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DORSET COUNCIL - HARBOURS COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON WEDNESDAY 4 DECEMBER 2019

Present: Cllrs Kate Wheller (Chairman), Sarah Williams (Vice-Chairman), Dave Bolwell, Louie O'Leary, Mark Roberts, Jim Clarke and Matt Walkden

Apologies: Cllrs Rob Hughes and Steve Pitman

Also present: Lee Hardy and Alistair Clarke

Officers present (for all or part of the meeting):

Lara Atree (Legal Services Manager), Ken Buchan (Head of Environment and Wellbeing), Claire Connolly (Harbour Financial and Admin Manager), Chris Evans (Service Manager for Finance), Keith Howorth (Weymouth Harbour Master), Matthew Penny (Project Engineer), Karyn Punchard (Corporate Director of Place Services) and James Radcliffe (Bridport Harbour Master)

22. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 26 September 2019 were confirmed and signed.

23. Declarations of Interest

The Chairman reminded members of the need to update their register of interests.

Jim Clarke declared an interest as an occasional user of all three harbours, and a family interest in restaurants based in West Bay and Lyme Regis.

24. Public Participation

A number of speakers addressed the Harbours Committee, a summary of their questions and a response statement are attached as appendices.

Appendices: Public questions and statement

25. Harbour Consultative Group Minutes

The Chairman of the Weymouth Harbour Consultative Group presented the minutes of the meeting held on 11 November.

He highlighted the salient points raised by the Group members regarding the composition of the group and the mess and damage created by the seabirds.

It was recognised that something more needed to be done in the sense of the Weymouth Harbour consultation and that the constitution of the Harbour Consultative Group could be looked at further.

The Harbour Master for Lyme Regis and West Bay presented the minutes of the respective Harbour User groups. The groups had looked at how they would be set up as a consultative group in the future, it was intended to look at the Terms of Reference in the new year and set up a meeting in March to appoint a Chairman to run the meetings.

26. Harbour Master Updates

The two Harbour Masters presented their updates.

Weymouth – the Harbour Revision Order (HRO) was progressing, there had been some delays due to the MMO raising additional queries which had now been answered and it was hoped that the HRO would be approved by Parliament in the new year.

Highlighted points from the report included the WiFi coverage around the harbour and the related complications with BT. It was planned to replace some more of the electricity bollards and some of the decking on the North Quay pontoons.

The recently appointed designated person had visited all three harbours for his first look and a report would be brought to the next Harbours Committee meeting.

There was a FLAG update.

In response to a question from the Chairman, the Weymouth Harbour Master explained that the draft lease for the Rowing Club would be ready soon but was dependent on the HRO being approved.

The MCA consultation was well attended, local fishermen were briefed on and discussed a proposed new Code of Practice for Small Fishing Vessels.

The Sealife Tower was being dismantled and the area would revert back to a car park in the coming months.

Favourable reports had been received following the recent oil spill exercise.

The Chairman asked, when the Seafood Festival was organised if the Council would liaise with the organiser and security provider regarding security concerns for the charter boats.

The Harbour Master agreed to remove the percentage signs on the inner harbour moorings information figures.

Bridport – the season tickets plus the shop and boat repair figures had increased.

Lyme Regis – the visiting boat nights were down mainly due to the weather and the summer of south easterly winds, the pontoons had also been disconnected a number of times. Work was being done to submit a proposal for the slipway, the timescale for these works would depend on whether planning permission was needed.

In response to a question regarding the pontoon piles, the Corporate Director for Place Services advised that the costs for the pontoon piles would have to be included within a list of capital bids which would be decided by Cabinet. However, it was still hoped that the EMF grant would cover some of the costs.

Harbour staff for Lyme Regis and Bridport had stayed the same.

Following the Bridport Gig Club accident, it had been agreed that life jackets were to be used by everyone, not just children.

27. Engineering Update

The Engineering Projects Manager reported that the engineering inspection works in Weymouth were now complete.

There had been delays in the Wall D strengthening works due to harder ground conditions and a piling obstruction in the harbour. The structural conditions had been worse than anticipated, resulting in anticipated delays of 4 to 5 weeks for completion of the work.

The new Sheet Pile in wall D would have a life span of 50-60 years.

There were no plans for dredging in Weymouth Harbour at the current time.

28. Appointments of Co-Opted Independent Members of the Harbours Committee

The Chairman reported that there had been a good response for a new Co-opted Independent Member to join the Harbours Committee. A report to endorse the nomination of Mr Lee Hardy and the appointment of a second three year period for Mr Matt Walkden was recommended to Full Council for approval.

Proposed by Cllr Roberts, seconded by Cllr Wheller.

Decision: that the following 2 recommendations be forwarded to Full Council for approval:-

- 1. That Lee Hardy be appointed as a Co-opted Independent Member of the Harbours Committee for an initial term of three years.**

- 2. That Matt Walkden be appointed as Co-Opted Independent Member of the Harbours Committee for a second term of three years.**

29. Harbours Budget Monitoring 2019/20

The Weymouth Harbour Office Manager presented the report summary for 2019/20.

The Weymouth Harbour Budget had been approved with the knowledge that there was a £116,000 predicted shortfall which would be taken from the reserves. A number of projects had been deferred following a review of the Asset Management Plan. The Chairman asked for reassurance that those deferred items would be monitored.

A commitment of £250,000 had been made from the harbour budget reserve to demolish the Terminal Building, this had not been taken into account in the figures, but would be incorporated at a later date. There had been some noteworthy variances to the budget predictions which included a number of major water leaks on the Peninsula and a secondary leak on the Cargo Stage. It had also been necessary to appoint a contractor to carry out the role of the Designated Person.

The number of PWC berths would be increased from 3 to 6 next year, the cost of the installation would be incurred in the current financial year, but would hopefully generate new income from next April.

It was requested that attention be paid to climate change implications when reviewing the pilot boat and take into consideration, where possible, how the boat was powered and investigate lower energy and carbon footprint options.

The Bridport and Lyme Regis Harbour Master presented the budgets for those two harbours. He highlighted the main variances to the budgets which were predominately related to employee costs, transport, supplies and services, including costs incurred for the Lyme Regis slipway and HRO. In response to a question regarding dredging costs, the Harbour Master advised that he had requested a higher budget to cover those.

30. Medium Term Financial Plans

The Weymouth Harbour Master presented the Harbours Budget Requirements 2020/21 and beyond. The report set out the budget requirements for Weymouth, Bridport and Lyme Regis Harbours and the Asset Management Plan Improvements for Weymouth.

The figure of £250,000 mentioned in the Harbours Budget Monitoring 2019/20 report for the demolition of the Terminal Building and a further £100,000 committed to the Quayside Re-generation Project had not been included in this budget as it was hoped funding would come from the income as a consequence of the HRO work.

There were some unknowns in moving forward on the impact the Peninsular would have on the budget. It was hoped that the improvements would help with the five-year trend of having a £100,000 shortfall.

Following comments on the presentation of the reports it was suggested, going forward, that the finance reporting mechanism be aligned for all three harbours so that comparisons could easily be made.

The Bridport and Lyme Regis Harbour Master highlighted the salient points relating to both harbours, including the HRO costs. In relation to employees cost, the income generated by the mechanic had offset any additional costs.

There was an increase for commercial mooring costs, tender and kayak storage was charged per space, a 3% increase across the board had been applied to miscellaneous services.

In response to the reports it was suggested that the Committee's role was not to look at lots of costings but rather to look at the impact of the prices on services and sectors and where the change of price had the biggest impact.

There should be an impact from the workshops that committee members attend and contribute to. At the last workshop the committee looked at standardising where possible, yet one set of charges presented was rounded off and another not. Should this be aligned?.

Inflation adjustments 3% at one 2% at other, minor small charges which could be standardised but are still different, charity discount at some but not others. Standardisation of promotional discount schemes – still not done.

The Chairman responded that it was unfortunate that due to the timing of the workshop there was not enough time for the ideas and discounts considered to be implemented for this meeting.

The committee members were keen to have the reports standardised with the same headings and layout, the Chairman advised that this was being worked towards, but the staff needed time to set these up.

In accordance with procedural rule 28 it was proposed by Cllr Wheller and seconded by Cllr Roberts.

Decision: that a recorded vote be taken

It was proposed by Cllr Wheller, seconded by Cllr Roberts.

Those who voted in favour; Cllrs Wheller, Williams, Bolwell and Roberts. Mr Jim Clarke and Mr Matt Walkden.

Those who abstained: Cllr O'Leary

Decision: that the following related to budget requirements for the Harbours' Budgets for 2020/21 be approved, including:

1. Recommendation to Cabinet, that the 2020/21 Weymouth Harbour budget be included in the overall Dorset Council 2020/21 budget.
2. That the scale of charges for 2020/21 for Weymouth Harbour be approved
3. That the Asset Management Plan Improvements for 20/21 for Weymouth Harbour subject to a mid year review for the annotated items be approved.
4. Recommendation to Cabinet, that the 2020/21 Bridport Harbour budget be included in the overall Dorset Council 2020/21 budget.
5. Recommendation to Cabinet, that the 2020/21 Lyme Regis Harbour budget be included in the overall Dorset Council 2020/21 budget.
6. That the scale of charges for 2020/21 for Bridport and Lyme Regis Harbours be approved.

31. **Workplan**

The Forward Plan was noted and a request was added for;-

A review of external finance.

A performance and assessment review.

An explanation of finances within the council and how the harbour finances would be ring-fenced when the HRO comes into effect.

32. **Urgent items**

There were no urgent items.

33. **Exempt Business**

There was no exempt business.

Duration of meeting: 9.00 - 10.20 am

Chairman

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Jamie Pullin

Which elements of the Fisher Report does the council intend to include in its future strategy for Weymouth harbour?

Where are the current proposals for charter boat operations in the harbour. What are they. Where are they documented?

Phillip Cox

Has there been or will there be a impact assessment done to look at the damage that will be caused to Businesses and the wider community on the South Harbourside, if the Charter boats & Trip boats are relocated to the Multi-use Quay?

If this were to go ahead it would definitely have a negative affect on footfall and customer spend around the South Harbourside shops, bars and restaurants . This side of the harbour is already struggling after the loss of Brewers Quay back in 2010 and the removal of any more tourist attractions including the charter boats, which we benefit greatly from, could well be the final nail in the coffin for many businesses including my own, which is a Community store and Post office that has been on the South Harbourside since 2005 and currently employs 8 full time and 2 part time staff.

Ben Rogers

“The councils specific vision for where the harbour is going to be in 10 years time “

Susan Boyd

Following the sessions held on November 15th to present the Weymouth Quay Regeneration Project plans and obtain feedback from harbour users, what has the Dorset Council Harbours Committee learned about the concerns of harbour users relating to this project and what modifications are being incorporated into the plans to address the concerns raised?

Mr R. Bright-Paul

In recent weeks I have spoken with retailers, fishermen, pub managers, restaurant owners, angling boat charters, boat ride operators, ferry operators, water sport operators, retailers, dive charter operators, mackerel boat operators, marine suppliers, marine engineers, holiday cottage owners and residents in Weymouth Harbour all of whom believe the plans to restructure the harbour (ref: Fisher Report recommendations of which a part proposed as a working concept on the back of the Weymouth Quay Regeneration Project) does significant harm to their business and wider interests. Now, if this Committee, and the Weymouth Harbour Master in particular, believes that the consultation processes currently in place are fit for purpose, how is it that this particular finding has not, in the two years since the Fisher consultants first muted the idea, been surfaced and taken on board? If this insight has, during this period, been heard, understood and digested, then why is the Harbour management and this Committee persisting with a strategy which is knowingly harmful to so many local businesses?

Mary LG Harris

Would the council consider re-opening its consultation regarding the peninsular development to take into account the impact on local businesses and, if not, why not?

I am the co-owner of old harbour dive centre in North Parade on the harbourside which has been established as a dive centre for over 25 years. As an integral part of the Maritime community we have a wealth of knowledge and views on business and life on the harbourside and at no time have we been asked for our opinion as to the viability and impact/benefits of the proposed Peninsular Development. My business and other businesses would benefit for the opportunity to be consulted as to our views.

Nigel Holder

What evidence does the council have to demonstrate that the current concept is positive for Local businesses?

Who in the council supports the parts of the Weymouth Quay Regeneration Project that impact local commercial harbour users?

Following convergence of the predecessor county, district and borough authorities in April, we now have a new Council and a new Harbours Committee covering all Dorset Council's Harbours. As part of our new programme of work, the Committee will be developing a harbours strategy in consultation with Harbour users over the next 6-8 months. This will outline our vision for Weymouth, Bridport and Lyme Regis Harbours over the next 10 years.

With regard to Weymouth Harbour, the local authority has been responsible for its management for the best part of 500 years since Weymouth and Melcombe Regis were united, so we have an immense wealth of experience.

The Weymouth Quay Regeneration Project is an opportunity for investment in to the harbour and to review some of the operations to set us up for the future. The current engagement is not about the wider peninsula development which is currently on hold.

The plans presented at the Engagement meetings were conceptual. The committee is in the process of considering feedback from the engagement events, so at this stage we are unable to specify what modifications may be made. However, we are aware of the concerns some businesses have around the harbour and will consider these carefully in the context of the wider harbour operations and the considerable benefits these businesses generate to the local economy.

With regard to consultation, there have been mechanisms and opportunities in place for a number of years for harbour users to engage in the affairs of the harbour including via the Harbour Consultative Group and in response to the e-news dissemination of the Harbour Management Board/Harbours Committee meetings papers and Minutes.

The proposals being put forward for the Weymouth Quay Regeneration are partly based on the Fisher Associates report and on the consultants' experience of working with a number of harbours in the UK and after consultation locally with Weymouth harbour users and quayside businesses

Any proposals for charter boat operations in the harbour are only at the concept stage. The concept has been shared with members of the Harbour Consultative Group and at the recent Engagement meetings. At this time, no decisions have been made, but it is expected decisions will be forthcoming early in the new year.

I can assure you that any proposals you have offered now or in the future will be fully taken into account in the formation of the plans for Weymouth Harbour.

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