

FORDINGBRIDGE TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of the Finance & Policy Committee held on Wednesday 29th January at 7.30pm in the Town Hall (Minutes subject to approval at the next meeting of the Committee)

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

In attendance: Mr P Goddard, Town Clerk
Mrs M Coatham, Finance Officer (RFO)
One member of the public

1. To receive any apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Cllrs Anstey and Paton.

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 27th November 2019 and report any matters arising

Cllr Jackson proposed and it was seconded by Cllr Lewendon and therefore **RESOLVED**: that the minutes of the meeting held on the 27th November 2019 be signed as a true record. All in favour.

Matters arising:

Agenda point 5 – The RFO had clarified the position regarding CIL payments and had emailed details.

Agenda point 5 – Cllr Adams suggested that the dishwasher should now be repaired. Cllr Wilson suggested that it should be left until after the meeting to discuss the Town Hall on 5th February 2020.

Agenda point 16 – Cllr Jackson circulated copies of 'The Bridge' from 1995 which included a summary of the Town Council committee structures of the time. Cllr Jackson suggested that there was some duplication across the committees and proposed to look at the current committee structure.

4. To confirm the minutes of the meeting held on 13th November 2019 and report any matters arising

Cllr Lewendon proposed and it was seconded by Cllr Hale and therefore **RESOLVED**: that the minutes of the meeting held on the 13th November 2019 be signed as a true record. All in favour.

No matters arising.

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

No matters raised.

16. To consider developing a Climate Change Policy

Cllr Adams proposed to move this item to the agenda for the benefit of the member of public attending. Cllr Jackson reported that the NPA has agreed a plan in response to the climate and nature emergencies and is looking to be carbon neutral by 2030. The NPA hope their partners will do so by 2050. Cllr Jackson said this is something the Town Council should look at as it is high on everyone's agenda. HCC is analysing its carbon footprint looking at areas where this could be reduced. Cllr Adams advised that the meeting's agenda was full and suggested one or two Cllrs should research this further and report back and that climate change should be put on a future agenda for a larger discussion. Cllr Hale said it was good that the town generally was doing so much and the Town Council should support this. Cllr Lewendon noted that Salisbury Reds had introduced two new electric buses. Cllr Wilson and Cllr Jackson volunteered to research a climate change policy. The member of the public referred to the Fordingbridge Greener Living Group who are knowledgeable and are looking to work on initiatives with the Town Council and the NFDC. It was

agreed that Cllr Jackson and Wilson should arrange a meeting with Fordingbridge Greener Living or attend the next Greener Living meeting.

Action: Town Clerk to liaise with Fordingbridge Greener Living to arrange a meeting

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

The RFO reported that she was making the final payment to STN regarding the 2019 Christmas Lights but there was around £500 of costs in the final account that were not attributable to the Town Council. The RFO was paying the final balance less those unattributable costs. The RFO advised that she was meeting Ian Newman the following Tuesday to discuss this matter with him. Cllr Lewendon proposed and it was seconded by Cllr Goldsmith to approve the payments made. The RFO raised the issue of the cancellation of and charging for Town Hall bookings. The RFO advised that if events did not take place but the Council had not been notified in advance of a cancellation then the terms and conditions of the booking stipulated that the booking would still be charged for. The Entertainment Society had not again ahead with its film showing at the end of December and the RFO would need Cllrs to agree if a credit note for the booking were to be raised. Cllr Adams advised that, if that was the case, the Entertainment Society would pay for the booking. Cllr Mouland proposed and it was agreed that in this instance the Town Council should credit the booking invoice but that in the future the booking charge should stand.

The RFO suggested that the anti virus software Eset which is currently used in the town Council office should be extended to the Town's Cllrs. Cllr Hale informed the meeting that the Town Council's IT consultant had identified that the issue he was having with his Town Council's email was due to the anti virus software that he was running. The IT consultant replaced that software with Eset and it resolved his issues. Cllrs agreed to fund Eset anti virus software for members, as required.

The RFO advised that she had progressed with making tax digital and signed up with SAGE including support, at a cost of £40 a month. Once the RFO is happy regarding the online submission she will cancel the support element bringing the cost down to £20 a month.

7. To consider grant applications under Section 137

- New Life Community Church

Cllrs discussed the purpose of the grant request and considered the filed 2018 accounts of the New Life Community Church. Cllrs also discussed the Town Council's grant policy and the RFO clarified the remaining budget available for grant applications. Cllrs Earth and White spoke about the good work that the New Life Community Church undertook in the local community. Cllr Earth proposed and it was seconded by Cllr Hale to approve a one off grant of £150 to the New Life Community Church. Cllrs voted on Cllr Earth's proposal with two in favour and seven against and so Cllr Earth's proposal was not carried.

8. 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. Cllr Wilson proposed and it was seconded by Cllr Mouland and therefore **RESOLVED**: that the Town Council will contribute £200 to the Westacres Resident's Association for a contribution towards grass cutting.

9. To consider website funding – main site and neighbourhood plan

Cllr Jackson said that he thought the Town Council website was out of date and not adequate. Seemore Graphics had already quoted for a separate Neighbourhood Plan for £750 which was previously approved by the Town Council. The RFO provided details regarding the existing website and the current hosting costs and commented on the Councils website compared to other Town Council websites. Cllr Hale said that the development of a new website and the hosting costs going forward were separate issues. The RFO asked Cllrs should they have any input regarding the content of a new website if they could feed that into the office. Cllr White proposed and it was seconded by Cllr Hale and therefore **RESOLVED**: to accept the quote from Seemore Graphics for the development of a new website to incorporate the Neighbourhood Plan. All in favour.

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

There were no matters referred from sub-committees.

11. To receive a report on building matters

The Pavilion refurbishment: The Clerk advised that the architects have submitted an application to the NFDC for pre-application advice in relation to the proposed refurbishment plans for the Pavilion. They have also produced a schedule of works which has been passed to the Town Council's buildings manager to assess the likely cost which he will do by 14th February 2020. The RFO suggested an additional Finance & Policy committee meeting on 19th February to consider the costing and if appropriate agree to proceed with the refurbishment work. Cllr Hale asked if the refurbishment was out for tender and the pre-application advice process was ongoing would this be sufficient for the NFDC regarding the availability of s106 funding. The Clerk said, based upon his conversations with the NFDC, that this would be considered to be a committed project.

Electrical Testing: The RFO advised that the Town Council's building manager was contracted for a year in November 2018 and a budget of up to £9,000 was allocated to this cost, to date £3,725 has been spent. Part of the buildings manager's remit was to produce a maintenance proposal for the Town Council's buildings. STN Solutions had advised that the Town Council as an owners of buildings is required to have a valid electrical testing certificate. The Town Council has these for the kiosk and the Town hall but not for the bungalow and workshop. The Pavilion can be dealt with as part of the proposed refurbishment. Two quotes have been obtained for the testing of the bungalow and workshop, one for £550 and one from STN Solutions for £350. It was agreed to accept the quote from STN. The RFO advised that PAT testing was last undertaken in 2015 at a cost of £91. The contractor that did this work will undertake PAT testing again for the same cost. Cllrs discussed the requirement for PAT testing and the potential implications of not having the testing done and agreed that the suggested PAT testing should go ahead.

Buildings Manager Report: The RFO suggested that there should be proper maintenance schedules for the Town Council's buildings.

Town Hall Maintenance: The RFO said that the Town Council had spent £160,000 on repairs to the front roof of the Town Hall and that a schedule of maintenance should be in place to mitigate deterioration of the condition of the Town Hall. Cllr Jackson said residents would expect the Town Council to be properly maintaining its buildings.

Recreation Ground Toilet Block: The buildings manager is to report back regarding options in relation to the drainage from the toilets and the wall units.

Paddling Pool: The buildings manager is to report back regarding maintenance work required on the pool. Cllr Mouland commented that a bigger paved area around the pool would be desirable.

12. To receive the interim internal audit report (IAC) for 2019/20

The RFO highlighted the following points from the internal audit:

- The decision to approve Standing Orders and Financial regulations made by the Finance & Policy committee should be ratified by General Council, which has now been done.
- The Clerk is not Cilca qualified. The RFO does not believe that this is a requirement and the RFO is Cilca qualified and the assistant Clerk is in the process of obtaining her Cilca qualification.
- Dual authorised banking – In hand.
- Petty Cash – This is barely used but needs to be reconciled twice a year, at Finance & Policy.
- SAGE bank reconciliations need to be printed and signed off by a Cllr on a regular basis.

13. To review the Risk Register and Asset Register

The RFO advised that the Risk Register had been reviewed by the office staff and it was for Cllrs to approve or make changes to the Register. Cllr Adams queried whether the VIC lease was a full repairing lease and suggested that Pavilion narrative should be amended to reflect the building structurally was still fit for purpose. Cllrs approved the risk register subject to clarifying the points made regarding the VIC lease and the Pavilion. Cllrs considered the Asset Register. The RFO advised that it may be necessary to add the Almshouses and Sandleheath Allotments once the position had been clarified. The RFO asked Cllrs to inform her if there were any other assets held by the Town Council that were not included on the Asset Register.

14. Christmas Lights – review of 2019 and proposals for 2020 and beyond (including testing of points): consider ongoing storage of lights

The minutes of the wash up meeting regarding the Christmas Lights had been circulated and the RFO was meeting Ian Newman on the following Tuesday. Ian Newman has drafted a tender document which will be discussed at that meeting. The RFO suggested going out to tender so the Town Council can then decide if it wants lights in their current format. Cllr Jackson said the Town Council will have paid £21k for the lights this year against a budget of £12k (the RFO advised that this figure included £5k for the new lighting pole). Cllrs Wilson and Hale suggested that the lights should be subject to a separate meeting and that grants to replace the existing lights should be explored. Cllr Jackson thought there was a risk that the current contractor would put up costs and that Ian Newman might not continue to bear costs in relation to the lights. Cllr Hale suggested going through the tender process to establish the costs and also to explore funding to replace the existing lights. Cllr Jackson suggested that the lights and the trees should be subject to separate contracts. The RFO advised that there was £16k for lights in the current budget. Cllr Jackson raised the issue of whether the Fordingbridge Events Group would be looking to put on a Christmas event this year themselves or whether it would be a Town Council event sub-contracted to the Events Group. Cllr White suggested that the Events Group had yet to have its wash up meeting following the Christmas event and the Town Council should open lines of communication regarding next year with the Events Group.

15. To approve the following policies:

- **Code of Conduct**
- **Disciplinary**
- **Grievance**

The RFO advised that the Disciplinary policies had been updated following the issue of a Legal Topic Note and are based upon NALC approved policies. There are not significant changes to the Code of Conduct. Cllr Lewendon proposed and it was seconded by Cllr Wilson and therefore **RESOLVED**: to approve the Code of Conduct, Disciplinary and Grievance policies. All in favour.

17. To note any items of correspondence.

No items of correspondence

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

Cllr Wilson raised the issue of bunting for VE Day and the Summer period and whether the Events Group would be able to contribute to the cost of putting it up and taking it down. The quoted cost is £650-£750. In the alternative, Cllr Wilson raised whether it would be possible to put up bunting in another location other than over the road.

19. To note the date of the next meeting as 29th January 2020

The meeting closed at 9:02 pm