

LYME REGIS TOWN COUNCIL

STRATEGY AND FINANCE COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON WEDNESDAY 6 MARCH 2024

Present

Chairman: Cllr P. May

Councillors: Cllr B. Bawden, Cllr S. Cockerell, Cllr R. Doney, Cllr M. Ellis, Cllr P. Evans, Cllr B. Larcombe, Cllr D. Ruffle, Cllr D. Sarson, Cllr R. Smith, Cllr G. Stammers, Cllr G. Turner

Officers: N. Cleal (finance manager), M. Green (deputy town clerk) A. Mullins (support services manager), J. Wright (town clerk)

23/86/SF Public Forum

O. Chuter

O. Chuter spoke in relation to agenda item 11, Replacement Mini-Golf Building. She asked if the council may be able to look into relocating the indoor rowing centre over the summer months from the Jubilee Pavilion to the Langmoor Room, in order to continue already established indoor rowing classes. She said documentation had been forwarded to members and she wanted to confirm this had been read and received by members of the committee.

The deputy town clerk confirmed all correspondence relating to the indoor rowing centre had been emailed to members.

O. Chuter said the indoor rowing centre had been established for a couple of years and had been successfully growing month by month. She said a separate proposal had already been submitted to enable this to continue. She said they currently had over 90 gig members and non-gig members who regularly used the centre on a pay-as-you-go basis. She said the demographics of those who attended varied considerably and benefits in particular included social participation, maintaining and developing fitness, rehabilitation and mental wellbeing. O. Chuter said instructor led classes were held five days a week, with many users benefitting from the close proximity to home and work. She said the gig club also used the machines to train seven days a week over the winter, then during the summer when the weather reduced the outdoor gig rowing. For future, she said she was keen to strengthen the links with local schools and youth services to develop healthy hobbies and interests within the younger population in the area. She said the Woodroffe School and Lym Valley Scouts had already used the facilities and had been in touch about learning more rowing. O Chuter said she was keen to forge links with local GPs to encourage those who would ordinarily struggle to access exercise, and to provide exercise specific to women, from those with newborn babies to older generations to improve self-esteem, lessen anxiety and provide avenues for returning to exercise.

Cllr D. Ruffle and Cllr G. Stammers arrived at 7.04pm.

O. Chuter said she was keen to do classes in the evenings to incorporate more people who worked. She said they had developed a strong community asset and she had seen how this had helped many individuals. She said she remained passionate about maintaining and developing this so more locals could benefit, plus helping to create a healthy, happy local population.

Cllr B. Larcombe asked O. Chuter what the indoor rowing centre would have done if the Langmoor Room hadn't been available and asked if they'd looked elsewhere.

O. Chuter said the initiative had developed over the last couple of years but if the room wasn't available, it wouldn't have happened and there wouldn't be 90 people involved. She said they had looked elsewhere but it was too expensive to operate on this level and people wouldn't be able to afford the costs that would then be passed on.

23/87/SF Apologies for Absence

Cllr C. Aldridge
Cllr C. Reynolds – illness

23/88/SF Minutes

Proposed by D. Sarson and seconded by Cllr B. Larcombe, the minutes of the meeting held on 24 January 2024 were **ADOPTED**.

23/89/SF Disclosable Pecuniary Interests

Cllr B. Larcombe declared a pecuniary interest in agenda item 7, Update Report.

23/90/SF Dispensations

There were none.

23/91/SF Matters arising from the minutes of the Strategy and Finance Committee meeting held on 24 January 2024

Park and Ride 2024

The deputy town clerk said due to recent weather, the land used for park and ride remained exceptionally wet and unless there were a number of dry days between now and Easter, the landowner was quite pessimistic about being able to operate, at least for the first few days of the holiday. He said the landowner was keeping a close eye on the situation.

A National Park for Dorset

Cllr B. Larcombe said as the Dorset Association of Parish and Town Council (DAPTC) representative, he had spoken to them about their role in gathering a collective view of the National Park proposal and they were supportive of this. He said the issue had been included in the programme for the networking event on 7 March 2024.

23/92/SF Update Report

Second Homes and Empty Properties Council Tax Premium

Cllr B. Bawden said the question of how the premium affected chalets was subject to government legislation but the indication was they would be exempt, although this was yet to confirmed.

23/93/SF Strategy and Finance Objectives

Cllr B. Larcombe asked why there was no update on the office refurbishment.

The deputy town clerk said there was no update at the time the agenda went out but this would be reported to Full Council. However, he said good progress had been made and there appeared to be no major obstacles to the council moving to St Michael's Business Centre later this year.

23/94/SF Governance Arrangements

Cllr P. May said this item was on the agenda as a majority of members had written to him about the council considering the membership of committees, the committee structure and the minutes of meetings. He said the council could make recommendations for the next administration to consider.

Members gave their views on the three issues mentioned.

The majority of members felt merging committees would lead to longer meetings and poor decision-making, that restricting numbers on committees would lead to longer Full Council meetings when other members wanted to have their say, and shorter minutes restricted just to the decisions or with a summary of the debate and no members' names mentioned would be preferable.

Several members also requested that minutes were circulated to members within one or two weeks of the meetings.

Several members felt these issues should not be discussed this late in the administration as the changes would be imposed on the new administration. However, there was support for members using their expertise to provide recommendations to the new administration.

The town clerk said there were lots of other governance issues that were not included in the report and he felt all these issues should be considered as a whole. He said in May 2019, the previous administration recommended to this administration it should look at governance and a working group was set up to do this. He said the council decided to keep things the same and the model was similar to most other councils. However, there were councils that did things different, such as Sherborne who had portfolio holders and greater delegation to officers. The town clerk reminded members a consultant would be commissioned early in the new administration to work with members, when both structural and cultural suggestions were likely to be made.

It was proposed by Cllr B. Larcombe to recommend to the upcoming council that it may wish to examine the committee structure, based on the views the Strategy and Finance Committee made, and minutes should be shorter, kept to the salient points and where practical, anonymised.

Cllr B. Bawden asked if the recommendation could be amended to include that minutes should be sent to members within one or two weeks.

The town clerk said his concern was the committee would try to amend the minutes and there would be debates with individual members about what should be included. He said he didn't have an issue with providing the minutes, as long as there were no alterations.

Proposed by Cllr B. Larcombe and seconded by Cllr D. Sarson, members agreed to **RECOMMEND TO FULL COUNCIL** to recommend to the upcoming council that it may wish to examine the committee structure, based on the views the Strategy and Finance Committee made; that minutes should be shorter, kept to the salient points and where practical, anonymised; and that minutes should be circulated to members within one or two weeks of the meeting.

23/95/SF Further Land Movement at Ware Cliff

The deputy town clerk said little work was done on site on the first day due to the weather. Since the report was written, there had been further land movement on western beach behind the beach huts. He said the work done so far wouldn't cost £20k but he asked members to approve expenditure up to this amount because there were likely to be more works necessary in the coming weeks.

Cllr B. Larcombe said this was what the council had a reserve for and he would endorse the money spent and give scope for further expenditure.

The deputy town clerk said the work was being carried out in a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and there would be limits on what the council could do in this area. He said some people in Natural England would say nature should be allowed to take its course and would not support the council in carrying out large amounts of earth works, even if it was to protect property. He added that it may reach a point when Natural England doesn't permit any works, even if it meant losing chalets.

Cllr R. Smith suggested there be a budget allocation for dealing with land slippage, as he couldn't see the problem going away. He suggested an allocation of £20k per year.

In response to a member question, the deputy town clerk said the town council owned up to and beyond the top of the slope and all the land that had moved recently was owned by the council. Over the top of the slope, the land was owned by Natural England.

The town clerk said he didn't feel a budget allocation was necessary as there were appropriate procedures in the council's standing orders and financial regulations to allow officers to authorise this kind of expenditure in consultation with the mayor and relevant chairman, and then report back to members.

It was proposed by Cllr R. Smith and seconded by Cllr G. Turner to set aside an allowance of £20k a year to deal with land movement.

This motion was not carried.

Proposed by Cllr B. Larcombe and seconded by Cllr G. Turner, members agreed to **RECOMMEND TO FULL COUNCIL** to note the further land movement at Ware Cliff

and the emergency works undertaken to protect properties; to approve the unbudgeted expenditure estimated at up to £20,000 + VAT incurred in undertaking the emergency works that have already taken place and those works which need to be undertaken to deal with further slippage; to retrospectively approve the exception to standing orders in the appointment of Axminster Excavations to carry out these works because of the specialist nature of the works and their ability to mobilise and complete the works at very short notice; and to approve the appointment of Lewis Brown Ltd to carry out the future monitoring of ground markers at Monmouth Beach to commence on the planned withdrawal of the current contractor, West Country Land Surveys Ltd, in autumn 2024 and note the exception to standing orders in their appointment because of the specialist nature of the works and because they have already been through a competitive process in respect of similar works in the seafront gardens.

23/96/SF Replacement Mini-Golf Building

Proposed by Cllr B. Larcombe and seconded by Cllr R. Smith, 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.

Cllr D. Ruffle said option 1 – reducing the tender price for the already approved building without making changes – seemed the sensible option because for the cost of what the mini golf took in income each year, a new building could be provided. He didn't think staff would like to be based in Langmoor Room permanently.

Cllr B. Larcombe said he was keen to use the Langmoor Room as a staff rest room and felt staff would be happy there. He asked what remedial work would be required to the room and said this work would have to be done regardless of what it was used for.

The deputy town clerk said the work included the replacement of the entrance doors, the windows were sub-standard and there were significant issues and potential leaks on the flat roof. He said different standards would be applied if the room was permanently occupied by staff and the council's duty of care in terms of the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) were even greater to staff than they were to others.

The deputy town clerk said if members went for option 1, there would need to be two interim arrangements while the works were taking place; one for the amenities staff to operate out of and the provision of the Langmoor Room for gardening staff. In response to the indoor rowing centre's request, he said this couldn't be accommodated this summer because it would be used for staff.

It was agreed officers would inform the indoor rowing centre they couldn't be accommodated this summer and future arrangements would need to be considered by the new administration.

Proposed by Cllr G. Turner and seconded by Cllr G. Stammers, members agreed to **RECOMMEND TO FULL COUNCIL** to proceed with reducing the tender price for the already approved mini-golf building without making changes which would result in the

need for a fundamental redesign and the reapplication for permissions and consent with resultant delays, increases in fees and build costs.

23/97/SF Jubilee Pavilion

Cllr R. Doney asked why it would be the responsibility of Visitor Support to have their own public liability insurance as this hadn't been an issue when it was previously run as a welcome point.

The town clerk said the welcome point was going to be operated by a separate body, not the council, so they needed to have their own public liability insurance. However, officers had brokered an advantageous deal for the group.

Cllr B. Larcombe asked if the cap on utilities would be based on assumptions of continued use or current use.

The town clerk said officers would assess what the consumption would be and this would become the cap.

Proposed by Cllr B. Larcombe and seconded by Cllr D. Sarson, members agreed to **RECOMMEND TO FULL COUNCIL** to agree the principles of an agreement for the future use and management of the Jubilee Pavilion, and to agree £3,000 of unbudgeted expenditure from the 2023-24 budget for costs to reinstate the Jubilee Pavilion as a welcome point.

Cllr P. Evans said as changeover day was on Friday, he suggested Visitor Support were asked to consider opening the welcome point on a Friday as well as weekends. He also asked that a report was taken to the Tourism, Community and Publicity Committee to review how it was going and to ask Alan Vian to attend those meetings.

23/98/SF Budget Performance, 1 April – January 2024

The finance manager said the forecast year-end cash position of £1,314,400 was an improvement of £172k since it was last reported to members in October 2023. She said these figures were based on actual income and expenditure until the end of January 2024 and this position could further improve in the last two months of the financial year.

The finance manager said following the earlier decision regarding the mini-golf building, the updated year-end cash position was £1,231,400 as an additional £83k was allocated to the project.

The town clerk said this decision meant the council wouldn't have as much money to allocate to additional projects in 2024-25, but this was to be discussed later in the agenda.

23/99/SF CCTV Project

Proposed by Cllr B. Larcombe and seconded by Cllr S. Cockerell, members agreed to **RECOMMEND TO FULL COUNCIL** to note the progress and spend against the 2023/24 budget allocation for CCTV, to approve a 2023/24 budget of up to £29,000 to cover the estimated CCTV project overspend and to approve £9,000 from the 2024-25

budget to renew nine seafront cameras and connect them to Dorset Council's control centre.

Cllr D. Sarson asked what a realistic timescale would be for the installation of the camera at the skatepark as members of the Allotments Association were keen to have it in place.

The deputy town clerk said June or July 2024 was a likely timescale.

23/100/SF Priority Two Objectives and Projects

The town clerk said £83k had been approved the amenities hut overspend and an additional £9,000 had been allocated to the CCTV project, so there was now £32k available for priority two projects. However, officers believed the cash position would improve by the end of the financial year so there could be scope to release funds for further projects. He said officers could bring a report back to members early in the new administration to confirm if there were more funds available.

The town clerk said to help members, he could suggest projects which were more time sensitive. He said the secure card link to the amenities hut was critical because there would be no wifi provision after 31 January 2025; the bursary scheme had been popular and if no further budget was made available, these would stop from 1 April 2024; and there would be some work arising from the Traffic and Travel Working Group, including the 20mph proposal, which was already in progress, but he thought £10k would be sufficient.

The town clerk said seasonal evening seafront litter collection was important but the council had struggled to recruit to this posts to undertake this work in the past. Officers believed there was scope for existing staff to cover the peak periods during Easter and Whitsun, so it would only be necessary to employ staff from June to August, therefore reducing the cost. He said officers could have discussions with staff about doing this on an overtime basis.

Cllr R. Smith asked if a 4G connection could be used for the secure card reader.

The deputy town clerk said he had previously received a quote for £12k for a hard-wired connection but this may not be needed and he was looking at all potential means of securing a card link. He hoped this figure could be reduced.

Cllr R. Smith suggested the defibrillator at the mini golf be added to the list of projects.

Proposed by Cllr P. May and seconded by Cllr R. Smith, members agreed to **RECOMMEND TO FULL COUNCIL** to approve the following priority two objectives: a secure card link to the mini golf hut, the continuation of bursaries, recommendations from the Traffic and Travel Working Group with a revised figure of £10k, and the defibrillator at the mini golf; to ask officers to explore the option of having seafront litter collection staff for June to August and to discuss with existing staff the opportunity of overtime for other peak periods; and to instruct officers to bring a report to members in the first quarter of 2024-25 with the year-end position with a view to releasing funding for further priority two projects.

23/101/SF Church Cliff Beach Bathing Water Designation

Proposed by Cllr B. Larcombe and seconded by Cllr R. Smith, members agreed to **RECOMMEND TO FULL COUNCIL** to delegate the survey response for the Church Cliff Beach bathing water designation to the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs to the town clerk in consultation with three members of the Strategy and Finance Committee.

Cllrs B. Bawden, S. Cockerell and P. May agreed to work with the town clerk.

23/102/SF List of Payments

Cllr B. Larcombe asked why the charge for electricity at the cadet hut was the same as other units as it wasn't in use.

Officers said it was used as a store but it was where the electric vehicles were charged and there was also computer equipment in the building because the operations supervisor sometimes worked there.

Proposed by Cllr B. Larcombe and seconded by Cllr P. Evans, members agreed to **RECOMMEND TO FULL COUNCIL** to approve the schedule of payments in January 2024 for the sum of £132,691.46.

23/103/SF Investments and Cash Holdings

Members noted the report.

23/104/SF Accreted Land and Trailer Park at Monmouth Beach

Proposed by Cllr R. Smith and seconded by Cllr D. Sarson, 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.

23/105/SF Debtors

Proposed by Cllr R. Smith and seconded by Cllr D. Sarson, 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.

23/106/SF Exempt Business

a) Accreted Land and Trailer Park at Monmouth Beach

Cllr B. Larcombe asked if officers were content this was the right figure for the rent and asked if there was a sense of the impact it would have on people who used the land and whether DC would pass the increase onto them.

The deputy town clerk said a valuer had provided these figures and the increase was based on RPI over the period since the last increase. He said when the council agreed a phased approach to any increase, it had stipulated to DC the phased benefit should be passed directly to the land users. However, he didn't know what DC was proposing to charge users because it said it was confidential information. He said if the council was to consider an amount lower than the valuer's suggestion, it would have to be by way of a grant to DC.

Proposed by Cllr B. Larcombe and seconded by Cllr M. Ellis, members agreed to **RECOMMEND TO FULL COUNCIL** to note the received consent from Natural England for the 'harbour use' of the town council-owned accreted land at Monmouth Beach; to approve the granting of a new lease to Dorset Council's for its use of both the above land and the adjacent 'trailer park' land with a term of five years and at an initial rent of £14,100 for 2024/25, increasing to £19,200 in 2025/26 and, thereafter, increasing by RPI as calculated at September each preceding year; and that the cost of any subsequent applications for consent to Natural England be wholly met by Dorset Council as a condition of any future lease renewals.

b) Debtors

Members noted the report.

The meeting closed at 9.07pm.