

FORDINGBRIDGE TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of the Finance & Policy Committee held on Wednesday 23rd November 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, Goldsmith, Hale, Lewendon, Millar, Paton, & Wilson

In attendance: Mr P Goddard, Town Clerk
Mrs M Coatham, RFO

1. To receive any apologies for absence

Apologies received from Cllr Adams, Cllr Perkins & Cllr White

2. To receive any Declarations of Interest - None

3. To confirm the minutes of the meeting held on 26th October 2022 and report any matters arising

Cllr Wilson proposed and it was seconded by Cllr Millar and therefore **RESOLVED**: that the minutes of the meeting held on the 26th October 2022 be signed as a true record. All in favour.

Matters arising: Item 10 (building matters) - Cllr Jackson queried progress on the demolition of the toilet block and it was agreed the Clerk would follow-up the additional quotes with the buildings manager.

4. To receive any matters raised by Members of the Public – none present.

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

Cllr Jackson referred to the RFO's report to members. The RFO noted that the Aish work was advisable rather than urgent and this would be referred back to Amenities for discussion. The RFO noted that an additional invoice had been received from Scentsational for the winter towers and that this would be included in the revised November schedule for payment. The RFO provided details of the SLA with the NFDC. Cllr Jackson proposed and it was seconded by Cllr Wilson 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 – none received.

The RFO advised that Citizens Advice New Forest had provided details that confirmed that their application met the Council's grant criteria so she would make the payment to them.

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

- **General Purposes: to consider the proposal/quotation for an automatic winding system for the town hall clock.** Members considered the proposal and agreed that this would be funded from the Town Hall reserves as it was essential works to ensure the safety of its employees. The quotation was for £5,694 plus VAT. Cllr Lewendon proposed and it was seconded by Cllr Hale to proceed with the works, subject to listed building consent and the installation of an appropriate electricity supply. All in favour.

8. To receive an update on building matters

The RFO informed Council of the issue with the kiosk toilet floor. She advised that the extent of the work would not be known until the floor was lifted up and so, Matt Bright had quoted a day rate of £440 per day for two workers. Cllr Jackson proposed and it was seconded by Cllr Wilson and therefore **RESOLVED**: to engage the contractor to undertake the work at the proposed day rate. All in favour.

Town Hall: the Clerk had reported the provision of a stair lift had been reviewed and may be possible if the boxing that housed the clock weights was removed. Cllr Wilson had contacted Smiths of Derby to supply a quote for an electronic winding system which would allow the weights to be removed – for conservation purposes these would need to be retained. The Clerk felt this

was a positive move as it meant that staff would not need to climb into the tower to wind the mechanism each week, unsupervised. The application would need to be reviewed by Building Control (fire approval) and the Conservation Officer. ***The Clerk to follow-up the quote request.***

9. To authorise the use of a SumUp machine to receive electronic payments on behalf of the Town Council

The Clerk and RFO reported that it was becoming increasingly difficult to request cash for items in the Information Office – copy charges, maps, allotment payments – as people no longer carry cash and the associated bank charges and access to the bank (Ringwood) was more challenging. It was agreed to accept cashless payments using a SumUp machine, with an initial outlay of £94.80 for the machine, no monthly fee, and a fixed charge of 1.69% per transaction. Cllr Jackson proposed and it was seconded by Cllr Lewendon and therefore **RESOLVED**: to accept cashless payments using SumUp. All in favour. The RFO would review and amend Standing Orders and Financial Regulations to include this update, for approval in January 2023.

10. To review the CIL forward plan (used to inform budget setting)

The RFO apologised for not printing copies of the document and discussion took place about the development of the Strategic Plan and how this would inform the CIL forward plan. Cllrs discussed projects including upgrading footpaths, ongoing maintenance of the car park and removing the green shelter at the Recreation Ground, not proceeding with the riverbank repair work and improving the open space area at Flaxfields. It was agreed to review the Forward Plan in February 2023.

11. To note the estimated charge for election costs for 2023 from NFDC

NFDC had written to confirm the estimated charge for the May 2023 Town Election would be £5,578.10. The cost was noted by members and included in the budget setting. This full charge would only apply if more than 12 people stood for Council.

12. To receive and discuss a recommendation from Amenities for budget proposals for 2023/24

The Amenities Committee recommended a budget proposal of £106,600 to be funded from the precept. It was noted that these were provisional proposals subject to the tax base. Discussion took place about the inclusion of the noted forward plan items on the planning sheets. It was agreed to increase the general & grounds maintenance budget allocation by £5000 to include annual repair costs. Cllr Paton proposed and it was seconded by Cllr Goldsmith and therefore **RESOLVED**: to recommend a budget proposal for 2023/24 of £111600. All in favour.

13. To receive and discuss a recommendation from General Purposes for budget proposals for 2023/24

The General Purposes Committee recommended a budget proposal of £46,612 to be funded from the precept. It was noted that these were provisional proposals subject to the tax base. The RFO advised that given the change in roles of the Information Office staff the allocation of staff costs may need to be reallocated across the committee budgets but the overall cost would remain the same. Cllr Hale proposed and it was seconded by Cllr Millar and therefore **RESOLVED**: to agree the recommendation from the General Purposes committee for budget proposals for 2023/24. All in favour.

14. To consider the budget proposals for the Finance & Policy Committee for 2023/24

The RFO advised that the General Purposes and Amenities budgets feed into the Finance & Policy budget. Members discussed what additional items could be progressed in 2023/24 and it was noted that to move forward with the town hall works a PWLB would be required, the likely costs for part year funding would be £7000 and this should be included in the budget proposals.

The overall position is a proposed precept of £318,152 which is an increase of £33,008.50 which represents a percentage increase of 11.58%. Members noted that once the tax base has been adjusted the percentage increase per resident would be lower. It was noted that these were provisional proposals subject to the tax base – a further meeting may be required in January to review the proposals once the tax base figure is confirmed, the RFO will share this information as

soon as it becomes available from NFDC. Cllr Hale proposed and it was seconded by Cllr Millar and therefore **RESOLVED:** to agree the Finance & Policy committee budget proposal of £159,940 for 2023/24. All in favour.

15. To formulate a resolution to go before General Council on 5th January 2023 for the precept request.

Cllr Hale proposed and it was seconded by Cllr Millar and therefore **RESOLVED:** to agree the committee's budget proposals for 2023/24 subject to consideration of the Council's reserves to go before General Council on 4th January 2023. The proposals would result in a precept of £318,152, subject to confirmation of the tax base in December. All in favour.

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

It was agreed to continue with the appointment of IAC for internal audit. Proposed by Cllr Jackson, seconded by Cllr Wilson, all in favour.

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

18. To note any items of correspondence - none

19. To receive a report from the Clerk or any other relevant business - nothing to report

20. To note the date of the next meeting as 25th January 2023

The meeting ended at 8:47 p.m.