

LYME REGIS TOWN COUNCIL

STRATEGY AND FINANCE COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON WEDNESDAY 14 JULY 2021

Present

Chairman: Cllr M. Ellis

Councillors: Cllr B. Bawden, Cllr J. Broom, Cllr R. Doney, Cllr K. Ellis, Cllr B. Larcombe, Cllr C. Reynolds, Cllr D. Ruffle, Cllr D. Sarson, Cllr R. Smith, Cllr G. Stammers, Cllr G. Turner, Cllr T. Webb, Cllr S. Williams

Officers: A. Mullins (support services manager), J. Wright (town clerk)

21/01/SF Election of Chairman and Vice-Chairman

It was proposed by Cllr D. Sarson and seconded by Cllr G. Turner that Cllr B. Larcombe is chairman of the Strategy and Finance Committee.

It was proposed by Cllr C. Reynolds and seconded by Cllr K. Ellis that Cllr M. Ellis is chairman of the Strategy and Finance Committee.

Cllr M. Ellis was duly **ELECTED** as chairman.

Cllr J. Broom left the meeting at 7.07pm.

Cllrs B. Bawden and B. Larcombe left the meeting at 7.08pm.

Cllr S. Williams left the meeting at 7.09pm.

It was proposed by Cllr M. Ellis and seconded by Cllr C. Reynolds that Cllr R. Doney is vice-chairman of the Strategy and Finance Committee.

There being no other nominations, Cllr R. Doney was duly **ELECTED**.

21/02/SF Terms of Reference

Proposed by Cllr R. Doney and seconded by Cllr K. Ellis, the terms of reference were **RECEIVED**.

21/03/SF Public Forum

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

21/04/SF Apologies for Absence

There were none.

21/05/SF Minutes

Proposed by Cllr C. Reynolds and seconded by Cllr T. Webb, the minutes of the meeting held on 12 May 2021 were **ADOPTED**.

21/06/SF Disclosable Pecuniary Interests

Cllr M. Ellis declared a pecuniary interest in agenda item 14, List of Payments as it included a payment to the Woodmead Halls, which was her employer.

21/07/SF Dispensations

There were none.

21/08/SF Matters arising from the minutes of the Strategy and Finance Committee meeting held on 12 May 2021

Requests for outside seating

Cllr C. Reynolds asked for an update on the trailer outside Hix's restaurant.

The town clerk said at the time of writing the report, the trailer was not being used but it was now in use. He said the deputy town clerk would be arranging a meeting with the restaurant owner the following week to discuss it. The town clerk said he thought there was a misunderstanding of what the trailer would be used for; there seemed to be a perception that it would be used as an inward facing bar that served people in the restaurant.

Cllr M. Ellis asked that members were updated following the meeting.

Cllr R. Smith asked if the fee charged to the restaurant could be increased because the trailer was being used as an outside bar.

The town clerk said the council could only charge £100 under government legislation to help businesses recover from Covid, but the restaurant owner had expressed an interest in pursuing it after the legislation ended.

Cllr R. Doney asked if the government had given any indication of when the legislation would end.

The town clerk said a letter circulated to local authorities from the Secretary of State for Housing Communities and Local Government stated the legislation would be extended until September 2022. However, there was nothing to confirm this change was going through Parliament, although he believed a letter of intent from a secretary of state was enough to support action being taken.

The town clerk said he intended to write to the local MP to seek clarification.

21/09/SF Update Report

Members noted the report.

21/10/SF The Annual Review of the Fixed Asset Register

Cllr M. Ellis said the road to the fire station wasn't included in the register as there was land along there owned by the council, which the gardeners also hadn't been tending to.

In response to a member question, the town clerk confirmed the lift on Marine Parade was included in the Marine Parade Shelters listing.

Cllr R. Doney asked if the internal auditor had sight of the register.

The town clerk said the internal auditor had sight of the register. He added everything on the register was recorded at its purchase price, which wasn't practical in the real world, but it was the practice in this sector. He clarified this was a rule for all local authorities.

Proposed by Cllr R. Doney and seconded by Cllr G. Stammers, members agreed to **RECOMMEND TO FULL COUNCIL** to approve the fixed asset register.

21/11/SF Cyber Security

The town clerk said officers had discussed cyber security with Lloyds Bank, which felt its firewall was secure and didn't present any issues. He said the council's insurers, Zurich, didn't provide cyber security for this sector, and officers had also spoken to neighbouring town and parish councils who confirmed they did not have cyber security.

Cllr R. Smith asked how much of the council's IT system was provided by DC.

The town clerk said DC provided the almost the entire system. He added that Worldpay, the council's main payment terminal, also believed its system would stand up to a cyber-attack. As such, officers felt the council was adequately protected particularly as other parties would take the weight of a cyber-attack.

Cllr R. Smith asked if DC carried out exercises where they pretended to be attacked and whether there was a means of reporting phishing emails.

The town clerk said staff had been tested with mock phishing emails from DC and he would check whether members would be included in this exercise.

The support services manager said there was an DC email address where all suspected phishing emails could be forwarded to, and she would provide this to members.

Proposed by Cllr D. Sarson and seconded by Cllr R. Smith, members agreed to **RECOMMEND TO FULL COUNCIL** not to proceed with cyber security cover.

21/12/SF Investments and Cash Holdings

The town clerk said the council was in a healthy position, with car parking income strong and a prudently projected reserve of almost £1.2 million at the end of the financial year. This meant the council could comfortably begin to release funding for

projects. He said the priority projects were the refurbishment of the council offices, c£100k, and the seafront railings, c£70k.

The town clerk said the council was prudent with its budget assumptions and there would be unbudgeted receipts from the sale of chalet and beach huts.

As cases of Covid were rising and with the relaxing of restrictions, Cllr G. Stammers asked how financially resilient the council would be.

The town clerk said 75% of the parking income would be received by the end of the summer and this would put the finances in a strong position. In addition, capital expenditure could be curtailed. He said if the council didn't commit any other funding this year, it could consider paying off the loan for the Marine Parade Shelters; this could be deferred if money was proved to be tight at the end of the year.

Cllr M. Ellis asked if the car parking comparison data could continue to be provided to members.

21/13/SF Interest

The town clerk said interest rates were incredibly low, currently 0.01%, although this could be increased if money was tied up for longer fixed periods. He said the council's agreed approach to investing its cash was based on a low risk strategy and he was working on the assumption the council would want to continue with this approach.

The town clerk said he could bring a report to members as part of the budget-setting process to consider whether to adopt a different approach.

Members agreed low-risk investment was the right approach at the moment, especially as there may be a requirement to access money quickly.

Cllr R. Doney said the cost of officer time in moving money around would be the same as the savings if the council's cash was moved from an instant access account to a fixed-term deposit account.

Proposed by Cllr R. Doney and seconded by Cllr C. Reynolds, members agreed to **RECOMMEND TO FULL COUNCIL** to continue with the council's approach of low risk investments.

21/14/SF List of Payments

Cllr M. Ellis suggested a review of the mobile phone contracts as there were a lot of handsets issued to staff and there may be better deals available.

Proposed by Cllr G. Stammers and seconded by Cllr D. Sarson, members agreed to **RECOMMEND TO FULL COUNCIL** to approve the schedule of payments for May and June 2021 for the sums of £145,728.04 and £135,029.39, respectively

21/15/SF Debtors' Report

Proposed by Cllr M. Ellis and seconded by Cllr C. Reynolds, 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.

21/16/SF Exempt Business

a) Debtors' Report

The town clerk said officers had made progress with commercial tenants, with the help of the loss adjuster, and all but one had either paid or had been given until 31 March 2022 to clear their debt.

The town clerk said good progress had been made on debts related to the chalets and caravans, with the total amount of historic debt down to £14k. He said officers were now focusing on one individual, who the deputy town clerk was in discussion with.

The town clerk praised the assistant finance manager for her work in chasing debts.

Once the chalet and caravan debt was cleared, Cllr M. Ellis said the council needed to be firm with owners and if fees were not paid on time, action would be taken.

Members agreed the staff involved in pursuing debts should be thanked by the council for all their work.

The meeting closed at 7.54pm.