

LYME REGIS TOWN COUNCIL

STRATEGY AND FINANCE COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON WEDNESDAY 9 OCTOBER 2024

Present

Chairman: Cllr P. May

Councillors: Cllr M. Ellis, Cllr P. Evans, Cllr S. Larcombe, Cllr C. Reynolds, Cllr J. Trevena, Cllr G. Turner, Cllr A. Wood

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

24/19/SF Public Forum

There were no members of the public present

24/20/SF Apologies for Absence

Cllr C. Aldridge – holiday
Cllr G. Caddy – holiday
Cllr S. Cockerell – away
Cllr D. Holland – prior engagement
Cllr G. Stammers – holiday

24/21/SF Minutes

Proposed by Cllr P. Evans and seconded by Cllr M. Ellis, the minutes of the meeting held on 3 July 2024 were **ADOPTED**.

24/22/SF Disclosable Pecuniary Interests

There were none.

24/23/SF Dispensations

There were none.

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

Members noted the report.

24/25/SF Update Report

Town bus

The town clerk said officers had been talking to First about operating the service on behalf of the council but this was no longer an option. He said the most favourable option was to purchase a bus and seek volunteer drivers.

It was noted discussions had also taken place with Beaminster Town Council, which had a community bus. Although there were logistical difficulties with this option, members asked if this could be pursued as a temporary solution until a more permanent solution was in place.

It was agreed the council would advertise for volunteer drivers and officers would investigate the possibility of using the Beaminster bus in the interim.

Accreted land

The town clerk said Dorset Council's (DC) property services team were now engaged in discussions about the lease and officers were optimistic about reaching an agreement. However, the rent had not been paid and DC would receive a letter the following week informing them the town council intended to start court proceedings.

24/26/SF Strategy and Finance Objectives

Members noted the report.

24/27/SF The Process for Approving the 2025-26 Budget¹ and Five-Year Financial Plan 2025-30

Members noted the report.

24/28/SF Statement of Internal Control, Risk Management Policy and Annual Risk Assessment

A member asked if the robustness of the council's IT systems was considered as a risk.

The town clerk officers were confident the IT systems were robust, most of which were provided by DC, as well as other third parties, and this provided some assurance as the systems belonged to bigger organisations.

A member questioned the proposed risk ratings for several of the headings in the risk register and the town clerk explained officers' rationale for the ratings.

A member was concerned about DC no longer providing services in the town, an issue which all other town and parish councils seemed to be experiencing, and hoped there could be some movement on the transfer of assets to the town council. It was suggested the DC ward member could take this forward.

The town clerk said meetings used to take place between the mayors/leaders and clerks of the town councils in Dorset to help drive things forward as a group and he was happy to try and start these again. He believed it would be more effective to have several ward members working together.

Proposed by Cllr M. Ellis and seconded by Cllr S. Larcombe, members agreed to **RECOMMEND TO FULL COUNCIL** to note the statement of internal control and the town clerk's observations; to approve the risk management policy and the standard annual risk assessment; and to approve the risk register.

¹ The 2025-26 budget includes the precept.

24/29/SF Budget Performance, 1 April – 31 August 2024

It was suggested the mayor’s allowance be increased in-year due to a change in office and a disproportionate amount of the allowance being spent by the previous mayor. It was suggested an additional £1,000 be allocated.

Proposed by Cllr M. Ellis and seconded by Cllr C. Reynolds, members agreed to **RECOMMEND TO FULL COUNCIL** to increase the mayor’s allowance by £1,000 in 2024-25.

24/30/SF Budget and Precept 2025-26 and Five-Year Financial Plan 2025-30

A member asked why the figures in the five-year plan were not increased year on year.

The town clerk said the five-year plan gave an indication of where the council would be over that time period and if nothing changed, it demonstrated the organisation would still be financially viable.

Proposed by Cllr S. Larcombe and seconded by Cllr C. Reynolds, members agreed to **RECOMMEND TO FULL COUNCIL** to approve the 2025-26 base budget and assumptions and to approve the base five-year financial plan

24/31/SF Review of Charges

Precept

Cllr C. Reynolds requested a recorded vote on the following motion:

Proposed by Cllr P. May and seconded by Cllr M. Ellis, members agreed to **RECOMMEND TO FULL COUNCIL** to set the precept for 2025-26 at £70 for a Band D property.

Voted for – Cllr P. May, Cllr G. Turner, Cllr A. Wood, Cllr S. Larcombe, Cllr P. Evans, Cllr M. Ellis

Voted against – Cllr C. Reynolds

Abstentions – None

Cart Road beach hut hire

Proposed by Cllr M. Ellis and seconded by Cllr A. Wood, members agreed to **RECOMMEND TO FULL COUNCIL** to set 2026 Cart Road beach hut hire charges as follows:

| | Daily Rates 2026 | Weekly Rates 2026 |
|------------------------|-------------------------|--------------------------|
| January– Easter | £7 | |
| Easter Holiday | | £75 |
| April – Spring Holiday | £14 | |

| | | |
|------------------------|------|--------|
| Spring Holiday | | £80 |
| June | | £75 |
| 2 July – 16 July | | £105 |
| 23 July- August | | £190 |
| September | £17 | |
| October | £10 | |
| November- December | £8 | |
| Christmas and New Year | | £105 |
| Winter Season | £210 | |
| Summer Season | | £1,365 |
| Annual | | £2,100 |

It was suggested the council carries out a more thorough review of the hiring of beach huts, including charges, the availability of packages, the merit of daily or weekly hire, and the prioritisation of residents. It was agreed a report would be taken to the relevant committee in early-2026.

Alfresco licences

Proposed by Cllr S. Larcombe and seconded by Cllr P. May, members agreed to **RECOMMEND TO FULL COUNCIL** to set alfresco licence charges for 2025-26 at £150 for covers and £20 for chairs.

Bell Cliff advertising boards

Proposed by Cllr M. Ellis and seconded by Cllr C. Reynolds, members agreed to **RECOMMEND TO FULL COUNCIL** to set Bell Cliff advertising board charges for 2025-26 at £175.

Marine Parade Shelters

Proposed by Cllr G. Turner and seconded by Cllr M. Ellis, members agreed to **RECOMMEND TO FULL COUNCIL** to set Marine Parade Shelters' charges for 2026-27 as follows:

| Categories | 2026-27 |
|---|----------------|
| DT7 postcodes | £20 |
| Within a 10-mile radius of the offices | £25 |
| Outside a 10-mile radius of the offices | £30 |

| | |
|---|-------------------------------------|
| National charities (per hour) | £25 |
| Not-for-profit community events and festivals hiring the shelters | At the discretion of the town clerk |

| Area | 2026-27 |
|--|-------------------------------------|
| Langmoor Room (per room, per hour) | £15 |
| Market area (per day) | £150 |
| Performance area/ top of shelters (Commercial) (per day) | £200 |
| Hire of Performance Area for Performance (per half) | £70 |
| Hire of any section on top of the shelters (per day) | At the discretion of the town clerk |

Amenities

Proposed by Cllr M. Ellis and seconded by Cllr S. Larcombe, members agreed to **RECOMMEND TO FULL COUNCIL** to set amenities charges for 2025-26 at adult mini-golf, £4.50, child mini-golf, £2.50, table tennis, £2.50 per person.

Weddings and civil marriages

Proposed by Cllr M. Ellis and seconded by Cllr C. Reynolds, members agreed to **RECOMMEND TO FULL COUNCIL** to set wedding and civil marriage charges for 2026-27 at £475 for Monday to Friday and £575 for weekends and Bank Holidays.

Car parking permits

Proposed by Cllr M. Ellis and seconded by Cllr S. Larcombe, members agreed to **RECOMMEND TO FULL COUNCIL** to no longer offer a non-residents parking permit from 2025-26 onwards and to set other car parking permit prices for 2025-26 at £225 for residents and £775 for holiday accommodation.

Car parking

Proposed by Cllr G. Turner and seconded by Cllr C. Reynolds, members agreed to **RECOMMEND TO FULL COUNCIL** to set car parking prices for 2025-26 as follows:

| | 2025-26 |
|----------------|---------|
| Cabanya | £1.90 |

| | |
|-----------------------|-------|
| Monmouth Beach | £1.90 |
|-----------------------|-------|

| | |
|-----------------|-------|
| Woodmead | |
| 1 hour | £1.50 |
| 3-day ticket | £45 |
| Weekly ticket | £80 |

Penalty charge

Proposed by Cllr S. Larcombe and seconded by Cllr C. Reynolds, members agreed to **RECOMMEND TO FULL COUNCIL** to set the penalty charge for 2025-26 at £70, or £40 if paid within seven days.

It was noted officers were looking into a further reduced charged if the penalty was paid within 24 hours and were in discussions with ZatPark about the technology needed to do this. It was agreed a report on a proposed reduced fee would be brought back to a future meeting.

Cemetery

Proposed by Cllr M. Ellis and seconded by Cllr C. Reynolds, members agreed to **RECOMMEND TO FULL COUNCIL** to set cemetery charges for 2025-26 as follows:

| Inter still born child or under 2 years | Inter child under 16 years | Inter over 16 years | Inter cremated remains | Exclusive right of burial in earthen grave | Exclusive right of burial of cremated remains | Installation of headstone/footstone/tablet |
|--|-----------------------------------|----------------------------|-------------------------------|---|--|---|
| No Charge | No Charge | £250 | £75 | £500 | £300 | £100 |

| Installation of vase | Additional inscription on memorial | Scattering ashes on existing graves | Scattering ashes beneath turf of existing graves | Genealogy searches | Certified copy of entry in burial books | Double interment fee |
|-----------------------------|---|--|---|---------------------------|--|-----------------------------|
| £60/£75 | £30 | £20 | £20 | £25 | Not Offered | No Extra Charge |

Memorial benches

It was noted the cost of a memorial bench was governed by the procurement price and this system would remain unchanged for 2025-26.

It was suggested memorial benches should have a life span because the council incurred the maintenance costs. It was agreed a report would be taken to the relevant committee to allow members to consider this.

Monmouth Beach garages

Proposed by Cllr G. Turner and seconded by Cllr M. Ellis, members agreed to **RECOMMEND TO FULL COUNCIL** to set the Monmouth Beach garage charge for 2025-26 at £1,550.

24/32/SF Woodmead Car Park Drainage Proposals

Proposed by Cllr M. Ellis and seconded by Cllr S. Larcombe, 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.

Members recognised the urgency and importance of the drainage works and felt they should be completed as soon as possible.

Proposed by Cllr M. Ellis and seconded by Cllr S. Larcombe, members agreed to **RECOMMEND TO FULL COUNCIL** to note the increase in the estimated cost of Woodmead car park drainage project and instruct officers to seek tenders and continue with the planned work as soon as possible, noting the unbudgeted expenditure involved and the potential reduction in the level of forecast year-end reserves.

24/33/SF Grants

The town clerk suggested members considered allocating a budget for grants that was equal to the precept.

It was suggested the medium grants' category should be reintroduced and there was general support for this.

Members suggested there should be more emphasis put on organisations demonstrating self-funding or match funding, even on the smaller grants, and that better publicity should be given to acknowledge the council's funding.

The town clerk said the grants' policies could be brought to the next cycle for members to approve, and these kinds of amendments could be made.

There was concern 11 December 2024 was too late to advertise the availability of term grants as this would give organisations only a month to apply.

The town clerk said a public notice could be issued sooner to give organisations notice funding would be available but the grant policies would need to be agreed at the next cycle of meetings before applications could be formally submitted.

Proposed by Cllr M. Ellis and seconded by Cllr P. Evans, members agreed to **RECOMMEND TO FULL COUNCIL** to allocate an amount equal to the precept to grant funding; to reintroduce the medium grants' category; to include the Fossil Festival, Christmas lights and fireworks' displays as term grants; and approve the processes and timetables for inviting grant applications and making decisions on their

allocation, but to give notice of the availability of term grants before applications open on 11 December 2024.

24/34/SF Objectives and Projects 2025-26

The finance manager said decisions made during the meeting had affected the total amount available for objectives in 2025-26; there was now £319,792 available.

However, the town clerk said due to prudent forecasting, officers believed the budget would be beaten by between £50k and £100k. There was also the option to defer some proposed objectives to 2026-27. He added that the council offices would be sold, which would generate a significant return, which he would suggest was used strategically to get on top of the council's asset investment strategy.

Members agreed the repairs to the Guildhall, the garden paths and the Monmouth Beach landslip work were the highest priority projects but would take up almost the entire budget.

The town clerk suggested members could agree additional objectives up to £150k at this point and then in February 2025, members could consider additional projects if that funding became available.

Members were unable to agree a priority list of objectives.

The town clerk suggested officers went away and tried to further prioritise the list and identify projects which could be deferred to future years. He suggested members could get together before the next meeting of this committee to further review the projects, with a report back to the next meeting for decision.

This was agreed and a meeting date would be confirmed. It was also agreed the level of the council's reserve would be agreed at the next meeting.

24/35/SF Investments and Cash Holdings

Members noted the report.

The meeting closed at 9.15pm.