

FORDINGBRIDGE TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of the Finance & Policy Committee held on Wednesday 28th September 2022 at 7.30pm in the Town Hall (Minutes subject to approval at the next meeting of the Committee)

Present: Cllr Jackson – Chair;
Cllrs Anstey, Earth, Hale, Millar, Paton, White & Wilson

In attendance: Mr P Goddard, Town Clerk
Mrs M Coatham, RFO
A representative from the Salisbury Journal

1. To receive any apologies for absence

Apologies received from Cllr Adams, Cllr Goldsmith, Cllr Lewendon & Cllr Perkins

2. To receive any Declarations of Interest

Cllrs Jackson and White declared an interest in agenda item 9 “To consider funding Ashford marker signs” as they were both residents of Ashford.

3. To confirm the minutes of the meeting held on 31st August 2022 and report any matters arising

Cllr Millar proposed and it was seconded by Cllr Paton and therefore **RESOLVED**: that the minutes of the meeting held on the 31st August 2022 be signed as a true record. All in favour.

Matters arising:

Agenda point 5: Cllr Jackson noted that there was likely to be a significant increase in a PWLB loan interest rate.

Agenda point 10: Confirmation has been received from the church that any income generated by the church going forward will be paid to the Town Council.

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 Jackson referred to the RFO’s report to members. Cllr Jackson noted the SSE refund. Cllr Millar raised investing an element of reserves as returns were now improving. The RFO advised that she had been looking at investing some of the reserves, albeit she had so far only looked at term savings accounts. Cllr Anstey referred to the portable welder/generator disposal. The Clerk advised that the generator had been sold as the grounds staff did not weld and a more suitable portable generator was purchased for less money. The RFO advised that the old generator was not on the asset register and the new one had been added.

Cllr Wilson 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. All in favour.

The RFO advised that there were additional invoices received after the report that she would need to pay before the next meeting to comply with payment terms: Biffa - £894, CSS - £103, CGM - £816 and the auditors - £1,200. These will show on next month’s report. The next precept payment of £142k has been received.

6. To consider grant applications under Section 137/CIL

- CANF

Cllr Hale said this is a good cause and he thinks the Town Council should grant the £1,000 as it was increasingly important and the grant funds are available. Cllrs discussed whether the use of funds would meet the Town Councils grant policy conditions, the type of work CANF did for residents of the town and whether it was possible for CANF to make more hours available for the town’s residents. Cllr Millar proposed and it was seconded by Cllr Wilson and therefore **RESOLVED**: to grant £1,000 to CANF provided the Clerk was satisfied the use of funds would meet grant conditions and that the Clerk should ask if more hours could be made available to residents of the town. All in favour.

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

8. To receive an update on building matters

The Clerk had reported he had received three quotes to demolish the old toilet block: Three Cross Demolition - £5,750 plus VAT; Bemacross Contractors - £5,000 plus VAT and Prime Demolition - £6,385 plus VAT. Prior to commencement of the work an asbestos survey has been undertaken by ACL. Asbestos was identified and ACL has provided a quote to remove the asbestos prior to demolition in the sum of £6,500 plus VAT. The Clerk is currently seeking two additional quotes, for the removal work. The RFO said, now the Council is aware of the asbestos it should have it removed in any event. Cllrs discussed the proposed demolition of the toilet block. Cllr White proposed and it was seconded by Cllr Millar and therefore RESOLVED: to proceed with the demolition of the toilet block at the most competitive quotes. All in favour.

Cllr Wilson asked the Clerk to contact the planning officer regarding determining the Town Councils currently lodged planning application and to look into stress testing the balcony at the Town Hall.

9. To consider funding Ashford marker signs

Cllr White advised, by way of background, that he had been approached by some residents of Ashford regarding signage and that it had gained some momentum. HCC were prepared to provide and install signs at a cost of £380. The RFO advised that there was some ambiguity regarding the wording of HCC's quote as to whether that was the cost for both signs. Cllr Millar proposed and it was seconded by Cllr Earth and therefore RESOLVED: to proceed with the installation of the signs at a cost of £380. All in favour.

10. To consider registering sites with Film: New Forest

Cllr Jackson had attended a meeting regarding filming in the New Forest and felt that the Town Council should register sites for filming. There is no cost to do so and there could be a financial benefit and an opportunity to raise the profile of the town. Cllr White offered to take some photos around the town. Cllrs discussed the merit of registering and the level of control in terms of content. Cllr Jackson proposed and it was seconded by Cllr White and therefore RESOLVED: to register sites with Film: New Forest.

11. To discuss and agree funding arrangements for Christmas Events 2022

Cllr Wilson raised the councillor and staff Christmas party and whether it should be a meal at a hospitality establishment or a buffet at the Town Hall. Cllr Wilson questioned whether it would be appropriate to have a meal out and favoured doing something at the Town Hall. It could be a buffet where those attending brought food or it could be catered for by a local business. Cllrs discussed catering options. Quotes should be obtained.

Cllrs discussed holding an afternoon tea event now on 9th December as the 2nd December was the proposed date for the Christmas lights switch on. Cllr Wilson suggested that the tea should be for local volunteers. Cllr Paton felt that it should be offered to elderly residents as volunteers are generally younger so she did not feel they would necessarily be struggling in the same way. Music options for the afternoon tea were discussed.

Cllr White confirmed that the light switch on would now be on 2nd December, which it was hoped could be tied in with a Greener Living Event at the Town Hall. Cllr White is attending a meeting with the Events Group tomorrow to progress the event.

Cllrs considered buying a good quality artificial tree for the Town Hall. Cllrs discussed the environmental impact and the likely cost. As an alternative, a rooted tree should be investigated. Cllrs discussed purchasing new lights for the small trees for retailers. A letter has been drafted to go from the Town Council to retailers to establish the level of interest in small tree this Christmas. The RFO estimated the likely cost for new lights would be between £500 and £1,000. Cllrs discussed alternative lighting options but felt that due to time constraints the Council should offer trees this year and that the current lights be replaced. Cllr Jackson proposed and it was seconded by Cllr White and therefore RESOLVED: to fund the cost of new lights for the small Christmas trees. All in favour. Cllrs discussed whether it might be possible to buy solar lights for the empty retail premises – this would be considered.

12. To receive a report on the budget setting process for 2022/23 from the Finance Officer

The RFO noted that as the Amenities and General Purposes committees had been unable to meet in September, the next scheduled meeting is the budget setting meeting for those committees in November 2022. Members should start giving some thought as to what should be included in the budgets for those committees, particularly if there are additional costs for those committees arising from the strategic or neighbourhood plans as the RFO was not party to those discussions. If provision for the costs of projects is not included within budgets then those projects cannot be progressed within the next twelve months. Cllr Jackson referred to the document that the Clerk had sent to members that sets out specific pieces of work that should be funded (he felt by way of a PWLB loan) and undertaken. Separate to this are projects that might come out of the strategic or neighbourhood plan. Cllrs discussed how these projects might be funded including the use of future CIL and loans and noted that until they were identified and costed it would not be possible to budget for them. The RFO forecasts ahead three years but that did not mean that those budgets can be changed for future years. Cllr Wilson asked whether the associated loans costs to fund the repair to the Town Hall roof could be estimated so that this could be included within the appropriate budget. She also asked, whether prior to budgets being finalised the it would be possible to assess the impact of the precept request on the band D properties. The RFO confirmed that it would. Cllr Jackson noted that the proportion of council tax to fund the Town Council's work was small in comparison to other councils and services.

13. To review the following policies and registers – none this month

14. To note any items of correspondence

None

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

The RFO referred to the report on the summer TUFF activities, which she will circulate to members. On average twelve children attended each session, which she felt for the sums in question was a good thing to do.

The Clerk summarised the two quotes for tree works at the cemetery and the Recreation Ground. Cllrs agreed that lower quotes should be pursued for each piece of work. The RFO raised the timing of the pollarding work at the Recreation Ground and Cllrs agreed that this work should go ahead now.

Cllr Wilson reported on the community orchard for which there is a budget of £2,000 and contribution of £260 has also been made by Dave Tree of All the Cool Stuff. Cllr Wilson advised that hedge laying and clearance work for the orchard was going to be undertaken at Sweatfords Water Meadow by the NFDC on 31st October and then trees would need to be planted in November.

16. To note the date of the next meeting as 26th October 2022

The meeting ended at 9:09 pm.