

LYME REGIS TOWN COUNCIL

STRATEGY AND FINANCE COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON WEDNESDAY 13 NOVEMBER 2019

Present

Chairman: Cllr B. Larcombe

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

Absent: Cllr L. Howe

19/34/SF

Public Forum

Mr C. Tipping

As manager of LymeForward, Mr C. Tipping said the organisation didn't apply for the funding from the Mary Anning film for the foodbank. He said there had been some letters in the local press about the foodbank, which was a reflection of how great the town was. He said the foodbank survived on the generosity of the town and it never failed to give. As an example of this generosity, Mr C. Tipping said LymeForward had put out an appeal about a resident whose dog needed to be looked after while he was in hospital and within half an hour, several people had come forward to help. He said the council already funded the foodbank because it funded LymeForward and enabled him and his team of volunteers to help those in the town who needed it. Mr C. Tipping said last Christmas they helped a Lyme Regis family in crisis; the father had lost his job, both parents were in the Universal Credit system and it would be five weeks until they had any money. He said despite being referred by the citizens' advice bureau, the mother was ashamed to go into the foodbank, she was worried about Christmas and couldn't afford presents for the children. Mr C. Tipping said LymeForward was not a panacea for all the problems in Lyme Regis but in a little way, it had helped this family get back on their feet with food and the volunteers had even managed to arrange some presents. He said the family went back in January and having both found jobs, they gave food back to the foodbank. He said the town council had helped enable that and it should feel as proud as LymeForward did. Mr C. Tipping said he would be happy if LymeForward could say a foodbank wasn't needed anymore. He also thanked the town council staff because in his 14 months at LymeForward, which had not been easy, they had been fantastic and it was good to know there was someone at the end of the phone with advice. He said whatever the future held for LymeForward, he said it had been fantastic and he thanked the council.

Mr N. Ball

Mr N. Ball said The Hub, in many things it did, had recently given his family some support through the Death Café. He urged everyone to go to a coffee morning, a clothes swap or to the foodbank at The Hub. He said there was so much there he didn't know about previously and it must be kept going. He said it really was the hub of Lyme Regis.

Ms R. Cohen

The town clerk said an email had been received from Ms R. Cohen from B Sharp, thanking the council for its support in funding and looking to the future. He said the email would be circulated to members.

Miss G. Robson

Miss G. Robson spoke in relation to agenda item 16, Grant Funding Request. She said as a local person and someone who had acted on the Marine Theatre stage, she was asked to direct play written by local writer Andy Rattenbury to celebrate the life of the town through the history of the Marine Theatre. She said the play was about, by and for the people of Lyme Regis. As an historic town, she said the Marine Theatre was a living relic, kept alive by the townsfolk. Miss G. Robson said the community play involved five local societies; musical society, pantomime players, Marine Players, school of ballet and B Sharp. She said it was commonly known there had been some disagreements between societies, the theatre and the townspeople but that was all being put to one side and they were all coming together to celebrate the theatre over the last 125 years. Miss G. Robson said the play was telling a story about the town and the people through the history of the Marine Theatre. She said they needed money to put on a production of this size, as well as time and manpower. She said the budget had been refined and a further £1,000 saved, leaving a budget of £6,968, with expected ticket sales of £1,500. She said ticket prices had been set low to get as many people as possible to see the play. Miss G. Robson said they had been proactive in getting funding and had secured £3,000 from small arts' grants, friends and sponsors. She said they were asking the town council to fund the remaining £2,468. She said they aimed to create a production the whole town could be proud of and she wouldn't be asking for the council's help to make it happen if it wasn't for her Lyme Regis stubbornness and passion.

Cllr Mrs M. Ellis said as it was a celebration of the Marine Theatre, she thought there should be no charge for the venue. She asked who was doing the lighting and sound as the theatre had installed new equipment recently.

Miss G. Robson said the lights at the theatre were being used but they needed a projector as the one at the theatre was not suitable for their requirements.

Cllr B. Larcombe asked why they hadn't applied for funding at grants' time in March. He also asked why some people were being paid for putting on a community production.

Miss G. Robson said they needed to make sure they had all the societies on board before applying for funding. She said people were being paid because they were spending a lot of time on the play and although the fee had been reduced, it was not possible to do the play without that payment.

Cllr Ms G. Stammers asked if there was a contract agreement for the paid roles and whether vacant posts were advertised. She also asked when the budget was put together.

Ms G. Robson said she was asked to take on the role of director and the budget was put together in September.

Ms T. Blech

Ms T. Blech spoke in relation to the same agenda item. She said the writing of the script and engagement with the people needed to put the play on was not complete until end-September/early-October. She said only at that point did they have the confidence to approach people to ask for funding and to come to the council to make the funding request. She said they were not representing the Marine Theatre; it was about the group of people who had got together to put the play on for the town, and the town and its theatre were at the centre of the play. Ms T. Blech said they were using the term 'community players' for a group of around 150 people who wanted to celebrate the town and its theatre through the production and the contribution of the history of the theatre, and the part it had played through times of crisis and joy. She said they were not asking for a bail-out and it wasn't an indulgent piece of entertainment, it was for everyone in the community, bringing together so many people to share and celebrate the theatre. She said the coming together of the societies was unprecedented and a special occasion in the 125 years of theatre in Lyme Regis.

Cllr Mrs M. Ellis asked where it would leave the play if the council didn't provide the funding. She also asked if they had asked for free use of the Marine Theatre.

Ms T. Blech said it would leave them with a huge problem and they would have to think again. She said they had been given the rock bottom rate for using the theatre, which included rehearsal time.

Cllr B. Larcombe asked who the governing body was.

Ms T. Blech said the director, musical director and stage manager were the governing body. She said this hadn't been done before and if another community play was put on, they would apply for other grants.

19/35/SF Apologies for Absence

Cllr J. Scowen – personal commitment

19/36/SF Minutes

Proposed by Cllr J. Broom and seconded by Cllr G. Turner, the minutes of the meeting held on 25 September 2019 were **ADOPTED**.

19/37/SF Disclosable Pecuniary Interests

Cllr D. Ruffle declared a non-pecuniary interest in agenda item 16, Grant Funding Request, as he would be part of the production with the Marine Players. He said he would stay in the room but not vote.

Cllr Ms B. Bawden declared a non-pecuniary interest in agenda item 15, Filming Money, Expressions of Interest as she was involved in the bid from the Mary Anning Scholarship Legacy Fund. She said she would stay and take part in discussions but not vote.

Cllr R. Doney declared his membership of the Marine Theatre. He said he didn't believe this was a pecuniary interest under the law but to avoid any doubt, he had requested a dispensation to take part in the discussion of the Marine Theatre.

19/38/SF Dispensations

The town clerk confirmed he had granted a dispensation to Cllr R. Doney to allow him to take part in discussions about the Marine Theatre.

19/39/SF Filming Money – Expressions of Interest

The chairman brought this item forward to allow applicants to speak.

Cllr S. Williams asked if the council had been provided with all the information it needed about the organisations, such as audited accounts.

Cllr B. Larcombe said this was only a requirement of the normal grants' funding, whereas this was a one-off grant award and organisations had not been asked for this information.

The following people spoke in support of the applications:

- Rob McLaughlin – Town Mill Trust, chairman
- Anya Pearson – Mary Anning Rocks, project lead
- Sara Hudston – B Sharp, trustee
- Mary Kahn – Axminster and Lyme Regis Cancer Support, founder
- Marcus Dixon – Lyme Regis Gig Club, trustee
- Philip Evans – Lyme Regis Musical Theatre, president
- Adrienne Bonwick – Woodroffe School PTFA, fundraising committee member
- Cecelia Bawden – Mary Anning Scholarship Legacy Fund

Further discussion was deferred to when the item came up on the agenda.

19/40/SF Matters arising from the minutes of the Strategy and Finance Committee meeting held on 25 September 2019

Bowls' club

Cllr R. Doney asked when the council had agreed further negotiations would take place and why it had taken eight months for the club to respond.

Cllr B. Larcombe said the club had requested a meeting with himself and the town clerk. The town clerk confirmed the club was informed of the council's decision on a timely basis.

19/41/SF Update Report

Powerboat club

The town clerk said this issue was becoming quite protracted as the respective solicitors were talking, but a meeting had now been arranged for 14 November 2019.

Cllr S. Williams was concerned meetings involved only officers as the powerboat club wanted to speak to members.

Cllr Mrs M. Ellis left the meeting at 8.20pm.

The town clerk said the council had discussed the matter at length and he had carried out the council's instructions.

Cllr Mrs M. Ellis returned to the meeting at 8.21pm.

Cllr B. Larcombe said the club had failed to respond to the council, which was why legal action had been taken.

Largigi

The town clerk said he would provide a verbal report in exempt business.

Proposed by Cllr Mrs M. Ellis and seconded by Cllr Miss K. Ellis, 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.

19/42/SF Internal Audit Report, Visit One 2019-20

Members were concerned about the size of the agenda and agreed this item needed to be deferred to the next meeting to allow proper consideration.

Proposed by Cllr B. Larcombe and seconded by Cllr J. Broom, members agreed to **RECOMMEND TO FULL COUNCIL** to defer consideration of the internal auditor's report on visit one of 2019/20 to the next Strategy and Finance Committee meeting.

19/43/SF The Process for Approving the 2020-21 Budget and Five-Year Financial Plan

Members noted the report.

19/44/SF Statement of Internal Control, Risk Management Policy and Annual Risk Assessment

Members felt this item should also be deferred to the next meeting to allow proper consideration.

As there would already be a significant amount of business on the next agenda, it was agreed an additional Strategy and Finance Committee meeting would be held on Tuesday 17 December 2019, with a degree of flexibility for the agenda.

19/45/SF Budget Performance, 1 April – 30 September 2019

The deputy town clerk highlighted the main budget variations throughout the year.

In response to a member question, the deputy town clerk said the income didn't include site licence fees as there was no commitment accounting.

Cllr B. Larcombe said he wanted the council to be presented with more accurate estimates for the projects it was entering into, as in some instances, actual costs had doubled or almost trebled.

The town clerk agreed and said a quantity surveyor would be used in future to provide more detailed estimates.

Cllr B. Larcombe said the council would reach a plateau as it wouldn't be able to grow its income through rates and charges in the same way it had done in the last four years. As such, he said the council needed to look at its own outgoings and costs.

Cllr G. Turner asked why the estimated cost of the office refurbishment had increased from £100k to £300k.

The deputy town clerk said £100k was a very early estimate and was predicated around the likelihood the office would move to another building, which would have required a fit-out, only. However, when it was decided the office would remain in the existing building, the budget had to be increased to £300k. The deputy town clerk said this budget was an estimate based on there being no clearly defined scope of works.

The town clerk said officers wanted the scope of works to be agreed as soon as possible so the project could progress.

Cllr J. Broom said he didn't think this could be agreed in a normal committee meeting and said there needed to be a separate meeting. This was agreed and it was anticipated this would take place in early-2020.

19/46/SF Review of Charges

Cart Road beach hut hire

Proposed by Cllr S. Williams and seconded by Cllr B. Larcombe, members agreed to **RECOMMEND TO FULL COUNCIL** to set weekly charges for 2021/22 Card Road beach hut hire as follows:

Easter holiday	£50
Spring holiday	£55
June	£50
Mid-July and August	£130
Christmas and New Year	£40
Winter season	£160
Summer season	£1,000
Annual	£1,600

Proposed by Cllr Mrs M. Ellis and seconded by Cllr Ms B. Bawden, members agreed to **RECOMMEND TO FULL COUNCIL** to hold daily hire charges for 2021/22 Cart Road beach hut hire, as follows:

January to Easter	£3
End-April to spring holiday	£9
Early-July	£30
September	£11
October	£6
November and December	£4

Alfresco licences

Proposed by Cllr R. Doney and seconded by Cllr Mrs M. Ellis, members agreed to **RECOMMEND TO FULL COUNCIL** to hold alfresco licence charges for 2020/21, as follows:

Covers	£130
Single chairs	£12

Website advertising

Proposed by Cllr R. Doney and seconded by Cllr D. Sarson, members agreed to **RECOMMEND TO FULL COUNCIL** to hold website advertising charges for 2020/21, as follows:

	Excl VAT	Incl VAT
Bronze listing	£50.00	£60.00
Silver listing	£100.00	£120.00
Gold listing	£150.00	£180.00
Small advert subpage	£150.00	£180.00
Medium advert subpage	£300.00	£360.00
Large advert subpage	£780.00	£936.00
Small advert overview/webcam page	£200.00	£240.00
Medium advert overview/webcam page	£480.00	£576.00
Large advert overview/webcam page	£1,020.00	£1224.00
Advert + 2 nd advert (same size or smaller)		2 nd advert at half price
Advert + listing		Listing at half price
Listing + 2 nd listing (same price or less)		2 nd listing at half price

Bell Cliff advertising boards

Members discussed increasing the charges for Bell Cliff advertising boards as there was a waiting list in double figures. Cllr Ms G. Stammers said advertising boards at Uplyme Garage were £150 per year.

It was proposed by Cllr G. Turner to set the charge for 2020/21 for Bell Cliff advertising boards at £125.

This motion was not seconded

It was proposed by Cllr B. Larcombe to set the charge for 2020/21 for Bell Cliff advertising boards at £150.

This motion was not seconded.

It was proposed by Cllr B. Larcombe and seconded by Cllr J. Broom to set the charge for 2020/21 for Bell Cliff advertising boards at £130.

This motion was not carried.

Proposed by Cllr R. Doney and seconded by Cllr Mrs M. Ellis, members agreed to **RECOMMEND TO FULL COUNCIL** to set the charge for 2020/21 for Bell Cliff advertising boards at £120.

Marine Parade Shelters

The deputy town clerk said the council had already set charges for 2020/21 and there was an outstanding commitment to review the use of the shelters; as such, he recommended the charges remained unchanged for 2021/22 at this point, and to re-visit this as part of the review, which members agreed.

Amenities

Proposed by Cllr Mrs M. Ellis and seconded by Cllr B. Larcombe, members agreed to **RECOMMEND TO FULL COUNCIL** to hold amenities charges for 2020/21, as follows:

Adult mini golf and putting	£3
Child mini golf and putting	£1.50
Table tennis	£1.50

Weddings and civil marriages

Proposed by Cllr Mrs M. Ellis and seconded by Cllr J. Broom, members agreed to **RECOMMEND TO FULL COUNCIL** to hold wedding and civil marriage charges for 2021/22, as follows:

Monday to Friday	£300
Saturday and Sunday	£400

Car parking permits

Proposed by Cllr R. Smith and seconded by Cllr J. Broom, members agreed to **RECOMMEND TO FULL COUNCIL** to set holiday accommodation parking permit charges for 2020/21 at £670.

It was proposed by Cllr B. Larcombe to set non-resident parking permit charges for 2020/21 at £350.

This motion was not seconded.

Proposed by Cllr B. Larcombe and seconded by Cllr R. Doney, members agreed to **RECOMMEND TO FULL COUNCIL** to set non-resident parking permit charges for 2020/21 at £335.

Proposed by Cllr B. Larcombe and seconded by Cllr Ms G. Stammers, members agreed to **RECOMMEND TO FULL COUNCIL** to set resident parking permit charges for 2020/21 at £175.

Car parking

Proposed by Cllr Mrs M. Ellis and seconded by Cllr B. Larcombe, members agreed to **RECOMMEND TO FULL COUNCIL** to hold parking charges at Monmouth, Cabanya and Woodmead car parks for 2020/21, as follows:

Cabanya and Monmouth	£1.40 per hour
Woodmead	£1 per hour
Woodmead three-day ticket	£25
Woodmead weekly ticket	£50

Members agreed there would be no change to the level of penalty charge.

Cemetery charges

Proposed by Cllr Mrs M. Ellis and seconded by Cllr J. Broom, members agreed to **RECOMMEND TO FULL COUNCIL** to hold cemetery charges for 2020/21, as follows:

Inter stillborn child or under 2 years	No charge
Inter child under 16 years	No charge
Inter over 16 years	£225
Inter cremated remains	£50
Exclusive right of burial in earthen grave	£455
Exclusive right of burial of cremated remains	£276
Installation of headstone headstone/footstone/tablet	£90
Installation of vase	£45/60
Additional inscription on memorial	£30
Scattering ashes on existing graves	£20
Scattering ashes beneath turf of existing graves	£20
Genealogy searches	£25
Certified copy of entry in burial books	Not offered
Double interment fee	No extra charge

The meeting adjourned for a break at 9.37pm.

The meeting resumed at 9.45pm.

19/47/SF Future Grant Allocation

Cllr S. Williams said organisations such as the Citizens' Advice Bureau would benefit from having the security of longer-term funding but required less funding than the major grants.

Cllr B. Larcombe said the distinction between grants should be short/medium/long-term grants, rather than minor/medium/major, which members generally agreed with. He said there should also be a greater emphasis on match funding, as some organisations were overly reliant on council funding.

Cllr R. Doney suggested the council set up a social fund to provide funding to organisations that helped the fabric of the town and provided a sense of community, and all other grants would be discretionary.

Members supported this idea and discussed how the council would determine if an organisation qualified for the social fund.

Cllr R. Smith suggested organisations could make a case for a grant from the social fund in their application, and if they qualified, they could be given higher priority in the grant allocation.

The town clerk said further discussions would need to take place about how the categories and qualifying criteria would work as some organisations could fall into either category. At this point, he said guidance was needed from members about the total grants' budget from 2020/21 onwards, which was currently at £130k. He said £25k could easily be cut from this budget due to the end of the council's grant commitment to the football club. As such, he suggested a total grants' budget of £80k.

Cllr Mrs M. Ellis said she didn't believe the budget should be reduced too significantly as it was not yet known how many organisations would require funding and the level of that funding. She said it may result in in-year funding requests because organisations were in dire need.

Cllr B. Larcombe suggested a contingency fund for in-year requests, but this was not agreed.

The town clerk said if the council intended to change the process, it needed to be implemented quickly as there were organisations currently receiving grants who needed to have a steer on future funding. He said the council should be in a position to approve grants by the middle of January 2020.

It was proposed by Cllr Mrs M. Ellis and seconded by Cllr D. Sarson to set the total amount of grants to local organisations in 2020/21, 2021/22, 2022/23, 2023/24 and 2024/25 at £100,000 per year.

This motion was not carried.

Proposed by Cllr G. Turner and seconded by Cllr B. Larcombe, members agreed to **RECOMMEND TO FULL COUNCIL** to set the total amount of grants to local organisations in 2020/21, 2021/22, 2022/23, 2023/24 and 2024/25 at £80,000 per year.

It was agreed Cllr R. Doney would work with officers to develop proposals on the allocation of grants, to include a social fund and discretionary grants, with greater emphasis being put on match funding.

19/48/SF Objectives 2020-2025

Cllr Mrs M. Ellis said she felt the objectives should include looking for an alternative park and ride site to Charmouth Road as it was uncertain how long the existing site would be available. Members agreed with this.

Members discussed the precept and whether it should be held at the current level, increased, or withdrawn completely.

Cllr B. Larcombe believed the council should consider withdrawing the precept as the council shouldn't be imposing a tax on residents if it wasn't needed. He said an increase of 10%, for example, would generate a nominal sum for the council but would show as a huge percentage increase for taxpayers and create an adverse reaction.

Cllr Mrs M. Ellis said the council should start to gradually increase the precept so if services were passed down from Dorset Council (DC), the council wouldn't be forced to increase it by a significant amount to cover the cost of those services.

Cllr R. Doney said as the number of properties had increased in Lyme Regis, the effect of holding the precept meant the amount of tax on each property went down. He said if the precept was increased by 20%, for example, this would add an extra 12p a week on an average Band D property and generate £12k for the council, which could be used to provide grants to local organisations. He added that he didn't believe residents would complain if the council explained why it was implementing the increase.

Cllr Ms B. Bawden said she believed people should pay for local services, not just because the town council was likely to take on services from DC, but there were many other services the council provided and it was a matter of principle to contribute to the local community.

Cllr R. Smith asked if there was a cap on how much a town or parish council could increase the precept by.

The town clerk said there was currently no cap but this could be introduced at some point in time. He therefore suggested the council looked at increasing the precept now, as it might not have the freedom to do so in future.

Cllr J. Broom said many other town and parish councils increased their precept ahead of the transition to a unitary authority. He believed a cap would be introduced at some point, so the council should take the opportunity to increase the precept while it was still able to do so.

Members agreed if there was an increase, it should be for one year only, rather than planned increases over several years.

It was proposed by Cllr R. Smith and seconded by Cllr B. Larcombe to increase the precept for 2020/21 by an inflationary rate of 2.5%.

This motion was not carried.

Proposed by Cllr R. Doney and seconded by Cllr Mrs M. Ellis, members agreed to **RECOMMEND TO FULL COUNCIL** to increase the precept for 2020/21 by 10%.

Members discussed the rest of the draft objectives and agreed an alternative site for park and ride should be added to the draft list.

Cllr R. Doney said the town bus was very important to elderly residents and said there had been requests for a Saturday service. As such, Cllr Mrs M. Ellis asked if costings could be obtained for a Saturday service.

Cllr Mrs M. Ellis was concerned members had not yet voted on the objectives before they were costed and before going out to public consultation.

The town clerk said there was another step in the process when members would be able to vote on individual objectives alongside estimated costs and public feedback. He said it would be straightforward to take objectives out at a later date, but he advised against adding in further objectives as it would mean a budget couldn't be produced by 8 January 2020 as planned.

Cllr Ms B. Bawden said other projects which had been passed on to the One Planet Working Group to progress would also come back to the council for approval and implementation.

Proposed by Cllr R. Smith and seconded by Cllr Miss K. Ellis, members agreed to **RECOMMEND TO FULL COUNCIL** to agree the list of draft objectives for 2020-25, with the addition of pursuing an alternative park and ride site, to take forward to public consultation.

19/49/SF Filming Money – Expressions of Interest

Members agreed to defer this item until the meeting on 17 December 2019.

19/50/SF Grant Funding Request

Cllr Ms G. Stammers said she was unhappy with the way the request had been presented as it had been made so late.

Cllr Mrs M. Ellis said the council would usually ask for accounts and a constitution as part of a grant request, which had not been provided. She said she didn't agree with the directors paying themselves, especially as the positions hadn't been advertised and it was a community play. She added the Marine Theatre should be providing the venue for free, as the play was in celebration of the theatre.

There was general agreement with all these points.

Proposed by Cllr Mrs M. Ellis and seconded by Cllr G. Turner, members agreed to **RECOMMEND TO FULL COUNCIL** not to approve the request from performing societies in Lyme Regis for a grant towards the cost of a community play, 'Are you going to the Marine?'

19/51/SF Exempt Business

The town clerk gave an update on legal proceedings regarding the non-payment of cover charges by Largigi.

The meeting closed at 11.35pm.