

FORDINGBRIDGE TOWN COUNCIL

**Minutes of the Finance & Policy Committee held on Wednesday 26th July 2023 at 7:30pm
(Minutes subject to approval at the next meeting of the Committee)**

Present: Cllrs Bailey, Cameron, Hale, Hinton, Jackson, Lewendon, 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 Shering and Perkins

2. To receive any Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest.

3. To confirm the minutes of the meeting held on 28th June 2023 and report any matters arising

Cllr White proposed and it was seconded by Cllr Paton and therefore **RESOLVED:** that the minutes of the meeting held on the 28th June 2023 be signed as a true record. All in favour.

Matters arising:

Agenda Point 4: The leaflet sits under the General Purposes committee

Agenda Point 7: A letter of thanks has been received from Avon Vally Community Matters

Agenda Point 9: Building Matters – the RFO noted that current PWLB repayment on a fixed loan 25 year annuity of £100k would be £7300 pa (approx.) and on a £275k loan would be £20k pa (approx.) – The current rate is 5.33%

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

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

The RFO highlighted some small changes to her report from the report circulated by email.

The EDF gas supply contract to the Recreation Ground and Information Office is coming to an end at the end of September. The renewal prices are £4,565 (currently £1,633) for the Recreation Ground and £1,033 (currently £401) for the Information Office. Two brokers have obtained prices but the Council is still looking at costs of circa £3,250 and £700 respectively, so the costs will be considerably higher. Cllrs discussed the Pavilion's energy use and asked that the Recreation Ground grounds operative clarified its use. Cllrs discussed ways in which costs could be managed. The RFO advised that she had proposed to the rugby club a considerably higher block booking fee for next season. Cllrs felt that details of the increased costs should be provided to the clubs. Cllr Paton noted that through the RFO's good work for which she thanked her, the Council had benefitted from low energy costs for some time. Cllrs Hinton suggested a report on usage, how it's controlled and how quotes are managed. Cllrs also discussed solar panels and air source heat pumps. Cllr Millar suggested energy including renewable energy should be a future agenda point.

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.

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

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

8. To agree the process to review and verify assets

The RFO summarised the document and responsibilities. Cllr Millar said each committee chair should note what they were responsible for. Cllr Hinton proposed and it was seconded by Cllr White and therefore **RESOLVED:** to approve the asset verification process set out in the RFO's report. All in favour.

9. To receive an update on building matters

The Clerk noted listed building consent had been granted for an automatic clock winder. The Clerk had asked the Buildings' Manager to update the costings on the Town Hall scheme for which there was approval and to also cost the scaled back scheme, however, due to other commitments the Buildings' Manager had been unable to do so. The Clerk had suggested to the chair of this committee that the proposed agenda points should be rolled over to next month's meeting. Cllrs discussed the work needed on the roof and whether this should be done separately or at the same time work is undertaken to move the Council staff back to the Town Hall. Cllrs suggested quotes should be obtained for a stairlift. Cllrs also discussed the existing quote for the roof work and suggested alternative quotes should be obtained. Costings for the schemes should be obtained from the Buildings' Manager. Cllr Wilson said the door to the Information Office was a trip hazard and should have had a low threshold door. The RFO suggested that the ramp could be left out.

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

Cllrs discussed the policy on emails, given the number of emails being sent. Cllrs agreed that emails should be directed through the office rather than copying in all councillors, as with the volume of emails, matters could be missed. Cllrs discussed alternative ways to facilitate council business to alleviate the number of emails being sent, including online meetings and having an informal discussion and update regarding council matters after public meetings when deemed necessary.

11. To note any items of Correspondence - The RFO noted correspondence of thanks from Avon Valley Community matters.

12. To receive a report from the Clerk or any other relevant business – the Clerk raised the pending retirement/replacement of the groundsman and the accommodation. Cllrs discussed at length the position regarding the accommodation and agreed that there should be a rental charge of 50% of the assessed commercial rent. Cllrs also agreed that a consistent approach had to be taken for all candidates. Cllrs noted that two agreements would be needed for a candidate taking the accommodation, an employment contract and a separate agreement regarding occupation of the property. The RFO advised that as this was not an agenda point, whilst an agreed approach regarding the accommodation has been reached, it would need to be formally ratified at a future meeting (General Council next week).

13. To note the date of the next meeting as 30th August 2023

The meeting closed at 8.38pm