

FORDINGBRIDGE TOWN COUNCIL

**Minutes of the Finance & Policy Committee held on Wednesday 22nd February 2023 at
7:30pm
(Minutes subject to approval at the next meeting of the Committee)**

Present: Cllrs Anstey, Earth, Goldsmith, Hale, Hinton, Jackson, Millar (Chair), Paton, White and Wilson

In attendance: Paul Goddard, Town Clerk, Mrs M Coatham, RFO

1. To receive any apologies for absence

Apologies received from Cllrs Lewendon and Perkins

2. To receive any Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest.

3. To confirm the minutes of the meeting held on 25th January 2023 and report any matters arising

Cllr Paton proposed and it was seconded by Cllr Earth and therefore **RESOLVED**: that the minutes of the meeting held on the 25th January 2023 be signed as a true record. All in favour.

Matters arising: Agenda Point 10 – Internal Audit Observations: The RFO advised that there had since been changes to the treatment of VAT in relation to sports charges and she was awaiting official confirmation.

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

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

Cllr Millar referred to the RFO's report to members. The RFO provided details of the work undertaken by Worknest. Cllrs discussed the potential budget underspend, noted the contribution toward the Recreation Ground from Hyde Parish Council and the inheritance received for amenity equipment or seating. Cllrs discussed benches in memory of Cllrs Price and Adams. Discussion has taken place for a bench and planters in memory of Cllr Price. Cllr Wilson would speak to the family of Cllr Adams and a bench in the community orchard as a suitable location was suggested. The RFO noted an invoice only just received from CSS for £325 plus VAT, which would need to be settled before next month's committee meeting. Cllr Paton proposed and it was seconded by Cllr Earth and therefore **RESOLVED**: to approve the schedule of payments of account and that the amounts collected are correct. All in favour.

6. To agree to write off outstanding customer invoices

The RFO reported that there were a few outstanding customer invoices but that these would be paid prior to any further bookings being taken from these customers. The only two invoices which members should consider writing off are for the provision of one hanging basket and one small Christmas tree in 2022 to I N Newman (total cost £127). Cllr Earth proposed and it was seconded by Cllr Jackson and therefore **RESOLVED**: to write off invoices for one hanging basket and one small Christmas tree in 2022 to I N Newman (total cost £127). All in favour.

7. To consider grant applications under Section 137/CIL – none received

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

- **Staff Committee – revised pension contributions for 2023/24:** the committee noted that prior to this meeting the Staff Committee had met and approved the increase in the bandings in line with RPI for Employee Pension Contributions from 1st April 2023.

9. To receive an update on building matters

- The Clerk reported that further information had been sent to the NFDC regarding the listed building applications for the Town Hall window boxes and the automated clock winder. With regard to the winder, it was hoped that this would allow the installation of a stair lift. The

NFDC had requested additional detail regarding the window boxes. Cllr Wilson advised that the boxes were bespoke, made of metal and of Victorian design. Cllr Anstey expressed concern regarding security. Scaffolding quotes should be obtained for the Town Hall roof work. The guttering at the front of the Town Hall was due to be cleared.

- The Clerk advised that Matt Bright was capping off the services and removing the spur to the old toilet block prior to its demolition. The NFDC should be consulted as to whether Building Regulations applied in relation to the demolition and, if so, a private company should be approached. Matt Bright was also looking at options in relation to the drain issues at the kiosk.
- Cllrs discussed the role of buildings manager and the amount budgeted for this.

10. To review and approve the insurance for 2023/24: last year of long term agreement

The RFO reported that three quotes for insurance were requested and two were returned:

- Zurich (existing) £7607.70 pa (or £7048.79 if we enter a 3 year LTA)
- Gallaghers (Hiscox): £6536.82pa PLUS a separate motor policy of £1048.75 – so total of £7585.57 – the LTA with them is only fixed for the main body of insurance – the motor policy would vary each year.
- BHIB – Had come back today with queries raised by Aviva after the deadline.

The RFO noted that the Zurich LTA figure is within the budget (£7300). It was noted that the internal auditor had suggested that insurance values had increased by a much larger amount (this year we paid Zurich £6555.51). Zurich has not given us any concern or issues regarding our policy, so she recommended remaining with them. Cllr Wilson proposed and it was seconded by Cllr Paton and therefore RESOLVED: to enter into the LTA with Zurich. All in favour.

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

The RFO had circulated a document setting out CIL projects. CIL spending was normally reported at the Annual Town Assembly. The CIL policy says CIL spending would be considered in April and October. Cllrs considered deferring consideration of CIL projects until after the elections, when a new council would be starting a four year term. Cllrs decided that the Recreation Ground working party and the NPSG should provide comments on their respective areas of the document by the 24th March so that these could be considered at the next Finance & Policy committee. The Council's views regarding priority projects could be made available at the Annual Town Assembly. Following the elections the new council could consider which projects to then take forward.

12. To review and approve the contractor for Christmas Lights for 2023 onwards

The Clerk had circulated information following a meeting with Sparkx regarding the Christmas lights provision moving forward. The current lights contractor was keen to extend the existing contractor for a further three years, which had been the most competitive when the council went out to tender three years ago. The contractor is prepared to retain the price for the existing lights at the current cost (£16,500 pa) or could infill either side of the frame to cover the whole highway for £17,950. This would entail an extension of the existing contract rather than having to undertake a new tender process. Cllrs discussed the proposals by the existing contractor. Cllr Hale proposed and it was seconded by Cllr Goldsmith to talk to residents at the Annual Town Assembly about the two options or having no lights at all and then making a decision. Cllr Jackson proposed and it was seconded by Cllr Paton and therefore RESOLVED: to extend the existing contract for three years to include infill lights for three years. Eight in favour and two against.

13. To review the following policies and registers

- Risk Register

Cllr Anstey commented on the allocated level of risk, noting that some risk levels were pre mitigation and should be downgraded having taken into account that mitigation. Cllr Hinton suggested that it should be reviewed in the context of assessing both likelihood and seriousness. He also suggested that the preamble should be amended to comment on the small number of high risk matters and also the culture of how the Town Council manages risk. Cllrs discussed the risk register. Cllr Hinton proposed and it was seconded by Cllr Anstey and therefore RESOLVED: to approve the risk register with the amended narrative and to review again in the above context within the next twelve months. All in favour.

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- Asset Register

Cllrs discussed the asset register and Cllr Wilson noted that the community shed should be added to the register. Cllr Wilson proposed and it was seconded by Cllr Anstey and therefore RESOLVED: to approve the register with that addition. All in favour.

- CIL Policy

Cllr Hinton suggested that going forward it would be good to have broad headings of priorities in the document and as decisions regarding priorities are made to reflect this in the document. Cllrs discussed the CIL reporting process, the NFDC's CIL process and other councils' approach to the use of CIL funds. Cllr Wilson proposed and it was seconded by Cllr White and therefore RESOLVED: to approve the CIL policy. All in favour.

14. To review the effectiveness of Internal Control and agree an appropriate policy

The RFO advised that this sets out what the Council does. Cllrs discussed the bank reconciliation process, which is undertaken by the RFO and then checked and signed off by the Clerk. Cllrs agreed it was sufficient for the RFO in her monthly report to confirm bank reconciliations had been undertaken. Regarding the reference to signatories, the RFO confirmed that these were in line with the mandate. Cllr Paton proposed and it was seconded by Cllr Earth and therefore RESOLVED: to approve the Internal Control policy. All in favour.

15. To note any items of Correspondence

The Clerk referred to correspondence received in relation to the Riverside Kiosk and a request for additional covered seating. The Clerk suggested it could form part of the consideration of a plan for the Recreation ground by the Recreation Ground working party. Cllrs discussed providing a covered or enclosed area and Cllr Paton felt it would be a good thing to do and would be somewhere for youths to go in the evening.

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

The Clerk had been referred to a company called The Procurement Partnership Limited ("TPPL") by the NFDC, who they use for their own procurement. The Clerk and RFO had met and had signed up with TPPL. There was no obligation or cost to the Council. As a result, through TPPL, a local supplier was going to provide a demonstration electric vehicle to trial. Cllrs discussed the current diesel van, the merits of an electric vehicle and how it would be charged.

Cllr Wilson referred to the aims set out in the Council's Environmental Policy and how many had been achieved. She felt that this should be revisited before the next meeting of the committee and the Annual Town Assembly.

17. To note the date of the next meeting as 29th March 2023

The meeting closed at 8.49pm