

FORDINGBRIDGE TOWN COUNCIL

**Minutes of the Finance & Policy Committee held on Wednesday 27th September 2023 at
7:30pm
(Minutes subject to approval at the next meeting of the Committee)**

Present: Cllrs Bailey, Hale, Hinton, Jackson, Lewendon, Millar (Chair), Paton, Shering, White and Wilson

In attendance: Paul Goddard, Town Clerk
Mrs M Coatham, RFO
Five members of the public

1. To receive any apologies for absence

Apologies received from Cllrs Cameron and Perkins

2. To receive any Declarations of Interest

Cllrs Hinton, Jackson and Wilson declared an interest in the Green Gram grant application as they were shareholders and said they would leave the meeting. Cllr Jackson and White declared a non-pecuniary interest in agenda point 9 as they were residents of Ashford.

3. To confirm the minutes of the meeting held on 30th August 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 30th August 2023 be signed as a true record. All those that attended in favour. Agenda point 11: Building control had confirmed that as no work is being proposed on the first floor of the Town Hall there is no requirement to put in a stairlift. The Clerk is waiting for dates for a meeting with the architect. Cllrs Hinton and Wilson expressed a wish to attend that meeting. Cllr Wilson felt that the Council should not abandon plans to install a stairlift in the future.

6. To consider grant applications under Section 137/CIL

Cllr Millar moved this item up the agenda for the benefit of the members of the public in attendance.

• **Avon Valley Shed**

Representatives of the Avon Valley Shed provided details of their request to use the Town Hall on a Wednesday morning. Cllr White had met with the Avon Valley Shed the previous week. He felt the Council should offer the Town Hall on a Wednesday morning as it would be a good use of the facilities, the Avon Valley Shed have done jobs for the Council and can help with the Christmas event and it would be good to keep the group in the town. The RFO reminded Cllrs that the cleaning contractors clean the Town Hall first thing on Wednesday morning. She also provided details of the hire charges. Representatives of the Avon Valley Shed said that if the group was allowed to use the Town Hall on a Wednesday then they could set up for Council meetings. The RFO said that if the Council agreed to the group's request paid bookings should take precedence, which the group agreed to. Cllr White proposed and it was seconded by Cllr Wilson and therefore **RESOLVED**: to allow the Avon Valley Shed to use the Town Hall on a Wednesday morning subject to clarifying the cleaning times for the hall. All in favour. The group would want to use the hall from the end of November.

• **The Green Gram Community Refill Shop Ltd**

The representative from the Green Gram advised that Cllrs interest as shareholders was not a pecuniary interest, so Cllrs Hinton, Jackson and Wilson remained in the meeting but would not speak or vote. The representative set out details of the grant requested of £1,150 for a laptop, a laser printer and a label machine. Cllr Millar felt it met the Council's grant criteria and Cllr Paton felt it was worthwhile supporting the shop. The RFO advised that the s137 grant pot was around £5k and that there was approximately £3.5k left to the end of the financial year. Cllr Bailey had some concerns about setting a precedent by providing funds for a laptop. Cllr Millar had no objections in principle to the grant and proposed giving a grant of £450 for the printer. The RFO advised that groups cannot apply for another grant within 12 months. Cllr Lewendon seconded Cllr Millar's proposal. Cllr Paton

proposed and it was seconded by Cllr White and therefore **RESOLVED**: to give a grant of £650 for printer and label machine. All those who had not declared an interest in favour. The members of the public left.

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 advised there were no unusual expenses. The Council is currently looking at a slight overspend depending on how the toilet block demolition is funded. There has been one additional invoice today from the external auditors, BDO for just over £1,000 which is on seven day terms following conclusion of their audit.

Cllr Millar proposed and it was seconded by Cllr Bailey and therefore **RESOLVED**: to approve the schedule of payments of account and that the amounts collected are correct. 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 referred again to the stairlift and meeting with the architect. The Buildings Manager had advised that the rear roof of the Town Hall could not just be patched up. Roy Spicer who had previously quoted for the work was now no longer interested in doing it. Cllr Wilson had provided the Clerk with three other roofing contractors, which the Clerk would pass on to the Buildings Manager. The Buildings Manager also had a possible solution to the drains blocking at the bungalow, which he thought would likely cost in the region of £1,000.

9. To consider funding a second Ashford marker sign

Cllr Millar advised that around a year ago the Council considered a request for two Ashford signs at a cost of £380 each. The Council decided to pay for one sign and there has now been a request for the Council to fund a second sign on the other side of Ashford. Cllr Wilson said that Cala Homes would pay for the second sign if they were to be develop SS16. Cllrs also discussed Tinekr's Cross and whether Pennyfarthing would fund signs. Cllr Lewendon said that these are distinct hamlets and Cllr Bailey felt these areas would be lost if not signed and the cost of signs was not significant. Cllr Hinton proposed and it was seconded by Cllr Bailey and therefore **RESOLVED**: to have further discussions before a decision is taken. All those who had not declared an interest in favour.

10. To review the process for block booking arrangements for Sports Clubs

The RFO had emailed Cllrs. The current process is that the RFO monitors the activity of the clubs with block bookings (Whippets and Rugby) and approaches the clubs each year with a proposal based on the tariff (agreed by members) and their activity – if there is disagreement from the Clubs this is brought back to members for discussion. The RFO had also provided details of the clubs' activities. Cllr Millar said that the information provided reminds Cllrs that there is a tariff approved by members at the time the budgets are agreed. The RFO provides a proposal based on the use and the agreed charges and there is a 20% saving by way of having a block booking. The rugby club have responded to the proposal saying the club's use will be down at the Recreation Ground due to them using the all-weather pitch at Burgate. The RFO said she had only recently been made aware of this but that if the use is down then it may impact on maintenance of the facilities. If the club was only going to use the Recreation Ground for matches then the Council would lose income. Given its use last year, the club did well from the block booking approach. Cllr Millar advised that the rugby club had made an interim proposal to pay half of last year's block booking fee. He felt that there should be an agenda item to review the process. The RFO confirmed that the clubs were aware of the tariffs agreed. She said the Town Council pays Ringwood Town Council £6k for ground maintenance and that is before the Town Council's own costs are taken into account. Cllrs discussed the charges and usage of the pitches and facilities. Cllr White proposed that the Town Council asks the clubs for a meeting to look at the booking process. Cllr Hinton supported this but felt that it should be less of a financial discussion but should be more around how the clubs use the facilities and understand how in principle the clubs see the Recreation Ground being used in the future. The RFO and Cllrs also discussed the NFDC part funding the all-weather pitch at Burgate. The RFO, Cllr's White, Paton and Shering all agreed to meet with the clubs to progress discussions. Cllr Millar

proposed and it was seconded by Cllr Hinton and therefore RESOLVED: that the RFO and Cllrs named above should meet with the sports clubs to progress matters. All in favour.

11. To approve additional costs during interim period until replacement Groundsman appointed

The Clerk reported that to cover the interim period the Clerk & RFO have asked Andy Lane to provide cover on Sunday/Monday each week to open the recreation ground, clear-up and check toilets/changing rooms (amount TBA) and for Perfect Finish to clean the changing rooms weekly instead of fortnightly (at a cost of £72 per week). This will be reviewed weekly. Cllr Wilson proposed and it was seconded by Cllr Lewendon and therefore RESOLVED: to adopt the approach suggested by the Clerk and RFO subject to ongoing review. All in favour.

12. To discuss and agree funding arrangements for Christmas Events 2023

The Clerk summarised the costs committed to by the Council for Christmas lights this year. The balcony lights would be an additional one-off cost for the purchase of the lights and their erection would be included within the already agreed annual cost of the lights. Cllrs felt that the balcony lights were a good thing. Cllrs also discussed the switch on event and how it was funded in part by the Council and in part by the Events Group. Cllrs also discussed the practicalities of the road closure, concerns raised in respect of previous closures and purchasing or hiring the correct signage for the road closure. Cllr Shering said that it was the Council that was responsible for the closure so it was important that it was done properly and with appropriate signs. Cllr Bailey felt that in previous years the closures had not been done correctly. Cllr Millar suggested that the Clerk should consider how best to deal with the road closure and co-opt as many Cllrs as needed to resolve the issues raised. Cllr Hinton proposed and it was seconded by Cllr White and therefore RESOLVED: to purchase a new set of lights for the Town Hall balcony. All in favour.

13. To consider the NFDCs proposed framework for CIL

Cllr Millar gave a presentation to members on the proposed CIL expenditure framework which officers had presented to the NFDC which will be considered by cabinet and then full council in October. Currently the NFDC has been spending CIL at a rate of £860k per year on National Park mitigation. Officers have now presented four options and it looks likely that the first option will be preferred to develop a framework for CIL expenditure on a range of infrastructure setting out who could bid and how that might be done. At this phase bids could be made for up to £75k. The RFO explained how the Town Councils CIL reporting was undertaken and Cllr Millar asked if an interim report on CIL spending could be produced for the next Finance and Policy committee meeting. He suggested that the Town Council could consider its own framework and processes for managing its own CIL. He suggested that the Town Council identify a project to take to the NFDC but this needs to be done before the end of October. The cap is £75k per project. Cllr Jackson suggested that improvements to the Recreation Ground was a good project to take forward. Cllrs discussed the work that had already been undertaken in relation to the Recreation Ground and also whether the Council should look to advance just one project at the moment such as the proposed circular path or other projects such as a bandstand or improvements to the play area. Cllr Wilson suggested that the Council just needed quotes for the path and for Cllr White to get the plan for a path into a document and that project would be ready to be submitted. Cllrs also discussed matched funding to assist with the application to the NFDC. Cllrs on the Recreation Ground working party agreed that this could be discussed and progressed at their meeting on Saturday. Cllr Millar agreed to circulate the document that he had presented to members.

14. To receive a report on the budget setting process for 2023/24 from the Finance Officer

The RFO reported that normally she produces a proposal based on historical information and with knowledge of members proposals for future works, this is circulated prior to the budget meetings in November. These budgets are then approved in January. Cllr Hinton felt that there should be at least one separate meeting to discuss budgets and pressures. He suggested that the RFO should produce figures and all Councillors should review these and have an open discussion about the budgets. The RFO said should could produce some initial forecasts next week for consideration. Cllr Hinton suggested that each committee could then have an informal meeting where they can have strategic budget discussions. Rather than discussion about numbers the Council should consider projects like the Town Hall roof, the internal works project at the Town Hall and

Finance & Policy 27.09.23

community group pressures to form a view as to if the budgets are trimmed are there any projects that the Council cannot do, or could funds be raised from other sources or should they be funded from reserves with the goal of the Council being able to set out where it positions itself. Cllr Millar suggested that the committees should have separate informal meetings to discuss these points followed up by an informal meeting of all Cllrs.

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

16. To note any items of correspondence – The RFO had received a letter of thanks from Hope for tomorrow.

17. To receive a report from the Clerk and any other relevant business
No report.

18. To note the date of the next meeting as 25th October 2023
The meeting ended at 21:07

DRAFT