

## **FORDINGBRIDGE TOWN COUNCIL**

### **Minutes of the Finance & Policy Committee held on Wednesday 25<sup>th</sup> November 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, White & Wilson

**In attendance:**

Mr P Goddard, Town Clerk

Mrs M Coatham, Finance Officer (RFO)

Mr T Richards, Buildings Manager

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

Apologies received from Cllr Perkins.

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

Cllr Adams declared a pecuniary interest in item no. 7 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 21st October 2020 and report any matters arising**

Cllr Mouland proposed and it was seconded by Cllr Anstey and therefore **RESOLVED**: that the minutes of the meeting held on the 21<sup>st</sup> October 2020 be signed as a true record. All in favour.

Matters arising:

Agenda item 6 – Cllr Jackson raised having a master plan for the Recreation Ground and wondered whether it had been taken forward. The Clerk noted from the minutes, "The Men's Shed architect offered to work with the Council to develop a design for the Recreation Ground as a whole rather than as a singular project. Cllr Jackson said he'd be pleased to accept that offer." Cllr Anstey said it was important to agree what the Council wished to do at the Recreation Ground over the next two years, otherwise this would continue to be revisited. Various options had been looked at but there should be an agreed plan for the short and medium term. Cllr Jackson had a provisional discussion with the architect assisting the Avon Valley Shed who is happy to assist the Council with a plan on a pro bono basis. It was felt that all Cllrs should be involved in the discussion with the architect starting with an initial ideas and suggestions meeting. The RFO suggested that there was a risk with pro bono work that ultimately it would result in fee paying work without having gone through a formal procurement process. Cllrs discussed whether a landscape architect should be contacted or whether an architect was required at all at this point. Cllrs felt that in the first instance a meeting to discuss ideas for the Recreation ground would start the process. Cllr Anstey suggested that consideration should also be given to the recently issued 'The Football Foundation Local Football Facility Plan for the New Forest', which may offer a way to improve the existing pitches. Cllr Adams suggested that ideas should be fed into the Clerk who could then include them as an agenda point to be considered by the amenities committee. Cllr Paton suggested that consideration should also be given to facilities in other areas as they may have an impact on what it is felt to be needed at the Recreation Ground. Cllr Mouland suggested that ideas should be fed into the Clerk to be considered at an extraordinary meeting of the amenities committee who could then put forward a recommendation to be considered by the whole Council. Cllr Adams proposed and it was seconded by Cllr White and therefore **RESOLVED**: to have an extraordinary meeting of the amenities committee to consider the Recreation Ground and open spaces. All in favour.

Agenda item 9 – Cllr Jackson noted that a working party to look at reserves was suggested.

**Action: Clerk to arrange a meeting of the working party to consider reserves.**

**4. To confirm the minutes of the meeting held on 4<sup>th</sup> November 2020 and report any matters arising**

Cllr Hale proposed and it was seconded by Cllr Earth and therefore **RESOLVED**: that the minutes of the meeting held on the 4<sup>th</sup> November 2020 be signed as a true record. All in favour.

**5. To confirm the minutes of the meeting held on 11<sup>th</sup> November 2020 and report any matters arising**

Cllr Wilson proposed and it was seconded by Cllr Jackson and therefore **RESOLVED**: that the minutes of the meeting held on the 11<sup>th</sup> November 2020 be signed as a true record with an amendment to include Cllr Anstey and Wilson as attendees. All in favour.

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

No matters raised.

**7. To receive details of Monies Collected & Payment of Accounts**

Cllr Adams referred to monies collected and payments of account and asked if there were any questions or was there a proposal. Cllr Anstey queried the line marking paint expense as the pitches were not currently being used. The RFO advised that the paint is ordered by the grounds staff usually twice a year. In this instance the ground staff had changed supplier, which had caused some small issues. The RFO advised that pitches were booked for December and suggested the ground staff were preparing the pitches for that use. Cllr Hale noted the refund from the NFDC. The RFO advised that funds had been received as a grant and rates refund.

Cllr Lewendon proposed and it was seconded by Cllr Paton and therefore **RESOLVED**: to approve the schedule of payments of account and that the amounts collected are correct.

**8. To receive the External Audit report for 2019/20 from PKF**

The RFO had provided PKF with the reports and information required and addressed any queries raised. No issues have been raised by PKF and a Notice of Conclusion of Audit has been issued.

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

No applications received

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

No matters referred from sub-committees.

**11. To agree in principle to allow NHS use of the Town Hall**

The Clerk reported that the NHS were looking at possible alternative venues for appointments such as physiotherapy appointments to free up space at the GP's and hospital in anticipation of that space being needed for a Coronavirus vaccination programme. Members agreed to make the town hall available as required.

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

• **Town Hall Update**

Heritage Advisory Limited attended the Town Hall and their heritage report should be available at the end of next week in relation to the proposed work at the Town Hall. The Clerk had spoken to the landlord of the information office who had confirmed that a new lease on that building would be granted if required. Cllr Anstey queried the report regarding the telephone box and suggested the box may in fact be in Provost Street outside the solicitors. The Clerk advised he would seek clarification.

**13. To receive and agree the recommendation of the Buildings Manager for the Pavilion refurbishment.**

Cllr Adams advised that the Buildings Manager was in attendance to answer any questions but had recommended that the Town Council should proceed with the tender of K&B Builders (South West) Limited ("K&B") at a cost of £206,442.50. Seven tenders were received, there were two very close

to the Buildings Managers estimated costs and it was difficult to compare the two. Cllr Hale had read the Buildings Manager's report and could not see any reason why the Town Council would not proceed with the lowest one (K&B). Cllr Mouland felt that the Buildings Manager had set out the position eloquently and whilst the Council would not always opt for the lowest tender in this instance he felt it worked. Cllr Jackson raised queries regarding the total costs of the project and how it might be funded. He referred to previous discussions when it was considered that some funding would be available from the rugby club but this was no longer the case. Cllr Jackson raised concerns that by the time you have worked out pc and provisional sums and taking into account some of the assumptions then costs could increase. Cllrs discussed the level and source of the funding that would be required for the work. Cllr Anstey highlighted some of the assumptions made by the contractors in the pricing of the work. Cllr Jackson reiterated that if the tender is accepted the Council is committing more of its reserves than had originally been discussed. The Clerk advised that there was a small general provision for overspend in the tender costing sheet. He also advised that in February when funding of the work was discussed there was no formal agreement or cap on funding to be committed to the project, it was merely discussed how the work might be funded, but there was a formal decision to proceed with the option that then went out to tender. Cllr Wilson referred to an email sent to Cllrs setting out an assessment of the likely costs and how those costs might be met. Cllr Jackson suggested that the Town Council should be working to a long term plan. Cllrs discussed further how the work would be funded. The RFO suggested that Cllrs might accept K&B's tender and she would review options as to how the work could be funded. The Clerk advised, if the work was completed on the proposed contract price of £206k then there should be £129k of S106 funds and the Council would be looking to fund the balance of £77k from CIL or other sources but then in addition there would be professional costs for monitoring of work, site meetings and agreeing staffed contract payments. Cllr Hale proposed and it was seconded by Cllr Earth and therefore **RESOLVED**: to proceed with the recommendation of the Buildings Manager for the refurbishment of the Pavilion, subject to arranging the funding. Ten voted in favour and one abstained.

Cllr Mouland asked for clarification that the Council had agreed to authorise the Clerk to award the Pavilion Work to K&B. Cllr Mouland proposed and it was seconded by Cllr Paton and therefore **RESOLVED**: to agree the recommendation of the Buildings Manager and instruct K&B to undertake the Pavilion refurbishment work. All in favour.

#### **14. To receive and discuss a recommendation from Amenities for budget proposals for 2021/22**

The RFO advised that budget meeting had been held for General Purposes and Amenities and then the RFO and the Clerk had met with Cllrs Jackson and Adams to look at the overall figures that determine the precept request. The RFO advised that the tax base had been received and based on the proposed budget figures this would result in a precept increase of £6,575, which would be an increase per band D property of 51p for the year. Cllr Jackson queried why the Neighbourhood Plan figure sat outside the budget and the RFO advised that this was because these costs would be met from the grant available rather than an addition to the precept.

The Amenities Committee recommended a budget proposal of £79,350 to be funded from the precept. Cllr Paton proposed and it was seconded by Cllr Hale and therefore **RESOLVED**: to agree the recommendation from the amenities committee for budget proposals for 2021/22. All in favour.

#### **15. To receive and discuss a recommendation from General Purposes for budget proposals for 2021/22**

The General Purposes Committee recommended a budget proposal of £41,457 to be funded from the precept. Cllr Hale proposed and it was seconded by Cllr Wilson and therefore **RESOLVED**: to agree the recommendation from the General Purposes committee for budget proposals for 2021/22. All in favour.

#### **16. To consider the budget proposals for the Finance & Policy Committee for 2021/22**

The RFO advised that a precept request of £41,457 for General Purposes, a request of £79,350 for Amenities had been agreed. Cllrs are now considering a Finance & Policy proposal of £140,900 from the precept making a total precept request of £261,897 to go to General Council on 6<sup>th</sup> January 2021. Cllr Jackson suggested that consideration should be given to planning for future costs and Cllr Wilson advised that was the purpose of the proposed reserves meeting. The RFO advised that at

this meeting the Council was just agreeing a budget proposal to put to General Council prior to the precept request being submitted by January 15<sup>th</sup> to NFDC. Alternatively Cllrs might decide not to agree the budget proposal today but decide to have another meeting to agree the budget proposal. Cllr Wilson proposed and it was seconded by Cllr Jackson and therefore **RESOLVED**: to agree the Finance & Policy committee budget proposal of £140,900 for 2021/22. All in favour.

**17. To formulate a resolution to go before General Council on 6<sup>th</sup> January 2021 for the precept request**

Cllr Wilson proposed and it was seconded by Cllr Jackson and therefore **RESOLVED**: to agree the committee's budget proposals for 2021/22 subject to consideration of the Council's reserves to go before General Council on 6<sup>th</sup> January 2021. The proposals would result in a precept of £261,897. All in favour.

**18. To confirm the continued appointment of the Internal Auditor (IAC)**

Cllr Hale proposed and it was seconded by Cllr Paton and therefore **RESOLVED**: to confirm the continued appointment of the Internal Auditor (IAC). All in favour.

**19. To review the following policies**

- **Document Retention Policy:** The RFO advised that the policy was a work in progress about what documents the Council keeps, what it archives and what it can dispose of. The RFO would like members to review the draft policy carefully and note any concerns prior to the January Finance & Policy meeting, to enable approval of the final policy by the end of the financial year (March 2021).

**20. To note any items of Correspondence**

The RFO noted a thank you letter from Reaching the Unreached and a thank you from the Fordingbridge Museum for the grant.

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

The Clerk suggested that the money that would have normally been incurred in terms of Christmas expenses could be donated to a local charity. Cllr Jackson suggested that it should go to the Salvation Army. Cllr Adams proposed and it was seconded by Cllr Wilson and therefore **RESOLVED**: that the funds should go the Salvation Army. All Cllrs were in favour.

**22. To note the date of the next meeting as 27<sup>th</sup> January 2021**

The meeting ended at 8:25pm