that position which had occurred over the life of the current administration. He was concerned about the level of unbudgeted expenditure which had been approved 'in year', without which the council would probably have shown a small surplus. He set out the challenges which the council was likely to face in the next year or two and emphasised the need to constantly look at ways of generating new or increased income streams. If some major natural disaster were to occur the it would require major external funding to resolve the likely consequences.

He agreed that a proper asset plan was an important exercise and that some initial work had already been undertaken. He did, however, caution that any plan needed to be fit for purpose and properly inform real priorities.

Members **NOTED** the report Budget Performance, 1 April 2018 to 28 February 2019.

#### **18/113/SF Investments, Cash Holdings and Loans**

Proposed by Cllr J. Broom, seconded by Cllr C.Mrs C. Reynolds members agreed to **RECOMMENDED TO FULL COUNCIL** that:

- a) The Lloyds fixed term deposit of £101,485.44 maturing at the end of April 2020 be reinvested in a similar 12-month deposit at 1.00% (currently 0.90%) and that a further £100k of the balance in the Lloyds instant account (currently £501,595.88) be reinvested in a similar 12-month deposit; this will increase the interest on this sum from 0.05% to 1.00%.
- b) 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 tendered cost of the roof repairs to the shelters' building.
- c) Discussions continue with Santander to obtain a better rate of interest for the approximately £160k banked with them at an interest rate of 0.8% and which matured at the end of February 2019; if this cannot be achieved, then the balance be re-invested with another provider on the most preferential terms reasonably and prudently achievable.

#### **18/114/SF Debtors Report**

Proposed by Cllr S Miller and seconded by Cllr B. 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 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. Members noted the report.

#### **18/115/SF Exempt Business**

##### **(a) Debtors Report**

Members discussed the latest position with regard to an ongoing legal situation at some length. At the request of the town clerk, they gave guidance as how best to proceed given various scenarios.

There was debate about the licensing of tables and chairs along the Marine Parade and members were concerned that the situation should be regularly monitored to ensure that the numbers were in accordance with the various licences issued and that the areas occupied did not encroach beyond the permitted boundaries. The need to preserve safe access at all times was emphasised.

*The meeting closed at 8.35pm.*