

BERKHAMSTED TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of a Meeting of the

FINANCE & POLICY COMMITTEE

Held in the Council Chamber, Civic Centre, Berkhamsted

on Monday 10 April 2017 at 7.30 pm

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Councillors Mrs C Green (Chair)
 S Bateman
 Dr I Reay (substituting for Cllr D Collins)
 G Stevens
 G Yearwood

EX OFFICIO: Cllr T Ritchie (Town Mayor)

COUNCILLORS: Cllr A Armytage
 Cllr G Corry

ALSO PRESENT: Mrs J Mason – Town Clerk

(There were no members of the public present)

OPENING MATTERS

In the absence of both the Chair and Vice Chair it was necessary to appoint a Councillor from those members present to act as chair for the duration of the meeting. It was proposed and unanimously agreed that Cllr Mrs C Green should be appointed.

FP 16/17 Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr D Collins, Cllr E Collins and Cllr B Newton.

FP 17/17 Declarations of interest regarding items on the agenda

None.

FP 18/17 Approval of the minutes of the previous meeting held on 16 January 2017

The minutes of the meeting held on 16 January 2017 were approved as a correct record and were duly signed as such by the Chair.

FP 19/17 Chair's Communications

(i) HAPTC Bulletin March 2017 (circulated to councillors 29 January 2017);

- (ii) “Become a Local Council Charter Branch” – NALC Bulletin dated 24 March 2017;

It was agreed to refer this item to the T & E Committee (next meeting is on 2 May 2017);

- (iii) NALC Chief Executive’s Bulletin 11.

FP 20/17 To suspend Standing Orders to allow public participation

Not applicable as no members of the public were present.

FINANCIAL MATTERS

FP 21 /17 Grant Applications

The Town Clerk referred the Committee to discussions at the 11 April 2016 meeting (see minute FP 33/16) when it had been agreed that in future years £300 should be included in budget proposals to be paid to the Royal British Legion (Berkhamsted and Tring Branch) to assist in funding the band on Remembrance Sunday.

It was **RESOLVED** unanimously that a payment of £300 be made to the Royal British Legion (Berkhamsted and Tring branch) towards the costs for the Remembrance Sunday service on 12 November 2017.

(This payment is made under the Localism Act 2011, General Power of Competence.)

FP 22 /17 Income and Expenditure including Receipts and Payments Schedule

- (i) The **Income and Expenditure and Variance Analysis** at 28 February 2017 were noted and approved.

Various items contained within the analysis were discussed. Cllr Yearwood enquired about income code 0677 “YC Car Park Fees”. The budget had been set at £1,400 but the actual income received and predicted year end income were only £458. The Town Clerk advised that the spaces had previously been leased to the NHS. It had been anticipated when the budget was set that this arrangement would continue. However, the NHS had decided that they no longer needed the spaces and they had paid for the notice period necessary to terminate the contract. It was hoped that in the future the spaces might be re-let.

Referring to expenditure code 7350 “ Mayoral Expenses” the Town Mayor expressed the view that in the forthcoming review of Councillor Allowances, Travel and Subsistence (FC 119/16 refers), consideration might be given to payment of a Mayor’s allowance to future Mayors. He explained that although he was coming to the end of his term of office, he would like to ensure that in future no candidate for the office of Mayor should feel unable to accept because of personal financial constraints. The Town Clerk had done some research on the subject and would be contacting other Towns and Parishes to compare practice in this area. Cllr

Yearwood commented that this analysis should also refer to the comparative size of the Towns and Parishes.

- (ii) The Receipts and Payments Schedule for the period 1 January 2017 – 28 February 2017 has been sent to Cllrs B Newton and G Stevens for scrutiny.

Cllr Stevens asked whether transaction 27132 (£669.40 paid to HMRC) marked the end of the on-going saga during which a variety of inaccurate demands had been made of the Town Council. The Town Clerk confirmed that she had satisfied herself that £669.40 had been due and this amount had therefore been paid. The remainder of the alleged debt (£884.50) had been strenuously refuted and following extensive correspondence in January and February she had received an acknowledgement that the money was not owed but had been misallocated by HMRC. A verbal apology for the “appalling service” had been received but the promised written apology was still awaited.

Cllr Stevens then signed the schedule which was approved.

FP 23/17 Financial Regulations

The revised Financial Regulations were **received and approved** subject to some changes to the wording in part 5 “Banking Arrangements and Authorisation of Payments” so it is gender neutral. The Regulations will be put to the Full Council scheduled for 24 April 2017 for adoption.

FP 24/17 Bus shelter outside Ashlyns School in Chesham Road

The Committee considered a resolution, referred from the T & E Committee held on 13 March 2017 (TE 24/17 refers), that the Town Council should make a financial contribution towards connecting a power source to light the bus shelter outside Ashlyns School, Chesham Road. Because there is no convenient power supply a trench would have to be excavated from across the road and the cost would be in the region of £5,000.

During discussion it was noted that Hertfordshire County Council had not been able to justify the expenditure and it was likely that if the project were to go ahead they would expect the Town Council to pay the majority of the cost. There was already a light across the road from the shelter. Any light in the shelter itself would be in use for a very short period of time given that the last bus departs at about 4.30 pm. Even in winter most pupils would have left well before this time.

It was **RESOLVED** that the costs outweighed any benefit and therefore the Town Council would not make any financial contribution.

FP 25/17 Civic Centre Lease with effect from 16 January 2016 (four year term)

The lease has now had all the suggested changes incorporated into it and was signed by Cllrs Ritchie and Stevens. The Town Clerk will liaise as necessary with staff at DBC.

POLICY MATTERS

FP26/17 Meeting dates 2017/18

The schedule of meeting dates circulated with the agenda for the Council year 2017/18 was **approved**.

YOUTH MATTERS

FP 27 /17 Youth Town Council

It was **noted** that meetings were held on 18 January, 8 February and 8 March 2017. Cllr Armytage reported that the Swan Youth Project were looking at options to replace the project manager who had left recently.

FP 28/17 EXCLUSION OF PRESS & PUBLIC

Not applicable as no members of the public were present.

FP 29/17 Land ownership – Land Adjacent to Normandy Drive and Dellfield Allotments

The Town Clerk confirmed that discussions and correspondence with DBC were on-going. The most recent letter dated 14 March 2017 from the Corporate Director, Finance and Operations was discussed. Additionally, the Town Clerk had found references to the division of land and property between the successor parish and DBC in 1974 and the County Archivist had been commissioned to search further documents from around that period. Any information arising from these searches would be available within a fortnight and it was agreed that the matter should be discussed prior to any further discussions with DBC that might be necessary.

The Town Clerk would also reply to a letter received recently from a young member of the public, thanking him for his interest, excellent map and drawings of play equipment.

FP 30/17 Staffing Matters – salaries

The following recommendations made by the Support Services Group were approved:

- (i) Mrs A McHugh should progress to Points above Substantive range with effect from 1 March 2017 (salary point 23 with effect from that date). Additionally, her job title will be Administration Officer.
- (ii) That Mrs J Mason be awarded incremental progression to salary point 42, LC3 scale, with effect from 1 April 2017 having completed 1 year's satisfactory service.

FP31/17 Hertfordshire Pension Scheme – Individual valuation position for Town and Parish Councils

- (i) Lynne Apostolos' 13 March 2017 e-mail and attachments were discussed.

- (ii) It was **agreed** that the Town Clerk should seek further information and input, in particular from HAPTCs and other Town and Parish Councils, prior to referring the matter to a meeting of the Full Council.

FP 32/17 Business Rates Increase, Civic Centre and Lagley Meadow Youth Centre

The increases to the Town Council's small business rates at both the Civic Centre and Lagley Meadow were discussed. These were equivalent to a 7% increase at each premises. The Town Clerk had asked DBC if the Youth Centre should be exempt because it was mainly used for nursery education. However, a DBC officer had confirmed that this was not an exempt activity.

It was **agreed** that a meeting of the Lagley Meadow Sub Committee should be called in the new Council year. The Committee would include membership from all Councillor groupings.

Signed.....

Date.....