

FORDINGBRIDGE TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of the Finance & Policy Committee held on Wednesday 24th November 2021 at 7.30pm in the Town Hall (Minutes subject to approval at the next meeting of the Committee)

Present: Cllr Adams – Chair;
Cllrs Anstey, Earth, Goldsmith, Hale, Jackson, Moulard, White, & Wilson.

In attendance: Mr P Goddard, Town Clerk
Mrs M Coatham, RFO
2 members of the public
1 representative of the Salisbury Journal

1. To receive any apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Cllr Lewendon, Paton and Perkins.

2. To receive any Declarations of Interest

Cllr Adams declared an interest in the payment of accounts.

3. To confirm the minutes of the meeting held on 27th October 2021 and report any matters arising

Cllr Hale proposed and it was seconded by Cllr Wilson and therefore **RESOLVED**: that the minutes of the meeting held on the 27th October 2021 be signed as a true record. All in favour.
No matters arising.

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

None.

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

Cllr Adams referred to the RFO's report to members. Cllr Jackson proposed and it was seconded by Cllr Hale and therefore **RESOLVED**: to approve the schedule of payments of account and that the amounts collected are correct. All in favour.

6. To consider grant applications under Section 137/CIL

- No new grants to consider

7. To receive any Finance & Policy matters referred from sub-committees - None

8. To receive an update on building matters

The Clerk advised that the position in relation to the Town Hall was unchanged from last week. The architect is going to discuss the conservation officer's objections to the Town Council's scheme with the heritage and planning consultants before seeking to arrange an online meeting with either the planning or conservation officer, as deemed appropriate.

The Clerk met with NFDC Environmental Health at the Town Hall following a complaint regarding pigeon fouling in the alley adjacent to the Town Hall. The Clerk had previously met with Ringwood Pest Control and is awaiting a proposal from them.

9. To approve the revised CIL forward plan (used to inform budget setting)

Cllr Wilson proposed and it was seconded by Cllr White and therefore **RESOLVED**: that the revised CIL forward plan was approved, all in favour.

10. To receive and discuss a recommendation from Amenities for budget proposals for 2022/23

The Amenities Committee recommended a budget proposal of £99,207.00 to be funded from the precept. Cllr Adams said these were provisional proposals subject to the tax base. Cllr Jackson raised concerns that there was no provision for future capital expenditure. He felt that if projects were to be funded by way of PWLB loans then the Council would need to demonstrate how it would fund the repayments. If there was no provision for capital expenditure then the Council could not invest

in the future over the next eighteen months. He believed that some provision should be made in the budget. Cllr Wilson advised that some additional provision had been made in the amenities committee's budget. The RFO advised that additional budget had been included for grounds maintenance and play equipment but additional budget should not be made specifically for loan repayments unless residents have been consulted. Cllr Hale said that the proposed budget increases provided the Town Council with more flexibility and that, in any event, some of the projects being considered were longer term. Cllr Wilson said the additional budget (subject to the tax base) would allow loan repayments if required whilst not impacting on residents. Cllr Adams felt that given the current economic climate the Council should not burden residents with significant additional costs. Cllr Jackson said that recent surveys had highlighted resident's concerns in relation to highways and the Council might need to contribute to improvements. Cllr Hale said whilst this was the case in Rockbourne highways projects take considerably more than a year. Cllr Hale proposed and it was seconded by Cllr Earth and therefore **RESOLVED:** to agree the recommendation from the amenities committee for budget proposals for 2022/23. All in favour.

11. To receive and discuss a recommendation from General Purposes for budget proposals for 2022/23

The General Purposes Committee recommended a budget proposal of £44,750.50 to be funded from the precept. Cllr Hale proposed and it was seconded by Cllr Earth and therefore **RESOLVED:** to agree the recommendation from the General Purposes committee for budget proposals for 2022/23. All in favour.

12. To consider the budget proposals for the Finance & Policy Committee for 2022/23

The RFO advised that the General Purposes and Amenities budgets feed into the Finance & Policy budget. The overall position is a proposed precept of £285,143.50 which is an increase of £23,246.50 which represents a percentage increase of just under 9%. Cllr Wilson hoped that once the tax base has been adjusted the percentage increase per resident would be lower. The RFO said that funding for some projects may be available from other sources such as HCC, the NFDC and grants. Cllr Jackson asked about recent CIL contributions and the RFO confirmed CIL had been received in relation to two small developments. Cllr Wilson proposed and it was seconded by Cllr Moulard and therefore **RESOLVED:** to agree the Finance & Policy committee budget proposal of £141,186.00 for 2022/23. All in favour.

13. To formulate a resolution to go before General Council on 5th January 2022 for the precept request

Cllr Wilson proposed and it was seconded by Cllr Moulard and therefore **RESOLVED:** to agree the committee's budget proposals for 2022/23 subject to consideration of the Council's reserves to go before General Council on 5th January 2022. The proposals would result in a precept of £285,143.50, subject to confirmation of the tax base in December. All in favour.

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

Cllr Adams proposed and it was seconded by Cllr Wilson and therefore **RESOLVED:** that the appointment of IAC as internal auditor continues, all in favour.

15. To review the following policies and registers

- Data Protection Policy and Privacy Notices

The RFO advised that this had been updated based on HALC guidance. She confirmed that the policy took into account the recently installed CCTV. Cllr Hale proposed and it was seconded by Cllr Jackson and therefore **RESOLVED:** to adopt the updated policy.

- Environment Policy

Cllr Adams advised that the draft policy was in two parts. The RFO said the policy was based upon the environmental policy of similar councils and the action plan needed populating. There was discussion as to where responsibility for the policy should sit. Cllr Hale suggested General Council but it would need to go through the responsible committees. Cllr Wilson agreed, particularly with regard to planning where consideration should be given to matters such as walking and cycling routes. Cllr Hale felt that the Council should agree the policy and then give some thought as to how it would sit with the committees. The RFO suggested that the chairs of each of the committees

should meet to consider how the policy might best be implemented and responsibilities allocated. Cllr Anstey felt that the policy was a good document and the Council has a responsibility to consider environmental issues but thought consideration should be given to how it might be resourced. Cllr Wilson thought that the policy would not cost a lot to implement. Cllr Jackson felt that it might require considerable time and resource. He felt that consideration of issues such as phosphates might require external expertise and that Council should not sign up to the policy until this had been considered. Cllr Wilson felt a lot of the work required was already in place and she offered to commit her time to the policy's implementation. She felt this would be relatively easy in terms of the Council's own operations and that the review of transport could be undertaken by the transport committee. The RFO said the policy and action plan have been drafted and the action plan now needs to be populated. It is a flexible document so if things are not achievable then it can be modified. She suggested that the Council could agree the policy and action plan and review it again in six months' time. Cllr Hale felt the Council could agree the policy and then allocate responsibility to its committees. Cllr Jackson proposed and it was seconded by Cllr Hale and therefore RESOLVED: to adopt the Environment Policy document. All in favour.

16. To note any items of correspondence

The Clerk noted an email received from Hope for Tomorrow thanking the Town Council for its continued support.

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

The following points were discussed:

- Christmas Lights Switch on 27th November 2021
- Tree planting on 27th November 2021

18. To note the date of the next meeting as 26th January 2022

The meeting ended at 8:02 pm.