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DORSET COUNCIL - HARBOURS COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON WEDNESDAY 17 MARCH 2021

A recording of the meeting can be accessed on the committee page by using the following link: [Harbours Committee](#)

Present: Cllrs Mark Roberts (Chairman), David Gray, Rob Hughes (Vice-Chairman), Louie O'Leary, Mary Penfold, Sarah Williams.

Independent Members- Jim Clarke, William Ellwood, Lee Hardy, Steve Pitman.

Also present:

Cllr Ray Bryan - Portfolio Holder for Environment, Travel and Harbours

Cllr Nocturin Lacey-Clarke - Lead Member for Environment, Travel and Harbours

Cllr Kate Wheller - Dorset Council - Rodwell & Wyke

Andy Sargent - Chairman of Weymouth Harbour Consultative Group

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

Lara Aintree (Senior Lawyer - Regulatory), Ken Buchan (Head of Environment and Wellbeing), Sarah Cairns (Assistant Head of Assets and Infrastructure), Claire Connolly (Financial and Admin Manager, Weymouth Harbour), Jamie Joyce (Weymouth Harbour Master), Kelly Matthews (Health and Safety Consultant), Mark Osborne (Estates Surveying Manager), Matthew Penny (Engineering Projects Manager), James Radcliffe (Bridport and Lyme Regis Harbour Master), Denise Hunt (Democratic Services Officer) and William Heaps (Designated Person).

29. Apologies

An apology for absence was received from Karyn Punchard, Corporate Director for Place Services.

30. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 9 December 2020 were confirmed as a correct record and would be signed at a future date.

31. Declarations of Interest

Mr Steve Pitman, Independent Member, declared a general interest as a member of Weymouth Sailing Club.

Cllr Mark Roberts declared a general interest as his name was on the waiting list for a mooring in West Bay Harbour.

Cllr Mary Penfold declared a general interest as a member of SCOPAC.

32. Public Participation

A public statement was received that was read out at the meeting.

Cllr Kate Wheller (Dorset Council - Rodwell & Wyke) addressed the committee directly.

A copy of the statement, questions and responses are set out in the appendix to these minutes.

33. Chairman's Report

The Chairman welcomed newly appointed Independent Member, Mr William Ellwood to his first meeting of the committee.

He advised that he had attended a virtual Port Marine Safety Code Duty Holder training session provided by the British Ports Association and a DEFRA Fisheries Bill webinar in February 2021 and also outlined the current stage in the process of development of the Harbours Strategy.

34. Harbour Consultative Group Minutes

The Chairman welcomed the newly appointed Chairman of the Weymouth Harbour Consultative Group who presented the minutes of the meeting held on 17 February 2021.

The Bridport & Lyme Regis Harbour Master advised that formal meetings of the Bridport and Lyme Regis Harbour Consultative Groups would be arranged by late April / early May 2021, although the existing informal groups had met since the last Harbours Committee meeting.

35. Budget Monitoring Report

The Finance and Admin Manager, Weymouth Harbour and Bridport & Lyme Regis Harbour Master presented the current position for the respective Harbour Revenue budgets at the end of January 2021 and the predicted position of the Weymouth Harbour Reserves for 2020-21.

Cllr David Gray asked about the establishment of a reserve for dredging in Weymouth Harbour.

The Weymouth Harbour Master informed the Committee that discussions were taking place with the hydrographic surveyor in order to develop costs and establish a budget line in the new Asset Management Plan. In addition, work was also taking place to assess the potential of attracting larger vessels by dredging to depths of 2 or 2.5 metres.

Decision: To note the Budget Monitoring figures for 2020/21.

Reason for Decision: The Harbours Committee has the responsibility for

the harbours' finances including budget setting, budget monitoring and the final out-turn at the year end.

36. Port Marine Safety Code (PMSC) Designated Persons and Health and Safety Report

The Committee considered a report by the Designated Person and the Health & Safety Consultant.

The Designated Person introduced his second report for the period ending February 2021, stating that a good level of contact had been maintained with the Harbours teams despite home working due to the Covid restrictions. He outlined some highlights of the report including:-

- the approval of the Weymouth Harbour Revision Order (HRO) and ongoing preparation of the HRO for Bridport and Lyme Regis;
- that the harbour teams had fulfilled the obligations of the Port Marine Safety Code despite the pandemic and the change of Weymouth Harbour Master;
- the implementation of a new incident reporting system in Weymouth which was now live;
- that navigational risk assessments had been maintained;
- the ongoing development of Marine Safety Management Systems and early development of General Directions at Weymouth;
- ongoing stakeholder engagement despite remote working;
- useful information displayed on the Weymouth Harbour website in relation to Covid, which had been quickly updated in response to rapidly changing government guidance.

In response to questions it was confirmed that

- there was an opportunity to ensure that Port Marine Safety was included in the Marine Safety Management Plan going forward and for Harbours Committee to take ownership of the Plan.
- that further to issues with the Melway, an agreement with Portland Port for use of its pilot vessel in Weymouth Harbour was imminent.

The Health & Safety Consultant also gave an overview of the Health & Safety audits. These had been included in the report further to a request made at the previous Harbours Committee for consideration of those elements that were outside the remit of the Designated Person.

The Health & Safety Consultant stated that all staff had been very co-operative, helpful and open. The new Weymouth Harbour Master had put in place many new procedures at Weymouth, including the control of contractors and associated competencies, which had been impressive. He had been able to delegate work appropriately and this could be replicated by the Bridport & Lyme Regis Harbour Master should he be provided with further staffing resource. Closer working relationships between the harbours would be an aspiration going forward and further health & safety visits would be undertaken once Covid restrictions were lifted. Overall she had been very

impressed by the harbours teams in what was considered to be a high risk environment.

These comments were echoed by the Chairman and Jim Clark, Independent Member who congratulated the teams on such positive news.

The Chairman was particularly encouraged as the Committee relied on the harbours teams for its safe working harbours and it was encouraging for Duty Holders to know how well the teams were doing and continuing to improve.

Proposed by Cllr Mark Roberts, seconded by Cllr Rob Hughes.

Recommended to Full Council: That the Harbours Committee approves the Designated Person's report and that the report is sent to Full Council for information

Reason for Recommendation: Harbour operations have been reviewed and assessed throughout the period by the Designated Person and as a result compliance with the Code is reported.

37. Harbour Master Updates

The Weymouth Harbour Master and Bridport & Lyme Regis Harbour Master presented their updates.

Special thanks was extended to Mary Harris from the Weymouth Harbour Consultative Group for setting up and chairing the Weymouth Harbour Watch Community Group with the support of the harbour team that would increase security awareness of the harbour community.

Further to a question relating to dredging in Bridport & Lyme Regis, the Harbour Master explained that dredging of the outer harbour by the Environment Agency had ceased and that the contingency funding allocated by the Council had been insufficient to cover the full cost of this activity. Dredging at Lyme Regis was undertaken as part of the beach management plan in order to replenish the beach and would continue to be undertaken by the Environment Agency.

Noted

38. Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management (FCERM) Update

The Engineering Projects Manager presented an update report for the three Dorset Council Harbours.

Noted

Cllr Louie O'leary left the meeting at this juncture.

39. **Forward Plan**

Jim Clark, Independent Member suggested the following additional items to the forward plan:-

- a formal review of external funding opportunities;
- what has changed externally as a consequence of Brexit, including opportunities and threats
- development of a new 5 year business plan

Noted

40. **Urgent items**

There were no urgent items.

41. **Exempt Business**

Proposed by Cllr Mark Roberts, seconded by Cllr Robert Hughes.

Decision

That the press and the public be excluded for the following item(s) in view of the likely disclosure of exempt information within the meaning of paragraph 3 of schedule 12 A to the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended).

The public part of the meeting concluded at 12.00 noon.

42. **Sale of Freehold of the Old Fish Market, Custom House Quay, Weymouth**

The Committee considered an exempt report.

Proposed by Cllr Mark Roberts, seconded by Cllr Rob Hughes.

Recommended to Full Council (acting as the Statutory Harbour Authority): that the sale of the freehold of the Old Fish Market, Custom House Quay, Weymouth to the long leaseholder, Weyfish Ltd, be agreed on the terms outlined in the exempt report.

Duration of meeting: 10.00 am - 12.25 pm

Chairman

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Statement and request for Chair and Harbours Committee from Lyme Regis Sail Club

LRSC has had its launching and storage fees increased by 76% and 84% respectively, as opposed to a general increase to other harbour users of 3%. Lyme Regis Power Boat Club has been charged a 28% increase.

Your December minutes record that *budgets, fees and charges for 2021/22 for Bridport and Lyme Regis Harbours* were recommended for approval to full council. We understand the council intends to standardise discounts to its harbour user groups across the county. We don't understand why. It removes any encouragement or incentives for clubs such as ours which provide outstandingly positive health, environmental and social benefits to our local community.

We appreciate that Dorset Council is under considerable financial pressure and that West Bay/Lyme Regis harbours make a loss, so we question why charges for other harbour users were only increased by a general 3-5%. Dorset Council appears to be failing to support local organisations in favour of visitors.

Mark Roberts stated in his letter that “*LRSC fees have remained reasonably static and comparably low for some time*”. We contest the assertion that our “*fees have remained reasonably static*” as they have increased by more than double the percentage of other harbour users from 2013 to 2020.

We agree our fees are “*comparably low*”. The rates originally negotiated with West Dorset District Council in 2009 reflect our special relationship with the Harbour and the benefits from our contribution to youth training, physical and mental fitness. The environmental impact of sailing is minimal and we support the local economy by providing employment.

Lyme Sailing Club has always worked to keep sailing costs affordable to avoid elitism, so increasing our charges makes it difficult for us to remain inclusive. The membership profile of LRSC reflects the demographics of the local area. The main cohorts are young working families with youths in our training schemes and retired members on fixed incomes.

We do of course realise that the Council is under considerable financial pressure, as are many of our members after the double hammer blows of Brexit and Covid, so raising sailing costs will result in some members giving up the sport.

We request that the proposed percentage increase is significantly reduced to be in line with other harbour users and allow the club to continue benefitting the community.

Response

Thank you for your statement and request. The Harbours Committee are aware of and support the excellent work and opportunities that all clubs associated with our harbours provide for our young people and the wider community.

It is important to understand the context of the fee changes for the coming years as the percentage increases outlined in your statement are not only proposed over a 4 year period but also start from a very low base. The sailing club will continue to pay around a quarter of that of an equivalent visiting boat.

For example, a visitor or non-sailing club member will pay £97 per metre or £388 for a typical 4m boat for six months storage and £110 for the season for launching or £11 each launch.

A sailing club member for the coming year will pay £75 per boat (not per metre) for storage for six months and £50 for the season for launching or £5 for each launch. It is currently proposed that in 4 years' time this will increase to £97 and £88 respectively.

Charges for the sailing club have remained comparatively low and will continue to do so. Fees and charges for visitors to the harbour are significantly higher than those of the sailing club hence the lower percentage increase which in monetary terms is similar to that of the sailing club. Fees and charges are benchmarked with other south coast harbours to ensure we remain competitive.

The Committee wish to support clubs and charities and recognise them as a key component of the 'Harbour Community', and it is not the intention to put them under any additional financial strain. The small increase of £2.50 per month for storage and no change to launch fees this coming year coupled with the proposed gradual increase in fees over 4 years recognises this. However, we have agreed to review proposed fees and charges with the sailing club at the end of each summer so we can understand if increased charges are impacting on club membership.

Questions from Councillor Kate Wheller (Dorset Council - Rodwell & Wyke)

1. I have read the results of the initial consultations on a new Harbours Strategy for Dorset Council. They do not tell us anything very much new but serve to usefully inform the ongoing process. Could you tell me the schedule for proceeding and is the committee on target to complete the strategy as they hoped?

Response

Work on the Harbours Strategy is progressing a little slower than anticipated just over a year ago prior to the start of the Covid pandemic impacting on the UK. A sub-group of the Committee have been considering the 500+ responses received from the initial consultation exercise and have with the assistance of the Dorset Coast Forum developed some draft Strategic Goals, a vision and a mission statement. These are currently out for consultation with key stakeholders and harbour users through the harbours' consultative groups. The next step is to rework the strategic goals based on consultation responses. We would anticipate further targeted consultation with harbour users with the intention of considering a draft Harbours Strategy at the next Harbours Committee meeting in June. Should Committee Members agree, the Strategy will go out to Public consultation following this. Ultimately, we are seeking to consider the final Harbours Strategy in September.

2. No-one suggests that "Sea-bins" and other devices will solve the problem of pollution in our oceans. However, there is evidence that they could help in harbours and marinas. Currently in Weymouth there are a few wonderful people who collect litter at low water from around the Stone Pier steps and other locations as far as it is safe to do so. And I know harbour staff also collect litter when time restraints allow. Litter, plastic bottles, food cartons, cigarette ends etc also collect by the Town Bridge and the North Quay bend where it joins with Westway Road. Whilst ultimately it is a matter of education and the reduction in single use plastics a 'sea bin' or similar could help keep these areas and similar areas in Westbay and Lyme cleaner. Could I ask the Harbour Masters and the committee to do some research into these devices and perhaps set aside a budget to provide them in the locations where they would be most use?

Response

All three harbours have teamed up with Odyssey recycling to take part in both the Marine Regeneration scheme, targeting marine litter and the Net Regeneration Scheme for end of life fishing equipment. The aim of this collaboration is to provide a waste management solution to the fishing industry's end-of-life gear and encourages fishermen to collect all types of abandoned, lost or otherwise discarded fishing gear (ALDFG) whilst out on their fishing expeditions with no negative consequences. All acceptable material from the Harbour litter picks will be deposited in these receptacles which will be located at the Fish Landing area. This collaboration is expected to commence in early April.

Further to this all three harbours have consulted with the Dorset Coast Forum and approved the installation of Sea Clean bins at the slipways. The aim of this project is to locate bins at popular angling spots, such as piers, quays and slipways, where unwanted line can be disposed of safely. It can then be recycled, as fishing line continues to cause problems at land-fill sites.

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