

FORDINGBRIDGE TOWN COUNCIL

**Minutes of the Finance & Policy Committee held on Wednesday 28th August 2019 at 7.30pm in the Victoria Rooms
(Minutes subject to approval at the next meeting of the Committee)**

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

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 Wilson

2. To receive any Declarations of Interest

The following declarations of interest were made:

Cllrs Adams declared a pecuniary interest in item no. 5 Monies Collected and Payment of Accounts as a supplier to the Council and would remain in the room but not speak or vote.

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

Cllr Earth proposed and it was seconded by Cllr Paton and therefore **RESOLVED**: that the minutes of the meeting held on the 24th July 2019 be signed as a true record. All in favour.

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 advised the final Playscheme funds, funds for the hanging baskets and the VAT quarter reclaim had been received, which she noted was high due to the VAT on the building works payments.

The RFO noted the following expenditure: Sheerin Bettle (Town Hall Works); K&B Builders (Town Hall Works); The Goat (play equipment); Bushcraft (Playscheme); Cartoon Workshop (Playscheme); Scentsational Plants (Hanging Baskets); Biffa (The RFO advised that this appeared to have been double charged and required further investigation); John Slatem (IT – The RFO said the Council office would need him in again) and SSE (Based on an estimate – A refund/adjustment will need to be calculated).

The RFO reported that there was overspend on all committees due to staff costs, the hall income was down and there was no Playscheme grant. A meeting has been requested with the Football Club to agree the charge for use of the Recreation Ground. There have been additional costs for the Pavillion above budget and the final skate park bill has been paid from reserves but will show as overspend.

Cllr Jackson requested a breakdown of the CIL payments received.

Action: RFO to provide a breakdown of CIL funds

6. To consider grant applications under Section 137

- Citizens Advice New Forest

The RFO reported that the Town Council had given nothing in 2018/2019 and £500 in 2017/18. Cllr Adams thought the grant application seemed reasonable although it is unclear who else contributes. Cllr Lewendon said the NFDC make a substantial contribution. The RFO advised that previous years contributions had ranged from £150 to £350.

Cllr Paton proposed and it was seconded by Cllr Hale and therefore **RESOLVED** to approve the payment of a £300 grant to Citizens Advice New Forest. All in favour.

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

Staff & Remuneration Committee – Approval of the revised NJC payscales/rates.

The RFO advised that the revised scale rates would result in an additional staff cost of circa £3k. Cllr Hale proposed and it was seconded by Cllr Adams and therefore **RESOLVED** to accept the recommendation of the Staff & Remuneration Committee to approve the revised NJC paycales/rates.

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

The Clerk reported that he had a final site meeting today at the Town Hall with the architects and contractor. The clock tower and roof work has been completed and is watertight. There is an option to restrict the chiming of the clock tower so that it doesn't chime during the night. The cost to buy and install the restrictor would be just under £2,000. This can be fitted at any time if it is felt necessary. The Council Chamber has been painted and the carpet was being put down today. The work should be largely complete and the scaffolding taken down by Friday. The cleaner is booked for Saturday and the Town Hall will be handed back on Monday. The only remaining piece of work to complete after this week will be one of the lightning conductors at the front – A licence to work on the pavement is required. It has been applied for and this final piece of work is likely to be completed in the next four to six weeks once the licence has been obtained.

The approval for borrowing up to £110,000 was granted by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government on 9th August 2019. The Council has twelve months from that date to draw it down.

The RFO advised that she would prefer to draw the funds down towards the end of the financial year. The variable would be movements in interest rates. Cllrs agreed to give the RFO discretion to decide when to draw down funds.

9. To receive a report from the Clerk about the Sports Pavilion

The Clerk reported that he and the Town Council's Buildings Manager had met with BrightSpace architects earlier this month. BrightSpace have asked for further information regarding the use of the Pavilion and the grounds by both the rugby and football clubs, which is awaited. BrightSpace will obtain quotes for a surveyor to survey the Pavilion. BrightSpace will also carry out their own survey and look for any efficiencies in the current drawings. Storage seems to be the main issue and the Clerk is looking to obtain the NFDC's views regarding the use of storage containers. The next stages would be for BrightSpace to obtain CAD drawings, develop floor plans and produce a schedule of works. The Town Council's Buildings Manager or a building contractor could then assess the likely overall cost of the work. BrightSpace's initial thought is that the s106 money alone is unlikely to meet the overall costs of the work so the Town Council would then need to look at funding any shortfall. The RFO reported that the next meeting to discuss the Pavilion with the NFDC, the RFU and the FA was scheduled for next week.

10. To receive a report about Playscheme 2019

The RFO referred Cllrs to the circulated spreadsheet which she advised would need to be adjusted once she has received details of the cost of school hire. That cost is estimated at £600. If you leave indirect staff costs in the additional shortfall for the scheme above the budgeted shortfall was £2.3k. The attendance numbers are down last year and it is difficult to analyse why that might be. The RFO is awaiting further detail on the costs of additional support. The RFO reported that a 20% increase in the price of the scheme from £15 to £18 a day would meet the shortfall. The Playscheme manager is investigating alternative grant sources. Hampshire County Council cannot give an indication yet as to whether a grant would be available next year. Cllr Adams indicated the Sarah Kinsley Fund might fund additional care but it cannot be applied for up front. Cllrs discussed the price of the scheme and staff costs. The RFO said that the Playscheme manager was prepared to run it for one more year and most staff would be happy to come back. The RFO advised Cllrs that a decision to fund the Playscheme next year did not yet have to be taken. Cllr's Moulard and Jackson expressed their support for the scheme. Cllr Paton said other Playschemes were run for a considerably lower charge and queried how that was achievable. The RFO will look into this further but suggested it may be run by volunteers and that the other schemes may receive additional funding.

11. To receive a report on Christmas Lights 2020 and beyond

Cllr Adams noted the next Christmas Light meeting on 3rd September with Ian Newman and representatives from the Events Group. The RFO noted the contribution offered by the Events Group

of £2,500 or £3,500 if the Town Council's public liability insurance could be utilised for the Christmas event. Separately Ian Newman had raised £1,500 to £2,500. The Christmas Lights Contractor had advised the RFO that £5k would cover the cost of the replacement pole needed outside the Town Hall. The RFO suggested to Cllrs that the Town Council would need to decide if there was a shortfall for the replacement pole whether that shortfall would be underwritten by the Town Council, which was the RFO's recommendation. Regarding public liability insurance, the RFO reported that the Christmas event could not utilise the Town Council's insurance if it is not a Town Council event. To utilise that Town Council's insurance it would need to be an event controlled by the Town Council. Cllrs (and the Events Group) would need to decide if the Town Council was going to take on this responsibility. Cllr White advised that the Events Group wished to work collaboratively with the Town Council. Cllr Jackson suggested that the fundamental issue regarding the Christmas lights is who owns them. Cllr Perkins enquired whether a formal quote had been received for the replacement pole. The RFO said it wasn't, rather it was a quote received from the contractor. If the pole was acquired it would belong to the Town Council. The RFO suggested that if the Town Council took responsibility for the Christmas event it would mean increased work for Town Council staff and the Council would be corporately liable. Cllrs discussed what increased work would be involved and considered the risk and management of the event if the Town Council were to take responsibility. Cllr Perkins asked if the date for the Christmas event had been confirmed and Cllr White confirmed that it was scheduled for 30th November. Cllrs discussed the respective merits of having the event on a Friday or Saturday. The RFO provided further information to Cllrs regarding the historic costs of the Christmas lights to enable Cllrs to decide whether to underwrite the estimated potential shortfall of £1k for the replacement pole. The RFO advised that this shortfall could be funded from CIL. Cllr Hale proposed and it was seconded by Cllr Anstey and therefore RESOLVED to fund the potential estimated £1k shortfall for the replacement pole. All in favour.

12. To approve revised Standing Orders, Financial Regulations & Banking arrangements

The RFO had updated the Financial Regulations with the latest standard version and did not need to change them to meet the Town Council's proposed banking arrangements. The RFO advised she was in the process of changing the mandate. Cllr Paton proposed and it was seconded by Cllr Wilson and therefore RESOLVED to approve revised Standing Orders, Financial Regulations & Banking arrangements. All in favour

13. To re-approve the use of Direct Debits and Standing Orders (in accordance with Financial Regulations)

The RFO advised that the use of Direct Debits and Standing Orders should be reviewed every two years. Direct Debits are currently used for electricity and water supplies and Standing Orders are used for weekly staff wage payments. Cllr Paton proposed and it was seconded by Cllr Earth and therefore RESOLVED to re-approve the use of Direct Debits and Standing Orders (in accordance with Financial Regulations). All in favour.

14. To note any items of correspondence

The RFO noted that whilst a full response had not been received from the external auditors, there was likely to be a qualification as due to an administrative error a figure regarding insurance had not been changed as it fell in the wrong year.

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

Cllr Perkins enquired whether skip supply should be transferred from Biffa to Fordingbridge Skips. The RFO advised that Fordingbridge Skips were unlikely to be cheaper but she would check.

Action: The RFO to look into the cost of skips.

The RFO proposed and Cllrs agreed that the date of the October Finance & Policy meeting should be moved from 30th October to 23rd October 2019.

16. To note the date of the next meeting as 25th September 2019

The meeting closed at 8:35pm