

Council Offices, Commercial Road, Weymouth, Dorset, DT4 8NG

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**Minutes of meeting**

**MEETING:** Finance and Governance Committee

**DATE & TIME**: Wednesday 18 December at 7.00pm

**PLACE:** Town Council Offices, Commercial Road, Weymouth, DT4 8NG

**Present:**

**Councillors**

Cllr David Harris (Chair)

Cllr Richard Nickinson

Cllr Peter Barrow

Cllr Graham Winter (Sub)

Cllr Howard Legg

Cllr Gill Taylor

Cllr Lucy Hamilton

Cllr Colin Huckle (VC)

Cllr Luke Wakeling

Cllr Graham Lambert

Cllr David Gray

**Officers**

Jane Biscombe (Town Clerk)

Matt Ryan (Deputy Town Clerk)

Ian Milne (Business and Finance Manager)

Niki Ayles (Democratic Officer)

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| F0046 | **Welcome by the Chair**  Cllr Harris welcomed those in attendance. |
| F0047 | **Apologies for Absence**  Apologies were approved from Cllr Northam who was substituted by Cllr Winter. |
| F0048  F0049 | **Declarations of Interest**  Cllr Huckle declared an interest in Item 8, the letting of garages and Cycling without Age, and said that whilst he is not directly involved, the Golf Club of which he is President purchase the Trishaw and therefore he did not wish to participate in the debate or vote.  Jane Biscombe confirmed that this is a non-pecuniary interest and, as there is no personal gain for Cllr Huckle, he would not be required to withdraw from the room.  Cllr Taylor asked whether all Councillors have to declare an interest as part of the budget as they are all Council Tax payers. Jane Biscombe confirmed that this is not necessary.  **Minutes of the last meeting**  Resolved:  Proposer: Cllr Wakeling Seconder: Cllr Lambert  Members voted by a majority of nine, with two abstentions, to agree the minutes of the last meeting held on 6 November 2019 as a correct record and these were duly signed. |
| F0050 | **Councillors Questions**  There were no Councillor questions. |
| F0051 | **Public Comments and Questions**  **Speed Indicator Devices**  The Chair of Nottington Village Community Speed Watch was unable to attend the meeting but had asked: “As a newly established Community Speed Watch group for Nottington village we support the Council’s decision to purchase speed indicator devices and urge the Cllrs to accept the recommendations on SIDS and for locations in Nottington to be included. We ask the Council what else is being done to make areas like Nottington village safe from Road Traffic? There is routine speeding, heavy goods vehicles and site traffic from a number of developments ignoring the 20mph speed limit, specified site routes and 7.5 ton weight limit making it very dangerous to cyclists, pedestrians and horse riders.”  Cllr Legg highlighted that there has been a lot of work undertaken by WTC, the Unitary Authority, and Chickerell Town Council, and said that it is actually a unitary responsibility although WTC can initiate traffic surveys as long as WTC pays for them.  Cllr Harris stated that WTC would send a written response to the Chair of Nottington Village Community Speed Watch along those lines and will inform them of some of the action already taken through Councillors.  Speed Indicator Devices (SIDs) were considered later in the meeting (F0056 below.)  **Budget** A member of the public asked how much of WTC’s budget is going towards staff pensions as he was concerned about services being neglected.  Cllr Harris explained that in paying staff to undertake work, employers have to pay into a pension fund that then pays the local council pensions. Salary levels are often less than the private sector and is made up by sometimes having a better pension than the private sector.  Cllr Legg declared a non-pecuniary interest at this point as he is on the Committee for the Dorset County Pension Scheme, and explained that employers are legally required to contribute to a pension scheme for employees.  Grant Applications  Councillors agreed unanimously to consider grant applications at this point in the meeting. Please see minute number F0055 below. |
| F0052 | **Funding of Climate Mitigation Report**  Matt Ryan introduced the report.  Cllr Lambert reported that he had been shocked at how much the report is going to cost. However, he feels that WTC has no choice if it is serious about moving towards zero carbon.  Cllr Nickinson was disappointed that only one company tendered and therefore WTC has no idea whether this is cost effective. Matt Ryan confirmed that each energy efficiency will have a cost and details of the carbon savings. WTC also needs to be realistic about the timescale as 2030 is only 10 years away.  Cllr Hamilton was concerned about the cost and lack of tenders. She highlighted that at its meeting on 26th June 2019 the Council resolved to “call on the UK Government to provide the powers, resources and help with funding to make this possible, and lobby local MPs to do likewise”, and suggested that WTC writes to its local MP at the earliest opportunity to ask why a newly formed Council such as WTC should meet the cost. Cllr Hamilton asked whether there are grants or financial assistance that could help meet the cost of the report.  At the request of Councillors, Matt Ryan will circulate the breakdown of what will be included in the report.  Jane Biscombe explained that WTC is an anomaly in its size, and is far bigger than traditional parish and town councils, and this has put some companies off. Eight companies were contacted and only one responded. Unitary and County Authorities tend to have their own internal teams. WTC could continue to look for other companies however this will delay starting the process.  Cllr Taylor felt that the cost for the report was quite reasonable and felt that Councillors should accept the recommendation.  Cllr Hamilton highlighted an open letter from Cllr Sue Baxter on the NALC website outlining the priorities for local Councils, and she requested that WTC, at the very least, writes in support of her approach. She also felt that WTC has enough information to go back to its local MP and Dorset Council regarding financial assistance.  Resolved:  Proposer: Cllr Taylor Seconder: Cllr Barrow  Members voted unanimously to agree to:   * The commissioning of the Climate Impact and Mitigation reports as set out within this report for an estimated cost of £14,000 (plus VAT); funded from the predicted 2019-20 Beach and Esplanade underspend; and * Refer the development of a Council Climate Emergency Strategy, primarily determining a timeline of decarbonation measures to the Clean and Green Working Group.   Matt Ryan and the Clean and Green Working Group will monitor progress with regards to the completion of the report. Cllr Harris will compose a letter to WTCs local MP to encourage them to participate.  Updates will be brought to each Full Council meeting as a standing item. Cllr Gray requested that “resources” has its own heading within Committee reports rather than being included in the impact assessment. |
| F0053 | 1. **Letting of Council Garages**   Matt Ryan introduced the report.  Cllr Lambert highlighted that WTC will be undertaking a review of all its assets shortly and he hopes that as a result of that Councillors will know what assets WTC has, what they are used for and how much they cost. Cllr Lambert felt that WTC should be offering garages for just one year whilst an asset review is undertaken.  Cllr Nickinson was happy to support the letting of garages for a two-year period in order to obtain as much income as possible. Cllr Taylor that in that time WTC looks at what else can be done with them. Cllr Taylor was concerned about the number of charities who may ask for a garage if WTC lets one to Cycling without Age free of charge.  Resolved:  Proposer: Cllr Lambert Seconder: Cllr Harris  Members voted by a majority of seven in favour, with three against and one abstention, to approve:   1. That officers carry out a tendering exercise and contract award for the garages and parking spaces as specified within the report, for a period of 12 months.   With regards to recommendation B, Cllr Gray agreed with Cllr Taylor and said that he would rather Cycling without Age applied for a grant and presented their case for a garage.  Resolved:  Proposer: Cllr Gray Seconder: Cllr Lambert  Members voted by a majority of ten, with one abstention to approve:   1. To keep one garage free pending a grant application by CWAW for the cost of the rent for one year, to a maximum of £2,000.   Cllr Winter left the Chamber briefly at this point. |
| F0054 | **Draft Budget and Precept**  Ian Milne, Business and Finance Manager, highlighted a reduction in the tax base and stated that Officers have gone back to Dorset Council (DC) to try and ascertain where the decrease has come from.  Jane Biscombe explained that a significant number of town and parish councils in Dorset have seen a decrease in their tax base which is thought to be related to collection rates. Officers are currently awaiting a response from DC regarding whether this is correct.  Cllr Nickinson stated that he cannot support an above inflation increase after the first year as this sends the wrong message about what WTC is about and will impact those in the community who can least afford it. He would, however, support an increase of 2%.  Cllr Taylor asked for an explanation as to why the income coming in this year is very much below what is predicted given that WTC will have the same employees. Ian Milne responded that it is Officers’ opinion that the budgets inherited were unrealistic and some services did not pass over to WTC in the first place.  Jane Biscombe highlighted that a staffing paper has been circulated to Members. Currently, there has been no confirmation from the LGA on the NJC pay scales. The unions have submitted a claim on a 10% pay rise for all local authority staff. However, in the last year the increase was 2%. Jane Biscombe, Ian Milne and the HR Committee felt that it was prudent to input a figure of a 3% rise. However, if a lower pay rise is agreed there will be savings on the budget.  Cllr Gray requested that Members agree to recommend a 0% increase and said that the residents of Weymouth have incurred above inflation increases for the last four out of five years. Cllr Gray accepted that WTC might be using some reserves and may have to reduce the budgets for maintenance, he said that it is within WTCs gift to manage that with timing. Cllr Gray suggested that the 0% rise would be for one year only. Cllr Barrow supported Cllr Gray’s proposal.  Cllr Nickinson was concerned that Councillors are expecting more from Officers than ever and that will have a cost. He felt that Councillors need to look at what their expectations are as they may be putting more pressure on staff than is reasonable given the resources WTC has.  Jane Biscombe believed that WTC started on 1st April 2019 with not enough staff to meet the aspirations of Councillors and staff themselves, and felt that what is detailed in the staffing report will help rectify this and make the staff team more realistic to what is needed in Weymouth.  Resolved:  Proposer: Cllr Barrow Seconder: Cllr Wakeling  Members voted by a majority if ten in favour, with one abstention, to:   1. Recommend to Full Council a 0% increase in Members allowances for 2020/21.   Resolved:  Proposer: Cllr Gray Seconder: Cllr Barrow  Members voted by a majority of seven in favour, with four against, to:   1. Recommend to Full Council on 8 January 2020 a precept rise of 0% for 2020/21 to enable the Council to deliver its programme of service commitments whilst working towards achieving a prudent level of reserves. |
| F0055 | **Grant Applications**  *As One Theatre:*  Proposer: Cllr Gray Seconder: Cllr Harris  Members voted unanimously to award the £2000 requested towards a performance of Mary Anning “Mad Woman of Lyme”.  *Friendly Food Club:*  Proposer: Cllr Lambert Seconder: Cllr Barrow  Members voted unanimously to award the £2000 requested towards 12 workshops based on cooking and eating together.  *Greenhill Community Trust:*  Proposer: Cllr Gray Seconder: Cllr Barrow  Members voted unanimously to award the £1700 recommended towards upgrading sand and fencing.  *Weymouth Beach Volleyball Club:*  Proposer: Cllr Winter Seconder: Cllr Gray  Members voted by five in favour, with five against to amend the recommendation to award the full £1800 requested. The Chair had the casting vote in favour of the amendment.  Proposer: Cllr Winter Seconder: Cllr Wakeling  Members voted by a majority of nine in favour, with two against, to award the full £1800 requested towards balls, gazebo and water reusable bottles. |
| F0056 | **Speed Indicator Devices**  Jane Biscombe introduced the report and informed Members that the ongoing annual cost of £3000 includes an element of maintenance, replacement of batteries, as well as the one-off costs associated with new sites. The four sites listed have been assessed and there is no ongoing cost for their use by WTC. If WTC wishes to have additional sites for their own SIDs, it will have to pay for assessments etc.  Cllr Nickinson felt that if it is felt that there is excessive speed, this should be highlighted to Dorset Police as it is for them to enforce. Cllr Winter agreed that WTC should not be spending more money that it has to suggesting that if WTC passes potential sites through the local Unitary Councillor, DC may consider adding it to their list.  Cllr Gray was concerned that WTC paying for SIDs may lead to DC relinquishing responsibility for some things, and if WTC were to take on the purchasing of SIDs, it may become the norm. He added that if there is an issue with speed, DC should be asked to install SIDs, with evidence, or it should be highlighted to Dorset Police.  Cllr Barrow suggested that the matter be left with DC Councillors who will try and ascertain what can be done.  Resolved:  Proposer: Cllr Nickinson Seconder: Cllr Barrow  Members voted unanimously to defer the recommendations detailed in the report and revisit the item after feedback from DC Councillors. |
| F0057 | **Information Items**  **Forward Plan**  Cllr Lambert noted that the Nursery Lease is due to be put before this Committee in February 2020 and requested that the information be circulated more in advance than the legal despatch date as it will be pertinent to the Green and Clean Working Group.  Cllr Gray asked whether the Full Asset Review scheduled to be put before this Committee on 18th March 2020 be changed to read “Statement regarding Assets” and that the Full Asset Review be moved to the new financial year.  Meeting closed at 9.10 pm |