

LYME REGIS TOWN COUNCIL

STRATEGY AND FINANCE COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON WEDNESDAY 13 JULY 2022

Present

Chairman: Cllr M. Ellis

Councillors: Cllr C. Aldridge, Cllr J. Broom, Cllr R. Doney, Cllr B. Larcombe, Cllr P. May, Cllr C. Reynolds, Cllr D. Ruffle, Cllr D. Sarson, Cllr R. Smith, Cllr G. Stammers, Cllr G. Turner, Cllr T. Webb

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

22/01/SF Election of Chairman and Vice-Chairman

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

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

Members discussed the merits of the two nominated members giving their reasons for wanting to be chairman and/or the nominators giving their reasons for nominating them.

The town clerk agreed this would help members make their decision but this wasn't the normal protocol. However, if members wished to include this in the rules for next year, this could be implemented.

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

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** as vice-chairman.

22/02/SF Public Forum

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

22/03/SF Apologies for Absence

Cllr B. Bawden – holiday

22/04/SF Minutes

Proposed by Cllr D. Sarson and seconded by Cllr G. Stammers, the minutes of the meeting held on 11 May 2022 were **ADOPTED**.

22/05/SF Disclosable Pecuniary Interests

Cllr D. Ruffle declared a non-pecuniary interest in any matters relating to LymeForward as he was a member.

22/06/SF Dispensations

There were none.

22/07/SF Matters arising from the minutes of the Strategy and Finance Committee meeting held on 11 May 2022

Members' away day

Cllr D. Sarson asked if a date had been set for the away day.

The town clerk said a date had not yet been set as the preferred consultant was not available. However, he had interviewed one consultant, along with the support services manager and Cllr G. Stammers, and would be interviewing another the following day.

A35 Trunk Road

Cllr C. Reynolds asked if there was any update on this issue.

Cllr J. Broom, the member appointed to attend any meetings, said he had not yet been contacted.

22/08/SF Update Report

Members noted the report.

22/09/SF Gipsy and Traveller Encampments

The town clerk said there had been a few occasions when gipsies and travellers had been on town council land in the time he had been in post and in the past, officers had spoken to them and they had left. However, he said there might be situations where travellers didn't want to leave, were being difficult or the council may need to take formal action in addition to speaking to them.

The town clerk said Section 62 powers were the most effective method of removing travellers, which involved a senior police officer directing them to a transit site in Piddehinton in conjunction with Dorset Council (DC) for a fee of £500. He said most travellers didn't go to the transit site but he felt it justified spending £500 if they moved from town council land.

Cllr B. Larcombe asked how often gipsies and travellers took occupation of council land and where it usually happened.

The town clerk said it happened infrequently and in the past there had been travellers on Monmouth Beach, on the former park and ride site at Sidmouth Road and on Dorset Council land. He said he and the deputy town clerk had dealt with travellers in

the past but there was no policy in place to formalise how situations would be dealt with.

Cllr B. Larcombe asked how the proposed policy aligned with DC's policy.

The town clerk said it was consistent with DC's policy and he had had discussions with DC's gipsy and traveller unit in formulating it.

Cllr R. Smith noted the Piddlehinton site was only open between April and August and asked if there was provision outside of these times.

The town clerk said there were four permanent traveller sites in the county and that Piddlehinton was a transit site.

Cllr C. Reynolds asked if this policy would allow the council to deal with people who were currently sleeping in the gazebo in the seafront gardens.

The town clerk said this policy would not cover that situation as there had to be one caravan and one car for it to be seen as an encampment.

Cllr M. Ellis said it was sensible to have a policy in place because if the town clerk or deputy town clerk were not available, someone else could follow the policy and deal with the issue. She felt £500 was a reasonable sum to pay as it could potentially cost the council more in terms of any damage incurred or cleaning up that would be required.

The town clerk said the policy and procedure would also be accompanied by an information sheet which would include useful information such as contact details and locations of traveller sites.

Proposed by Cllr P. May and seconded by Cllr G. Stammers, members agreed to **RECOMMEND TO FULL COUNCIL** to approve the Gipsy and Traveller Encampments' policy and procedure.

22/10/SF Motions for Dorset Association of Parish and Town Councils Annual General Meeting

Cllr B. Larcombe suggested a motion that encouraged the Dorset Association of Parish and Town Councils (DAPTC) to pursue better reconciliation between the views of the building regulations and conservation teams on planning matters.

Cllr C. Reynolds said she would like to include something about housing policy as other areas had rural exception sites and she believed this should be a mechanism for ensuring local housing was for local people. She said she needed time to formulate a motion to this effect.

Cllr J. Broom advised that any motions couldn't be general, they had to be specific or the executive would not take it forward.

The town clerk suggested Cllr C. Reynolds worked on the wording of the motion and reported it to the Full Council meeting on 27 July 2022. He said DAPTC was looking for motions that were beyond a specific location and would affect all towns and parishes in Dorset which could be pursued through to a national level.

Cllr B. Larcombe also suggested DAPTC pursued an alternative to physical meetings that satisfied the regulations so councils could continue to transact its business remotely if there was another Covid or something similar.

Cllr R. Smith supported this suggestion and felt it should extend to situations even beyond Covid so if someone had a physical reason why they couldn't attend a meeting, they were still able to take part in some way.

Cllr B. Larcombe said he believed this was already a policy the National Association of Local Councils (NALC) was pursuing so it would just be adding weight to that.

Proposed by Cllr B. Larcombe and seconded by Cllr C. Aldridge, members agreed to **RECOMMEND TO FULL COUNCIL** to put forward the following motions for Dorset Association of Parish and Town Councils' Annual General Meeting which takes place on Saturday 19 November 2022:

- to pursue better reconciliation between the views of the building regulations and conservation teams on planning matters.
- to pursue an alternative to physical meetings that satisfies the regulations so councils could continue to transact its business remotely
- a motion regarding housing policy and rural exception sites, the wording for which will be presented by Cllr C. Reynolds to the Full Council meeting on 27 July 2022.

22/11/SF Objectives and Projects 2023-2025

Cllr D. Sarson suggested concerts or films on the flat roof area on the seafront as a project idea.

Cllr C. Reynolds said she understood it had always been intended to do this as part of the resurfacing of the roof.

The town clerk said when the specification was enhanced, the council intended to make the area usable for events, although not all members had supported the idea.

Cllr C. Aldridge asked if the list of projects in the report was the final list or whether there was an opportunity to add things. She also asked if when the ideas went out to consultation, whether they would be accompanied by how much each one would cost.

Cllr M. Ellis said this was the list officers had come up with but members didn't have to accept any. She said costings were not normally applied until after the consultation process, but the projects could be spread over several years.

The town clerk said he saw this as an iterative process where members could suggest ideas as the process went along; this was just a starting point as it was important to give the public a list of ideas to work from.

Cllr G. Stammers suggested a less formal meeting for members to discuss the ideas might be beneficial.

Cllr C. Reynolds said consultation processes often didn't reach enough people so it was important to go to various groups and also have hard copies of the consultation for people to complete.

The town clerk said the consultation would never reach everyone but the ideas suggested aimed to reach a broad spread of the town's population. He stressed that the consultation process should be member led, but members should be listening to and hearing what people were saying, rather than telling people their own views. He added that it was important to identify projects that were in the council's gift because it would be measured against delivery and progress.

Cllr M. Ellis said she felt some of the suggested projects were part of the day-to-day running of the council, such as footpath repairs, for which she felt money should already be set aside. She suggested surveys could be made available at local supermarkets and a box placed there for people to return their completed surveys. She added that people should be asked to include their names and addresses so they could only respond once.

The town clerk said the list was a starting point for discussion and although some of the projects were operational, it helped the council to see where its additional resources should be invested. He said there was otherwise a risk the list of ideas going out to public consultation would not reflect what the council needed to do to prioritise its own investment.

Proposed by Cllr R. Smith and seconded by Cllr C. Reynolds, members agreed to **RECOMMEND TO FULL COUNCIL** to hold an informal member-only meeting to discuss objectives and projects.

22/12/SF Outside Seating

The town clerk advised the council to reinstate the original, pre-Covid charging structure for outside seating, although he didn't suggest the charge was amended at this point; this could be reviewed during the budget-setting process. However, he said the council might wish to consider a pro-rata charge as it wouldn't be for the whole year, or perhaps a discount of 25% because businesses wouldn't be receiving as much income between September and the end of March. On the other hand, he said members may consider businesses had already benefitted from the reduced charges last year and so far this season.

Cllr G. Stammers asked if it was certain the government was going to end the temporary licence provision because there had been suggestions it would be made permanent.

The town clerk said he was fairly certain the provision would end as the government would have had to made an announcement by now, if not. However, if it was extended or made permanent, the council would have to follow it as it is government legislation.

Proposed by Cllr R. Doney and seconded by Cllr P. May, members agreed to **RECOMMEND TO FULL COUNCIL** to reinstate outside seating charges at the previous level when the temporary pavement licence provision ends on 30 September 2022 and to charge businesses for six months from 1 October 2022 to 31 March 2023.

22/13/SF Request to Make Temporary Seating Arrangement Permanent

Cllr D. Sarson said he didn't support the request as he believed it would set a precedent and encourage other businesses to make similar requests and this was irrespective of whether the land would otherwise be used by the public.

Cllr R. Doney said he supported the request but the council should receive a proper commercial rent for use of the land, which would be independently assessed.

Cllr B. Larcombe said he wasn't concerned with how much money the business had invested in the seating area as it was their choice to do so, but what did concern him was the ingress into the gardens. He said the size of the seating area was bigger than the council was told it would be and more permanent than it was led to believe. He asked what kind of commercial income the area would generate.

The town clerk said members should expect a meaningful sum for the council to support the request. He also suggested that any agreement could include a condition that the horse box was removed.

Cllr G. Stammers and Cllr C. Aldridge were both concerned the council would be challenged by other businesses if it allowed Coastal Marks to use the area permanently and the opportunity was not made available to others.

Cllr C. Aldridge was also concerned with the way the business had approached the situation, building a structure that it was now saying would be difficult to take away.

The town clerk said there was nothing untoward in Coastal Marks' original proposition and it was entirely consistent with that they said they would do, although some members felt it wasn't what was described. He said Coastal Marks were fully aware it was temporary and that was why they were now requesting to make it permanent, along with all the other necessary consents.

Cllr M. Ellis pointed out that a precedent had already been set in allowing a business to build on council land as SWiM had built a balcony overhanging the Cart Road.

Cllr P. May asked how permanent the arrangement would be as he said he would be worried if the council lost control of the land and would like to see a way the council could revoke any agreement if necessary.

The town clerk said this would be determined during any negotiations and he suggested a seven-year lease or an annual licence. He said other outdoor seating arrangements were on an annual basis but the seating was removable in those cases. He added that if the council agreed to the request, it was important it had a clear understanding of what was on the land.

Cllr J. Broom said he would support the request if the council could obtain a significant amount of money and he felt discussions should take place about what Coastal Marks were willing to pay.

Cllr M. Ellis said as the land wasn't used for any other purpose and there were no other businesses in the area that would want to use it, she would be prepared to consider the request once further valuation advice was received. She said she didn't feel it would set a precedent as any other request would be considered on its merit.

The town clerk said he would be happy to enter into negotiations with Coastal Marks concurrently with a valuation being carried out.

It was agreed the town clerk would determine a price through valuation and/or negotiation and report back to the council, with the condition that the horse box is also removed.

22/14/SF Investments and Cash Holdings

Cllr B. Larcombe asked why the council didn't hold more of its funds in the Wilkinson Legacy account as the interest rate was higher than any of the other accounts.

The town clerk said this was a legacy that was left to the council so there was no control over it.

22/15/SF Debtors Report

Proposed by Cllr M. Ellis and seconded by Cllr J. Broom, 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.

22/16/SF Exempt Business

a) Debtors' Report

Cllr R. Doney asked if there had been any progress on the four debtors related to the caravan and chalet site.

The town clerk said officers had now negotiated two more payments.

Cllr J. Broom asked what the next steps were in relation to the debt for a parking permit.

The town clerk said officers had discussed now starting legal proceedings.

The meeting closed at 8.11pm.