

PORTLAND TOWN COUNCIL

TOWN COUNCIL MEETING HELD AT 7PM ON WEDNESDAY 13TH FEBRUARY 2019 AT PORTLAND COMMUNITY VENUE

PRESENT:

Councillors: Ray Nowak (Chairman), Jo Atwell, Charlie Flack, Chris Gover, Jim Draper, David Thurston, Sandra West, Rod Wild, Sue Lees, Tim Gomm and Rob Hughes.

IN ATTENDANCE:

Andy Matthews (Neighbourhood Plan Working Group) and 7 members of the public.

3819. Chairman's Welcome

Cllr. Nowak welcomed all to the meeting and advised of fire precautions at the hall.

3820. Prayers

As the Mayor's Chaplain was absent the Rev. Tim Gomm led the meeting in prayer.

3821. Apologies for Absence

Councillor Cocking sent her apologies

3822. Declarations of Interest

No declarations were received.

3823. To Approve the Minutes of the Meeting Held on 16th January 2019

These were agreed as a true and accurate record of the meeting and signed by the Chairman.

3824. Minute Update and Matters Arising

There were no matters arising

3825. Democratic Public Half Hour Open Forum

- a) Mr Matthews informed the Chairman that he would be happy to speak on Agenda item 14 (Neighbourhood Plan) if required.
- b) Mr Vincent, recognising that the precept had been set at the last meeting, sought to understand why £5,000 had been allocated to Portland Museum. The Chairman stated that discussions were still ongoing with Dorset County Council (DCC) as to which assets/areas of land would transfer to PTC, explaining that because DCC had been busy with the formation of Weymouth Town Council there had been insufficient time to legally agree the transfer of assets to PTC. Because of this, all assets would transfer to DCC on the 1st April 2019 and PTC would manage them under licence for one year whilst the job of legally transferring the assets was undertaken.

The Chairman explained that whilst the museum received a grant to cover the rates, as responsible landowners it was incumbent upon Portland Town Council (PTC) to ensure that sufficient resource was provided to maintain the assets. He further explained that there was a requirement to insure the building and to provide public liability insurance (currently greater than £5,000 if obtained by the Museum) and felt that PTC would be able to obtain that at a cheaper rate than the Museum, the rationale being that PTC already insure a

number of buildings and adding the requirements of the Museum to an existing policy would have financial benefits.

Mr Vincent then asked the Chairman if he was still on the Board of Directors of the Museum; the Chairman confirmed that this was the case.

Cllr. Gomm responded to Mr Vincent that, in discussing the precept (at the previous Council meeting) the Chairman had declared an interest (as a Trustee) in Portland Museum, and felt that nothing untoward was occurring in the allocation of the £5,000 budget.

- c) Ms Giovanna Lewis expressed her thanks to PTC for sorting out the issue with the Lease on Church Ope Car Park. The Chairman stated that he felt that he owed the Councillors and the members of the public an apology as he had understood that the car park was owned by Crown Estates and this had not been the case and further, had been a surprise to him when he found out that it was owned by Betterment Properties.

3826. Chairman's Update

The Chairman informed everyone that there had been a lot going on, and that PTC along with Weymouth and Portland Borough Council (W&PBC) and the Shadow Council had discussed those services that were transferring to PTC. He explained that the services being transferred would be managed by PTC for up to one year under licence whilst the legal transfer was undertaken. It was, he said, the intention of the Council and its Officers to learn to walk before they could run and that it was not intended, within the first year, to make any wholesale changes; and then consider any possible changes, although there were exceptions to this. The Masonic Car Park for instance; whilst it would be PTC's intention to make the car park a free car park, as it was only going to be leased to PTC for a year there would be little that could be done to implement that strategy if DCC decided to run it as a fee-paying car park for a year. He further explained that the Responsible Finance Officer had also suggested that the funeral charges, currently set by Weymouth Crematorium could be revised such that it would be within the Council's remit to determine whether the amenity was provided as a business or as a service. If it was provided as a service, then it could mean reduced costs for the people of Portland, but that concept needed careful thought and a better understanding of the charges prior to any changes being made. He concluded by reiterating that it was necessary to get all of the services under one roof before making wholesale changes.

He went on to state that there had been a good response to the advertisement of the skilled gardener's job and that he was pleased that the current head gardener had indicated a willingness to be part of the appointment process. He felt that the growing relationship between W&PBC and PTC would deliver benefits and was confident that they would continue to provide support, where required, post 1st April 2019.

Cllr. Hughes asked whether there was any merit in asking DCC to provide some help in the maintenance of the toilets at Portland Bill given that it is a fee-paying carpark. The Chairman responded that the Shadow Council had intended that all fee-paying entities remain with them, however, following negotiation an agreement had been reached that if PTC were to take on the Portland Bill carpark then they would be allowed to keep the Blue Shed (which currently has a sitting tenant). He went on to thank all of those Councillors who had taken time out to attend the Shadow Council meeting, their presence, he felt that the turnout had provided an indication of how seriously PTC were taking the transfer of assets. He stated that, having taken legal advice he was reassured that it was not possible now for DCC to make the claim that non-transfer of assets had been the intention.

Cllr. Hughes questioned who would be responsible for the management of the transfer of assets and the Chairman reminded him that, several meetings ago, it had been agreed that management of the transfer of assets had been delegated to the Finance committee.

Cllr. Gomm asked whether it was possible to have a form of communication on the events of the Shadow Management meeting. The Chairman provided a verbal report on the events of the meeting. He stated that the paper was on the agenda and several Councillors had spoken on the issue and David Brown (DCC) had provided some re-assurance that things were progressing as intended. As the Chairman was taking his turn to speak it became apparent that Councillor Cant was unwell (it later became known that he had suffered a stroke) and the meeting was closed. He has been informed that Portland would be discussed at the main Council meeting to be held next Thursday (21st February) and the Chairman invited all to attend. He further stated that the Mayor's robes are to be returned to PTC along with the Upham water colours and the Mayor's chair, however a mace that had been requested will not be returned as it was felt that neither of the maces had connections to Portland.

The Chairman took the opportunity to welcome Nichola Terry who has joined the staff at PTC as the Portland Community Venue Administrator.

The Chairman advised that a national Keep Britain Tidy event had been organised for 22nd March to 23rd April and sought comments from the Committee members as to whether there was interest in being part of the event. Cllr. Lees stated that she would be happy to have skips located at her place if that would help but didn't feel that she had the time to organise the event. Cllr. Flack mentioned that he had been informed that the Community Payback Team were undertaking work up at the Young Offenders Institute and that it might be worth contacting the probationer service to see if they could provide some help. Cllr. Wild commented that Giovanna Lewis was the nominated 'litter picker' and that she might like to take the lead, again whilst Ms Lewis was happy to be involved, she did not feel able to take the lead. The Chairman proposed that the suggestions raised be followed up, and the event be left open until such time that it was understood whether participation in the event was viable.

The Chairman advised that a celebration of the opening of the Portland Community Venue (PCV) was to be held and the date is now confirmed as 30th March 2019. He asked that any special invitees, who may not be on the guest list, be advised to the PCV co-ordinator.

3827. Town Mayor's Announcements

Cllr. Flack updated the Council on the Mayor's activities during the past month, stating that it had been a quiet month but that he had presented the Mayor's Charity cheque to the Portland Sea Cadets for £600.00, he understood that this would go towards berthing fees for their boats.

3828. Receive written reports from Borough and County Councillors

No written reports were received.

3829. Financial Matters

a) Payments for Authorisation

The Clerk presented payments totalling £8,197.62 for authorisation and approval. The list can be found at **Annex A** to these minutes.

This was unanimously approved

He also advised that there had been one receipt this month of £8.02 which had been for the sale of the Churchill Painting

b) The RFO confirmed that at this point, at the end of January 2019 (84% of the way through the year), the budget was within Precept representing a precept spend of 97.5% and RFO advised that whilst this figure was higher than anticipated he advised that this was likely to rise to 110% before the end of March 2019. He added that this had all been documented

and was within acceptable limits. It was due he said, in part to additional staff costs. He also advised that with the impending transfer of assets under the Local Government Review (LGR), that the Committee would see an increasing number of payments in this financial year in support of requirements post 1st April 2019.

The Precept spend for 2018/19 and the precept for 2019/20 can be found at **Annexes B and C**.

The report was unanimously accepted

3830. Portland Community Venue (PCV) update

In the absence of Cllr. Cocking, Cllr. Draper presented the report.

a) He advised that Nicola Terry was now on board as the PCV administrator and that the Web site was up and running and anyone who wished to contact Nicola could do so through the website.

b) He confirmed that the Open Day would take place on 30th March from 11am to 3pm. He explained that the intent was to attract local people and encourage local community groups to have stands. There is to be entertainment and refreshments and he hoped that there would be a dignitary to open the event.

The Chairman advised that Allsorts (Nursery) would also be taking an active part in the day and that they had gained some lottery funding to support the event.

Cllr. Draper stated that he was seeking funding (£1,000) to support the event. The Chairman seconded this and felt that this amount should also cover the cost of a plaque to commemorate the day.

The request for funds not to exceed £1,000 was unanimously agreed

3831 – Reinstatement of Yellow Lines outside of the PCV

A member of the public asked to be able to speak on the issue of the re-instatement of the yellow lines and stated that whilst he supported the application, recognising the safety implications, felt that railings would be a better solution. He further asked whether given the critical nature of parking in the area, the restrictions could be lifted at evenings and weekends? The Chairman advised they were only seeking to re-instate zig-zag lines, that whilst it could be considered, parking was the remit of Dorset County Council and would ultimately be up to them. A further member of the public mentioned that because PTC were only seeking to re-instate yellow zig-zag lines, the parking restrictions only applied at certain times (8am to 8pm).

Cllr. Hughes raised the issue that parking on the island was limited and that the Council would need, in the future, to re-evaluate the parking policy. The Chairman responded that parking was not a problem that could be resolved in the near future. Cllr. Hughes that we should consider turning some green spaces into car parks. The Chairman felt that with the takeover of the Masonic carpark and making this a free car park it would ease some of the issues.

The Chairman reminded the Committee that the issue was the reinstatement of yellow Zig Zag lines outside of the PCV and asked the committee to vote on the issue at hand.

The vote was supported, and the Highways Officer is to be invited to attend one of the meetings.

3832 - Submission of the Leader Grant

The RFO advised the meeting that the final part of the Leader Grant had been completed and submitted. The value of the Grant was circa £40,000 and had been hand delivered to County Hall on the morning of February 14th, 2019.

3833 - Portland Services Update

a) **Church Ope Car Park** – The RFO stated that Betterment had offered a 3-year Lease at a monthly charge of £50 and that PTC would need to pay associated legal costs. The Clerk advised that Betterment had been contacted to see if it was possible to achieve a longer lease, however this had not been possible. She also stated that a stipulation of the Lease was that the Car Park must be handed back in a condition that was no worse than it was at this time. To aid this it was imperative that photographs be undertaken to provide a baseline for the condition. The Chairman advised that he has taken some photographs. The RFO stated that the LGR car park fund will cover the cost of the rent.

The Chairman advised that it would be necessary to undertake a review of all the car parks to determine their condition and to plan for any maintenance required.

The RFO sought approval of £600 plus any legal costs to cover the continued use of Church Ope car park by the residents of Portland.

The request was supported unanimously.

b) **Advertisement of post of Assistant Town Clerk** – The Clerk explained that, given the additional administrative burden that would be upcoming from the 1st April 2019 that there was now a requirement to proceed with the advertisement for an Assistant Town Clerk. The RFO explained that it had been agreed when setting the budget, that the staff element would rise to £131,000 for the FY 2019/20 in anticipation of the additional costs required to support the implementation of LGR. In addition, he stated that it was normal practice for staff costs to be in the proportion of 50% of the precept. He had undertaken a review of two other Councils and discovered that Blandford was around 70% whilst Gillingham were around 50%, in comparison our budget for staff currently sat at 30%. The Chairman stated that he was happy to endorse the recruitment of an assistant town clerk.

The request to advertise the post of Assistant Town Clerk was unanimously supported.

c) i. **Grass Cutting Contract** – The RFO explained that the idea of going to Wessex Ground Services was that there was already an extant contract in existence. He was proposing that the current contract be extended for one year only, the rationale being that it would a) give the council time to understand the totality of the requirement and b) run a full procurement exercise for a longer period with a reduced risk of getting the requirement wrong. He explained that the cost of cutting all of the large spaces (10 cuts a year), which were; Weston Playing Field, Grove Road recreation area, Southwell recreation area, Officers Field, Beacon Hill and Cheyne Weares (for which Wessex are currently responsible), came to a total of £5,681.56. (VAT Inc), which he believed to be good value for money. The Chairman stated that he recognised that in an ideal world a full procurement exercise would have been undertaken but accepted that given the current unique situation he understood that it was critical to have a solution in place for the 1st April 2019. He also stated that with the possibility of new councillors in May it would allow them time to understand the requirement and have time to discuss and implement their preferences. A vote was taken on the proposal to extend the current contract with Wessex Grounds Services for the cutting of the large areas and a unanimous agreement was returned.

The contract with Wessex Grounds Services to be extended to include the cutting of the all the large grassed areas.

ii. **Contract with Garden Duck** – The RFO stated that Garden Duck had been asked and had provided a quote to maintain the green areas around the PCV. Garden Duck had been heavily involved at the start to the PCV regeneration project and this project sought to extend the work started at that point. Garden Duck (a local gardener) had provided a quote of £1,680.00 (£140 per month) this will provide two visits a month, each lasting four hours per visit. The work to be undertaken will include cutting the grass and maintaining the garden areas. Having undertaken a comparison the RFO was able to state that the £20 per hour being quoted was fair and reasonable. He also explained that it was imperative to get the contract placed quickly as the growing season was imminent and with it the ability to get a gardener was decreasing. He also explained that as this was Portland Town Council's flagship it was imperative that it deliver the right first impression. He further explained that, as per the Wessex contract, this would be for one year only and full procurement activity would be undertaken in the Autumn. The Chairman was happy to support the placement of a one-year contract with Garden Duck for the maintenance of the green spaces at the PCV. A vote was taken which was unanimous.

A contract be let with Garden Duck for one year to undertake garden maintenance for the PCV.

d) **Public Toilets** – The RFO explained that in support of the Public Toilets being transferred to PTC on the 1st April 2019, he had approached three Contractors, each of whom had held contracts with other town councils; Glen Cleaning, Churchill and Kingdom (current contractor for W&PBC). He explained that he had asked each of them to quote for two sets of opening times, 8am to 8pm in the summer (4 cleans per day) and 10am to 4pm in the winter (2 cleans per day). Whilst he had not been able to undertake a full procurement, he was confident that he had been able to give each of the Companies a comprehensive view of what was required. He reminded the meeting that a budget of £72,000 had been allocated for the public toilets, and whilst he had only received one quote to date from Churchill's at £54,519.31 it was heartening to see that this was well within the budget allocated and he was expecting the other two Companies quotes to be comparable. He was, he said, proposing that this meeting give the Finance Committee authority, as a one-off occurrence, to sign off a one-year contract for cleaning of the toilets. He believed that it was imperative that a contract be let as soon as possible and that to wait until the next Full Council meeting may be too late for the chosen contractor to mobilise. The Chairman confirmed that he was happy to support a proposal that delegated to the Finance Committee, authority to make the decision on the toilet cleaning contractor. A vote was taken that returned unanimous agreement.

Authority is delegated to the Finance Committee authority to determine who the toilet cleaning contract should be placed with.

3834 – Neighbourhood Plan – Submission to Local Planning Authority

Councillor Draper stated that the Planning Committee had agreed that the Neighbourhood Plan was sufficiently mature to be submitted the local Planning Authority and were bringing this formally to Full Council for endorsement. Cllr. Draper explained that they were just waiting for the habitat regulation study to complete and that would signal the submission to the local Planning Authority. Whilst the outcome of the habitat regulation study was still awaited, he remained confident that the plan would be submitted before the 31st March 2019. The Chairman stated that he was happy to support the proposal to submit the Neighbourhood Plan to the local Planning Authority and put the proposal to a vote, which was declared to be unanimous.

On completion of the habitat regulation study the Neighbourhood Plan is to be submitted to the local Planning Authority.

3835 – Remembrance Day

Cllr Gomm explained that the British Legion, who generally undertook the organisation of the Remembrance Day events, had requested that PTC be approached with a view to going into partnership with them, to help with the organisation of this year's event. He further explained that generally in other areas it was the Town Council who took the lead for the event. He continued that the aim was, that initially the event would be undertaken in partnership but with a view to PTC taking it over in its entirety in the coming years. He explained that it generally cost in the region of £500.00 which covered the printing of orders of service for both services. The Chairman felt that it was a role that the Town Council should be taking, but that this needed to be transferred over time. Cllr. Thurston enquired what liability would fall to the Town Council? Cllr. Gomm felt that this would likely be on a 50/50 basis but explained that the British Legion did not generate any income and that in previous years the Court Leet had provided a donation of £200. The RFO stated that, in generating this year's budgets no allowance had been made for this event. He also suggested that the British Legion should consider applying for a Town Council Grant, when the grant scheme was opened later in the year. He was concerned that the initial agreement that it be undertaken on a 50/50 split was likely to increase and become a greater burden on the Council. It was his suggestion that the British Legion be asked to lead and that we provide some support rather than take it on in partnership. The Chairman suggested that, now that there was access to a good printer it could provide help with the printing and admin for the road closure. He accepted that in principle the Council should help with Remembrance Day but at the moment the British Legion should lead and that the Council will actively support. He also requested that a meeting be set up with the British Legion to understand what aid the Council could provide and determine exactly what the Council would be committing too. He proposed that the Council proceed on that basis and asked for a vote, the vote returned a majority decision.

A meeting be set up with the British Legion to determine how the Town Council could assist with the Remembrance Day commemorations.

3836 Marine, Environmental and Tourism (MET) Report

Cllr. Lees provided a report on the latest issues and actions from the recent MET Committee meeting. She explained that as she had been unwell there had only been two meetings in the last year.

She informed the meeting that at the last MET Meeting Cllr. Rob Hughes had been appointed as the Deputy Chairman and that there had been a very interesting presentation by Sylvia Claydon on how the use of signs around Pewsey had greatly helped increase the tourism offering. She advised the meeting that there had been a long discussion on the bridleways and public rights of way and the desire to see the opening of the footpath between the Naval Cemetery and Knickodemus Knob which would go some way to seeing a public right of way that went all around the island. She advised that Mr Matthews was to actively pursue this with Portland Port (the land owners). Mr Matthews stated that he was just waiting for the NP to be submitted to the local Planning Authority and then he would be free to pursue this issue. Cllr. Lees advised that hedgerows were becoming an issue with the infestation of moths and that a strategy to deal with them needed to be agreed. At the meeting Cllr. Wild had provided an update on the archaeological sites and the issue of dry-stone walling had also been discussed. Cllr. Lees believed that the skill of dry-stone walling was an important one and was working hard to pass on this skill to a group of volunteers who had shown an interest. She advised that the next meeting was to be held on 6th March 2019 and invited all to attend.

The Chairman thanked Cllr. Lees for her report and thanked everyone for attending the meeting.

3837. Exclusion of Press & Public (discretionary)

There were no matters to discuss.

3838. Date of Next Meeting

The Committee's next meeting is scheduled to take place on Wednesday, 27th March 2019 at the Portland Community Venue at 7.00 pm.

The meeting ended at 21.00 hours.

Signed Dated.....
Chairman