

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

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**Minutes of meeting**

**MEETING:** Finance and Governance Committee

**DATE & TIME**: Wednesday 22 July 2020 at 7.00pm

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

**Present**

**Councillors**

Cllr Harris (C) Cllr Barrow Cllr Gray

Cllr Hamilton Cllr Huckle (VC) Cllr Lambert

Cllr Legg Cllr Nickinson Cllr Northam

Cllr Taylor Cllr Wakeling Cllr Wheller

**Officers**

Jane Biscombe (Town Clerk)

Matt Ryan (Deputy Town Clerk)

Ian Milne (Business & Finance Manager)

Charmaine Denny (Contracts & Facilities Officer)

Niki Ayles (Democratic Officer)

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| F0094 | **Welcome by the Chair**  Cllr Harris welcomed those in attendance. |
| F0095 | **Apologies for Absence**  No apologies for absence had been received prior to the meeting. |
| F0096  F0097 | **Declarations of Interest**  There were no declarations of interest.  **Minutes of the last meeting**  Resolved:  Councillors voted unanimously to agree the minutes of the last meeting held on 13 May 2020 as a correct record and these will be duly signed at the earliest opportunity. |
| F0098 | **Councillors Questions**  The following question had been received from Cllr Fuhrmann:  “This week, I was asked to meet with local digital entrepreneurs Aaron Jones and Barry Whettingsteel. They presented a prototype website (named: Weymouth High Street) that's ambition is to provide a digital structure for local (privately owned) businesses preparing for upcoming economical hardships. It could be described within its retail capability as "a local amazon".  A PDF file was circulated to Committee members prior to this meeting.  In normal circumstances I can assure you this would of taken a more (traditional) formal presentation, falling to a working group and/or another committee at this stage. However, in light of Summer being in full gear, we are literally burning daylight from our Summer season and edging closer to what may be the end for many of our local businesses. It's my hope that you (the fiscally minded Committee) might consider such an idea and if minded to, discuss the required steps / potential of funding for such a project. Would the Council wish to support the project and, if so, how?  ---------------  There was concern about whether the Council was being asked to go through the grant application process as organisations that run to make a profit are able to apply for a grant. Confirmation was received from the organisation, via the Council’s Facebook page, that it is a “not for profit” project.  Cllr Harris suggested that Cllr Huckle raise the project at the Town Centre Management Group meeting scheduled to be held on 20 August 2020, that WTC look at the project through the Income Generation Working Group, and that it be recommended that the organisation contacts Dorset Council to find out whether there is any Covid 19 regeneration money that they could access for a project like this. As they are a non profit making subset of a profit making business, if WTC were to grant funding, that would need to be looked at.  Matt Ryan will arrange a Zoom meeting between Cllr Huckle, Aaron Jones and Barry Whettingsteel so that a further conversation can be held.  Matt Ryan reported that under the Town Centre budget, there is a budget line for new Town Centre initiatives and there is a small amount that may be able to support a project such as this, if Members wished to. |
| F0099 | **Public Comments and Questions**  No members of the public had requested to ask a public question or attend. |
| F0100 | **Election of Chairman**  Cllr Harris wished to step down as Chairman of the Finance and Governance Committee, and nominated Cllr Gray to be his successor. Cllr Harris was thanked as outgoing Chairman.  Resolved:  Proposer: Cllr Harris Seconder: Cllr Huckle  Councillors voted unanimously for Cllr Gray to take over the role as Chairman of the Finance and Governance Committee. |
| F0101  F0102  F0103  F0104  F0105  F0106 | **Investment Strategy**  Ian Milne introduced the item as detailed in the agenda documentation.  Ian Milne confirmed that the Investment Strategy will be reviewed by auditors. However, it will not be audited in the sense that auditors give their opinion on it per se but that it complies with the Local Government Act 2003 and all government legislation that needs to be complied with.  Resolved:  Proposer: Cllr Harris  Councillors voted unanimously that:   1. That the Investment Strategy (Appendix A) be recommended to Full Council for approval. 2. That officers investigate the ethical investment policy of potential counterparties and place investments with those institutions that have an acceptable policy where security and liquidity allow. 3. It is recommended to Full Council that an account with the CCLA Public Sector Deposit Fund is opened. 4. It is recommended to Full Council that there is an amendment to the Standing Orders so that the approval of additional counterparties and length of fixed term investments is delegated to the Finance and Governance Committee. 5. **Attractions Tender and Brunswick Terrace Catering Kiosk** 6. Charmaine Denny introduced the item as detailed in the agenda documentation. The item was taken in two parts, the Attractions Tender followed by Brunswick Terrace Catering Kiosk.   Attractions Tender  Resolved:  Councillors voted unanimously to:   1. Consider the procurement options as detailed regarding the attraction sites and resolves to approve: 2. Officers to enter into discussions/ negotiations with its existing concessionaires to extend the existing concession contracts for a 12-month period; or where existing Concessions do not wish to extend to enter negotiations with another supplier for a short term (single season) arrangement; and 3. Alongside these negotiations, officers are instructed to issue an Early Engagement Notice (EEN) and Prior Information Notice (PIN) to the market (requesting responses within 3 weeks from issue), to assess the level of interest in the market in these opportunities; and 4. Assuming the level of interest is low, extend the existing attraction contracts for a period of 12 months or where existing concessions do not wish to extend, enter into an agreement with an alternative supplier for a period of 12 months; and 5. carry out market engagement with suppliers that respond to the EEN/ PIN over the coming months to understand the updated opportunities that may exist and how the Council can maximise these; and 6. Issue a new tender in 2021 for contracts to commence in 2022 on the same basis agreed at the Services Committee but including alternative pricing proposals as set out in this report.   However, should the level of interest be high following the issue of the EEN/PIN to:   1. Tender the attraction opportunities for commencement in March 2021 on the same basis agreed at the Services Committee but including alternative pricing proposals as set out in this report.   Brunswick Terrace Catering Kiosk  Cllr Wheller requested that it be noted that she would be uncomfortable with any suggestion that WTC should run this in-house as she feels there is not the expertise to do so. Cllr Taylor proposed that part b of the recommendation be amended to read “Approve the production of a business case for the operation of the Brunswick Terrace Refreshment Kiosk, for decision at the September meeting of the Committee, to include a legal opinion on the extension of the existing lease and an opinion from Dorset Council's Planning Department if that is possible to obtain within that timescale”.  Cllr Gray requested that Officer time be included in the amendment as he felt that it is important not to lose this from the proposal. Cllr Taylor was in agreement with this addition to the amendment.  Resolved:  Proposer: Cllr Taylor Seconder: Cllr Wakeling  Councillors voted unanimously in favour of the following amendment to the recommendation:  “Approve the production of a business case for the operation of the Brunswick Terrace Refreshment Kiosk, for decision at the September meeting of the Committee, to include a legal opinion on the extension of the existing lease and an opinion from Dorset Council's Planning Department if that is possible to obtain within that timescale. It is estimated that this will require 25 hours of Officer time”.  **Virtual Desktop Provision**  Ian Milne presented the item as detailed in the agenda documentation. Councillors agreed that it is important for Officers to have a fast and reliable way to access systems.  Ian Milne assured Councillors that any systems used by WTC will have the future in mind as Covid 19 has challenged everyone to look at the way they work. Additionally, he would talk to WTC’s IT support providers with regards to security. In terms of the data held by WTC, Office 365 and Sharepoint are used to store a lot of information and WTC goes through its IT support provider to ensure that security is in place. With regards to the companies approached, some already provide services to parish councils. Discussions have been held regarding security and assurances have been given that they have security for databases. WTC’s IT support provider can also provide additional assurance.  Cllr Gray suggested that the proposal state that the cost will be met from the money left in the Council’s set up fund rather than finding savings elsewhere, and that anything else will be found from reserves.  It was agreed that Cllr Gray and Cllr Wakeling with work with Ian Milne to ensure that WTC has the best system, and that consideration will be given to meeting the costs from the Council’s set up funds.  Resolved:  Councillors agreed unanimously for Officers to implement a virtual desktop and server solution to enable efficient and effective flexible working.  **Country Park Match Funding for Rural Development Agency Application**   1. Cllr Harris introduced the item as detailed in the agenda documentation. Cllr Harris and Cllr Northam were commended for the significant amount of work undertaken. Cllr Northam explained that “Country Park” is a working title, and it is about linking natural spaces across Weymouth and encouraging people to use them. It is about promoting space that is accessible throughout the year.   Members noted that the £20,000 would only be required if the bid to the RDA was successful.  Resolved:  Councillors voted unanimously in favour of £20,000 of the Project Support Reserve being allocated to the Country Park Project in the 2020/21 financial year with a further £20,000 to be allocated from within the 2021/22 financial year budget and reserves resources.  **Temporary amendments to the Grants Policy**  Jane Biscombe introduced the item as detailed in the agenda documentation. Jane Biscombe highlighted that the number formatting within the agenda documentation was incorrect and should read 4a and 4b, and gave assurances that the numbering within the policy would be concurrent.  Resolved:  Councillors voted unanimously in favour of the amendment to paragraph 4b of the Grants Policy as detailed in the agenda documentation.  Resolved:  Councillors voted unanimously in favour of the amendment to paragraph 8 of the Grants Policy as detailed in the agenda documentation.  It was proposed that the Grant Application Form be amended to ask whether applicants have received any grant support from WTC, or any other financial support from WTC, in the last three years.  Resolved:  Councillors voted by a majority of 10 in favour, with 2 against, in favour of the amendment to the Grant Application Form detailed above.  **Grant Applications**  *Air FM*  Resolved:  Councillors voted unanimously to award the recommended amount of £2000 to upgrade Air FM’s FM transmission equipment to be able to transmit this more powerful signal.  However, Councillors would like the organisation to secure the remainder of the funding before the grant from WTC is awarded, and would like assurances that the signal will reach Weymouth. Should the signal reach Portland then WTC would like to see Portland Town Council award a grant and, if they have not already done so, Air FM should submit a grant application to Portland Town Council. Councillors would also like information regarding how many residents receive an acceptable signal now and how may will receive it after the upgrade.  Jane Biscombe will obtain this information and circulate it to Councillors before the awarding of the grant is made and suggested that when the policy is reviewed next year, it should be amended to read that grants will only be awarded when all funding has been secured. |
| F0107 | **Information Items**  **Update – Beach Office Lettable Unit**  Matt Ryan introduced the item as detailed in the agenda documentation. There were no questions from Councillors.  **Update – Climate Change Work**  Cllr Harris provided a verbal update. A report has been received from the Carbon Trust and this was circulated to all Councillors in the last week or two.  **Update – Tumbledown Farm**  Cllr Northam provided a verbal update. Clive Tuck as has been appointed as Project Manager. It is hoped that a Zoom meeting can be arranged to re-engage members of the public who expressed an interest prior to lockdown. Unfortunately, asbestos and discarded farm equipment has been found on the site and therefore work will need to be undertaken to remove this and make the site safe and useable.  Cllr Northam requested that the Finance and Governance Committee consider how they are going to allocate money in to a project so that everyday items can be purchased quickly through the Project Manager. Cllr Harris explained that Jane Biscombe and Ian Milne are exploring how this can be managed.  **Christmas Town Centre Lighting**  Cllr Gray reported that the Weymouth BID Board have today committed to extending the Christmas lighting in the town centre and St Alban Street, in particular, was mentioned as it was lacking in Christmas lighting last year. Matt Ryan reported that the Services Committee has not yet agreed any funding for this, and has been waiting for the BID Board to meet. Weymouth BID was due to consider the cost of the lights and would look to WTC to take on the maintenance and responsibility for them. This will form part of a Services Committee report.  **Forward Plan**  Cllr Gray was concerned that the Asset Management Plan is not on the Forward Plan and he therefore wonders when it will be coming to this Committee. Matt Ryan responded that this has been delayed however he hopes to look at it in the next two months, with a view to bringing it back to the Finance and Governance Committee in October for review and adoption. This will be put on the Forward Plan.  Cllr Gray highlighted that the Town Council Strategy and set of priorities are not yet on the Forward Plan and stressed that an action plan is needed based on priorities. Jane Biscombe explained that the Forward Plan is only an indicative plan and is subject to constant change. However, something will be coming to Full Council on 2nd September.  Cllr Harris added that the paper in September will identify the work programme for the next six months and this will lead to the development of some plans that have been identified. Additionally, there will be a communications strategy for engaging the public in that process, adding to priorities and giving their ideas under the headings that have been identified. There will be a period of consultation with the public over the Autumn and plans should be in place by the time WTC has next year’s budget. Cllr Gray felt that this should be reflected on the Forward Plan.  **Seafront Lights and New Toilet Block**  A temporary control unit had been installed in order to operate the new seafront lighting. However, two weeks ago the lighting was switched off whilst it was moved into the new Beach Office. It is hoped that this work will be completed by the end of July and that the lights will be switched back on at that time.  It is hoped that the new Beach Office and Toilets building will be handed over to WTC during week commencing 3rd August 2020, with an anticipated date of 7th August. Unfortunately, there have been some delays due to covid-19 working practices. It is also hoped that the Ladies and Gents underground toilets will be able to open during the last week of July.  **Job Vacancies:**  There are currently three exciting opportunities at WTC; Marketing and Communications Officer, Project Officer, and Parks Development Officer. Application forms and job descriptions can be downloaded from the Weymouth Town Council website.  Resolved:  Councillors noted the information items.  The meeting closed at 9.07 pm. |