

## **FORDINGBRIDGE TOWN COUNCIL**

### **Minutes of the Finance & Policy Committee held on Wednesday 24<sup>th</sup> February 2021 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, Perkins, White & Wilson

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

#### **1. To receive any apologies for absence**

No apologies received

#### **2. To receive any Declarations of Interest**

No declarations of interest.

#### **3. To confirm the minutes of the meeting held on 27<sup>th</sup> January 2021 and report any matters arising**

Cllr Lewendon proposed and it was seconded by Cllr Mouland and therefore **RESOLVED**: that the minutes of the meeting held on the 27<sup>th</sup> January 2021 be signed as a true record. All in favour.

No matters arising.

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

No matters raised.

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

Cllr Adams referred to the RFO's report to members. No queries were raised. The Clerk advised that there was an additional invoice from Heritage Advisory for the report prepared in relation to the Town Hall for £1,850 plus VAT (£2,220). This expenditure had already been approved by the Town Council. Cllr Jackson asked about the timing of s106 funds from the NFDC regarding the Pavilion. The Clerk advised that the funds needed to be reallocated by the NFDC but that they would then release them pro rated to the Town Council's proportion of the funding.

Cllr Hale proposed and it was seconded by Cllr Earth and therefore **RESOLVED**: to approve the schedule of payments of account (including Heritage Advisory) and that the amounts collected are correct.

#### **6. To agree to write off outstanding customer invoices**

Members considered writing off the following invoices: 2020 Christmas Trees (All the Cool Stuff, The Alcove – both owe £55.20; Created by You and Hearts at Home both owe £110.40). 2019 Hanging Baskets (Bubbles and Dignity Funeral both owe £66 and The George £270) plus All The Cool Stuff for various events in 2019/20 £338.40). The RFO advised that she was looking to write off these sums to tidy up the accounts prior to year end and she felt it was appropriate to do so given the pressure on local businesses arising from the coronavirus restrictions. Cllrs discussed the rationale behind and the merit of writing the debtors off. The RFO had advised All the Cool Stuff that it was unlikely that the hall would be available for hire if the existing hall hire charges remained unpaid. Cllr Goldsmith proposed and it was seconded by Cllr Wilson that the debts be written off. Cllr Jackson proposed and it was seconded by Cllr Lewendon and therefore **RESOLVED**: to continue to pursue the debts. Six in favour, five against. Cllr Perkins noted that most of the shops were still shut so it may be necessary to wait until they have re-opened to chase them.

**7. To receive the interim internal audit report from IAC**

The RFO had circulated the interim internal audit report. The point of particular note from the audit was that the period the Public Rights Notice was advertised was 31 days, not 30 days which will be picked up from the AGAR by the external auditor. Other matters to note: The Standing Orders and Financial Regulations have been reviewed, the Clerk is studying for his CiLCA, it is not minuted that the bank standing orders and direct debits are reviewed (albeit they are on the reports circulated to members), the Risk Register is on the agenda for this meeting and the Council's fees and charges did not match our hire fees (due to the Pandemic).

**8. To consider grant applications under Section 137/CIL**

- New Forest Disability

Cllr Hale proposed and it was seconded by Cllr Earth and therefore **RESOLVED**: to give £200 to New Forest Disability. All in favour.

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

- Amenities – fencing

Cllr Moulard reported on the extraordinary meeting of the amenities committee where it was agreed to accept the quote of Steve Biedermann but to hold off the work for two months while improving the surfacing of the car park was explored.

Cllr Paton proposed and it was seconded by Cllr White and therefore **RESOLVED**: to approve the quote of £3,600 from Steve Biedermann for birds mouth fencing at the Recreation Ground. All in favour.

**10. To receive a report on building matters:**

- **Town Hall Update**

The Clerk reported that the conservation officer had submitted her comments to the NFDC planners but they had yet to be passed on to Sheerin Bettle. Sheerin Bettle was chasing the planning department.

- **Changing Rooms Update**

The Clerk read out a report from Tim Richards, the Buildings Manager. Whilst the works on the Pavilion alterations & refurbishment have been delayed by two considerable variations in construction, not anticipated during the design process, K & B Builders are now making good progress. The Council has been put on notice of a two week delay to the programme which has resulted from the aforementioned design alterations and recent cold weather which halted progress upon masonry works.

The front extension and external storage areas are ready for superstructure works, the containers are due on site in approximately 5-6 weeks. Internally the supporting beams are in place and internal walls are in construction following the amended construction specification to non loadbearing partitions. Upon that note Tim is monitoring the wall finishes closely to ensure that the most durable finish is used in all areas, which may vary to that provided by Brightspace.

Mechanical first fix has commenced for the new internal layout, externally all new drainage is complete. AISH are due to complete pump station repairs, Monday 1<sup>st</sup> March.

Electrical first fix has commenced. As an amendment to the electrical layout, motion sensors will be installed on changing room showers.

**11. To consider the continued arrangement with the Buildings Manager and to note the increase in hourly rate**

The RFO advised that there was £9,000 in the budget for the Buildings Manager and historically the actual cost has not approached this level. Cllr Adams considered this a modest increase and noted that the Buildings Manager did not charge mileage. Cllr Jackson suggested that the Council should be looking at other parties to establish what they would charge. The RFO had looked at doing this in the past but there was not a high level of interest in this type of work. The Clerk suggested that given his involvement with the Pavilion work it would be useful to retain the services of the Buildings Manager. Cllr Adams proposed and it was seconded by Cllr Hale and therefore **RESOLVED**: to

continue with the services of the Buildings Manager while the Pavilion refurbishment was ongoing. All in favour.

**12. To note the increase in contribution bands for Employees to the LGPS and the increase in the Employer rates for 2021/22 (20.2%)**

Cllrs noted the increase in contribution bands and agreed to accept them.

**13. To review the following policies**

- CIL Policy
- Risk Register
- Asset Register

Cllr Wilson suggested that the pumps at the allotments needed to be added to the asset register. With regard to the Risk Register, the RFO confirmed that the Town Council would be considered a large council based upon the Council's precept. Cllr Jackson suggested that, from a risk perspective, the Council should consider putting CCTV in town. Cllr Adams advised that there was an upcoming police shop watch meeting at which aligning the cameras of the shops would be considered. The RFO felt that CCTV around town might sit better under the Neighbourhood Plan and would not fall under the Risk Register which deals with risk to the Council's assets. Cllr Anstey queried the wording on the Risk Register regarding the security of buildings and equipment in relation to the kiosk and toilets and felt that the kiosk (leaseholder responsibility) and the toilets (ground staff) should be recorded separately albeit they were the same building. The RFO said she would amend the wording accordingly. Cllr Anstey also noted that with the Pavilion refurbishment the keyholders should be reviewed particularly as, due to the storage now being in external containers, there was less need to access the building. Cllr Anstey queried the asset register with regard to football posts and the RFO confirmed that they were on the register. Cllr Adams proposed and it was seconded by Cllr Wilson and therefore RESOLVED: to note the review of the above policies. All in favour.

**14. To review and approve the insurance for 2021/22**

The RFO confirmed that the Town Council had received the renewal documents from Zurich as part of the long term agreement (3 years to 1<sup>st</sup> April 2023). The following points were highlighted:

The renewal premium was in line with the previous year, £5982.66

The RFO advised that some small changes to the detail of the policy needs to be sent to Zurich and the Pavilion would need to be revalued once the refurbishment was completed.

Cllr Wilson proposed and it was seconded by Cllr Hale and therefore RESOLVED: to approve the Insurance Renewal for 2021/22 and for the Clerk and RFO to adjust the contents insurance to reflect the location of the equipment. All in favour.

**15. To identify priority projects for CIL funding to present to the Annual Town Assembly**

- To agree the level of CIL funding for Avon Valley Shed

Cllr Wilson advised that it is planned to fund the senior gym equipment by way of a grant and if grant funding was not available it was unlikely that the Council would be proceeding with it so this should be taken off the schedule, as should the permanent toilet at the allotments. Regarding Parsonage Park, the Council needs to liaise with the NFDC regarding the gate at the SANG accessing the land. Cllr Lewendon agreed that the gate should be removed unless a path is provided from the gate across Parsonage Park. Cllr Jackson suggested that the play area at Parsonage Park longer term could be moved to the SANG. Re the Recreation Ground, he queried whether the footbridge should be removed and suggested a master plan for the Recreation Ground. Regarding the footpath to Godshill, he did not feel it was feasible to fund this from CIL. He also felt that the tennis courts should be removed. Regarding an indoor sports hall at Burgate School this is something that is subject to discussion with the school. Cllr Jackson felt there were certain things that could be removed from the schedule so that other matters could be prioritised, in particular the car park at the Recreation Ground. He felt that if the NFDC were not prepared to contribute towards the improvement of the

car park then the Town Council should use CIL to fund it. Cllr Jackson felt that this should be looked at as a priority. The Clerk advised that Colin Read from the NFDC had discussed the car park with Edward Heron and conversations within the NFDC were ongoing. Cllr Jackson suggested that the Town Council should be looking at costings for the car park. Cllr Moulard advised that he had been liaising with a local contractor who asked for the dimensions of the car park and they would then quote for both a tarmac surface and gravel with a honeycomb former surface and also quote for a separator. Cllr Jackson felt this was a priority as if CIL funds were to be used it should be presented to the Annual Town Assembly. Cllr Wilson suggested that Cllrs should submit their comments to the RFO. The RFO suggested having a separate meeting to identify priority projects. Cllr Paton said these projects should be costed. The subject of charging for the car park was discussed and it was agreed to have this as an agenda point at the next General Council meeting.

Regarding the Avon Valley Shed ("AVS"), Cllr Adams advised that the Council had agreed to offer a sum from CIL funding. A representative from the AVS said that originally the application was for £20,000 of CIL funding but on the basis that in the first instance only the toilet block was being looked at then the sum could be reduced but asked whether the Council could consider provisionally allocating a sum of money to a possible second building to assist with the AVS fund raising from other sources. Cllr Jackson set out his concerns and suggested that residents should be consulted and the AVS should provide a management plan. Cllr Hale suggested that including the AVS as a CIL project to present to the Annual Town Assembly would be consultation with residents. Cllr Wilson said match funding has previously been discussed. Cllr Wilson proposed and it was seconded by Cllr Hale and therefore RESOLVED: that the Town Council proposes that it gives £5,000 for the current building and set aside a further £5,000 for the future to be presented at the Annual Town Assembly. Ten in favour and two against. The representative from the AVS confirmed that there was business plan for the project and undertook to provide it to the Town Council.

#### **16. To receive an update on the Christmas Light contract**

The Clerk and the RFO had met with Sparkx on 1<sup>st</sup> February 2021. As previously reported not all connections are compliant but Sparkx were prepared to work around that issue as it was the first year. Each supply should have an external isolation point. Sparkx are going to supply a quote for the work required by the end of February. Sparkx advised that the lights historically used on the trees were not compliant as they were mains voltage but Sparkx had replaced them this year with compliant lights at no charge. There is a wash up meeting scheduled with Ian Newman on 8<sup>th</sup> March which will include discussion of the delivery of the Christmas trees. The Clerk said that the trees are a significant element of the cost of the contract so it may be possible to scale back the trees next year to mitigate the cost of the upgrade work required to make the lights compliant and possibly get more lights. Cllr Jackson suggested that it may be possible to raise money from residents and businesses towards the additional costs and this could be raised at the Town Assembly.

#### **17. To note the revised financial planning documents**

The RFO had circulated year two and three budget documents. Cllr Adams proposed that it should be noted that they had been received by Cllrs. All in favour.

#### **18. To note any items of Correspondence**

There was no correspondence.

#### **19. To receive a report from the Clerk or any other relevant business**

The Clerk advised that the Town Council had been seeking a meeting with HCC Highways and the NFDC wanted to be party to those discussions. A meeting has now been proposed for 1<sup>st</sup> March 2021, which currently will be attended by Cllrs Jackson and Paton and the Clerk. Cllr Wilson and Cllr Lewendon expressed a desire to attend the meeting as well.

#### **20. To note the date of the next meeting as 31<sup>st</sup> March 2021**

The meeting ended at 8:42pm