

## **LYME REGIS TOWN COUNCIL**

### **STRATEGY AND FINANCE COMMITTEE**

#### **MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON WEDNESDAY 6 MAY 2026**

##### **Present**

**Chairman:** Cllr P. May

**Councillors:** Cllr G. Caddy, Cllr S. Cockerell, Cllr M. Denney, Cllr P. Evans, Cllr M. Ellis, Cllr N. Hampton-Rumbold, Cllr D. Holland, Cllr C. Reynolds, Cllr G. Stammers, Cllr G. Turner, Cllr A. Wood

**Officers:** N. Cleal (finance manager), A. Mullins (assistant town clerk), J. Wright (town clerk)

##### **25/66/SF Public Forum**

##### **R. James**

R. James spoke on behalf of the Cobb Traders in relation to agenda item 11, Request from Cobb Traders – Autumn/Winter Parking Scheme. He said understanding customers was critical to any business and as the council's greatest source of income was car parks, it was concerning that past decisions on charges had been based on revenue data, with little or no consideration for average length of stay, transaction amounts or occupancy levels. He said although revenue was rising as a result of increased charges, this could be conceived as a decline in usage. He said extending the charging period at Monmouth Beach to 9pm was disappointing and he wanted to understand the rationale for the decision and have insight into the data which drove it. He said it was standard to charge more during busy times and less when demand is lower. He said there was much focus on how much money may be lost with the introduction of winter discounts but approaching it with a business mindset could generate extra revenue. He said winter parking discounts were common in coastal locations in the south west, usually from 1 November to 31 March, and data from East Devon District Council's (EDDC) winter parking review in July 2025 suggested it increased the level of transactions. In one example, a 50% reduction led to 20% more transactions than the previous year, despite sea wall refurbishments. He said effective promotion of a winter discount should help attract more visitors and the potential to increase the council's revenue, with the marketing expertise and reach available through the Cobb Traders to promote it. He was pleased to hear Dorset Council (DC) was considering the introduction of dynamic pricing to help encourage visitors during off-peak times, also raising revenue and improving parking efficiency. He was also pleased to hear DC had announced a freeze on parking charges in the current financial year, with Charmouth Road car park being discounted to £1.50 per hour and a £9 all-day tariff, all year round. He said the equivalent charge at Monmouth Beach car park was £26 all day. He believed introducing a winter parking discount, on a trial basis, offered the town council a good opportunity to be more forward-thinking and businesslike and potentially increase revenue. He hoped the council would give this some serious consideration.

##### **G. Symonds**

G. Symonds spoke in relation to agenda item 15, List of Payments, which included a payment of £10k for the cleaning of Marine Parade toilets, which he felt was excessive. He also highlighted a payment to Kitson and Trotman for £22k, which he felt was excessive for a one-off payment.

It was clarified that in both cases, a number of invoices had been paid in one payment before the end of the financial year but related to various activities.

**25/67/SF      Apologies for Absence**

Cllr C. Aldridge – holiday  
Cllr S. Larcombe

**25/68/SF      Minutes**

Proposed by Cllr N. Hampton-Rumbold and seconded by Cllr M. Ellis, the minutes of the meeting held on 18 March 2026 were **ADOPTED**.

**25/69/SF      Disclosable Pecuniary Interests**

There were none.

**25/70/SF      Dispensations**

There were none.

**25/71/SF      Matters arising from the minutes of the Strategy and Finance Committee meeting held on 18 March 2026**

Members noted the report.

**25/72/SF      Update Report**

Members noted the report.

**25/73/SF      Request from Cobb Traders – Autumn/Winter Parking Scheme**

The chairman brought this item forward on the agenda.

The finance manager said if members were minded to support a discounted winter parking, it could provide an opportunity for collaboration with the business community, as most of the evidence suggested discounted parking alone didn't bring in many more visitors, but collaboration with local businesses to also provide discounts would draw people in. She reminded members that the council had budgeted the car park income for 2026-27 so she wouldn't advise taking too much of a risk on this, but suggested a trial in February 2027. She said income at Woodmead car park was around £9k in February, so reducing parking charges by 50% would risk around £4.5k income. Running a trial would then allow the council to gather some data, with a view to entering into a more formal arrangement the following year.

Members agreed a trial would be a sensible option and stressed the importance of working in partnership with local businesses, via Cobb Traders, to give visitors a reason to use the cheaper parking. It was suggested local businesses could offer their

own discounts and special offers and this be advertised as a collaborative initiative between the council and Cobb Traders.

However, members were also mindful of the potential impact on the council's finances and the desire to support the local economy while also maintaining its projects, asset investment and grants to local organisations.

An all-day charge of £5 was suggested, but it was noted this would penalise those who only wished to stay for an hour or two.

The town clerk suggested visitors could be charged the normal hourly rate for up to three hours, and thereafter the charge would be capped, creating a maximum charge of £6, with options for paying for only one or two hours. He said support from the Cobb Traders by offering promotions and discounts would be important to draw people in, as without it, it could mean a net loss to the council.

A member asked if Cobb Traders had also asked DC to reduce parking charges.

The chairman allowed T. Mayers from Cobb Traders to speak, who said DC was willing to talk to them and Cobb Traders had suggested parking discounts at Holmbush car park, as well as Charmouth Road car park.

Members noted the concerns about the council's decision to extend the charging hours at Monmouth Beach car park from 6pm to 9pm. The finance manager confirmed data relating to this period could be extracted, so members could review the decision in future.

The finance manager reminded members the parking machines in Woodmead and Monmouth Beach were different, and although officers could amend the tariffs on the machines at Woodmead car park, they couldn't do the same for the Monmouth Beach machines so this would incur a charge.

The town clerk wanted members to understand the potential implications of introducing parking discounts; he said based on historic data, if a £6 cap was applied in all car parks between November and March, it would put £70k of income at risk. He reminded members a significant part of the council's income came from car parks, unlike DC or EDDC where a much smaller proportion came from car parking. Therefore, anything that affected the town council's parking income would have a much greater impact on its budget.

Members agreed that any trial should be applied to both Monmouth Beach and Woodmead car parks and favoured a trial in February 2027, with a £6 cap after the third hour.

The town clerk confirmed this would mean potential income loss of up to c.£12k, which could be mitigated by initiatives from the Cobb Traders which might increase the number of vehicles parking.

Proposed by Cllr N. Hampton-Rumbold and seconded by Cllr M. Denney, members agreed to **RECOMMEND TO FULL COUNCIL** to introduce a parking discount trial at Woodmead and Monmouth Beach car parks in February 2027, where parking is paid at the normal hourly rate for the first two hours, and then capped after the third hour, with a maximum £6 charge, recognising that the potential loss of income would be up

to c.£12k, and to work with Cobb Traders on an initiative to attract visitors with other local discounts and to work collaboratively on promoting this.

**25/74/SF Strategy and Finance Committee - Objectives**

Members noted the report.

**25/75/SF Renewal of Insurance Provision for 2026-2028**

The finance manager confirmed officers were happy with the current providers, Clear Councils, and they had built up a good relationship with them in the first year.

Proposed by Cllr M. Ellis and seconded by Cllr S. Cockerell, members agreed to **RECOMMEND TO FULL COUNCIL** to authorise the town clerk to enter into a negotiated insurance agreement with Clear Councils from 1 April 2026.

**25/76/SF Breaches of Financial Regulations**

The finance manager said breaches of financial regulations happened occasionally and it was good governance to report them to the council. She said the breaches totalled just over £3k but clarified that it wasn't the case that the payments shouldn't have been made; they were all authorised in some way before the payments were made.

A member said given the number of transactions the council did, to only have six minor issues was a good achievement.

Proposed by Cllr M. Ellis and seconded by Cllr N. Hampton-Rumbold, members agreed to **RECOMMEND TO FULL COUNCIL** to note the report and approve the management actions proposed to ensure greater compliance with the Financial Regulations.

*Cllr C. Reynolds and Cllr M. Ellis left the meeting at 8.07pm.*

**25/77/SF Potential Fire Station Closures' Consultation**

A member said although Lyme Regis fire station was not under threat of closure, the potential closure of Charmouth fire station would put more strain on Lyme Regis and other surrounding stations.

*Cllr M. Ellis returned to the meeting at 8.09pm.*

Cllrs A. Wood, P. Evans and M. Ellis agreed to formulate the council's response to the consultation.

Proposed by A. Wood and seconded by Cllr G. Stammers, members agreed to **RECOMMEND TO FULL COUNCIL** to delegate a response to Dorset & Wiltshire Fire and Rescue Authority's consultation on the closure of fire stations to the town clerk, in consultation with Cllrs A. Wood, P. Evans and M. Ellis.

**25/78/SF Civic Reception**

Proposed by Cllr M. Ellis and seconded by Cllr G. Turner, members agreed to **RECOMMEND TO FULL COUNCIL** to approve unbudgeted expenditure of £600 for a civic reception for the RNLI on 2 May 2026.

**25/79/SF Investments and Cash Holdings**

A member asked if the amounts took into account payments made relating to outside seating.

The finance manager confirmed that they did, apart from one payment for £900 which had fallen into the current financial year.

It was noted two investments had matured in April 2026 so officers would be making further investments.

**25/80/SF List of Payments**

Proposed by Cllr M. Ellis and seconded by Cllr N. Hampton-Rumbold, members agreed to **RECOMMEND TO FULL COUNCIL** to approve the schedule of payments in March 2026 for the sum of £381,067.96.

**25/81/SF Strawberry Fields Budget for Valuation and Appraisal Work**

Proposed by Cllr M. Ellis and seconded by Cllr P. May, 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.

**25/82/SF Cyber Security Training**

Proposed by Cllr M. Ellis and seconded by Cllr P. May, 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.

**25/83/SF Debtors' Report**

Proposed by Cllr M. Ellis and seconded by Cllr P. May, 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.

**25/84/SF Debt Written off Between 1 April 2025 and 31 March 2026**

Proposed by Cllr M. Ellis and seconded by Cllr P. May, 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.

**25/85/SF Exempt Business**

**a) Strawberry Fields Budget for Valuation and Appraisal Work**

It was noted that any valuation and appraisal work would be carried out at the council's expense, but the landowner could undertake their own, separate appraisal.

Proposed by Cllr M. Ellis and seconded by Cllr A. Wood, members agreed to **RECOMMEND TO FULL COUNCIL** to approve the use of the existing approved £10k budget for an options appraisal at Strawberry Fields for obtaining detailed valuation and development appraisal advice relating to the potential allocation of the site in the emerging Dorset Local Plan for housing purposes.

**b) Cyber Security Training**

Members noted the importance of completing cyber security training.

The finance manager said if the council suffered a cyber attack and training was not up-to-date, this would affect the council's insurance.

**c) Debtors' Report**

Members noted the report.

**d) Debt Written off Between 1 April 2025 and 31 March 2026**

Proposed by Cllr M. Ellis and seconded by Cllr D. Holland, members agreed to **RECOMMEND TO FULL COUNCIL** to note the debts of less than £250 written off between 1 April 2025 and 31 March 2026, as authorised by the town clerk as RFO and reported retrospectively to the council.

*The meeting closed at 8.30pm.*