

## FINANCE AND GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting of the BEST VALUE AND SCRUTINY SUB-COMMITTEE of Bridport Town Council held at Mountfield, Bridport on Tuesday 4 March 2025 at 11.00am.

PRESENT Cllr Sarah Carney

Cllrs: Jonathan Bourbon                          Paddy Mooney  
Andrew Holdridge                                Anne Rickard

Also in attendance: Cllr Ian Bark (ex officio), Paul Fuszard (Finance & Office Manager) and Will Austin (Town Clerk).

### **PUBLIC FORUM**

There were no members of the public present.

#### **28. APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs Ann Langridge and Steve Williams.

#### **29. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

#### **30. MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting of the Best Value and Scrutiny Sub-Committee held on 3 December 2024 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

In respect of minute 20, Cllr Sarah Carney asked whether an update was available regarding the Literary & Scientific Institute. Cllr Ian Bark advised that discussions were ongoing and that resolution of a water ingress issue was a prerequisite to future plans.

Cllr Sarah Carney reported that minute 23 in respect of conflict resolution required further action by councillors before being considered further.

#### **31. WEST BAY CAR BOOT SALE GRANTS SCHEME**

The Town Clerk advised that the grants panel meeting had been delayed due to an administrative error, and that the meeting would now take place on Monday 10 March. He asked members to consider allowing recommendations from the panel to be referred direct to the Finance & General Purposes Committee on the same day, rather than delaying awards by tabling them at the next sub-committee meeting in June.

RESOLVED: that the recommendations of the West Bay Car Boot Scheme Grants Panel be referred to the Finance & General Purposes Committee meeting of 10 March 2025 for approval.

### **32. INTERNAL AUDIT**

The interim report of the independent internal auditor, ENCL: 3978, was received and considered at length at the meeting.

The Town Clerk reported on the second visit for 2023/24 that the internal auditors, Lightatouch, had made in February 2024.

RECOMMENDED: that the internal audit report and recommendations be received and approved.

The Town Clerk further reported that Tim Light, whose company Lightatouch was the council's current independent internal auditor, was retiring following his next visit in May. With members' approval, competitive quotations would be sought from auditors serving town councils in the area, and the current specification would be used as the basis for invitations to quote.

Cllr Sarah Carney asked that the council's ethical decision making matrix be used in the process, including an emphasis on local procurement.

RECOMMENDED: that recruitment of an internal auditor be pursued under delegation by the Town Clerk.

RESOLVED: that Tim Light be thanked for his longstanding independent internal audit service to the council.

RESOLVED: that the Finance & Office Manager be thanked for his work in support of the internal audit process.

### **33. INVESTMENT REVIEW 2024/25 AND STRATEGY 2025/26**

Consideration was given to a report of the Town Clerk, ENCL: 3979 about investment review 2024/25 and Strategy 2025/26.

Members considered the council's investment returns and future strategy, and in particular:

- When the investment in the CCLA Property Fund would be returned to the Town Council following a decision to withdraw. The Finance & Office Manager advised that the deal date had been set as 31 July 2025.
- Whether a cash deposit fund with CCLA would be a suitable alternative to the property fund. The Town Clerk advised that this would be considered at a future meeting and would include consideration of the Ethical Decision-Making Policy.

RECOMMENDED that:

- (i) the investments made in 2024/25 be noted as in the report; and
- (ii) the Investment Strategy for 2025/26 be approved as drafted.

### **34. ASSET REGISTER**

Councillors considered the Asset Register, ENCL: 3980. The additions and disposals in the year were summarised since the previous year's register. Other minor changes might be required before the financial year end.

Members discussed:

- Additions to the register, including those inherited from the former parish councils, noting that further detail was being sought in order to finalise the register;
- Active management of older assets, including disposal where appropriate; and
- Management of asset values to inform insurance costs.

RECOMMENDED: that the Asset Register be approved and the Town Clerk be given delegated authority to make any final amendments, before it is signed by the Chairman of the Finance and General Purposes Committee and the Town Clerk.

RESOLVED: that a review of the register be carried out when resources allow, to consider asset values and inclusion in the register.

### **35. ANNUAL TOWN MEETING ARRANGEMENTS**

Consideration was given to the draft agenda, ENCL: 3981.

Members welcomed the inclusion of reports from council grant recipients at the meeting, and discussed its traditional and statutory purpose as a forum for electors to discuss town issues.

RESOLVED: that the agenda and arrangements for the Annual Town Meeting be agreed.

### **36. STANDING ORDERS AND FINANCIAL REGULATIONS**

Councillors agreed arrangements for a review of the Town Council's Standing Orders and Financial Regulations.

Members considered:

- The need for a review to look at the impact of the council's warded arrangements since 2024, suggestions previously made for changes, the council's scheme of delegation, and the NALC model documents;
- Whether a working group should be established for the review; and
- The need to incorporate any decisions arising from a separate review of the warding arrangements.

RECOMMENDED: that a Working Group comprising five councillors be agreed at Full Council on 25 March 2025, to also include consideration of the conflict resolution policy.

### **37. COMMUNICATIONS**

The Town Clerk reported that this would be the last sub-committee meeting to be attended by Paul Fuszard as outgoing Finance & Office Manager. Members

expressed their sincere gratitude for Paul's longstanding support to the sub-committee, and for his exemplary and wonderful service to the town.

The meeting closed at **12:04pm**

**The next meeting of this Sub-Committee is scheduled to be held on 3 June 2025**