

PORTLAND TOWN COUNCIL
TOWN COUNCIL MEETING
HELD ON WEDNESDAY 14TH NOVEMBER 2018
AT EASTON METHODIST HALL, EASTON

PRESENT:

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

IN ATTENDANCE:

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

3782. Chairman's Welcome

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

3783. Prayers

The Mayor's Chaplain led the meeting in prayer.

3784. Apologies for Absence

Cllr's Reynolds, Symes and Lees sent apologies along with Cllr. Garcia (DCC) and Baker (W&PBC)

3785. Declarations of Interest

No declarations were received.

3786. To Approve the Minutes of the Meeting Held on 17th October 2018

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

3787. Minute Update and Matters Arising

Cllr. Atwell informed the meeting that the additional Christmas lighting at Straits (3760) had been erected and that the local traders were very grateful. She proposed that a letter be issued to W&PBC thanking them for their efforts.

A letter of thanks to be sent to W&P BC.

3788. Democratic Public Half Hour Open Forum

A question was raised by a member of the public seeking information as to how the draft precept had been arrived at and whether there should actually be a two percent increase; given that there were to be no election costs and potentially an increase in revenue as an impact of the Local Government Review (LGR).

A response was provided by Councillor Cocking who stated that there was no guarantee that we would receive an increase in revenue due to LGR and, with regard to the draft precept budget, this was reviewed and amended at each Finance meeting as more information on local and county issues became available.

Councillor Draper also added that election costs would be incurred next April, when local elections are to be held, and added that it had always been the councils

practise to include in the precept a year on year pro-rata amount to cover the costs of the elections. He also stated that the amount budgeted for staff costs this year were likely to be insufficient due to an obligatory increase in the employer element of staff pensions and an increase in wages to low paid staff. He added that there was no contingency in the draft precept budget for next year for these increases, and as such the Finance committee had looked to find savings in other areas.

3789. Chairman's Update

The Chairman added his congratulations in getting the Christmas lights erected in Straits.

He reminded those present that the Christmas Sparkle would take place on 14th December and encouraged everyone to become involved. He further commented that he felt that the Beacon commemorations had been exceedingly successful and thanked all of the Councillors and Staff for making it such a success. He added that whilst it had been the intention to use the Beacon for this one-off event, he now felt that it should remain in situ for further commemoration events, and indeed to provide an enduring memorial for the conclusion of World War One. It was suggested by Councillor Wild that the area around the Beacon be renamed Beacon Hill; the Chairman agreed that he would look into whether this was possible. The Chairman made a proposal that the Council seek planning permission to be allowed to keep the Beacon in situ. The motion was proposed, seconded and unanimously supported by the Council.

The Town Clerk to follow up with the proposed planning permission

The Chairman to report back on possibility of naming the site Beacon Hill

There is to be a Garden and Litter pick day on Saturday 17th November at the Portland Community Venue starting at 10.30. Anybody who has some time to spare is encouraged to drop in and provide some help.

3790. Town Mayor's Announcements

Cllr. Flack updated the Council on the Mayor's activities during the past month. A full list can be found at **Annex A** to these minutes.

3791. Receive written reports from Borough and County Councillors

There were no written reports received.

3792. Financial Matters

a) Payments for Authorisation

The Clerk presented payments totalling £41,180.86 for authorisation and approval. The list can be found at **Annex B**.

This was unanimously approved

b) 2018/19 Financial Report to 31st October 2018

The Clerk confirmed, at this point, the budget was well within Precept. The draft Precept statement can be found at **Annex C**.

3793. Portland Community Venue (PCV) update

Cllr. Cocking updated the Council on the PCV activities during the past month. A full update can be found at **Annex D**.

3794. Local Government Reorganisation update

The Chairman provide an update on LGR. He informed the meeting that there was to be a meeting of the Borough Council next Monday (19th November) at which the proposals for assets and services submitted by Portland Town Council were to be considered. He also stated that, with the agreement of the Council, he had also asked for a sum of £250,000.00 as financial help in support of LGR. Therefore, by the end of Monday there should be a better understanding of what, in principal, the Management Committee's decision is likely to be. He did, however, warn that the Management Committee's proposal would still need to be submitted to the Full Council in January so there was not likely to be any final decision until then. He had concerns that as the decision was not likely to be made until early next year it put increasing pressure on PTC who were also required to set their Precept in January.

Councillor Hughes had some concerns over the amount of financial help that was being requested, believing that the sum was insufficient and that a larger figure should have been requested. The Chairman explained that most of Weymouth and Portland's large assets would automatically go back to the Unitary, so a share should come back to Portland through that route. The figure presented was calculated as a percentage of the money that had been spent in Weymouth in the last two years, and it was agreed with the Borough Council that there should be parity. As an island we make up 16.8% of the council tax and should we wish to take a bigger percentage of the gains then we must also be prepared to take the same percentage of the losses, of which there have been many. If this rationale were to be applied, it could reduce the final figure agreed significantly. The Chairman acknowledged that following the decision of Monday's meeting there would be an impact on the Precept and that this would be discussed at the next Finance Meeting to be held on 28th November, and to which everyone was invited.

3795. Portland Town Council Website discussion

Councillor Hughes raised concerns over the accuracy of the current website, drawing particular attention to one of the many errors; the fact that the location was still shown as New Road some three and a half years after the move. He had concerns that the Council was paying money for a website that was incorrect and didn't work on many mobile devices. The Chairman explained that the Councillors were aware that there were errors and that the website needed updating. He further stated that the Portland Community Venue was in the process of generating its own website, a proviso of the Leader Grant being to arrange for a professionally developed web site; and development of the Town Council website would take account of the lessons learnt from this activity. Councillor Draper informed the meeting that the previous Clerk had renewed the contract with the website provider, with the contract now expiring at the end of the next financial year and further it was in the Councils plans to ensure that something better would be in place for when that contract expired. The Chairman stated that it was not possible to take this issue forward at this point in time, but assured Councillor Hughes that it is on the wider agenda for the Council and that he would welcome his help in taking the issue forward.

3796. Telephone Communications in the new Town Council Offices

Councillor Cocking provided a report on the new telephone system being installed in the new Council Offices at the Portland Community Venue. She stated that it was necessary to upgrade the current phone system, which whilst it had worked fairly well in the old offices it would not be fit for purpose in the new ones. The current

system has one line with 3 extensions which means that it is often frustrating to find the number engaged. The new system will have one line but allow up to 12 phones to be linked and used separately and simultaneously. She confirmed that a thorough evaluation had been undertaken and that Councillor Draper had looked at other systems and prices. Following a thorough evaluation, she was able to confirm that the proposal from a local Company SW IT had delivered the best value for money. She stated that with the impact of LGR and being part of a larger venue, it was imperative that the new Council Offices be able to support an increase in the number of calls. It was, she said, 'her ambition that the new Council Offices be commercially minded but community focused', with the new system being much more effective. She added that, 'in the event that it is necessary to use temporary numbers, whilst the new system is fitted, then these temporary numbers would be advised'.

3797. Grant Awards 18/19

The Chairman noted that there had been five applications for grant funding this year and in addition there had been further bids received past the deadline (after the closing date of 12th October 2018). He asked the Councillors whether or not they wished to take the late bids into consideration. Following a discussion, it was generally agreed that the late bids should not be considered. It was felt that the closing date had been well published and it would not be wise to accept late bids and potentially set a precedence. Councillor Thurston moved to decline to consider the late bids which was seconded by the Chairman and unanimously agreed. The Chairman asked that the Clerk inform the sponsors of the late bids and ask them to ensure that next year they submit them in good time. The Chair declared a non pecuniary interest as a Trustee of two of the organisations, so he would not vote on any of the applications. Each of the Grants was considered and a resolution made for each; the results of this are held at **Annex E**.

Clerk to inform the Sponsors of the late Bids.

3798. Draft Precept 2019/2020

The Chairman drew the meetings attention to the draft precept document held at Annex C to the Agenda. He asked if the Chair of the Finance Committee if she wished to expand on the figures presented. Councillor Cocking stated that the draft precept was an evolving document and apt to change on a regular basis; she further stated that the figures quoted would be reviewed as they always were at the Finance meetings. She reminded that meeting that the next meeting was to be held on 28th November and to which all members of the public were welcome to attend.

Councillor Hughes proposed that there should be no increase in the precept for 2019/20. The Chairman acknowledged the intent and asked Councillor Hughes to review the precept figures and to respond with a proposal that would see the precept remain at the 208/19 figure of £22.97 (the 2019/20 figure is currently set to be £23.52). Following a discussion, and as an immediate resolution, the Chairman suggested that the meeting undertake a line by line review of the precept document. Several amendments to the precept items was proposed but none were sufficiently supported as to be accepted. Following the review and debate of the precept figures, the Chairman proposed that the Finance Committee consider the proposed amendments further and determine whether these, together with any updates from other discussions and LGR would result in a material change to the figures proposed.

3799. Exclusion of Press & Public (discretionary)

There were no matters to discuss.

3800. Date of Next Meeting

The Committee's next meeting is scheduled to take place on Wednesday, 16th January 2019 at the Portland Community Venue at 7.00 pm.

The meeting ended at 20.45 hours.

Signed Dated.....
Chairman