

FORDINGBRIDGE TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of the Finance & Policy Committee held on Wednesday 29th July 2020 at 7.30pm
held remotely using appropriate technology in accordance with The Local Authorities and Police
and Crimes Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel
Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020 ("the 2020 Regulations") which came into force
on 4th April 2020

(Minutes subject to approval at the next meeting of the Committee)

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

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

1. To receive any apologies for absence

Apologies received from Cllrs Perkins and White.

2. To receive any Declarations of Interest

The following declarations of interest were made:

Cllr 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 June 2020 and report any matters arising

Cllr Mouland proposed and it was seconded by Cllr Lewendon and therefore **RESOLVED**: that the minutes of the meeting held on the 24th June 2020 be signed as a true record. All in favour.

Matters arising:

Agenda point 3 – The Clerk advised that he has continued to chase the solicitor for an update on the Almshouses

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 provided her report for July and asked whether Cllrs had any questions. No questions were raised. The RFO raised the issue that there was no allocated budget in relation to the BrightSpace invoice as the precept was agreed prior to agreeing a proposed budget for the Neighbourhood Plan. Cllr Adams proposed and it was seconded by Cllr Jackson and therefore **RESOLVED**: to allocate the payment from the Neighbourhood Plan grant but to pay it from reserves in the event that the grant was not drawn down. All in favour. The Statement of Payments and Report were approved by all members present.

6. To consider grant applications under Section 137

- Victim Support

The RFO advised that Victim Support has applied for a £100 grant. Cllr Earth asked what grant the Council had provided in the previous year and the RFO advised that a £100 grant had been given in the previous year. Cllr Adams commented on the accounts and suggested that the requested grant was not significant when looking at the figures in the accounts. Cllr Wilson and Cllr Jackson suggested any contribution was worthwhile and that it would demonstrate the Council's support for a good cause.

Cllr Jackson proposed and it was seconded by Cllr Wilson and therefore **RESOLVED**: to award a grant of £100 to Victim Support. All in favour.

7. To receive a report following Internal Audit (annual accounts 2019/2020)

The internal audit reports (interim and final) had been circulated to members prior to the meeting. The points raised were reviewed and noted by members.

Points raised:

- Following tenders the name of the successful bidder to be formally included in the minutes and the value of those works (where possible)
- Reserves – Council to formally review reserves and CIL and take action to ensure these reserves are used within the 5 year limit
- Council to review the Asset Register and restate the 2019 value as required
- Council to ensure that the petty cash balances are correctly recorded in the Councils accounting records (small difference of £7.39 of excess cash)
- End of year petty cash to be formally approved by Council as soon as the COVID-19 restrictions allow.
- Council to review year end VAT reclaim as year end balance on the control account does not match the subsequent receipt.

These points were noted by members and the required actions will be taken.

The RFO noted the new report with percentages rating performance, which does not get sent to the internal auditor. The RFO also noted that the visit was completed remotely.

8. To approve the Annual Governance Statement and Annual Accounting Statements for 2019/20

A draft copy of the AGAR for 2019/20 had been circulated to members prior to the meeting, along with copies of all the additional reports required (bank statement reconciliation, explanation of differences). These detail the difference between the figures for 2018/19 and 2019/20. These were noted by members.

Cllr Hale proposed and it was seconded by Cllr Adams and therefore **RESOLVED** to recommend approval of the Annual Governance Statement (Section 1) for 2019/20 to General Council.

Cllr Hale proposed and it was seconded by Cllr Adams and therefore **RESOLVED** to recommend approval of the Annual Accounting Statements (Section 2) for 2019/20 to General Council.

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

- Staff Committee 24th June 2020 - to approve incremental pay/spine points

The RFO summarised the details approved by the Staff and Remuneration Committee and set out the increase in costs to the Council. Cllrs reviewed the minutes of the Staff & Remuneration Committee meeting held on 24th June 2020. Cllr Hale proposed and it was seconded by Cllr Jackson and **RESOLVED**: to approve the incremental pay/spine points. All in favour.

10. To receive a report on building matters:

- Town Hall – revised plans for review

The Clerk summarised the two proposals prepared by Sheerin Bettle for the internal layout of the Town Hall. He also summarised a proposal by the architects to allow access to the garden from the hall. Cllr Adams suggested that a separate meeting might be necessary, that there should be public consultation and the views of the Conservation Officer should be sought. The Clerk advised that the architect was looking to meet the Conservation Officer to discuss the plans. Cllr Hale noted the feedback received and thought the external extension may be a step too far now but that the Council should proceed with the internal work. Cllr Hale and Paton felt that a decision should be made at this meeting. Cllr Paton thought there was no need for public consultation as the use of the hall was not being changed, instead the Council was improving the way it would be used and saving operating costs. Cllr Adams thought a reduction in the size of the main hall was a major consideration. Cllr Hale proposed and Cllr Moulard agreed that the Council should move forward with the internal plans, look at the costs and seek the views of the Conservation Officer. The chairman asked for a show of hands and nine Cllrs indicated their desire to proceed as proposed and one did not vote.

11. To consider a request from Westacres Residents Association for a contribution towards grass cutting

The RFO advised that the Town Council give £200 a year to the Westacres Residents' Association for grass cutting (last awarded in January 2020). Cllr Paton proposed and it was seconded by Cllr Goldsmith and therefore **RESOLVED**: that the Town Council will contribute £200 to the Westacres Resident's Association for a contribution towards grass cutting.

12. To receive an update regarding the Christmas Lights tender response

The Clerk summarised the tenders received and advised that a meeting had taken place with the preferred contractor, Sparkx Limited. Cllr Hale noted that the only variable was whether we leased new lights for the duration of the contract or used the existing lights. Cllr Adams supported leasing new lights as there would be no additional costs if there was any issue with the lights. The only additional cost would be if the contractors had to come out if there was a power failure. The RFO advised that in the Council's precept the sum of £16,000 was allocated to Christmas Lights. The Sparkx tender has come in at £13,770 without leasing lights or with leased lights the cost is £16,500 dependent upon the design. Cllrs discussed the tender and the options regarding the lights. Cllr Jackson congratulated the RFO on the quality of the Expression of Interest document. Cllr Hale proposed and it was seconded by Goldsmith and therefore RESOLVED: that the Town Council proceeds with the Sparkx Limited contract.

13. Neighbourhood Plan: to approve an Open Space survey for residents

Cllr Adams noted that the survey had been circulated and commented on the quality of the document. Cllr Anstey noted that there was no opportunity for residents to volunteer to take part in additional, more extensive surveys. Cllr Wilson said she would expect that if it was a survey specific to the Neighbourhood Plan but this survey is being issued in the context of the Council's consultation policy in line with stated aims and objectives. It would not mean surveys regarding other matters could not be undertaken. Cllr Jackson agreed with Cllr Anstey that residents should be able to express an interest to contribute further as it would provide a group of individuals that the Council could refer to. Cllr Jackson proposed and it was seconded by Cllr Goldsmith and therefore RESOLVED: that the Town council goes ahead with the proposed Open Space survey. All in favour.

14. To approve the following policies:

- CIL Policy (including proposals for expenditure)

The RFO advised that there no changes to policy that she had previously circulated except she had split into two appendices what had been received and spent (that has to be sent to the NFDC) and what future expenditure was proposed based upon the recent CIL meeting that had taken place. Cllr Paton proposed and it was seconded by Cllr Earth and therefore RESOLVED: to approve the CIL policy. All in favour.

15. To consider adopting a street and open space naming policy

Cllr Wilson raised the issue of whether the Town Council should have a policy regarding the naming of roads and open spaces and, if so, what that should policy be. Other councils already have policies in place whereby roads are not named after individuals that are alive or were alive in living memory or where a Council just does not name a road after any individuals. Cllr Jackson agreed with Cllr Wilson that there should be a policy not to name things after individuals that are alive or were alive in living memory as there is a risk that it could cause upset. Cllr Wilson suggested we should have a policy and should give it to developers and the NFDC. The emergency services and post office should also be considered where similar names could give rise to unnecessary confusion. Cllr Jackson suggested that this issue may frequently arise with new roads in the development sites. Cllrs discussed the policy that might be adopted. Cllr Anstey suggested that the Council should state the fact that the Council has reviewed its policy in naming places and in light of that review the Council is going to adopt the stance that it would not name things after anyone that is living or was alive in living memory and it should be applied retrospectively so that in the future people cannot cite examples where the Council has named roads and open spaces after individuals. Cllr Wilson proposed and it was seconded by Cllr Anstey and therefore RESOLVED: that the Council's policy is not to name any roads or open spaces after an individual that is living or was alive during living memory. Nine in favour and one against. Cllr Wilson had already drafted a policy based upon other councils' policies with some information from the British Standards about street naming and asked for it to be circulated.

16. To note any items of Correspondence

No correspondence to note.

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

The Clerk advised that, having gone through a competitive tender process appointing Maverick to build the skate park, we approached their lighting subcontractor, Highlights Floodlighting Limited, which the Council would have used had it gone ahead with lights at the time of construction. Highlights provided a quote in Autumn last year of £12,344 plus VAT to provide lighting to the skate park. The Council holds a contribution of £1,000 from the Co-Operative and there are just under £1,000 of pledged funds towards the costs. A decision was taken by the council to now go ahead with the lighting, provided that the quote to do the work was not materially different to the quote obtained in November 2019. Highlights have confirmed that the quote they submitted stands so the Council can now ask that they go ahead with the work.

The Clerk had received an update from the Branch regarding the use of funds that the Council had secured as a grant from SSEN. The Branch has worked with the local schools and foodbank to understand the need the meals over the summer holiday periods for both families and vulnerable and isolated households. They have put together a frozen meal voucher that has been issued by the schools and foodbank whereby the family can go to The Branch and each week get a full meal. This will run for the full summer holiday period. they currently have around 45 families on their list but this may increase as the summer goes on.

Cllr Jackson has been approached by one of the trustees of Avonway which is in need of funds to repair the building's roof and take the chimneys down. Avonway's trustees are looking at other sources of funding but Cllr Jackson wanted to know what Cllrs views were in relation to providing funding for this work. Cllrs discussed the finances of Avonway and its contribution to the community. The RFO advised the Council's grant policy mentions grants over £5,000 which the Council would not normally consider and she had when this was previously raised suggested that Avonway might approach the NFDC for funding from the CIL that it holds. Cllr Jackson will speak to the trustee and advise him that he would need to provide the Council with a formal proposition.

Cllr Wilson raised the matter of boreholes on the proposed allotments. She advised that it is likely that there is water a little over three metres under the ground. The suggested boreholes that Pennyfarthing have got quotes for are disproportionate and she wondered whether the developer would consider just digging the required holes and providing some funding for the necessary pipe. Existing allotment holders have the expertise to put in the boreholes. Alternatively, Cllr Wilson thought that the developer might meet the cost of a prognosis to establish what the water levels are at the proposed allotments. Cllr Jackson agreed to go back to Pennyfarthing.

18. To note the date of the next meeting as 26th August 2020

The meeting closed at 8:32 pm