

**FORDINGBRIDGE TOWN COUNCIL**  
**Minutes of the Finance & Policy Committee held at 7.30pm on**  
**Wednesday 22<sup>nd</sup> February 2017 in the Town Hall**  
**(Minutes subject to approval at the next meeting of Committee)**

**Present:**

Cllr Connolly – chairman

Cllrs Price, Adams, Lewendon, Anstey, Hale, Fulford, Earth, Wilson, Paton & Perkins

**In Attendance:**

Mrs H Richards, Town Clerk (TC)

Mrs M Coatham, Finance Officer (RFO)

**1. To receive any apologies for absence**

No apologies were received

**2. To receive any declarations of interest**

Cllrs Adams declared a Pecuniary Interest in Agenda Item 5, Monies Collected and Payment of Accounts as a supplier to the Council, he remained in the meeting but did not speak or vote on this item.

**3. To confirm the minutes of the meeting held on 25<sup>th</sup> January 2017 and report on any matters arising**

The RFO requested the following amendment:

*Minute No. 5 “Avon Valley Property ~~Services~~” .. insert “& Heritage Ltd”*

Cllr Anstey proposed and it was seconded by Cllr Hale and it was therefore **RESOLVED**: that the minutes of the meeting held on 25<sup>th</sup> January 2017 be signed as a true record subject to the following amendment:

*Minute No. 5 “Avon Valley Property ~~Services~~” .. insert “& Heritage Ltd”*

**Matters Arising:**

There were no matters arising

**4. To receive any matters raised by members of the public**

No members of the public present.

**5. To receive details of Monies collected & Payment of Accounts**

The RFO summarised the February accounts and members noted the following items:

- 2 no. window cleaning invoices paid as January invoice received late
- Additional costs for Road Closure signs provided by Ian Newman (Christmas & Remembrance Sunday)
- STN Christmas Lights - end of (extended) contract invoice – the Chair advised members that additional costs had been invoiced for upgrade of the PA system and callouts. The Chair had met with Ian Newman regarding some of these costs and spoken with the RFO regarding the need for a formal ordering system to be put in place to ensure tighter financial controls for emergency

provision. The RFO confirmed that only one call out charge had been made this year in relation to Christmas lights. The chair confirmed that following recent discussions, The Rotary Club would be assisting with the tendering process for the future provision of Christmas Lights.

## **6. To consider the following grant applications**

- Sandleheath Sea Scouts – following discussion,

Cllr Price proposed and it was seconded by Cllr Hale and therefore **RESOLVED:** that a grant of **£250.00** is awarded to Sandleheath Sea Scouts. All in favour

- Burgate School & 6<sup>th</sup> Form (School Productions) – Members considered the application for funding towards the costs relating to the next production, “Grease”.

Cllr Perkins proposed and it was seconded by Cllr Wilson and therefore **RESOLVED:** that a grant of **£250.00** is awarded to Burgate School & 6<sup>th</sup> Form.

The Chair then informed members that providing the Town council also contribute, that authorisation has been given for the Town Council to spend the funds transferred from Hampshire County Council for youth projects (£4250 held in reserves). Members discussed the need for a separate application process (from the S137 grant ) for funding from this budget. RFO & TC to review the S137 Grant Policy and Application procedure and adapt for applying for Youth Project grant funding.

## **7. To agree the Financial Reserves Policy**

Members discussed the Financial Reserves Policy prepared by the RFO. An amendment was agreed regarding the table in item 5 to include Avonway Youth Projects, Policy for Use, insert “Full Council”.

Cllr Connolly proposed and it was seconded by Cllr Lewendon and therefore **RESOLVED:** that the Financial Reserves Policy is adopted, subject to the amendment above.

The chairman then requested an amendment to the running order of the Agenda to allow full discussion of item 8.

## **9. To consider amendments to Financial Regulations**

The RFO advised members that following the recommendation by the Internal Auditor, the Financial Regulations had been re-ordered to be consistent with the NALC model regulations.

Cllr Connolly proposed and it was seconded by Cllr Hale and therefore **RESOLVED:** to adopt the amended Financial Regulations.

## **10. To discuss provision of the Summer Playscheme 2017**

Following discussion regarding funding from Hampshire County Council & New Forest DC, members agreed that the scheme should be run this year.

Cllr Lewendon proposed and it was seconded by Cllr Hale and therefore **RESOLVED**: to run the Summer Playscheme during 2017 and that the Playscheme Manager be engaged and make applications for funding.

#### 8. To receive any Finance & policy matters referred from sub-committees

- Staff & Remuneration Committee – staffing and accommodation report

The Clerk reported on her original staff and accommodation report and subsequent update prepared for this meeting. The issues raised by the reports are:

- Business Rates will be charged for both the Town Hall & Information Office from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2017 (budgeted for in 2017/18) (Town Hall would be exempt if only one property occupied)
- Information Office Lease expires 30/04/17
- Associated costs of running Information Office approx. £10,000 per annum
- Inability to share resources and workload and provide support across the team
- Works needed to Town Hall to accommodate Information Office & staff
- Sufficient office space at Information Office to accommodate Town Hall Staff

The Town Clerk and RFO also advised Members that they could not commit to any further projects or workload at the present time as they are currently unable to share workload with the Information Officers; the Assistant Clerk's post would be vacant from 24<sup>th</sup> February; they are both undertaking the work to achieve the CiLCA qualification and potentially there would be a vacancy at the Information Office from mid-March.

Members were asked to consider the Clerks recommendation to:

- i. Permanently relocate the Information Office & staff to the Town Hall. Close VIC
- ii. together with an interim proposal to relocate Town Hall staff to VIC (Back Office) & close Town Hall as office accommodation while the required works are undertaken at the Town Hall to achieve (i) above.

The chair asked Members for individual views. Following discussion the following proposals were received:

Proposal 1 – Cllr Adams proposed and it was seconded by Cllr Wilson to **recommend** to General Council, as an interim measure to relocate Town Hall staff to the Information Office & close the Town Hall as office accommodation while the required works are undertaken at the Town Hall to relocate all office staff to the Town Hall and then permanently close the Information Office at Kings Yard. A deadline of 2 years should be set to achieve this in order to avoid renewal of the lease in 2019.

Proposal 2 – Cllr Hale proposed and it was seconded by Cllr Fulford to **recommend** to General Council to relocate the Information Office and staff to the Town Hall and not to renew the lease of the building in Kings Yard – transfer to Town Hall to be completed by the end of April 2017.

The following votes were cast:

Proposal 2 - 5 voted in favour, 4 against & 2 Members abstained

Proposal 1 - 4 voted in favour, 5 against & 2 members abstained

It was therefore **RESOLVED**: to **recommend** to General Council on 1<sup>st</sup> March 2017 to relocate the Information Office and staff to the Town Hall and not to renew the lease of the building in Kings Yard – transfer to Town Hall to be completed by the end of April 2017.

Members then discussed the options put forward by the Clerk in her update report regarding opening hours and staffing of the Information Office - this included discussion of a reduction in opening hours and the future provision of Tourist information.

***9.30pm the Chairman suspended Standing Order 1(x) to allow the meeting to exceed 2 hours in duration to allow conclusion of business on the Agenda.***

Cllr Fulford queried whether the hours of the Assistant Clerk's post could be extended to incorporate cover at the Information Office. This post has already been advertised, however the Town Clerk to raise with candidates for interview.

Cllr Hale proposed and it was seconded by Cllr Lewendon and therefore **RESOLVED**: that the opening hours of the Information Office should remain the same as follows:

- Monday to Friday throughout the Summer Period (from Easter until End of October)
- Monday, Tuesday & Friday throughout the Winter Period (November until Easter)

**11. To note any items of correspondence**

There were no items of correspondence to report.

**12. To receive a report from the Clerk or any other relevant business**

The clerk had nothing further to report.

**13. To note the date of the next meeting as Wednesday 29<sup>th</sup> March 2017.**

The meeting closed at 9:45pm