

LYME REGIS TOWN COUNCIL

STRATEGY AND FINANCE COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON WEDNESDAY 27 NOVEMBER 2024

Present

Chairman: Cllr P. May

Councillors: Cllr C. Aldridge, Cllr G. Caddy, Cllr S. Cockerell, Cllr M. Ellis, Cllr P. Evans, Cllr S. Larcombe, Cllr C. Reynolds, Cllr G. Stammers, Cllr G. Turner, Cllr A. Wood

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

Absent: Cllr D. Holland

24/36/SF Public Forum

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

24/37/SF Apologies for Absence

Cllr M. Denney
Cllr J. Trevena – family commitment

Cllr S. Larcombe arrived at 7.01pm.

24/38/SF Minutes

It was noted Cllr J. Trevena's vote was not recorded under minute 24/31/SF, Review of Charges, relating to the precept. Cllr J. Trevena voted against the motion.

Proposed by Cllr P. Evans and seconded by Cllr M. Ellis, the minutes of the meeting held on 9 October 2024, with the above amendment, were **ADOPTED**.

24/39/SF Disclosable Pecuniary Interests

There were none.

24/40/SF Dispensations

There were none.

24/41/SF Matters arising from the minutes of the Strategy and Finance Committee meeting held on 24 April 2024

Members noted the report.

24/42/SF Update Report

Members noted the report.

24/43/SF Strategy and Finance Objectives

Members noted the report.

24/44/SF Introduction of lost property policy

Members suggested publicising lost items or if unclaimed, selling them on an auction website. However, it was agreed the process should be kept as simple as possible, as per the proposed policy.

Proposed by Cllr M. Ellis and seconded by Cllr S. Cockerell, members agreed to **RECOMMEND TO FULL COUNCIL** to approve the proposed lost property policy.

24/45/SF Fixed Assets Policy

Proposed by Cllr M. Ellis and seconded by Cllr S. Cockerell, members agreed to **RECOMMEND TO FULL COUNCIL** to approve the fixed assets' policy.

24/46/SF Allocation and Distribution of Grant Funding

Several members were concerned that introducing large capital grants would not allow the council flexibility to respond to in-year requests and that the amount suggested of £25k per year for these grants would not be enough.

However, it was noted an organisation could apply for a large capital grant twice in the same year. It was also noted that in exceptional circumstances, funding could be accrued to the following financial year, as long as it was identified against a project, which would allow greater flexibility.

Members emphasised that evidence of self-funding and a robust review process of grant recipients would be important to them.

The town clerk assured members officers carried out a lot of analysis and in-depth discussions about organisations' finances, which would continue.

Proposed by Cllr P. Evans and seconded by Cllr M. Ellis, members agreed to **RECOMMEND TO FULL COUNCIL** to approve a five-year annual grant budget of £140,000 from 1 April 2025 until 31 March 2030 and within that budget approve an annual allocation of £100,000 to term grants, an annual allocation of £25,000 to large capital grants and an annual allocation of £15,000 to community grants; to approve a large capital grants' policy and procedure; to approve changes to the existing term grants' policy and procedure; and to approve changes to the existing community grants' policy and procedure.

24/47/SF Budget and Precept 2025-26 and Five-Year Financial Plan 2025-30

Officers drew members' attention to the funding available for priority two objectives and how the shortfall could be addressed. If members were to agree all the suggested amendments, this would leave a gap of £2k.

It was noted the Gardens Working Group had recently met and discussed signage in the gardens, which had no budget currently allocated. The working group had suggested £5k be allocated from the 2024-25 climate action plan budget and this was agreed by members.

Proposed by Cllr S. Cockerell and seconded by Cllr S. Larcombe, members agreed to **RECOMMEND TO FULL COUNCIL** to approve a budget for 2025-26 including the proposed priority 1 and 2 objectives with the following exceptions:

- Remove the £25k for the continuation of the council's budget to carry out the climate action plan
- Defer renewable energy projects, of £15k, until better defined
- Remove installation of more LED lighting, £3k
- Defer waste initiatives of £10k, until better defined
- Remove electric strimmers at £12k

to allocate £5k from the 2024-25 climate action plan budget for signage in the seafront gardens; to approve a precept of £163,254 for 2025-26; and to approve the five-year financial plan for 2025-30 and note the impact on the council's forecast reserve over that period.

24/48/SF Charges for Filming on Town Council Land

Proposed by Cllr P. Evans and seconded by Cllr M. Ellis, members agreed to **RECOMMEND TO FULL COUNCIL** to approve the proposed charging structure for filming on town council land.

24/49/SF Consultation by Dorset Council about the local adoption of Street Trading legislation

The town clerk said officers were concerned about the proposed policy because of the potential impact on licencing the town council currently managed, the impact on the hiring of the Marine Parade Shelters and the restrictions on charges. It would also not resolve the current issue of the trader on the Cart Road.

Members agreed it was a concern that Dorset Council was looking to introduce a blanket policy across the county, which would have revenue implications for the town council. It was agreed a strong argument needed to be put forward that not all towns should be treated the same and exemptions needed to be made.

Proposed by Cllr C. Aldridge and seconded by Cllr G. Turner, members agreed to **RECOMMEND TO FULL COUNCIL** to instruct officers to respond to Dorset Council's consultation about the local adoption of Street Trading legislation in consultation with the chairman of the Strategy and Finance and Town Management and Highways Committees and in line with the views expressed by the Strategy and Finance Committee.

24/50/SF Enabling Remote Attendance and Proxy Voting at Local Authority Meetings

The majority of members were opposed to remote attendance and proxy voting. It was noted how difficult it was to hold virtual meetings during the pandemic and this would be the only reason to make an exception.

Cllrs S. Cockerell, P. Evans and P. May agreed to work with the town clerk on a response to the consultation and it was suggested the draft response be considered by the Full Council on 11 December 2024 before being submitted.

Proposed by Cllr S. Cockerell and seconded by Cllr P. Evans, members agreed to **RECOMMEND TO FULL COUNCIL** that Cllrs S. Cockerell, P. Evans and P. May work with the town clerk to draft a response to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government's open consultation on 'Enabling Remote Attendance and Proxy Voting at Local Authority Meetings', to be considered by the Full Council on 11 December 2024.

24/51/SF List of Payments

Proposed by Cllr C. Aldridge and seconded by Cllr G. Turner, members agreed to **RECOMMEND TO FULL COUNCIL** to approve the schedule of payments in April and October 2024 for the sums of £171,716.16 and £325,515.12, respectively.

24/52/SF Debtors' Report

Proposed by Cllr C. Aldridge and seconded by Cllr G. Stammers, 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.

24/53/SF Exempt Business

a) Debtors' Report

The finance manager said since drafting the report, a lot of the chalet and caravan income had been received. She had spoken to the auditor about recovering historic debt so she was expecting to report a much lower figure next time.

The meeting closed at 8.13pm.