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HARBOURS COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON WEDNESDAY 29 SEPTEMBER 2021

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

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

Also present:

Cllr Ray Bryan - Portfolio Holder for Environment, Travel and Harbours
Cllr Kate Wheller – Dorset Council (Rodwell and Wyke)
Dave Caddy - Vice-Chairman of Weymouth HCG

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

Paul Ackrill (Service Manager (Finance)), Lara Atree (Senior Lawyer - Regulatory), Ken Buchan (Head of Environment and Wellbeing), Sarah Cairns (Service Manager - Major Projects), Claire Connolly (Financial and Admin Manager, Weymouth Harbour), Jamie Joyce (Weymouth Harbour Master), Matthew Penny (Leader Manager - Flood & Coastal Erosion Risk Management (FCERM)), James Potten (Communications Business Partner - Place), Karyn Punchard (Corporate Director for Place Services), James Radcliffe (Bridport and Lyme Regis Harbour Master) John Sellgren (Executive Director of Place) and Denise Hunt (Democratic Services Officer)

14. Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Andy Sargent, Chairman of Weymouth HCG and William Heaps – Designated Person.

15. Declarations of Interest

Cllr Mark Roberts declared that he held a mooring at West Bay Harbour.

Cllr Mary Penfold declared that she was Chairman of SCOPAC.

16. Public Participation

Councillor Kate Wheller addressed the Committee. A copy of her written submission and response given at the meeting is outlined in the appendix to these minutes.

17. **Chairman's Report**

The Chairman reported on the following points:-

- the advertisement period to recruit two new independent members had been extended.
- Dorset Council had successfully hosted the LGA Coastal Special Interest Group summer tour and AGM the previous week. He congratulated all the officers involved, in particular, Claire Connolly who gave an excellent tour of Weymouth Harbour.

18. **Harbour Consultative Group (HCG) Minutes**

The notes of the Weymouth HCG meeting held on 18 August 2021 were presented by the Dave Caddy, Vice-Chairman of the group, who highlighted the issue of harbour related highways concerns, particularly with regard to the impact of restricted access on the RNLI when attending emergencies.

It was felt that a highways officer should attend the Weymouth HCG meetings on a regular basis in order to provide feedback.

19. **Draft Dorset Council Harbours Strategy for Public Consultation**

The Committee considered a report concerning public consultation on the draft Harbours Strategy.

Following presentation of the report by the Head of Environment and Wellbeing, the Chairman thanked the Dorset Coast Forum and others who had contributed to the draft strategy document.

Members queried the form the consultation would take, the lack of quantifying measures and the need for greater explanation of the qualitative measures in the document.

The Head of Environment and Wellbeing advised that the consultation questionnaire would be available online and paper documents at libraries.

Members highlighted that it was not known whether all harbour users were made aware of the draft Strategy by their HCG representative with the suggestion that responses provided by harbour users should receive greater weight in the consultation. However, it was explained that one of the consultation questions sought to identify harbour users and members were reminded that it was the committee's role to achieve balance between the different harbour users whilst recognising that the harbour was an asset for all Dorset residents. The aim was for the harbours to be self-sustainable in future with detailed business plans to be considered by the committee in September 2022.

The committee was minded to agree to the release of the draft Dorset Council Harbours Strategy for a period of 8 weeks' public consultation.

The Executive Director of Place stated that he had listened to the presentation, debate and vote and would determine the report recommendation in line with the committee's "minded to" decision.

Decision: That the release the draft Dorset Council Harbours Strategy for a period of 8 weeks' public consultation be approved.

Reason for Decision:

The draft Dorset Council Harbours Strategy sets out the strategic direction for our harbours. The strategy has been widely consulted upon in its development and we are at a stage where additional views from harbour users and the general public who have not yet had the opportunity to comment are required to finalise it. Following consultation, any proposed amendments and a final draft strategy will be brought back to Harbours Committee in March 2022 for approval.

20. **Harbour Master Updates**

The Harbour Masters presented their updates.

Weymouth Harbour – Jamie Joyce, Harbour Master

The Committee heard that the organisers of the Seafood Festival had been pleased with the Peninsular location and wished to explore using this area in future years.

Members asked how the budget could be more accurately predicted for dredging and whether more background information could be included in future reporting.

The Weymouth Harbour Master advised that he was working with the engineering team and hydrographic survey personnel to assess how much sediment needed to be taken away and from which areas of the harbour in order to make a more accurate financial prediction each year.

Bridport & Lyme Regis – James Radcliffe, Harbour Master

Following the Harbour Master's presentation, the Chairman stated that the piles procured for Bridport Harbour had been purchased at a reduced rate from Bournemouth and were ready to be installed.

Noted

21. **Flood & Coastal Erosion Risk Management (FCERM) Engineering Update**

The Lead Officer - FCERM presented an update report for the three Dorset Council Harbours.

Since the report had been published approval had been given by the Environment Agency for the Weymouth Harbour & Esplanade FCERM

Scheme Phase 1 strategic outline case approved by Cabinet in June 21, giving the green light to proceed to a business case for the scheme and for the project to start in Autumn 2021.

The Chairman asked how the proposed refresh of the shoreline management plans might affect FCERM.

Members were advised that shoreline management plans were overarching strategy documents for the coastline that gave recommendations and a designation for each stretch of coastline. There were “hold the line” designations in place for the 3 Dorset Council harbours and it was anticipated that this would be unchanged as a result of the refresh.

Noted

22. Budget Monitoring Report

The Finance and Admin Manager and Harbour Masters presented the current budget monitoring position for the harbour revenue budgets for Weymouth, Bridport and Lyme Regis Harbours at the end of August 2021 and the predicted Harbour Reserves for 2021-22.

Cllr Louie O’ Leary left the meeting following the report presentations.

Members asked about the increase in National Insurance contribution and were informed that this would take effect from 1 April 2022 and that advice was awaited on how the additional costs for Dorset Council would be met.

Noted

23. Forward Plan

The Committee noted its forward plan.

Members raised the issue of harbour parking charges and how this fitted with the Dorset Council parking charges strategy. It was noted that there would remain some designated areas of parking for harbour users that may not come into alignment with other car parks.

24. Urgent items

There were no urgent items.

25. Exempt Business

There was no exempt business.

Duration of meeting: 10.00 - 11.40am

Chairman

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Public Participation

Cllr Kate Wheller (Dorset Council – Rodwell and Wyke)

I have some concerns and some compliments to share.

My concern is that with the removal of a designated pilot for Weymouth Harbour, albeit, very part-time and not needed for some years, the harbour ceases to be a Competent Harbour Authority.

During my twenty year plus involvement with Weymouth Harbour it was always impressed upon me by every harbour master (good or bad) that we should not risk losing this designation.

Can someone confirm for me that Weymouth is no longer a designated Competent Harbour Authority? Can you tell me whether an economic impact assessment was undertaken on this?

It is my belief that the loss of that designation seriously impacts on the future of the harbour both economically and to its reputation. Weymouth is an historic harbour significant in protection of Britain since medieval times with a long and well regarded Royal and Merchant Navy heritage.

What is the result of this loss upon Weymouth Town Council pursuing the possibility of a ferry service in the future, however small? Have those councillors pursuing this project been made aware? Are they wasting their time and effort?

I welcome the publication of The Strategic Plan for Weymouth Harbour and congratulate you all on your work, but I am disappointed that it is not more robust and imaginative.

Finally, I congratulate the Weymouth Harbour Master on his management of the harbour budget. I am delighted to see that a designated reserve has been created for the dredging of Weymouth Harbour. This is something that the committee pushed for over many years and is long overdue. Well done and thank you.

Response

I can confirm that Weymouth Harbour is a Competent Harbour Authority and has statutory powers relating to the provision of pilotage within our Statutory Harbour Area.

As a Competent Harbour Authority, we abide by the Port Marine safety Code Guide to Good Practice and in particular the responsibility for keeping the need for pilotage and the service provided under constant and formal review.

The pilotage directions have been reviewed and updated, to include the provision of Portland Port providing Pilot transfers for Weymouth.

The Pilotage Service has undergone a formal review with an independent consultant and as per the Harbour Committee forward plan this report is due for discussion in June 2022.

The strategy has been widely consulted upon in its development including the three harbour consultative groups and their constituents and harbour related competent and relevant authorities.

We are at a stage where additional views are required from harbour users and the general public who have not yet had the opportunity to comment.

We would welcome yours and other comments on how the Strategy can be improved. In the agenda today, it is proposed that the draft strategy goes out for a period of wider consultation after which an updated final version can be approved by the Committee.

With regard to your comment regarding Weymouth Harbour Master's management of the Harbours budget, thank you for your compliment.