

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

01305 239839 - office@weymouthtowncouncil.gov.uk

**Minutes of meeting**

**MEETING:** Finance and Governance Committee

**DATE & TIME**: Wednesday 30 September 2020 at 7.00pm

**PLACE:** Zoom online meeting

**Present**

**Councillors**

Cllr Gray (C) Cllr Barrow Cllr Harris

Cllr Wheller Cllr Huckle (VC) Cllr Lambert

Cllr Legg Cllr Nickinson Cllr Wakeling

Cllr Taylor

**Officers**

Jane Biscombe (Town Clerk)

Tony Hurley (Operations Manager)

Ian Milne (Business & Finance Manager)

Tara Williams (Parks & Open Spaces Manager)

Charmaine Denny (Contracts & Facilities Officer)

Niki Ayles (Democratic Officer)

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| F0108 | **Welcome by the Chair**  Cllr Gray welcomed those in attendance and paid tribute to Cllr Harris who has been Chair of the Committee since WTC’s inception, thanking him for his efforts. Cllr Gray stressed that there are some important and difficult financial decisions to be made over the next few months and he hoped that the Council strives for value for money in everything it does, and its residents would also hope that this is the case. |
| F0109 | **Apologies for Absence**  Apologies were unanimously agreed from Cllr Hamilton and Cllr Northam. |
| F0110  F0111 | **Declarations of Interest**  There were no declarations of interest.  **Minutes of the last meeting**  Resolved:  Proposer: Cllr Harris Seconder: Cllr Barrow  Councillors voted unanimously to agree the minutes of the last meeting held on 22 July 2020 as a correct record and these will be duly signed at the earliest opportunity. |
| F0112 | **Councillors Questions**  No Councillor questions had been received for inclusion in the agenda documentation. |
| F0113 | **Public Comments and Questions**  Cllr Gray shared the following statement from the current leaseholder of the Brunswick Terrace Catering Kiosk, which relates to items 11 and 13 of this agenda:  “Good evening everybody. I hope this statement finds everyone in good health. I have been the leaseholder of the Brunswick Kiosk site for the last 15 years. In that time I have made friends for life through customers, employees and the residents of Brunswick Terrace.  While the site and kiosk hold a lot of sentiment value, there has always been a sad reality that at the end of the lease there’s no guarantee I would be able to renew it. No guarantee of a long-term income. The prospect of having to tender for the site again in the coming months and possibly losing it to a higher bidder has been looming over me. Two days ago I was told by a customer that there would be a vote going ahead tonight for the Council to take over the site, and my hopes to continue trading were further diminished. To then be told that rumours had been circulating within the Council that I “no longer wanted to re-tender for the site” was even more of a shock.  In 2011 I invested over £40,000 into the newly designed kiosk and decking area. I have invested tens of thousands of pounds in equipment over the years. For the last five years our products have been chosen with sustainability being a priority, with most customers opting to use mugs, plates and bowls, and our takeaway options all delivered in compostable and recyclable materials. I paid these expenses with the vision to, in the event of losing the next tender process, sell them to the new owner. But my primary interest has always been to continue trading and delivering a service to the local customers that visit me day-in day-out.  With the Brunswick site having low footfall compared to its neighbours on the sands, we rely heavily on local returning customers. We have worked hard to establish the relationship we have with the people that visit us every day. It would be a shame for this to be lost, and even more of a shame if it was lost to a generic and soulless business proposal that will likely be put forward.  At no point have I been approached to see my thoughts on the matter, or even been given a heads up that the proposal was in place. It’s upsetting to know that while I have been planning to re-tender for the site and try to build the business further, plans have been made for the site to be taken away from public tender. Had I known this would happen, I would have tendered for the sites that became available last year.  I urge the Committee to vote against the proposed “in-house delivery” of a kiosk. At the very least, I plead that the tender process continues and a lease is available for the same duration as the remaining beach kiosks. Again, I would like to reiterate that despite rumours of my disinterest in re-tendering for the site I am hopeful that I will be able to trade at Brunswick Terrace for the next 10 years. I will be seeking further information on the source of these damaging rumours. Thank you for your time.”  Jane Biscombe provided the following response:  “Councillors will be aware that the Council needs to plan ahead for the future of this trading site on the beach given that the lease ends in 2021 and there is no legal mechanism for an extension. The Council is, therefore, going through a quite proper process to consider options including an in-house operation or the tendering of a new lease.  Both options presented this evening are based on the recommendations that this Committee agreed at its July meeting and also take into account the Council’s income generation work stream. Officers have not provided any briefings to Councillors nor stated anything in the reports tonight or at previous meetings, as to the current tenant’s future intentions. I, and other staff members, are not aware of any rumours concerning the current tenant and their future intentions.  The current tenant has always been aware of the end date of the lease and, once Councillors have decided on the best way forward, officers will engage with the tenant to explain the next steps. For clarity, no decisions have been made, those are the items in front of you tonight Councillors.  Councillors are asked to come to those reports on the agenda with a clear mind and to only base decisions on information given to them by officers in an official Council capacity. Councillors are reminded to base decisions on facts and not rumour.”  There were no comments or questions from Councillors at this stage of the meeting. |
| F0114 | **Budget Monitoring Report – Quarter 1**  Ian Milne introduced the items as detailed in the agenda documentation. Councillors considered each part of the Q1 report individually.  *Budget Monitoring*  Cllr Nickinson highlighted that this is the Q1 report covering the period April to June and said that it will be difficult to judge what the position was in June against what the position will be in the coming months. Cllr Nickinson requested that the Q2 report is published more quickly as Councillors will be able to get more of an indication of the Council’s financial position.  Ian Milne confirmed that the Q2 budgeting monitoring report could be available for the next Finance and Governance Committee meeting scheduled to be held on 11th November.  *Reserves*  Cllr Barrows asked why vehicles replacement and property maintenance are held in reserves rather than the normal budget.  Ian Milne explained that finance for town and parish councils is very different to those for district and borough councils, and WTC has to ensure that it has enough reserves built up to protect its assets so that they can be maintained and replaced.  Cllr Gray’s understanding was that budgets are there to be spent, and reserves are there to cover the risks.  It was suggested that the Budget Working Group look at renaming some of the reserves to make it clear what they are for.  *Income*  Income generation is mainly responsible for the shortfall. The Q2 report will include the summer period which is when most of the Council’s income is obtained in terms of the beach and concessions.  *Budget Monitoring Group*  The Budget Monitoring Group is a small group made up of Members, who were able to interview budget holders and scrutinise their spending and outturns, and get a better understanding of what the financial position would be at the end of the year. This will be vitally important this year.  It was agreed that Cllr Lambert, Cllr Huckle or Cllr Hamilton, Cllr Harris and Cllr Gray to sit on the Budget Monitoring Group during this financial year. It was felt that other Members should be given the opportunity to sit on the group in future years, in order to broaden knowledge.  Resolved:  Proposer: Cllr Harris Seconder: Cllr Nickinson  Members voted unanimously to:   1. Note the budget monitoring statement as at the end of the first quarter (Appendix A). 2. Note the earmarked reserves statement (Appendix B) 3. Approve the virements listed within Appendix C |
| F0115  F0116  F0117  F0118  F0119  F0120 | **Weymouth BID led Christmas Event**  Tony Hurley introduced the item as detailed in the agenda documentation. It was noted that the proposed digital projection will commence at 4pm each day and finish at approximately 8pm, and Members felt that further information was required regarding whether shops would be opening later during this period in order to benefit from any increased footfall and whether there was any agreement from Dorset Council regarding reduced car parking fees so that people will be drawn in to the town should the proposal go ahead.  A Town Centre Management Group meeting is scheduled to be held tomorrow and Cllr Huckle will ask the BID representative whether there are plans for shops to stay open longer during the period that the light projection is in place. Cllr Gray spoken to Unitary Councillor Ray Bryan today regarding WTC’s request for free parking days/part days and he has committed to responding within 48 hours with an answer.  It was highlighted that, with regards to the BID’s request for WTC to fund 50% of the cost of the digital projection, there is no capital involved and once WTC has spent the money, there will be no assets.  Resolved:  Proposer: Cllr Huckle Seconder: Cllr Taylor  Members voted by a majority of 9 in favour, with 1 against, to defer this item to the Full Council meeting scheduled to be held on 14th October, pending the receipt of further information regarding whether free parking has been agreed by Dorset Council and whether shops will remain open for longer to enable them to benefit from increased footfall. In addition Members requested more information regarding what other initiatives being progressed by Weymouth BID.  Tony Hurley will seek further information in readiness for the Full Council meeting.     1. **Grant Applications**     *Air FM*  Ben Tolley, from Air FM, joined the meeting to explain more about the project. Air FM have not been successful with their £9,150 application to the National Lottery Community Fund, so they have revised their application to Weymouth Town Council. They have been investigating with their broadcast consultant any available options for proceeding with the improved coverage at a reduced cost and are pleased to say that following a re-engineering of the system and using different parts they are able to improve the coverage of their broadcast by the same amount at a significantly reduced cost.  Air FM has increased their listeners since Wessex FM went national and have also received more enquiries from advertisers.  Resolved:  Members voted by a majority of 9 in favour, with 1 against, to award the recommended amount of £2000 as detailed in the agenda documentation.  *Refresh*  Cllr Taylor explained that when the Refresh Project was stopped earlier this year a lot of people got in touch to say that they were disappointed and it became clear that a lot of people are experiencing loneliness and want to remain in contact. Refresh are applying for a grant to pay for a coordinator and running cost for a new project which has been highlighted through Covid-19. The “Keep in Touch” project involves volunteers speaking to people on the telephone, writing letters etc.  Resolved:  Members voted unanimously to award the recommended amount of £2000.  *Friends of Radipole Park and Gardens*  Resolved:  Members voted by a majority of 9 in favour, with 1 abstention, to award the recommended amount of £2000.  *Waterside Community Forum/The Park Community Centre:*  Resolved:  Members voted unanimously to award the recommended amount of £1570.  *Nothe Fort*  *Weymouth’s Victorian Christmas Market at Nothe Fort*  There were concerns regarding whether an event such of this could be held safely given the current Covid-19 pandemic.  Resolved:  Members voted by a majority of 9 in favour, with 1 against, to award the recommended amount of £1945.20. However, it is stressed that, given the uncertain times, should the event not go ahead the full amount must be refunded regardless of whether or not the marquee and organ have been booked.  *The Nest Social Supermarket:*  This was a late item. However, because the Grant Applications item was already on the agenda and the papers could be sent out within the legal timescales, this application has been allowed to come to this meeting.  The project is aimed at supporting those who are struggling but fall outside of food bank regulations. Anyone could access the social supermarket, pay a small contribution and select a certain number of food items.  Resolved:  Members voted unanimously to award the recommended amount of £2000.    **Information Items**  **Green and Clean Working Group Update:**  Cllr Harris provided a short verbal update. The working group has looked at the work identified over the last 6 months and will be sitting with interested parties to turn ideas in to further research.  **Actions from last meeting:**  *Virtual Desktop Provision*  Ian Milne reported that Cllr Wakeling has been proactive in ensuring that WTC has a solution to have a finance system that is remote from the rest of the system. This is quicker and more secure, and officers working from home are happy and thankful that it is working better, and thank Cllr Wakeling for his help. The virtual desktop provision is costing £50 per month.  *CIL Money Dispersal*  Officers are currently looking for best practice but it is difficult to find any information regarding what other Council’s have. This is work in progress and Officers will come back to Committee regarding allocations.  *Weymouth High Street Website*  A meeting regarding the proposed Weymouth High Street Website is being held tomorrow.  **Forward Plan:**  Officers will ensure that Finance and Governance Committee meetings are held shortly after quarterly reports are available.  Resolved:  Councillors noted the information items.  **Brunswick Catering Kiosk**  Charmaine Denny introduced the item as detailed in the agenda documentation.  Cllr Nickinson was concerned that, as a Council, WTC should not become involved in running a catering outlet for which it has no expertise. He felt that this type of operation is best carried out at the risk of private operators who are prepared to put their own money in to it, and added that this would send out the wrong message to others that WTC is willing to act in competition with them. Members noted that other Councils ran successful commercial ventures including catering outlets and that income generation such as this was not unusual.  Resolved:  Proposer: Cllr Harris Seconder: Cllr Lambert  Members voted by a majority of 9 in favour, with 1 abstention, to suspend Item 11 of the agenda, before returning to public session to confirm the Committee’s decision once confidential Item 13 has been heard.  **Exclusion of the press and public**  Resolved:  Members voted unanimously to agree to exclude the public and press.  The recording of the meeting and livestreaming to Facebook were paused temporary at this point in order that the confidential item could be discussed.  **Confidential Item – Brunswick Catering Kiosk** |
|  | Following in depth discussion regarding the confidential papers, the public meeting resumed and the recording and livestreaming of the meeting continued. The meeting returned to Item 11 at this point in order that Members could vote on the recommendations detailed in the agenda documentation.  Cllr Gray advised Councillors that, in making their decision, they will be voting for options A and B, plus option C separately if that fails. It is a financial decision and the Council has to do what is best given that it has a commercial aim to keep the precept down.  Cllr Gray did not see the recommendation as WTC being in competition with other concessions as it will bring a different offer. There is the option to operate 12 months of the year whereas other concessions only operate during certain months. If Councillors vote for this, there is a need to differentiate it from other concessions.  Cllr Gray reminded Members of the recommendation detailed in the agenda documentation.  Resolved:  Members voted by a majority of 8 in favour, with 2 against, that the Committee:-   1. Approves the delivery and operation of a Council run kiosk at Brunswick Terrace in line with the information provided; and 2. Recommends to Full Council the use of Prudent General Fund Reserve to find the capital costs of the purchase and fit out of the kiosk at Brunswick Terrace as detailed within the confidential business plan.   The meeting closed at 9.34 pm. |