

FORDINGBRIDGE TOWN COUNCIL

**Minutes of the Finance & Policy Committee held on Wednesday 29th November
2023 at 7:30pm**

(Minutes subject to approval at the next meeting of the Committee)

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

In attendance: Paul Goddard, Town Clerk
Martine Coatham, RFO
Cllr Woods (NFDC)

1. To receive any apologies for absence

Apologies received from Cllrs Perkins.

2. To receive any Declarations of Interest

Cllr Shering declared an interest in item 6 (Payment of Accounts) - invoice from his company Crownshade.

3. To elect a deputy chair

Cllr White proposed and it was seconded by Cllr Lewendon and therefore **RESOLVED**: to elect Cllr Hinton as Vice-Chair. All in favour.

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

Cllr White proposed and it was seconded by Cllr Bailey and therefore **RESOLVED**: that the minutes of the meeting held on the 25th October 2023 be signed as a true record. All those that attended in favour.

Matters Arising

Agenda item 8: the winder installation was on hold until the infestation of cluster flies in the clock tower had gone.

Agenda item 10: Cllr Wilson noted that the NFDC had agreed that the levelling up funds could be used to improve the area behind the Co-op and their design team were preparing details and a specification for review and submission for funding.

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

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

The RFO advised that two of the requests for payment had not been discussed at an appropriate meeting prior to submission. Members agreed that the drawings for the circular path could be funded from the professional fees budget and that the transportation of the Christmas trees was approved (although higher than normal) due to the original contractor not being able to undertake the work at short notice.

Cllr Lewendon 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 who had not declared an interest in favour.

7. To consider grant applications under Section 137/CIL – The RFO reported that Fordingbridge Greener Living had asked to return £150 of their allocated grant as they had been unable to run as many meetings as they had intended and several had not incurred hire charges. This leaves them with a remaining grant of £161.23.

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

9. To receive an update on building matters

- To agree a quote for architectural services in relation to the Town Hall – after the last F&P meeting the Clerk had requested a revised quote for this work to provide a fixed cost to the Council rather than an hourly rate. Cllr Hinton had agreed to prepare the submission (stage 3) on behalf of the Council. The architect has agreed to remove the cost for stage 3 but has increased the stage 2 cost to ensure that any changes are covered to enable Cllr Hinton to make the submission. The fees are a measured survey (£400), stage 1 (£500) and stage 2 (£1800) all plus VAT. Cllr White proposed and it was seconded by Cllr Paton and therefore **RESOLVED**: to approve the fees as stated. All in favour. Members thanked Cllr Hinton for agreeing to undertake the work.

10. To consider preparation of an Asset Maintenance Plan

Cllr Hinton raised the subject of preparing an appropriate Asset Maintenance Plan for the Council to more easily highlight when additional large value expenditure was required to protect assets. Cllr Bailey noted that he was currently reviewing the assets at the Recreation Ground and that the Council already had some of this information (via RoSPA play inspections, for example) so these would help inform the document. Members agreed that an Asset Maintenance Plan should be prepared.

11. To receive and discuss a recommendation from Amenities for budget proposals for 2024/25

The Amenities Committee recommended a budget proposal of £123912.60 to be funded from the precept. It was noted that these were provisional proposals subject to the tax base. Cllr White proposed and it was seconded by Cllr Paton and therefore **RESOLVED**: to recommend a budget proposal for 2024/25 of £123912.60. All in favour.

12. To receive and discuss a recommendation from General Purposes for budget proposals for 2024/25

The General Purposes Committee recommended a budget proposal of £54107 to be funded from the precept. It was noted that these were provisional proposals subject to the tax base. Cllr Hinton proposed and it was seconded by Cllr Wilson and therefore **RESOLVED**: to agree the recommendation from the General Purposes committee for budget proposals for 2024/25. All in favour.

13. To consider the budget proposals for the Finance & Policy Committee for 2024/25

The RFO advised that the General Purposes and Amenities budgets feed into the Finance & Policy budget. The overall position is a proposed precept of £335,981.20 which is an increase of £17829.20 which represents a percentage increase of 5.6%. 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 Lewendon proposed and it was seconded by Cllr Millar and therefore **RESOLVED**: to agree the Finance & Policy committee budget proposal of £157,961.60 for 2024/25. All in favour.

14. To formulate a resolution to go before General Council on 3rd January 2024 for the precept request.

Cllr Millar proposed and it was seconded by Cllr Lewendon and therefore **RESOLVED**: to agree the committee's budget proposals for 2024/25 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 £335,981.20 subject to confirmation of the tax base in December. All in favour.

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

Discussion took place about whether it would be appropriate to change auditors (good practice). The RFO noted that options were limited as it was a specialised service and would review HALC recommendations for future years. It was agreed to continue with the appointment of IAC for internal audit for 2024/25. Proposed by Cllr Paton, seconded by Cllr Wilson, all in favour.

16. To reconsider CIL Spending plan

Following recent discussions regarding grant applications it was agreed to review the CIL allocations agreed at the last meeting of F&P. Members agreed to allocate the following amounts:

- £70k for a circular path around the recreation ground (and applying for the balance from NFDC CIL)
- £120k to improve the play area at the recreation ground
- £10k to improve the accessibility to the play area and riverbank
- £6k for boreholes at the allotments
- £20k for bandstand/covered area at recreation ground
- £10k for help provide a building for the Avon Valley Shed

Total allocated £236k (currently CIL allocation held £231k). Agreed by Members.

17. To consider Christmas donations from the Mayors Allowance

Discussion took place about whether full council should be involved in agreeing expenditure from the Mayors Allowance. The Mayor was asked to confirm what he would propose to spend the allowance on. It was agreed to allocate £500 to a Christmas meal and to make a donation of £250 to the Foodbank. This would leave funds available should further donations need to be considered before the end of the financial year.

18. To review the following policies and registers – none

19. To note any items of correspondence – none

20. To receive a report from the Clerk and any other relevant business – Cllrs agreed that next Remembrance Day crosses should also be put on the graves of the service men put in family graves.

21. To note the date of the next meeting as 31st January 2024

The RFO noted that there is no meeting in December and so the payment of accounts will be circulated via email for approval prior to payment before Christmas.

The meeting ended at 20.35