

PORTLAND TOWN COUNCIL
TOWN COUNCIL MEETING
HELD ON WEDNESDAY 15TH JANUARY 2014

PRESENT: Councillors L. Ames (Chair), Mrs R. Barton, R. Denton-White, K. Dutheridge, A. Matthews, Miss A. Munro, T. Munro, Mrs E. Munro-Price, I. Munro-Price (from 7.30 pm), R. Nowak, Mrs S. Reynolds and R. Wild.

IN ATTENDANCE: Ian Looker (Town Clerk) and Rev. Tim Gomm (Mayor's Chaplain), together with twelve members of the public.

2528 – ALDERMAN ALAN MARTINDALE

The meeting observed one minute's silence in honour of Alan Martindale, a former member of Portland Town Council and Town Alderman.

2529 – PRAYERS

The Mayor's Chaplain led the meeting in prayer.

2530 – APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Cllrs. S. Bradley and R. Hughes.

2531 – DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Cllr. Tim Munro declared a personal interest in Agenda Item 13 – Council Budget, 2014/15. Cllr. Barton declared a prejudicial interest in two of the organisations applying for grants from the Council under Agenda Item 9. Cllr. Elspie Munro-Price declared a personal interest in Agenda Item 13 and one of the organisations involved in Agenda Item 9. It was acknowledged that all the members had a personal interest in Agenda Item 13 and a dispensation to debate and vote on the matter.

2532 – OPEN FORUM

a) Police Question Time

No representative of Dorset Police was present. Cllr Ames agreed to contact the Police about their infrequent attendance.

b) Public Half-Hour

Mr Siddons asked about the proposed rise in the precept and whether Portland people would be able to comment on it.

Mrs Attwooll asked how she could bring pressure on the Crown Estate concerning derelict properties at the Verne Citadel. Cllr Ames recommended that she contact the Home Office. Cllr Matthews commented that the Portland Neighbourhood Plan could be a vehicle for putting pressure on the Crown Estate and Home Office in this respect. Cllr Nowak thought it would take time if it were dealt with by the Borough Council, while Cllr Elspie Munro-Price indicated that there might be a developer interested in improving the site.

c) Reports from Borough and County Councillors

No reports were provided.

2533 – MINUTES OF THE TOWN COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON 18TH DECEMBER 2013

a) Minute 2515 – Cllr. Elspie Munro-Price

Cllr. Munro-Price requested that the word “visited” in the third paragraph be altered to “contacted.” This was agreed.

b) Minute 2517 – Council Budget, 2014/15

Cllr. Matthews thought there should have been some reference in the minute that the decision taken to increase the precept in terms of the Band D equivalent Council Tax was only in principle and not conclusive. Cllr Nowak recalled that Cllr Hughes had made that suggestion.

(Cllr Ian Munro-Price joined the meeting.)

Cllr. Tim Munro proposed that the words “consider setting” in the first resolution should be amended to “set” as that was the precise wording he had used in proposing the motion. There followed a difference of opinion among members over this, but Cllr. Elspie Munro-Price reminded the Council that they had taken a great deal of trouble in establishing the precise wording of the original motion and her amendment to it.

The Clerk voiced his objection to the alteration of the resolution. He agreed with Cllr. Munro-Price that the Council had indeed spent some time on the choice of words and to make sure that there was no misunderstanding he had read the words back to the members at the time. The wording in his notes of the meeting read, “PTC considers setting a precept of £150 p.a. Band D equivalent so that it can be financially independent.”

Members voted on the motion and it was **RESOLVED** – that the words “consider setting” be amended to “set.”

Cllr. Matthews then said he was willing to let the matter rest on the night about whether the decision had only been in principle.

c) Minute 2520 – Marine & Environment Partnership Meeting, 4th December 2013

Cllr Nowak proposed and it was **RESOLVED** – that the words “Trinity House” in the final paragraph be replaced by “Crown Estate.”

2534 – ORDER OF BUSINESS

It was agreed that at this point Council should deal with Agenda Item 9 – Council Grant Awards, 2013/14.

2535 - COUNCIL GRANT AWARDS, 2013/14

It was proposed by the Chair and **RESOLVED** – that, pursuant to the provisions of Section 1(2) of the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960, the press and public be excluded from the meeting for this item by reason of the confidential nature of the business to be transacted.

Cllrs. Ian Munro-Price and Amanda Munro declared a non-pecuniary interest in Tornadoes of South Dorset Swimming Club and Cllr. Munro-Price also in South

Dorset Community Sports Trust. Cllr Barton declared a prejudicial interest in two of the organisations.

(Cllr. Barton withdrew from the meeting.)

In the course of interviewing representatives of the organisations Cllr. Ames recalled that as a director of Community 2000 he had a prejudicial interest.

(Cllr. Ames withdrew from the meeting. Cllr. Tim Munro in the chair.)

In the course of deciding the allocation of grant money to the various organisations the Clerk elicited from the representative of Muntsy's Community Care Activities Ltd that it was not a not-for-profit organisation, as required by the conditions of the Council's grant awards scheme.

It was **RESOLVED** – that the following awards of grant money be made:-

South Dorset Community Sports Trust	£350
Portland Parish	£250
Muntsy's Community Care Activities Ltd	£75
Portland United Youth Football Club	£200
Tornadoes of South Dorset Swimming Club	£200
Community 2000	£250
The Drop In, Portland	£200
Chesil Sailability	£75

	£1,600

(Cllr Elspie Munro-Price left the meeting at 8.45 pm. Cllrs. Ames and Barton rejoined the meeting. Cllr. Ames in the chair.)

2536 – ORDER OF BUSINESS

It was agreed that Agenda Item 13 – Council Budget, 2014/15 be taken as the next item of business.

2537 – COUNCIL BUDGET, 2014/15

Cllr Tim Munro opened the debate by suggesting the likelihood of limited extra funds being available for parish and town councils in the future through the Government extending its capping of Council Tax rises beyond principal authorities as now. He saw it as important that expenditure on services for the Island was prioritised through the involvement of community groups. It was necessary for the Town Council to reinvent what the Council could do for the community by becoming a commissioning council and extending the principle of localism to its natural limit.

Cllr. Reynolds thought the Council should seek the views of the people of Portland first before committing itself to such a large rise in the precept.

Cllr. Barton said she had a problem with the size of the increase and understood there might have been a conflict with Standing Order 39 in reaching the decision. She favoured levering in grant funding from outside to supplement the precept actually levied.

In the course of the Council's debate Cllr. Ames proposed from the chair that the members of the public remaining [seven] be allowed ten minutes to give expression to their views. This was agreed.

Some of the points made by the public were as follows:-

- The Council was just trying to build up its bank balance.
- The intended rise in the precept was unaffordable for the majority of Island people.
- Why had the Council not sought a wider consultation?
- One in five households on the Island had problems in meeting cost of living expenditure.
- Recent Town Council minutes were not available.
- Why had the e-mail notification of the Council Tax rise sent to the Echo not been made public?

Responding to some of the comments made, Cllr. Ames from the chair said that he and other members of the Council had worked for years to achieve more independence for the Island in terms of operating its own services, but had made little progress. Each time the Borough had offered to pass services back to the Island it was on the condition that Portland people paid for them in addition to paying for those same services delivered in Weymouth, a system known as “double taxation,” which was not acceptable to the Town Council. Personally speaking he favoured the Council extending its services, but was sympathetic to a Council Tax rise only up to about £50 Band D equivalent.

Cllr. Ian Munro-Price regretted that the information placed in the public domain had been so limited. All the members of the Council had the right intention to make Portland a better place.

Cllr. Denton-White drew attention to the progress made in the current year by the Council taking on an Island Caretaker to improve the general look of the Island, particularly when services were being run down at national, County and Borough levels. Holding some sort of referendum to gauge public opinion would cost the Council more than £5,000. [£8,000 plus – Clerk]

Cllr. Wild referred to discussions at a recent DAPTC [Dorset Association of Parish and Town Councils] meeting he had attended. There were strong indications that the Borough would move to setting up parishes also in Weymouth and even the possibility of Weymouth & Portland Borough Council ceasing to be an authority in its own right.

Cllr. Matthews thought it possible that more funds might become available to the Island if the parishing proposals went ahead. He wanted a greater debate with the community and thought a £50 Band D rate was more realistic than £150 in order to build up the public's trust in the Town Council.

Cllr. Nowak called the current situation “a once-for-all opportunity” before parish precepts were capped. Meanwhile the Borough was in a dilemma having to respond

to a huge cut in Government funding. He regretted that the details in Cllr. Tim Munro's e-mail had only trickled out and affirmed the need for the Council to engage with the community.

It was proposed by Cllr Nowak and **RESOLVED** – that a public meeting be held within fourteen days of the present meeting to explain the decision to raise the precept. All Saints Church was suggested as a possible venue.

(Cllr. Nowak left the meeting at 10.05 pm.)

The Clerk stated his view to members that the reaching of a definite decision on the precept in December was a breach of the Council's Standing Orders.

Cllr. Tim Munro proposed that the Borough Council be notified immediately that the Town Council had set a precept of £501,465.

Cllr. Matthews proposed an amendment that notification be delayed until after the public meeting had been held. This was **LOST**.

The original motion, that the Borough Council be notified immediately that the Town Council had set a precept of £501,465 was **RESOLVED**.

2538 – ORDER OF BUSINESS

The Clerk requested that Agenda Item 10(a) be dealt with before the meeting was concluded. This was agreed.

2539 – FINANCIAL MATTERS

a) Payments for Authorisation

RESOLVED – that the schedule of invoices (cheque refs. 2970 – 2971, 2990 – 3005) in the sum of £6,089.28 including VAT be approved.

2540 – ORDER OF BUSINESS

The remaining agenda items were deferred.

2541 – DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next scheduled meeting of the Town Council was due to take place on Wednesday, 19th February 2014, starting at 7.00 pm.

The meeting ended at 10.30 pm.

Signed Dated
(Chair)