

FORDINGBRIDGE TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of the Finance & Policy Committee held on Wednesday 25th September 2019 at 7.30pm in the Victoria Rooms (Minutes subject to approval at the next meeting of the Committee)

Present: Cllr Adams – Chair;
Cllrs Earth, Goldsmith, Hale, Jackson, Lewendon, Mouland, Paton, Perkins, White & Wilson

In attendance: Mr P Goddard, Town Clerk
Mrs M Coatham, Finance Officer (RFO)

1. To receive any apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Cllr Anstey

2. To receive any Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

3. To confirm the minutes of the meeting held on 24th July 2019 and report any matters arising

Cllr Mouland proposed and it was seconded by Cllr Earth and therefore **RESOLVED**: that the minutes of the meeting held on the 28th August 2019 be signed as a true record. All in favour.

Matters arising:

Minute point 5: The RFO has circulated a breakdown of CIL funds

Minute point 8: The Clerk advised that the clock at the Town Hall had been stopped pending replacement of the platform to wind the mechanism. The work was not deemed a contractual variation. Once the clock had been restarted Smith of Derby would come to look at the chiming mechanism.

Minute point 9: The Clerk reported that survey quotes had been received from BrightSpace architects and that he continued to chase the NFDC for its views regarding container storage.

Minute point 11: The Clerk reported that a letter had been received from the Events Group today regarding the proposed Christmas Event.

Action: The Clerk to circulate a copy of the Events Group correspondence to members

4. To receive any matters raised by Members of the Public

No matters raised.

5. To receive details of Monies Collected & Payment of Accounts

The RFO reported that there would be an overspend due to the Town Hall works. The quantum would be dependent upon the contractors final account and how the work is funded, using reserves, drawing down the loan or using CIL funds.

Cllrs queried the necessity of the alcohol licence for the Town Hall which is not generally used by those booking the Town Hall. Members agreed to consider whether the licence should be renewed prior to the next General Purposes meeting.

Cllr Perkins entered the meeting.

The RFO advised that copy correspondence had been received regarding maintenance of the St Mary's cemetery which had been passed on to the NFDC. The cemetery is closed and is the responsibility of the NFDC. The NFDC pay the Town Council a small sum to maintain St Mary's which extends to cutting the grass and maintaining the hedge. The RFO will review and report back to members.

6. To consider grant applications under Section 137

- New Forest Disability Information Service

Cllrs considered the application of New Forest Disability Information Service.

Cllr Jackson proposed and it was seconded by Cllr Hale and therefore **RESOLVED** to approve the payment of a £200 grant to New Forest Disability Information Service. All in favour.

- Avon Valley Concerts
Cllrs considered the application of Avon Valley Concerts.
Cllr Moulard proposed and it was seconded by Cllr White and therefore **RESOLVED** to approve the payment of a £150 grant to Avon Valley Concerts. All in favour.

7. To receive any Finance & Policy matters referred from sub-committees:

There were no matters referred from sub-committees.

8. To receive a report on the Town Hall building works and borrowing

The Clerk informed the platform in the clock tower and the lightning conductors were the final pieces of outstanding work. Bennington Green, who prepared the schedule of conditions pre commencement of the Town Hall work had attended the site to look at specific concerns raised by the owners of the adjacent property and were due to report back. The RFO reported on the current billing for the work and estimated that £18k of the £25k contingency had been utilised including three small recent variations. The largest variation related to the additional insulation that it was agreed should be fitted. The RFO informed Cllrs that she had met a curtain company at the Town Hall and was meeting a second company tomorrow with a view to obtaining quotes for curtains in the Council Chamber. Cllrs considered that blinds should also be investigated as a possible alternative to curtains.

9. To approve Community Garden project (to allow grant application to NFDC)

The RFO reported that the grant application had been submitted. Cllr Wilson reported to Cllrs regarding the application for £1,000 from Hampshire County Council and the plans for a community garden at the allotments, which was supported by the allotment committee. The RFO reported that the application had been submitted due to the tight deadline for applications. Cllrs agreed to approve the Community Garden project and the application for funding.

10. To consider implications of Making Tax Digital – software changes

The RFO reported on the requirement for Making Tax Digital, the timeframe within which the Town Council needed to be compliant (December VAT Return) and the additional likely cost of remaining with SAGE. The RFO advised Cllrs of alternative providers, Xero and Quickbooks and the likely alternative costs. Cllrs discussed the merits of the respective software. The RFO was to continue to research options to enable the Town Council to agree a software package before the December deadline.

11. To consider replacement IT for officers and software updates

The RFO reported that the Town Council had currently budgeted for MS Office 365 for the officers and the Information Office. The RFO informed Cllrs that the introduction of 'fordingbridge.gov.uk' email addresses for the Cllrs had complicated matters and the RFO was in discussion with John Slatem, who had been assisting the Town Council regarding IT issues as to how best to deal with those complications. The RFO also reported on the requirement for additional hardware: a new PC for the RFO whose current PC could then be utilised in the Information Office to replace its PC that was in need of replacing. The RFO advised Cllrs of the cost of the proposed hardware (£700) and the Office 365 licences (£8.47 plus VAT per month per users). Cllr Adams queried the cost of the hardware – The RFO advised that the specification of the proposed PC was not high but would be adequate. The RFO agreed to looking into using the existing licences if possible. The RFO informed Cllrs that John Slatem provided a support contact at a cost of £45 per month which provided for work up to twenty minutes at no charge and for anything beyond that at £40 an hour. Alternatively, ad hoc support could be given at £42 an hour. Cllr Adams suggested that the RFO should come back with figures. The RFO noted that the Office 365 cost was already budgeted for, the hardware was not. Cllr Hale suggested that the Town Council should have rolling programme for updating IT equipment to be determined by the officers. Cllr Paton agreed it should be determined by the officers.

12. To note any items of correspondence

Bar the correspondence from the Events Group referred to earlier, there was no correspondence.

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

The Clerk advised that there was an issue with the van. The van had been looked at by Alderholt Motors who suggested the flywheel needed replacing and the cost of the work was £1,000 plus VAT. The Clerk had also spoken to Albion Road Garage who confirmed the likely cost of the work. The Clerk had booked the van in at Alderholt Motors who could do the work on the 7th October and was looking at the cost of hiring a van in the interim. Cllrs discussed the work required and suggested that the Clerk should speak to two other garages to confirm the likely cost of the work and whether it could be undertaken sooner.

14. To note the date of the next meeting as 23rd October 2019

The meeting closed at 8:25pm