

LYME REGIS TOWN COUNCIL

STRATEGY AND FINANCE COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON WEDNESDAY 10 JULY 2019

Present

Chairman: Cllr B. Larcombe

Councillors: Cllr Ms B. Bawden, Cllr J. Broom, Cllr Miss K. Ellis, Cllr Mrs M. Ellis, Cllr L. Howe, Cllr D. Ruffle, Cllr D. Sarson, Cllr J. Scowen, Cllr Ms G. Stammers, Cllr G. Turner, Cllr S. Williams

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

19/01/SF Election of Chairman and Vice-Chairman

The mayor, Cllr Brian Larcombe opened the meeting.

Cllr D. Sarson nominated Cllr Mrs M. Ellis as chairman of the Strategy and Finance Committee, seconded by Cllr Miss K. Ellis.

Cllr S. Williams nominated Cllr B. Larcombe as chairman of the Strategy and Finance Committee, seconded by Cllr G. Turner.

Cllr B. Larcombe said he understood Cllr R. Doney wished to be considered for the role of chairman but he had sent his apologies for the meeting.

Cllr B. Larcombe nominated Cllr R. Doney as chairman of the Strategy and Finance Committee.

Members questioned whether a member could be nominated if they were not at the meeting.

The town clerk said a member did not have to be at a meeting to be nominated, but they did need to be able to accept a nomination. As he had not received confirmation of Cllr R. Doney's acceptance, he didn't believe the nomination could stand.

Cllr Mrs M. Ellis requested a recorded vote on the election of chairman, which was as follows:

Cllr B. Larcombe – Cllr Ms B. Bawden, Cllr G. Turner, Cllr L. Howe, Cllr Ms G. Stammers, Cllr S. Williams, Cllr J. Scowen, Cllr J. Broom, Cllr B. Larcombe

Cllr Mrs M. Ellis – Cllr D. Ruffle, Cllr Miss K. Ellis, Cllr D. Sarson, Cllr Mrs M. Ellis

Cllr B. Larcombe was duly **ELECTED** as chairman of the Strategy and Finance Committee.

Cllr B. Larcombe nominated Cllr J. Broom as vice-chairman of the Strategy and Finance Committee, seconded by Cllr G. Turner.

Cllr D. Sarson nominated Cllr Mrs M. Ellis as vice-chairman of the Strategy and Finance Committee, seconded by Cllr D. Ruffle.

Cllr J. Broom was duly **ELECTED** as vice-chairman of the Strategy and Finance Committee.

19/02/SF Terms of Reference

The committee **RECEIVED** its terms of reference.

19/03/SF Public Forum

Mrs C. Reynolds

Mrs C. Reynolds spoke in relation to agenda item 17, Filming Money and asked the council to support the Mary Anning statue appeal in donating the funds from the filming of Ammonite. She said she had read with interest in the local press the mayor, Cllr B. Larcombe's comments about how the money should be spent on something tangible for the town, that it shouldn't get absorbed into council funds, and was used to support a worthy project or cause to create a lasting legacy for the town. She said she couldn't think of a more lasting legacy than a statue of one of Lyme's greatest women and ambassadors. Mrs C. Reynolds said the last council had agreed it was a worthwhile project and gave the appeal its full support to continue. She said the cleaning of Mary Anning's grave had been admired by many, including Mary's relatives, who she had corresponded with and they had been very impressed. She said to launch a Crowdfunding appeal they needed £19k in their account, of which £4k was already in place, and a donation from the town council would enable them to pursue Crowdfunding to build the statue. She said this was supported by the film company, which had assured her was a more than acceptable use of the money. Mrs C. Reynolds asked the council on behalf of the Mary Anning Statue Committee, but more importantly on behalf of the town, to consider the request, which would be a lasting legacy. She said she couldn't stay for the meeting due to another commitment, but she looked forward to hearing a positive response to her request.

Ms L. Wiscombe (read out by Mrs C. Reynolds)

Ms L. Wiscombe spoke in relation to the same agenda item and said she also felt the money should go towards a statue of Mary Anning because it was high time Lyme Regis had a fitting tribute to a remarkable woman. She said to do her justice, a highly-skilled sculptor needed to be hired, which would cost a considerable amount. She said this was preferred to a substandard sculptor who might produce a statue that was not worthy of Mary Anning. Ms L. Wiscombe said this money would go towards engaging the best sculptor which could be afforded. She said she volunteered at the museum and last year almost 33,000 people visited there, both national and international visitors all with Mary's story as their reason for being in Lyme. She said many visitors asked why Lyme Regis didn't have a statue, and as Mary Anning was a part of the town's economy, it should recognise her with a fitting tribute of a bronze statue for today and future generations. Ms L. Wiscombe said the film company was in Lyme Regis to tell Mary Anning's story so any money donated should be spent in memory of her. She said the statue was the best thing the town could do in her memory and when the film was released it would cause even more interest. Ms L. Wiscombe said from observing social media pages, there seemed to be overwhelming support for the money to be used to support the establishment of a statue.

Mr R. Smith

Mr R. Smith spoke in relation to agenda item 15, Climate and Environmental Emergency. He said Lyme Regis had a reputation around the world, it was known as the birthplace of palaeontology and other sciences and because of visitors, the town was known globally. He drew members' attention to a UN summary for climate change published in October 2018, which showed a graph of climate change globally, and that global emissions must reach zero by 2040. Mr R. Smith said the UK sparked the industrial revolution and it was the country's duty to help repair some of that damage and lead the world in a de-carbonised economy. He said Lyme Regis could play an important part; it was a small community but people did look to it for leadership and it did have a reputation. He said as a coastal town, Lyme Regis was particularly vulnerable to rising sea levels and if the proposed reduced carbon levels were not achieved, there could be catastrophic sea level rises which would seriously affect the town. Mr R. Smith asked the council to do everything it could in being a leader, tackling climate change and carbon dioxide emissions.

Mr S. West

Mr S. West spoke in relation to the same agenda item. He thanked Cllr B. Bawden for putting forward the motion which he had requested at a Full Council meeting and asked that all members voted in favour of it. He said he couldn't solve climate change and nor could Lyme Regis, it was going to take everybody, but by voting to declare a climate emergency, members were sending a clear signal they were part of the solution. Mr S. West said it may be difficult to see exactly what the council could do and some things were beyond its remit. However, he said he was prepared to put his efforts into this and had started to put together the One Planet working group, which brought together existing groups in Lyme Regis helping to solve some of the issues around climate change, ensuring the people of Lyme Regis were involved and not just looking to the council to solve everything.

Mr K. Jenkin

As chairman and a trustee of Lyme Regis Community Land Trust (CLT), Mr K. Jenkin spoke in relation to agenda item 16 regarding a proposed feasibility study on Woodmead car park for affordable housing. He said the CLT was formed seven years ago at the behest of Lyme Regis Town Council and he quoted the late councillor Barbara Austin who said the town needed affordable rental housing for local people in perpetuity. He said they didn't realise the full impact of what she said but took it on board and it became their mission statement. Mr K. Jenkin said since then, the CLT had helped developed 15 affordable units at Garmans Field, which were occupied by people with a confirmed local connection. He said the CLT had won the People Powered Award of the year and had been shortlisted for the National Affordable Housing Scheme of the year. Mr K. Jenkin said they had a reputation in housing association circles and they had led a workshop at the CLT national conference recently. He said at the onset there was a massive need for affordable housing for local people in Lyme Regis and this was evidenced by the fact that when the 15 units were up for bidding, 258 bids were submitted. He said considerable sifting took place and they got the number down to 45, but this represented an over-subscription of 300%. He said that need remained and with this in mind, he asked the council to give the CLT permission to undertake a feasibility study on Woodmead car park.

Mrs L. Jenkin

As secretary and a trustee of Lyme Regis Community Land Trust (CLT), Mrs L. Jenkin spoke in relation to the same agenda item. She said as a former councillor, she understood what members' concerns would be. She referred to efforts made 10 years ago to place affordable housing at Woodmead car park, which became unwieldy and planners had warned the scheme would not be accepted. She said the CLT had scrapped those plans and started with a clean slate. Mrs L. Jenkin said they had spoken to the ambulance trust and fire brigade, which owned green land behind the emergency services centre, a large area not currently used by either service. She said they were fully behind the CLT's idea and had agreed to make the land available to them if needed for affordable housing. She said this land abutted the car park at the rear. Mrs L. Jenkin said they knew from the 250 applications that the local need for housing existed and they were now thinking of compact, maisonette, studio flats for singles and couples seeking one-bed accommodation, not families, possibly without car parking. She said there were currently 38 eligible applications on the housing list for Lyme Regis. Mrs L. Jenkin said they knew housing associations would re-house tenants with babies and children in more suitable accommodation in the town. She said they wanted to commission a feasibility study by experts in this field to find a way to incorporate units on the grass or elsewhere to protect the council's parking income and fit in with the broader landscape. She said they had no pre-conceived ideas, just this general idea. Mrs L. Jenkin said the CLT knew car parking income was central to the council's income and they envisaged no loss of parking spaces and hoped there could even be an increase. She said they would insist the council and the wider public had the opportunity to contribute to the study and they were also considering a professional look at the whole parking area to see if re-arranging it could give more spaces; if not, they would leave well alone. She said the money from the study would come from CLT sources and nothing would be asked of the council's budget. Mrs L. Jenkin said all they were asking for was the council's blessing for the study to be carried out and not to commit to anything further at this time.

Ms R. Austin

Ms R. Austin spoke in relation to agenda item 15, Climate Change and Environmental Emergency. She said she couldn't imagine the council would not support the motion for a climate emergency, with so many people talking about it in the community and nationally. She said at a time when a government had for the first time been taken to court for not protecting its citizens, she hoped the council didn't just pay lip service to the idea and got behind the UN Sustainable Development goals and took action for the best of the community and its residents.

Mrs T. West

Mrs T. West spoke in relation to the same agenda item and said she hoped the council would vote to declare a climate emergency. She said there were so many stories coming in from around the world, not just around the country, of new councils declaring a climate emergency, with Surrey declaring the previous day and pressure on Congress that day to declare. She said she was sure Lyme Regis could lead the way for coastal communities, as a town that needed the sea and bay more than anywhere, and lead the way as a tiny town with a big attitude. She asked the council to vote to declare a climate emergency in Lyme Regis.

19/04/SF Apologies for Absence

Cllr R. Doney

19/05/SF Minutes

Proposed by Cllr J. Broom and seconded by Cllr G. Turner, the minutes of the meeting held on 24 April 2019 were **ADOPTED**.

19/06/SF Disclosable Pecuniary Interests

Cllr J. Broom declared a non-pecuniary interest in agenda item 15, Filming Money, as he was a committee member of Mary Anning Rocks.

Cllr Mrs M. Ellis declared a pecuniary interest in agenda item 16 regarding the feasibility study of Woodmead car park as her property adjoined the car park. She said she would leave the room for this item but would make a statement before she left.

Cllr D. Sarson declared a non-pecuniary interest in agenda item 9, Update Report, as he was a member of the bowls' club.

Cllr J. Scowen declared a non-pecuniary interest in agenda item 15, Filming Money, as he was a committee member of Mary Anning Rocks.

Cllr Ms G. Stammers declared a pecuniary interest in agenda item 13, Sidmouth Road Park and Ride, as she worked in Uplyme and any proposal to divert traffic away from the village could affect the business.

19/07/SF Dispensations

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

19/08/SF Matters arising from the minutes of the Strategy and Finance Committee meeting held on 24 April 2019

Ice cream parlour

Cllr J. Scowen asked how the process of finding a new tenant was progressing.

The town clerk said officers would go through the process of tendering with a view to a new tenant taking occupancy when the work was complete. He said the contract for the works would be awarded in September and work was expected to take four weeks, so a new tenant could be in place in October.

Cllr S. Williams asked if anyone had given permission for an ice-cream van to operate on the seafront.

Cllr Mrs M. Ellis left the meeting at 7.31pm.

Although this was not on the agenda, the deputy town clerk said the trader had been told not to return and had agreed not to.

Cllr Mrs M. Ellis returned to the meeting at 7.33pm.

Powerboat club

The town clerk said following a meeting with the council's solicitor that day, he and the solicitor would be having discussions with the club shortly.

Electronic leases

Cllr B. Larcombe asked if officers were confident they would be able to achieve the deadline of 30 December 2019 for the production of electronic leases.

The town clerk said work had started in the office and he was reasonably confident the deadline would be met.

19/09/SF Update Report

Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL)

Cllr J. Scowen asked whether this money would go into the council's pot or it had to be spent on something specific.

The deputy town clerk said Section 106 funding had to be used for specific purposes and within a certain period of time, but CIL money could be used for any lawful purpose and had no time limit.

The town clerk said as the council was reviewing its grants at budget-setting time, he suggested the council put this money aside as it could be used to subsidise any grants.

Bowls' club

As there had been no response from the club, Cllr J. Scowen asked what would happen if they didn't respond at all.

The town clerk said in the event, he would bring the matter back to the council for further discussion.

Members discussed whether there should be a further face-to-face meeting with the bowls' club or whether officers should continue with formal correspondence.

The town clerk said he and officers had acted on the instructions of the council and its decision had been conveyed to the bowls' club.

No alternative course of action was agreed.

19/10/SF Minutes of the Dorset Council working group meeting held on 11 June 2019

The town clerk said he had written to Dorset Council's (DC) executive director of place, John Sellgren, as instructed by the working group, and he had received a response informing him the matter would be delegated to another officer. Having received no response within two weeks, the town clerk said he had chased this up and had also notified Cllr Daryl Turner.

The town clerk also said Kitson and Trotman had a copy of the lease between the Crown and former West Dorset District Council and would provide it to him.

19/11/SF A Review of the Information Policy

Cllr Ms B. Bawden said she was uneasy about agreeing the policy in its current form and asked if it could include a reference that the council was working towards General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) compliance.

The town clerk agreed more work was needed on GDPR and a revised policy would be brought to the council with inclusions referring to GDPR when the work was complete.

Regarding the handling of requests to the council, Cllr S. Williams said he was concerned he had written to the town clerk about several matters and had not received a response or acknowledgement.

Cllr B. Larcombe said if members had concerns about the effectiveness of the running of the council office, they should raise it in a formal way and not at meetings.

The town clerk supported this view and said bringing the office of town clerk into disrepute was unacceptable, but any complaints should be made to the mayor.

Proposed by Cllr D. Sarson and seconded by Cllr J. Scowen, members agreed to **RECOMMEND TO FULL COUNCIL** to approve the Information Policy.

19/12/SF The Annual Review of the Communications/PR Policy and Procedure

Proposed by Cllr J. Broom and seconded by Cllr J. Scowen, members agreed to **RECOMMEND TO FULL COUNCIL** to approve the Communications/PR policy and procedure.

19/13/SF Sidmouth Road Park and Ride

Several members believed the council should no longer operate the Sidmouth Road park and ride for reasons including: the Hydrock report not substantiating the need for it, and the increased number of spaces and a longer period of operation at the Charmouth Road park and ride.

Cllr Ms G. Stammers left the meeting at 7.57pm in line with her declaration of pecuniary interests.

Cllr J. Broom said the council should keep Sidmouth Road park and ride for another year until Hydrock's final report was published. He said if the council was not successful in getting signage on the A35 directing traffic to the east of the town, there would still need to be parking for those coming from the west.

Cllr S. Williams agreed and said the full extent of the parking issues would not be known until the peak season.

The deputy town clerk said the planning permission for use of the land at Sidmouth Road for park and ride had expired. He said it was a condition of the previous permission that remedial works were carried out by a certain date, which had now passed. He added it was unlikely the council would be allowed to operate a park and ride for a further year without doing those works, and he didn't believe the council had enough information to submit a planning application.

Cllr B. Larcombe said the signage the council hoped to introduce would make a real difference to the traffic coming through Uplyme.

Cllr J. Scowen said the council needed to make it very clear to the community it had been proven the Sidmouth Road park and ride was not needed.

Proposed by Cllr B. Larcombe and seconded by Cllr G. Turner, members agreed to **RECOMMEND TO FULL COUNCIL** not to pursue Sidmouth Road park and ride any further due to the figures in the Hydrock report not supporting the need to keep it, and that all efforts should be made to maximise the effectiveness of Charmouth Road park and ride, including necessary signage.

Cllr Ms G. Stammers returned to the meeting at 8.04pm.

19/14/SF Request from St Michael's Parish Church for Grant Funding

Cllr D. Sarson said the church was a historical building of great importance to the town and as such, he suggested the council gave a grant of £25k, subject to a review of grant funding in the autumn.

Several members agreed with this as they believed it showed the council valued the town's only Grade I listed building and could not allow it to deteriorate.

Cllr Mrs M. Ellis supported this view but believed the council should give more than £25k.

There was some concern from members about whether the council could legally give money to the church for this purpose.

The town clerk said there didn't appear to be a straightforward answer to this question and no case law existed to help determine this, but either position the council adopted was defensible. He said if the council agreed to the funding, it was taking a risk, but he suggested it was a considered risk.

Cllr B. Larcombe said members needed to consider whether approving the request to preserve a historic building was reasonable and done with the best of intentions.

Cllr J. Broom asked if the prices obtained for the work in 2018 had changed since then.

The town clerk said church representatives had discussed this with the contractor, who said there was likely to be a 3% increase on the works' cost.

Cllr S. Williams was concerned that approving the grant would leave the council open to requests from other churches in the town.

Cllr B. Larcombe said he didn't believe it would set a precedent because this was a specific, identified problem which would worsen if not addressed, and the church had already demonstrated its commitment through the funds it had raised.

It was proposed by Cllr Mrs M. Ellis and seconded by Cllr D. Ruffle to award £50k of grant funding to St Michael's Parish Church towards works to the church tower.

This motion was not carried.

Proposed by Cllr D. Sarson and seconded by Cllr J. Scowen, members agreed to **RECOMMEND TO FULL COUNCIL** to award £25k of grant funding to St Michael's Parish Church towards works to the church tower, subject to a review of grant funding in the autumn.

19/15/SF Climate and Environmental Emergency

Cllr B. Larcombe supported the motion and said many of the initiatives identified which could support a climate change emergency were things the council had already indicated its support for, including a free town bus and an electronic office.

Cllr Ms B. Bawden said many organisations in the town were keen to work with the One Planet working group to coordinate the community effort and not duplicate. She said the Be the Change initiative would monitor and motivate people to do more.

Cllr J. Scowen said it would also help the council work more closely with the community.

Cllr J. Broom asked if the proposal within Cllr B. Bawden's motion to prepare a report within six months of the actions the town council would take was a realistic timescale.

The town clerk said the many of the identified initiatives were relatively cheap and easy to implement and as the council moved through the budget-setting process, the council could adopt them as objectives and get them formally codified. He said other initiatives could be introduced over several years.

Cllr B. Larcombe asked if the council would actually be working 'in partnership' with the UN to work towards the Sustainable Development Goals.

Cllr Ms B. Bawden said it would involve committing to make pledges, a process the One Planet working group could coordinate, and a report would then need to be produced to evidence how that target was reached.

Proposed by Cllr Ms B. Bawden and seconded by Cllr L. Howe, members agreed to **RECOMMEND TO FULL COUNCIL** to declare a climate and environmental emergency.

Proposed by Cllr B. Larcombe and seconded by Cllr S. Williams, members agreed to **RECOMMEND TO FULL COUNCIL** that Cllrs B. Bawden, L. Howe and K. Ellis sit on the Lyme Regis One Planet Working Group.

19/16/SF Request from Lyme Regis Community Land Trust to undertake a feasibility study over the Woodmead car park area for possible affordable housing for rent to local people

Cllr Mrs M. Ellis agreed more sites needed to be found for affordable rented housing, but the council needed to consider the conflict in 2014 when a scheme was previously proposed for the car park, and the risk that valuable parking spaces could be lost.

Cllr Mrs M. Ellis left the meeting at 8.36pm in line her declaration of pecuniary interests.

Cllr B. Larcombe made it clear the study would be undertaken by the CLT at their own expense and in agreeing to the study, the council would be making a without prejudice decision.

Proposed by Cllr J. Broom and seconded by Cllr Ms G. Stammers, members agreed to **RECOMMEND TO FULL COUNCIL** to approve the request from Lyme Regis Community Land Trust to procure a feasibility study; this is entirely without prejudice to the council's subsequent consideration of any proposals which might emerge from the study.

Cllr Mrs M. Ellis returned to the meeting at 8.39pm.

19/17/SF Filming Money

Cllr J. Scowen suggested offering interested parties the opportunity to bid for the money and members could then make a decision based on expressions of interest.

The town clerk said an advert could be placed in the local press inviting organisations to bid, and expressions of interest could come to the next meeting of this committee on 25 September 2019.

Cllr Mrs M. Ellis believed the timescale was too tight and suggested the meeting on 6 November 2019 would be more suitable, which members agreed.

Proposed by Cllr J. Scowen and seconded by Cllr B. Larcombe, members agreed to **RECOMMEND TO FULL COUNCIL** to invite interested parties to submit expressions of interest for the £15,000 filming money.

The meeting closed at 8.48pm.