

FORDINGBRIDGE TOWN COUNCIL
Minutes of the Finance & Policy Committee held at 7.35pm on
Wednesday 26th April 2017 in the Town Hall
(Minutes subject to approval at the next meeting of Committee)

Present:

Cllr Connolly – chairman

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

In Attendance:

Mrs H Richards, Town Clerk (TC)

Mrs M Coatham, Finance Officer (RFO)

1. To receive any apologies for absence

Cllrs Price, Bailey & Perkins

2. To receive any declarations of interest

Cllr 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 29th March 2017 and report on any matters arising

The Clerk advised that although the Minutes of the 29th March 2017 resolved to confirm the Minutes of the meeting held on 22nd February 2017 (Minute no. 3), the February minutes contained an error at Minute no. 8 (2nd resolution) Winter opening hours should read "*Monday, Wednesday & Friday*".

Cllr Lewendon proposed and it was seconded by Cllr Anstey and therefore **RESOLVED**: that the Minutes of the meeting held on 29th March 2017 be signed as a true record and that the Minutes of the 22nd February 2017 be amended as above.

Matters Arising:

Minute no. 3 – Christmas Lights – The Finance Officer (RFO) advised that she had received the draft Tender from the Rotary Club and would respond shortly.

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 April accounts and members noted the following items:

- CIL monies (£4113.30) received from NFDC generated from Regal Cinema Development and former HSBC Bank (6 High Street)
Cllr Fulford queried whether the council had received CIL or S106 contributions relating to the Fordingbridge Hospital redevelopment – RFO to check.
- Funding received for 2017/18 Lengthsman Scheme
- Datum Drainage payment relating to emergency works for drainage blockage in paddling pool (August 2016), subsequent remedial works to install valve and investigation/drainage survey on kiosk toilet drains. Awaiting report/action from Architect/original contractor.
- Ongoing problems with BT accounts
- New vehicle purchased this week – need to dispose of Tata Pickup

- Salaries – payment for hours completed by Playscheme Manager

Budgets – not discussed as year-end accounts to be prepared.

6. To receive a report from the Finance Officer

The RFO reported on the following:

Quotes are awaited for:

- Signs at the Recreation Ground
- Verti-Drainage
- Removal of Youth Shelter (Car park)
- Moles & (chain harrow)
- Car Park levelling (Recreation Ground)

The pump house shed located in the Recreation Ground which was damaged by a fallen tree needs to be replaced by the Council– land ownership issue with Wessex Water & awaiting WW inspection of the tree.

Water Leak – Groundsman has this week reported water leak due to damaged feed to paddling pool standpipe – contractor inspected and await remedial works.

Internal Audit visit scheduled for 12th June 2017.

7. To conduct an annual review of the Section 137 Grant Application Policy

Members discussed the above policy. Cllr Fulford queried the following requirement:

If the grant is in excess of £2000 then a report is required from the organisation within 12 months of the grant being awarded of how the money has been spent with supporting evidence attached

It was discussed that as the council are unlikely to issue grants of this (high) value, the amount should be reduced.

Cllr Fulford proposed and it was seconded by Cllr Lewendon and therefore **RESOLVED**: to reduce the trigger value for the requirement to report back on spending from £2000 to £750.00 – all in favour.

Cllr Fulford raised the issue of giving grants to religious groups and should this be treated in the same way as political groups (grants not awarded for projects with party political links). Members concluded that where a clear benefit to the wider community can be demonstrated, grants could be awarded to religious groups.

Cllr Lewendon proposed and it was seconded by Cllr Anstey and therefore **RESOLVED**: that subject to the amendment agreed above, that the Grant Award Policy is approved. All in favour.

8. To consider the following grant applications

- Salvation Army

The chairman advised that he had discussed the application with Mike French, Salvation Army and is satisfied that the funds will be spent for the benefit of members of the public who can access the services provided by the organisation.

Members discussed how any grant should be funded (S137 and/or Youth Budget) and agreed that the project will benefit a wide age-range of users (not just youth).

Cllr Lewendon proposed and it was seconded by Cllr Anstey and therefore **RESOLVED**: to award the following grant funding to the Salvation Army:

£250.00 – S137 Grant

£750.00 – Youth Provision

All in favour

The chair advised that when budgets are set, an allocation should be made each year for provision towards youth services.

9. To conduct the Annual Review of the following:

Complaints Procedure – Cllr Lewendon proposed and it was seconded by Cllr Wilson and therefore **RESOLVED**: that the Complaints Procedure be approved.

Freedom of Information Publication Scheme – Cllr Lewendon proposed and it was seconded by Cllr Paton and therefore **RESOLVED**: that the FoI Publication Scheme be approved

Data Protection Policy – Cllr Lewendon proposed and it was seconded by Cllr Adams and therefore **RESOLVED**: that the Data Protection Policy is approved.

Press & Media Policy – Cllr Fulford spoke about the need to review the key aims regularly and actively work to achieve them. Cllr Fulford proposed and it was seconded by Cllr Adams and therefore **RESOLVED**: that the Press & Media Policy is approved.

Recording & Use of Social Media at Council Meetings – Cllr Anstey raised concern that Paras. 1 and 7 of the Guidance contradict each other. Para. 1 “supports the video or audio recording by the public and press” however Para. 7 advises that for those who object to being filmed, photographed or recorded that their wishes are complied with. Members considered that the taking of Minutes are a recording of the meeting (and statements from members of the public, cannot be excluded).

Cllr Lewendon proposed and it was seconded by Cllr Anstey and therefore **RESOLVED**: that the Recording & Use of Social Media at Council Meetings is approved subject to the following amendment:

7. Some members of the public attending the meeting may object to being filmed, or photographed ~~or recorded~~. The Council will ask those filming or photographing ~~or recording~~ the meeting to respect their wishes, and will expect that these are complied with.

10. To agree a way forward for reviewing services, facilities and accommodation provided by the Council in the Town Centre.

The chairman read out a statement provided by Cllr Price who was unable to attend the meeting – this concluded that the project to relocate the office staff into one building should be put on hold.

Members discussed the project and how this should be moved forward – the Clerk advised that this was not to discuss details, purely to agree how the project would be managed (working party approach or through named Committee) as a co-ordinated approach was needed and the Council need to identify what the objectives are for the project. Cllr Fulford confirmed that she awaited a visit from the Conservation Officer to discuss the potential of works to the Town Hall. Members generally agreed that updates would be required regularly and the chairman advised that this would be placed on the

Finance & Policy Agenda for May meeting and asked the Clerk and RFO to provide a list of requirements. It was acknowledged that any re-location would not be feasible in the short term (up to 2 years).

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

- **Staff and Remuneration Committee 20.04.17 – Information office & Recruitment**

Recommendation

- Rescind the decision made by the Finance & Policy Committee on 22nd February 2017 *“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, Wednesday & Friday throughout the Winter Period (November until Easter)”

and to open the Information Office for 5 days per week throughout the year.

- Confirm with the existing member of staff at the Information Office increase in working hours to 3 days per week throughout the year and advertise for a 2nd officer for 16 hours per week throughout the year.
- Re-advertise Assistant Clerk’s vacancy as Administrative Assistant with an amended (simplified) job description.
- Consider changing the name of the Information Office from Visitor Information Office.

Members discussed the recommendations including the need for more administrative hours, the costs associated with increasing the opening hours of the Information Office and whether both roles could be provided by one post holder.

9.35pm The Chairman suspended Standing Order 1(x) to allow the meeting to exceed 2 hours to allow conclusion of business on the Agenda.

- Cllr Connolly proposed and it was seconded by Cllr Adams and therefore **RESOLVED:** to **Rescind** the decision made by the Finance & Policy Committee on 22nd February 2017 *“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, Wednesday & Friday throughout the Winter Period (November until Easter)”

All in favour

- 1st Proposal - Cllr Connolly proposed and it was seconded by Cllr Wilson to open the Information Office for 5 days per week throughout the year
2nd Proposal – Cllr Hale proposed and it was seconded by Cllr Fulford to open the Information Office for 4 days a week throughout the year (providing that we could successfully recruit to the 2nd post)

The following votes were made:

2nd proposal – 3 votes for, 5 votes against (chair did not vote)

1st proposal – 5 votes for, 3 against (chair did not vote)

It was therefore **RESOLVED**: that the 1st proposal was carried.

Cllr Fulford raised concern over spending public money that has not been budgeted for.

- Cllr Connolly proposed and it was seconded by Cllr Lewendon and therefore **RESOLVED**: to recruit 2 replacement members of staff, advertised as Administrative Assistants, for 16 hours each per week, one to be based at the Town Hall and 1 to be based at the Information Office. 6 in favour, 2 against, 1 abstention
- Members agreed that ideas relating to the name change from Visitor Information Centre be given at Finance & Policy meeting in May.

12. To receive any items of correspondence

The Clerk reported on receipt of the draft lease for the Information Office in Kings Yard and advised members of the addition of a break clause to allow the Council to terminate the lease early after 18 months (2 year lease). Although it was hoped that the break clause would allow early termination at any point in the lease period, it was agreed that 18 months was a realistic time period. Concern was expressed that the Landlord is not required to give any notice regarding his (potential) intention not to renew after a 2 year period – Clerk to clarify with landlords solicitor.

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

The clerk had nothing further to report.

The chair reported on a further matter discussed by the Staff & Remuneration Committee regarding the proposal received from Ellis Whittam for HR and Health & Safety Services – the Committee (S&R) requested that the Clerk obtain feedback from other clients.

The Clerk reported that requests have been sent to 3 local councils for feedback on the services received from Ellis Whittam.

14. To note the date of the next meeting as Wednesday 31st May 2017.

The meeting closed at 9.55pm