

PORTLAND TOWN COUNCIL

TOWN COUNCIL MEETING HELD AT 7PM ON WEDNESDAY 16th OCTOBER 2019 AT PORTLAND COMMUNITY VENUE

PRESENT:

Councillors: Charlie Flack (Chairman), S Harpley, J Draper, C Atkins, S Cocking, R Hughes, P Roper, P Kimber, S West, D Thurston and L Saunders.

IN ATTENDANCE: 12 members of the public and PCSO Nick Bool

3968. Chairman's Welcome

The Chairman welcomed all to the meeting and advised that there was no planned fire alarm testing and indicated to those present the various fire exits.

3969. Prayers

The Mayor's Chaplain Mrs Paula Brown led the meeting in a moment of reflection and prayer.

3970. Presentation by the Conservation Officer – Mr Stefan Ganther

Mr Stefan Ganther provided a short talk on those buildings around the Island that were listed as Grade II and Grade II* and specifically St Peter's Church and the Windmills.

As a resident of Portland, Mr Ganther explained that he has a vested interest in the local listed buildings as they are important not just to the Island but also to the wider community. He explained that if a building is declared as being at risk and was subsequently included on the At-Risk register then this status could be used to unlock money; although he explained that access to that money followed a complicated route. Acknowledging that access to the money was in general a complicated task, it was less so for buildings with a * rating, as with St Peter's which is Grade II* listed, as Historic England would provide support. He felt that St Peter's has fallen into disrepair due to the lack of interest from the owner and, despite numerous attempts to contact him there has been no success to date. If action were to be progressed, then that action needed to be through a formal route and through Dorset Council. He hoped that this would eventually lead to a compulsory purchase order (CPO) being placed on the building. Stefan advised that the correct course of action would be to set up a local group, a trust which would need to be constitutionalised adding that Local Authorities could not make bid for funds and this was an action for the local group. He explained that his preferred route would be that Dorset Council continue to try and contact the owner and to pursue a CPO; he went on to explain the success would ultimately release the building from the current owner and pass it to a new one. That new owner would then be responsible for getting the funds in place to undertake repairs etc. He felt that any future action (following the CPO) would need to be community based, and for which he was offering his support; he advised that there was a group already formed (Friends of St Peter's Group) co-ordinated by Mrs Terry Shakespeare and he hoped that it would be this group that would become more formalised. He added that he hoped that this group would eventually become a charitable trust and it would be them that would take the lead in any future actions. He cautioned that there was no short-term solution for St Peter's and that it could take a number of years, and a great deal of community strength to deliver what would ultimately have to be a community-based asset. He reiterated that he would do everything that he could as a member of Dorset Council and in addition he had received confirmation that Historic England would also provide their support to release any funds available.

With regard to the Windmills he felt that this was a better situation. He reported that one (the north Windmill) was owned by the Stone Firms with whom he had been in contact with and who were fully supportive of the regeneration work. With regard to the south Windmill, this was privately owned, and he had not had much success in being able to contact the owner. His vision was to restore the south Windmill into a full working mill with the north one

becoming an information site. He expressed a view that he believed that the money could be found to support the regeneration from various sources. In terms of standing structures, he believed that they were the oldest in the country and this status would ensure financial support. Again, the route to regeneration was through the formation of a community group and again he believed that there was an interest group already formed. If this group could be formalised through a constitution, then it would have the gravitas to be able to apply for funding and drive the project forward. With the right people and groups in place he considered that the project could be complete within 1 to 2 years, with sufficient evidence in existence to be able to understand how they looked and worked originally. He felt that the biggest challenge would be trying to understand the cost of the work required as many of the skills required to bring the Windmills back to working order (millwrights) had limited (no) availability. He expressed a sadness that the only thing holding back the project was the lack of a local group to act as custodians to take the project forward. Despite all of this he said that he was really excited as this project was on the brink of formalising agreements and success.

During a question and answer session, the Councillors asked questions ranging from the difficulties and routes to getting the owner of St Peter's to respond, to the potential for training for the necessary trades required by the Windmills regeneration, to the need for a robust project plan.

The Chairman thanked Mr Ganther for his interesting talk and his support in the conservation of the very important buildings on Portland.

3971. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors B Parkes, C Parkes and Lewis and Mr Andy Matthews (Portland Neighbourhood Plan).

3972. Declarations of Interest

Cllr Kimber declared a non-pecuniary interest as Chairman of Access.

3973. To Approve the Minutes of the Meeting Held on 18th September 2019

The minutes of the previous meeting were agreed to be a true and accurate record of the meeting, noting the following, and signed by the Chairman.

Item 3949e – Installation of 3 gates each with a 'No Dog' notice. To note that the gates are already in existence and only require the 'No Dog' notices to be attached. The word installed is to be deleted.

3974. Minute Update and Matters Arising

Item 3943 Cllr Saunders wished it to be known that, whilst the request for funds to support the THRIVE initiative had been rejected, she had been impressed by the presentation. Cllr Cocking advised that external support for the initiative had been received and currently an application was being generated to deliver funding from different funding streams.

Item 3953c – The Chairman advised that a letter had been received from Osprey Leisure Centre thanking the Council for the Community Infrastructure Levy donation received.

Item 3956 – Cllr Thurston advised that a grant of £600 had been received from the British Heart Foundation towards the cost of a defibrillator. He also advised that with the grant the total cost of the equipment and the cabinet had come in under the approved budget of £1,200 and that the remaining funds would be put towards employing an electrician to install the equipment. Cllr Thurston expressed his thanks to the PCV administrator and the Assistant Town Clerk for their help in the application of the grant.

Item 3962 – Cllr Kimber asked whether there was any update on the item regarding the trial period of extended opening of the accessible toilets. The Chairman stated that he was not aware of an update and proposed that the issue be deferred to the next meeting.

PC Nick Bool provided an update on the policing matters around the Island. He advised of two matters:

- a) Who is responsible for the shelter at the end of Sweet Hill Lane? The shelter is currently being frequented by Academy students and as such it is being heavily graffitied and is becoming a dumping ground for rubbish. He was aware that it was not the responsibility of Portland Town Council, but was unsure who he should contact to resolve the issue. As the structure was not serving any useful purpose there was a desire to have it removed. Cllr Kimber advised that Dorset Council (DC) had denied ownership, but Cllr Roper stated that Dorset Explorer clearly shows ownership sitting with DC.

Action: with Cllr Cocking to speak to Mark Osborne at DC and provide PC Bool with any updates.

- b) He also enquired as to whether PTC had any advice on the status of the abandoned naval buildings (Hardy Block) in Castletown as they were regularly being called to site. The Chairman advised that a letter had been sent to Comer Homes regarding anti-social behaviour on site, but that Comer Homes had responded stating that they did not believe that there was an issue.

The Chairman advised that a letter was due to be sent to Comer Homes regarding the caterpillar issue and the eradication of such and this would also be mentioned in that letter.

Action: with the Clerk to re-raise the issue of anti-social behaviour in the letter to be sent regarding the caterpillars.

- c) Cllr Thurston raised the issue of graffiti on the Island and the increase seen recently. PC Bool asked that photographs be taken and forwarded to him, following which he would take them to the Academy and see if the perpetrator could be recognised.
- d) Cllr Hughes also mentioned that Cllr Parkes had been trying to get an abandoned caravan on Castle Road removed. He asked if it was possible for PC Bool to add any help that he could.
- e) The Chairman raised the issue of the recent spate of car vandalism in Ventnor Road and was pleased to inform PC Bool that an email from Inspector Gosling had been received which had provided assurance that this had been an isolated incident.
- f) Cllr Cocking asked PC Bool whether he was aware of any anti-social behaviour in Easton Gardens. PC Bool responded that he was aware of this and had increased patrols in the area to try and alleviate the issue; although he added that he was aware of who the culprit was.
- g) Cllr West wished to mention the 'county lines' issue, being concerned that the issue was creeping towards Portland. PC Bool advised that the county lines officers were concentrating on Weymouth, but he was aware that gangs were looking for other places; that said, he still believed that Portland was a relatively safe place to live, and certainly safer than other areas. He added that the team on Portland were soon to be augmented with another PC, PC Billy Taylor who had experience of county lines and provided re-assurance that any incursion onto Portland would be detected and highlighted.

3975. Presentation by Cllr Cocking – Dorset Council Plan

Cllr Cocking provided a presentation to the Councillors on the generation of the Dorset Council Plan (See Annex A to these minutes). She explained that there were two packs one for Councillors, for them to onward brief their ward residents and one for members of the public. She advised that copies of the presentation would be available at the Council Offices and Easton Library. She encouraged everyone to review the presentation and to provide feedback.

3976. Democratic Public Half Hour Open Forum

- a. Sarah-Jo Boyle – wished to speak in support of Agenda Item 14 – Plastic Free Portland. She explained that Lyme Regis, Wimborne and Dorchester had all achieved plastic free status and was pleased to see that action was now being considered by Portland. She urged PTC to support the proposal and to pick up the fight against plastic waste; asking that they aid the fight to kick the addiction on single use plastics. She asked that the Council consider simple actions, such as swapping plastic straws for paper; believing that together there was a real opportunity to make a difference.

The Chairman thanked Sarah-Jo Boyle and advised that the matter would be discussed further at that point of the agenda.

- b. Susanna Aldridge – spoke regarding a project to bring a skate park back to Tophill, as she felt that there was very little for the older children at Tophill. She was aware that there had been a skate park at Tophill and wished to re-instate such a facility, although recognised that as the market now used that area it may not be feasible but felt that Weston Playing Field or the Grove might be suitable alternatives. She explained that she had details of organisations available to help design and finance such a project and was seeking advice and support from the Council in progressing this project.

The Chairman asked the Play Parks Brief Holder (Cllr West) to respond. In her response she stated that she recognised that there were a growing number of families with children on Portland and fully supported the idea of such a park. She felt that the first action needed to be the identification of a suitable site and then have a site survey undertaken to confirm it's suitability. Cllr Roper (Green Spaces Brief Holder) added his support to the project and agreed that there were areas on Portland that would be suitable. Cllr Thurston reminded the meeting that the cost of the skate park Underhill had been in the region of £250k. The Chairman also reminded the meeting that there was a requirement on the developer of the old Royal Manor School to provide a sporting facility to replace the loss of the tennis courts, this as a consequence of the school being re-developed, and felt that this was an avenue worth pursuing. Cllr Thurston requested that Mrs Aldridge put the request in writing and send it to the Clerk.

- c. Mr Vincent spoke requesting that consideration be given to the re-instatement of a drinking fountain in Easton Gardens. He explained that a site visit had been undertaken and a new location identified. He requested assurance that this request be taken into account for any future plans for Easton Gardens especially in light of the Councils consideration of a Plastic Free Portland. Cllr Hughes commented that Wessex Water provided support for organisations who wished to install water fountains. The Chairman reminded the meeting that as the land was owned by Crown Estates, that they would also need to provide their permission. The Chairman re-assured Mr Vincent that the issue of water fountains was being progressed and that he would ensure that Mr Vincent was kept updated of any developments.

- d. Hannah Sofaer spoke regarding the next phase of the Memory Stones; scenes around the stones and asked for representatives from PTC to be involved with this second phase. She went on to explain that over the last thirty six years the organisation (The Sculpture Trust) responsible for the memory stones had been involved with cultural projects and economic growth of the Island and had been responsible for over 2,000 people a year visiting the Island to attend courses etc. She introduced Bill Beech who as an executive of the Trust who explained that he had a long connection with Portland and the Sculpture Trust was keen to ensure that the focus of heritage and specifically the quarries continued. He felt that Portland was uniquely placed to understand some of the current issues with climate, environment and ecological change and wished to support and promote the Sculpture Trust and the transformative possibilities of art that was key to the ethos of the Trust's culture.

Cllr Draper responded that Cllr Nowak had really been the focal point on developing a relationship with the Sculpture Trust and in losing Cllr Nowak that focal point had been lost and as such he was keen to redress the loss of that focal point. The Chairman asked for volunteers and Cllrs Kimber, Thurston and Saunders responded.

It was resolved that Cllrs Kimber, Thurston and Saunders be PTC representatives of the Sculpture Trust.

3977. Chairman's Update

The Chairman reported the following:

- a. The Memorandum of Understanding under which the Council manage the services transferred from Weymouth Town Council has been extended to the 31st March 2020. He added that he was hopeful that by that time all the legal work to finally transfer the assets would have been completed.
- b. He, Cllr Cocking (the Mayor) and the Assistant Town Clerk had met with a German representative of the Holzwickede twinning association who was visiting Portland. The Chairman felt that the meeting had been beneficial and had allowed for an informal discussion on the reasons that PTC had decided to remove themselves from the twinning agreement following the split from Weymouth Town Council. Cllr Kimber requested that the decision to move away from the twinning agreement be re-visited. Cllr Hughes advised that the decision to re-visit the decision could not be made for a period of 6 months (as per standing orders). However, as the decision was made in May 2019 the six months would be up in November 2019.

Resolved that the issue of twinning with Holzwickede be added to the November agenda for further discussion.

- c. A request had been received from one of the long-standing tenants that they have use of the Studio on a Wednesday evening. This would mean that the Planning Meetings normally held on a Wednesday evening would need to be moved to a Thursday. Following a vote, which returned a unanimous agreement, it was resolved that from November the Planning meetings would be held on a Thursday.

Resolved that all future Planning and Highways Meetings be held on a Thursday evening.

- d. The Chairman advised that the Clerk has suggested that Full Council Meetings be reinstated in August and December. The rationale being that the meeting following a two-month gap was, by necessity extended to cover an additional number of items. Cllr Cocking added her support to the proposal stating that with the increase in precept and the increased number of payments, meant that the gap between committees able to authorise payments and financial commitments was too great.

Cllr Cocking proposed that the decision be deferred until January when the meeting dates for the following year are agreed.

Resolved that the re-instatement of the August and December Full Council Meetings be reviewed in January 2020.

3978. Town Mayor's Announcements

- a. The Mayor provided a brief update on the events undertaken during the last month (see **Annex A** to these minutes).

3979. Receive written reports from and County Councillors

The Chairman advised that one report from County Councillors had been received and had been circulated with the Agenda; he then asked the meeting if they were content to accept these reports without further discussion?

It was resolved to accept this report without further discussion.

3980. Financial Matters

- a. Payments for Authorisation – A list of payments totalling £36,031.33 for payments to be authorised to 16th October 2019 had been circulated before the meeting and the Chairman asked if there were any questions on these from the Councillors. (A copy of the list of payments is held at **Annex B**).

Authorisation of the payments was unanimously approved.

- b. Payments for Pre-Approval – pre-approval was sought to commit £379.40 for the service and repair of the cylinder mower.

Authorisation of the proposed pre-approval was unanimously agreed.

- c. Second quarter financial budget report (copy at **Annex C**). Cllr Draper advised the meeting that the percentage precept spend, at the end of September 2019 (the six-month point), sat at 36.54% although there were certain commitments that were yet to be shown in the accounts and which would increase that number, but not take it beyond the 50%. He felt that there was work to be done to increase the Reserves to bring them up to the NALC recommended levels, but given the increase in precept recognised that this could not happen immediately and would take some time. Cllr Draper proposed that the accounts be accepted as a true and accurate record and ratified as such. This was proposed by Cllr Draper and seconded by Cllr West. The Chairman thanked the Finance Officer for producing the report.

Resolved to accept the second quarter financial report as a true and accurate record.

3981. Plastic Free Portland

Cllr Harpley proposed that the Council lead by example by removing single use plastics from the Portland Community Venue. She recommended that the initiative be Councillor lead and that an audit of the PCV be undertaken to facilitate future action. A vote was taken to determine whether the initiative should be adopted with a unanimous decision being returned.

It was resolved to support the plastic free Portland initiative with Cllr Harpley taking the lead.

3982. Weymouth Beach and Promenade Deck Chair Concession

The Chairman advised the meeting that from next financial year it was Weymouth's intention to charge PTC to be part of the deck chair concession. He stated that from what he remembered from a previous meeting a figure of circa £1,000 per annum had been mentioned. Cllr Draper suggested that before making a decision it would be useful to ask the residents of Portland. The Chairman advised that he would put an advert in the Free Portland News, asking that people who are interested in continuing with the concession register an interest with PTC. A decision will be made once the numbers of interested people are known.

3983. Exclusion of Press & Public (discretionary)

There were no matters to discuss.

3984. Date of Next Meeting

The Committee's next meeting is scheduled to take place on Wednesday, 13th November 2019 at the Portland Community Venue at 7.00 pm.

The meeting ended at 20.55 hours.

Signed Dated.....
Chairman