

PORTLAND TOWN COUNCIL

TOWN COUNCIL MEETING HELD AT 7PM ON WEDNESDAY 15th MAY 2019 AT PORTLAND COMMUNITY VENUE

PRESENT:

Councillors: Charlie Flack (Chairman), Rob Hughes, Dave Thurston, Sue Cocking, Sandy West, Jim Draper, Beryn Parkes, Carralyn Parkes, Paul Kimber, Cathy Atkins, Giovanna Lewis, Pete Roper.

IN ATTENDANCE:

Andy Matthews (Neighbourhood Plan Working Group) and 13 members of the public.

3875. 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. He took the opportunity at this point to introduce all of the Councillors now serving on Portland Town Council (PTC), explaining that there had been some changes following the elections on 2nd May 2019.

3876. Prayers

The Mayor's Chaplain Ms Paula Brown led the meeting in prayer.

3877. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr. Nowak and Cllr. Harpley.

3878. Declarations of Interest

No declarations were received.

3879. To Approve the Minutes of the Meeting Held on 17th April 2019

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

3880. Minute Update and Matters Arising

Item 3871 – Dorset Waste Partnership Enforcement (DWP) Action - Mr Rod Wild (previously Cllr. Wild) confirmed that he had written to DWP but had, to date, not yet received a response.

3881. Democratic Public Half Hour Open Forum

- a. Mr Rod Wild welcomed all the new Councillors and explained that he was speaking on behalf of the Portland Allotment Holders and asked when those allotments that were empty would be offered to new tenants? Mr Wayne Lewin the Responsible Finance Officer (RFO) explained that letters to all of the Allotment Holders seeking their commitment to a further year were to be issued imminently, he further explained that he intended to allow a four week period for a response and then start the process of filling the vacant allotments. It was also agreed that once the information relating to the allotments was better defined, a waiting list would be generated to ensure the fair allocation of the vacant allotments. The minutes note the concern of the Allotment holders with regard to vacant allotments.
- b. Mr Dave Darby expressed his thanks to the organisation who painted the black lettering on the War Memorial in Victoria Gardens, commending them for a job well done. Although he noted that renewal of the gold lettering was still to be undertaken. The Chairman commented that it was likely that the black lettering was being done first and that they intended to come back to do the gold.
- c. Mr Dave Darby – Referring to the £50k that was being sought from the Dorset Council for the maintenance of the football ground at Officers Field, he enquired

whether this included the cost of the goal posts? He explained that he had undertaken some research on the costs of goal posts and appraised the meeting that it was possible to purchase a pair of goal posts and accessories for a cost of £595 (plus delivery) from Live for Soccer. The Chairman thanked Mr Darby for his efforts and proposed that the information be taken forward to the next Policy and Resources Committee to consider the proposal.

- d. A member of the public asked whether it was the intention of the Council to invite a member of the local Police to a future meeting? The Chairman explained that invites had previously been sent but that no response had been received, although he acknowledged that there had been a changeover of police personnel on the island. The Chairman was advised that he should send the invitation to the Chief Constable, who had the power to direct local personnel to attend. The Chairman thanked the lady for her suggestions.
- e. Miss Haskins – representing Atlantic All Stars and Nursery, breakfast and after school club. Miss Haskins explained that the nursery was under threat of closure due to it ‘making an unsustainable significant loss’. She further explained that a factor in considering the closure of the nursery was that Atlantic Academy believed, incorrectly, that there were sufficient alternative childcare providers on the Island that could offer the same service. Miss Haskins elucidated that there were a number of disadvantaged children who attended the nursery, there was a real risk of these children being lost to future education if the nursery were to close. There was an impassioned debate regarding the consequences of the closure and the Council voted unanimously for a letter to be written to the Aspirations Academies Trust setting out the Councils concerns and supporting the nursery staff in keeping the nursery open.

Ms Saunders added that it had previously Councillors had been invited to sit on the Academies Board of Directors, whilst she recognised that this was by invitation she felt that there would be merit in exploring this as an option to provide an insight into the future plans of the academy.

Action on the Town Clerk to write a letter to Aspirations Academies Trust (See Annex A to these minutes).

- f. Ms Wendy Grayston – had heard that there was concern and some speculation that in addition to the Bumper’s Lane development that there would be further development behind the Alexandria Hotel. Cllr. Cocking stated that she was unaware of anything that suggested that this was the case; but in the event that information was received that sought further planning permission in this area then Ms Grayston would be kept informed. Mr Matthews explained that part of the area had been identified as a possible development site, but that was not to say that it would undergo development and that the Council would have the opportunity to comment on any planning application that was submitted.
- g. Ms Judith Frost – advised that she wished to highlight the issue of the planning application that had been submitted to add a balcony to the ‘Joinery’ building in Chiswell. She explained that she felt that the addition of a balcony to this building was inappropriate and, because of its visibility it would change the nature of Chiswell. She had concerns that the addition would detract from the historic nature of Chiswell which attracted artists from all over the world and supported her business. The Chairman explained that this planning application had been discussed at the last Planning and Highways meeting and the comments submitted based on the information available at the time. He urged Ms Frost to submit her comments/objections to the Planning Authority; she confirmed that she had done so and was simply seeking to highlight the issue prior to the closure of the consultation process.
- h. Ms Beverly Beach – a resident whose house is close to Merchant’s incline was seeking assurance that the scrub land would be managed better in order to reduce

the current anguish that was being felt due to the infestation of caterpillars. She added that there were real health issues, evidencing the fact that many of the local children were experiencing issues due to the nature of the hairs from the caterpillars. She explained that Cllrs Kimber and Lewis had visited and had advised that she seek help from the Council. She explained that last year notices had been put up warning of the dangers of caterpillars in the area but that it was disappointing that nothing had been done in the Autumn to destroy the nests, which had this work been undertaken would have reduced the agony which many residents of that area were now being put under. Cllr. Kimber confirmed that he had visited Ms Beach and wished to add his view that the situation that the residents now found themselves in was intolerable. The Chairman explained that this was an Island wide problem and that environmental health executive were aware of the situation. It was proposed that a reminder be sent to Dorset Council asking that something further be done as the recent action had been insufficient and seeking a plan of action for the Autumn.

Action on the Town Clerk to write to Dorset County (Giles Nicholson) – see Annex B to these minutes.

- i. Mr Vincent – Asked why the nominations for Deputy Mayor were not on this agenda? The Chairman explained that because the current meeting had a particularly full agenda the decision had been made to defer that item to the next meeting to be held on 26th June 2019.
- j. Ms Sam Thompson raised concerns over the growing levels of rape seed plants on the Island, and despite an attempt by volunteers to contain the situation it was evident that it was simply getting worse. She explained that the plants presented a real issue as they were an irritant to not only her guide dog, but to other dogs on the Island. She asked whether the Council had any ideas on what could be done? The Chairman advised that it was the responsibility of the individual landowner to deal with and further explained that the situation of who owned which areas of land on Portland was very complicated. The lady explained that this was an invasive plant and if nothing was done then it would become a very real problem. Cllr. Thurston further advised that the seeds of the rape seed plant were windblown and there was nothing that could be done to halt the spread. The Chairman suggested that the issue could be taken to the Marine, Environmental and Tourism Working Group as they may have a better suggestion on what could be done. Mr Rod Wild added that the issue was exacerbated as the seeds often came in on lorries that were used for multiple functions.
- k. Ms Sussane Gates – Stated that she lived on Albert Terrace and felt that there was a risk that children playing could be hurt by passing cars as there were no signs up stating that fact. She asked how she should go about getting signs erected that could reduce the risk. The Chairman advised that she should take some photographs and attend a Planning and Highways Meeting as that was the correct forum and they would be able to make contact with the right people.

3882. Chairman's Update

- a. The Chairman reminded all of the Councillors present that any claims for election expenses were to be submitted to Dorset Council by the 31st May 2019.
- b. The Chairman advised those present that both he and the Town Clerk had attended a meeting with the Town Clerk of Weymouth to discuss among other things the future Twinning arrangements between Weymouth and Portland and Louviers and Holzwickede. He explained that historically Weymouth and Portland Borough Council had paid any costs associated with the Twinning arrangements but now that the Councils had separated, Weymouth were proposing that should Portland wish to continue with the Twinning arrangements then the costs should be divided appropriately in proportion to the number of electorate. Weymouth proposed that for Louviers the total cost was £850, Weymouth to pay £695 and Portland to pay £155; for Holzwickede the total cost of £500 to be split, with Weymouth paying £410 and

Portland paying £90. There was a rigorous debate on the continued Twinning arrangement with the general view being that there was little to be gained in continuing, and that it would be appropriate to seek out more relevant connections with other Portland's around the world.

A vote was taken, and it was unanimously agreed that Portland remove themselves from the Twinning Charter with immediate effect.

- c. The Chairman advised Weymouth Town Council intended to honour the Deck Chair concession for Weymouth Beach that was currently provided to certain residents of Portland. He added that the concession would remain in place for the summer of 2019 but, should the Council wish it to continue in 2020 then it would cost £1,000. He added that he did not intend to discuss this issue at this meeting but felt that there should be some public consultation before a decision was made for next year.
- d. With regard to Christmas decorations, the Chairman explained that these were currently being held by Weymouth Town Council and that it would be necessary to go and get these in the near future and in addition find somewhere to store them.

3883. Town Mayor's Announcements

- a. The Mayor advised the meeting of the engagements she had attended during May 2019 and for the record these are attached at **Annex C**.
- b. Cllr. Lewis added that the 'Keep Portland Hospital group' met regularly with Helen Persey and she was keen to ensure that the Mayor also continued to apply pressure where possible, as she felt it was imperative that no one lose sight of what could be taken away. Cllr. Lewis suggested that Helen Persey be invited to attend the next Full Council Meeting to provide an update on the current situation regarding the hospital.

3884. Receive written reports from and County Councillors

- a. No written reports were received.

3885. Financial Matters

- a. **Payments for Authorisation** – The RFO presented payments for authorisation totalling £29,327.68 and this report is held at **Annex D**.

Cllr. Kimber asked whether the Council were paying the correct pension contributions. The RFO assured him that he was content that that was the case.

For the benefit of the new Councillors the RFO explained that once the proposed payments had been authorised then they would be approved by two of the authorised signatories. He explained that in order to ensure a separation of duties, whilst he had authority to load payments on to the banking system, he did not have approval to authorise the payments to be made and this had to be done by two of the four authorised signatories, Cllrs Cocking, Flack and Draper and Thurston.

He further advised that today he had been informed that the new visa cards had been approved. This would allow payment by visa card for necessary items and meant that funds were currently split between Unity Trust Bank and Lloyds Bank. Cllr. Kimber asked, in relation to compensation was the money split sufficiently to give maximum protection. The RFO stated that he believed that to be the case but that he was investigating the move of some money to national savings bonds if it proved necessary to keep the money below the level.

Authorisation of the payments was unanimously approved.

- b. The RFO advised that the precept spend to date (for the year 19/20) sat at 14.06% in relation to being 16.6% of the way through the year; so a slight underspend.
- c. The RFO sought pre-approval (authority to commit funds). He explained that, in general, any spend which was greater than £150.00 needed to be pre-approved by

either Full Council or the Resources and Policy Committee prior to any employee making a commitment of funds.

- i. £250.00 for PD Fire and Safety Systems – to undertake a full risk assessment on the Portland Community Venue (PCV). Importantly the output from this report will determine the maximum capacity for each of the rooms.

A vote was taken with the action being unanimously approved.

- ii. Retrospective approval was sought to pay £790.00 to Albion Stone Restoration following the cleaning of the stones in Easton Gardens in preparation for the Green Flag audit. Due to the very limited availability of Albion Stone Restoration and the need to have the work undertaken prior to the Green Flag audit, approval had been sought from Cllrs Flack, Cocking and Draper prior to engaging Albion Stone Restoration.

A vote was taken with the action being unanimously approved.

3886. Proposed construction of memorial stone to commemorate the late Jack Mantle VC.

The Court Leet have requested approval to construct a stone memorial to the late Jack Mantle VC, to be situated on the edge of the Beacon Ground opposite the Portland Heights hotel. A copy of their proposal is held at **Annex E**. A discussion was held on the appropriateness of the memorial stone and a vote taken on whether to approve this request.

A vote was taken on whether to approve the request with a majority vote in favour being returned.

3887. Committees, Working Groups and Internal Appointments

- a. The Chairman advised that a new structure for Committees and Working Groups was being proposed.
 - The Finance Committee to be expanded to include Finance, Staffing, Policy and Procurement and re-named Policy and Resources.
 - The Staffing Committee to cease to exist as it now sits within the Policy and Resource Committee.
 - The Marine, Environment and Tourism Partnership to be no longer a committee but to become a Working Group. The rationale being that as it was not a decision-making meeting it did not require committee status.
 - The Full Council Meeting and the Planning and Highways Meeting were to remain unchanged and maintain their committee status.

A vote was taken on the proposed changes and a unanimous vote of approval returned.

- b. A discussion was held on the proposed membership of the Policy and Resources Committee and the results of this is held at **Annex F**.
- c. The Chairman reminded the meeting that each Councillor had previously been issued with a list of Working Groups, with a request that they consider which they each wished to be members of, and that from these responses the Clerk had collated the responses. A review of each of the Working Groups was undertaken and a Brief Holder and Deputy Brief Holder was assigned to each of the Working Groups – See Annex F for a full list of members of the Policy and Resources Committee and Members of each Working Group.

- d. The Chairman advised of two date changes for meetings; the next Policy and Resources Committee due to be held on 12th June was moved to the 5th June 2019. In addition, the MET meeting due to be held on 5th June was deferred to 3rd July 2019.

A revised Calendar of Meetings is to be issued.

- e. A discussion was held on the requirement for internal appointments and the results of this discussion are held at **Annex G**.

3888. Standing Orders, Financial Regulations and Policy Documents

The Clerk requested that given the resources required to support the local government review and the transfer of assets, there had been no time to undertake a review of the standing orders, financial regulations and policy documents, and sought approval for approval of these documents be deferred by 3 months.

A vote was taken with a unanimous agreement being returned.

3889. Representatives to Outside Bodies and Voluntary Posts.

A discussion was undertaken on the requirements for representatives to outside bodies and voluntary posts with Councillors volunteering to be assigned to various posts. A complete list is held at **Annex F**.

3890. Exclusion of Press & Public (discretionary)

There were no matters to discuss.

3891. Date of Next Meeting

The Committee's next meeting is scheduled to take place on Wednesday, 26th June 2019 at the Portland Community Venue at 7.00 pm.

The meeting ended at 20.45 hours.

Signed Dated.....
Chairman