

PORTLAND TOWN COUNCIL
TOWN COUNCIL MEETING
HELD ON WEDNESDAY 16TH JANUARY 2019
AT PORTLAND COMMUNITY VENUE

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

IN ATTENDANCE:

Andy Matthews (Neighbourhood Plan Working Group) and 5 members of the public.

3801. Chairman's Welcome

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

3802. Prayers

The Mayor's Chaplain led the meeting in prayer.

3803. Apologies for Absence

Councillor West sent her apologies

3804. Declarations of Interest

No declarations were received.

3805. To Approve the Minutes of the Meeting Held on 14th November 2018

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

3806. Minute Update and Matters Arising

- a) Item 3795 – Cllr. Hughes provided an update on the ongoing action to make corrections to the current PTC website. He explained that with Charlotte leaving and the Webmaster refusing to talk to anyone other than PTC office staff there had been little improvement in the website. The Chairman thanked Councillor Hughes and reminded him that the agreement had been that when the Portland Community Venue website was up and running then focus would turn to the PTC website; and further acknowledged that until that action was complete then there would be no further improvement to the PTC website.

3807. Democratic Public Half Hour Open Forum

Mr Vincent sought clarification on which car parks would transfer to PTC on 1st April 2019. The Chairman explained that all the 'Free' council car parks would transfer. Mr Vincent then asked what would happen to the other car parks? The Chairman explained that PTC were only being offered those car parks owned W&PCB and not by other organisations. He further explained Dorset Unitary wished to retain the fee-paying car parks except for the Masonic car park as that one did not make a profit; however, in taking on the Masonic car park also came the commitment to take on the skate board park and its maintenance. Following further discussion on the transfer of the Westcliff car park the Chairman re-iterated that currently PTC were only being

offered the 'Free' car parks although this was a discussion that was ongoing with Dorset Unitary and the outcome was still to be decided, adding that this discussion now included the Public Toilets associated with some fee-paying car parks.

Mrs Lewis brought up the issue of the closure of Portland hospital; she explained that since the consultation last summer there had been some significant changes and that there were rumours of stripping out the underground hospital and, whilst she understood that the Neighbourhood Plan (NP) sought to protect the hospital felt that the protection could have been made a little stronger. She understood that there was now an opportunity to comment on the NP and sought confirmation that any comments made now on the NP would be accepted and would carry some weight. The Chairman confirmed that the next stage of the process would allow for the public to make comments and asked Cllr. Draper (as Chairman of the NP Committee) to comment.

Cllr. Draper stated that this subject had been discussed at length at the NP meeting and he believed that the plan was robust in that it ensured that, prior to any development on the site occurring, that alternative services be provided. Continuing, that the NP could not state that the site not be developed, as previous development has already occurred. He further explained that it was imperative that the NP be submitted to W&PBC for their approval at the earliest opportunity; to delay would see the Planning Authority move to Dorset Unitary and with it concerns that progression of the NP would not be high on their priority list; if this became the case then any advantage that the NP carried would be lost. He confirmed that any public comment made during the next consultation would carry weight and encouraged public comment.

3808. Chairman's Update

The Chairman stated that Weston Playing Field had now formally been leased to PTC on a 30-year lease with the stipulation that it remained an open space and that the MUGA be maintained. He felt that this provided a real opportunity to extend the leisure facilities on Portland and there was talk of Homes England potentially providing tennis courts and a small changing area in exchange for building on the Royal Manor site, and the removal of those facilities. Discussions were ongoing on the replacement of the goal posts although he felt that these could, in part, be privately funded.

The Chairman confirmed that the move from 52 Easton Street to Portland Community Venue (PCV) was now complete and the ex-landlord had wished them well. He further explained that the landlord had accepted the work undertaken by PTC to update the heating system had been accepted in lieu of a payment for exiting the lease early and had resulted in a considerable saving to the Council through the non-payment of rent.

Appointment of a Responsible Finance Officer – The Town Clerk explained that with the resignation of the assistant town clerk it had been decided that a Responsible Finance Officer would better suit the requirements of PTC at this time. The position had been offered to Mr Wayne Lewin on a temporary 6-month contract that provided for 13 hours a week (to remain cost neutral). She further explained that she was under remit to provide the Staffing Committee with a report that proposed the

necessary resource and functions required to provide optimum staffing for PTC, post the completion of the local government review (1st April 2019).

The Chairman stated that he was happy to endorse Mr Lewin as the Responsible Finance Officer and this was unanimously supported.

3809. 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.

3810. Receive written reports from Borough and County Councillors

No written reports were received, however Weymouth and Portland Borough Councillor Kate Weller asked if she might speak; the Chairman accepted that on this occasion he would accept a verbal report.

Cllr. Weller stated that she wished to inform PTC that regarding Public Conveniences she was trying to collect small packets of funding such that those toilets that would transfer to PTC on 1st April 2019 would have been steam cleaned, painted and decorated and any repairs undertaken.

She further advised that currently Victoria Gardens did not have Green Flag status as it did not provide public toilets. However, it does have a building which could house toilets and she has a plan to have the toilets re-instated.

She wished to re-iterate that she was trying to ensure that when the public toilets are handed to PTC on 1st April that they are in an acceptable state.

She informed the meeting that she had also become aware that the Weymouth and Portland Louviers Twinning Society were planning to drop 'Portland' from their society name and felt that the Chairman may wish to follow this up.

The Chairman thanked Cllr. Weller for her help and support with the transfer of the public toilets.

3811. Financial Matters

a) Payments for Authorisation

The Clerk presented payments totalling **** for authorisation and approval.

The list can be found at **Annex B** to these minutes.

This was unanimously approved

b) 2018/19 Financial Report to 31st December 2019

The RFO presented the third quarter budget report and this can be found at **Annex C** to these minutes.

c) The RFO confirmed that at this point (75% of the way through the year), the budget was well within Precept representing a 78.59% precept spend.

The draft Precept for 2018/19 and 2019/20 can be found at **Annex D**.

d) Cllr. Cocking proposed that a Business Bank account be opened which would support a Debit card for sundries. She explained that the need for a debit card had

been highlighted since moving into the PCV building and was proposing that a £100 transaction limit be set. She explained that Unitary bank charges were incurred based on the balance of funds held and that another account would allow for funds to be split such that bank charges were kept to a minimum and proposed that a Lloyds Bank Business Account be opened. The Chairman felt that the added transparency would be beneficial and the RFO confirmed that all transactions would be shown on the Payments list.

The proposal was unanimously supported.

3812. Portland Community Venue (PCV) update

Cllr. Cocking informed the meeting that the Allsorts nursery had moved in in January and that a 3-year lease had been signed with the Drop-In centre. In addition, a one-year lease had been signed with the Lighthouse Church and the National Careers Service were interested in renting some space, initially at least once a fortnight but with a view to expanding the service.

She confirmed that the PCV website was almost ready to go live and thanked Cllr. Draper for working with Karen (from Arise) to complete that.

She further advised that the signage was almost complete and would be up by the end of January 2019. Signs are to be placed on the railings and over the old Aldridge sign.

The last piece of work which supported the Leader Grant application, is for the public internet facilities. The provision of the service was approved at a previous Full Council meeting, but she was now seeking funds (not to exceed £150.00) to complete this piece of work. The money would purchase a piece of worktop and tubular legs to hold the laptop and proposed that the money come from the PCV budget. In addition, she was also seeking a budget of £700.00 (to come from the precept maintenance budget) to support the provision of hardware (laptops). She reminded the meeting that it had previously been agreed that PTC staff would get updated IT and that the old laptop would be refurbished and used to support the public internet facilities.

The Chairman confirmed that the proposal had already been approved and that Cllr. Cocking was now simply looking for approval to proceed with the expenditure.

The proposal to expend money to implement an upgrade in the IT equipment received majority approval

Cllr. Gomm asked whether it was the intention to have an official opening, Cllr. Cocking confirmed that it was and that the plan was for March 2019. The opening would-be run-in conjunction with Allsorts and she was hoping that the local radio station could also be persuaded to be part of it.

Cllr. Cocking sought approval from the Council to change the name of the PCV Working Group to the PCV Management Working Group, explaining that as the building was now complete focus had changed to management of the Venue. She proposed that the PCV Management Working Group continue with the same members until the elections in May 2019 and that they continue to bring any financial decision to Full Council meetings. She explained that it was proposed that they meet on the first Wednesday of every month, starting on Wednesday 6th February.

The proposal to change the name of the PCV Working group to the PCV Management Working Group was unanimously agreed.

3813. Low Carbon Dorset – Solar Panels

Cllr. Hughes stated that he wished to bring the Council up to date on the issue of solar panels; he explained that in November 2018 Cllr. Draper had asked that he contact Low Carbon Dorset about renewable energy sources. He has now been informed that the Government are doing away with the Feed In / Feedback tariffs in March 2019 and to be eligible to receive these tariffs then it would be necessary to have the solar panels in place by mid-March, which he did not consider to be feasible. Whilst there was still grant funding available for up to 40% of the cost to purchase and install it did not provide for any feedback of tariffs and was not considered appropriate at this time.

3814 Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) update

The Chairman advised the meeting that Weymouth Shadow Council had considered PTC's request that some mayoral regalia be returned to Portland, a mace; but felt that the request had fallen on deaf ears. On a more positive note he was pleased that a good working relationship between PTC and the new Weymouth Town Council (WTC) was being built with regard to future management of the green spaces, with a working agreement that, in the event of staff shortages, there would be the potential for the sharing of resources.

As a result of ongoing discussions, it had been agreed that with the transfer of Victoria Gardens and Easton Gardens and the requirement to maintain these public spaces; it would be prudent to employ a skilled gardener to supplement the manpower being TUPE'd across from W&PBC. The ultimate aim would be to be self-sufficient in the management of the parks and small green spaces. He explained that a job description has been generated and that he was now seeking approval to advertise that job role. Cllr. Flack added that whilst the post of Head Gardener would TUPE across with the other gardening post, the current incumbent was retiring.

The proposal to proceed with the advertisement for a Head Gardener was unanimously agreed.

The Chairman advised the meeting that discussions remained ongoing with regard to which assets would be transferred to PTC and confirmed that as details became available Councillors would be kept informed. A recent discussion with the County's Estates Manager had seen a previous intention to take on the Verne Common and the High Angle Battery reversed, as the detail of maintaining those areas had become clear and the realisation that PTC did not have the resource, the experience or the skills required to maintain assets such as bridges. He emphasised that not having ownership of these areas did not mean that the public would not be able to enjoy them and did not preclude PTC seeking ownership of them at a later date. Once a final list has been agreed, he said, then that list would be published which he hoped would be by the next Full Council Meeting.

3815 – Adoption of the Precept for 2019/20

The Chairman drew the meetings attention to the draft precept document held at Annex C to the Agenda. He explained that the process would be, that he would

move for the adoption of the Precept for the year and ask someone to second that action. He would then lead a review of each of the items in turn and allow each Councillor to propose an amendment to the amount proposed; having agreed the figures there would then be a recorded vote on the final figure. This process would be undertaken twice, once for the 2019/20 Precept and once for the LGR Precept to give a combined figure for 2019/2020. (See Annex C to these Minutes)

The Chairman moved for the adoption of the 2019/20 Precept at a figure of £83,000, the proposal was seconded by Cllr. Cocking.

He then proceeded to review each of the items listed, following which, and with no amendments formally asked each of the Cllrs to vote on the proposal to set the 2019/20 budget at £83,000.

The move to accept the 2019/20 precept of £83,000 was carried by a majority vote with one abstention.

The Chairman then moved for the adoption of the 2019/20 LGR figures totalling £279,600, the proposal was seconded by Cllr. Draper.

As before the Chairman led a review of each of the items listed, and once again with no amendments formally asked each of the Cllrs to vote on the proposal to set the 2019/20 LGR budget at £279,600.

The move to accept the 2019/20 LGR precept of £279,600 was carried unanimously.

The Chairman wished it to be recorded that this was an historic moment, that the year on year Precept figure proposed was a reduction on the previous year. Made even more remarkable given that the Council now had a new facility in the PCV and had managed to achieve this without increasing the Precept and with no financial impact to local residents.

The other historic moment being that PTC would, in the coming months, be providing more services directly to Portland. Local facilities for local people, managed by a local council and, for future generations, the ability to make local decisions and provisions, provided for and decided by local people.

3816. Exclusion of Press & Public (discretionary)

There were no matters to discuss.

3817. Date of Next Meeting

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

The meeting ended at 20.30 hours.

Signed Dated.....
Chairman