

BERKHAMSTED TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the

FINANCE & POLICY COMMITTEE

Held in the Council Chamber, Civic Centre, Berkhamsted on

Monday 11 March 2019 at 7.30 pm

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Councillors B Newton (Chair)
J Jones (Vice Chairman)
Mrs C Green
T Ritchie
G Stevens
G Yearwood

ALSO PRESENT

Councillor G Corry
Officer Mrs J Mason, Town Clerk

OPENING MATTERS

FP 13/19 To receive **apologies for absence**

There were no apologies for absence.

FP 14/19 To receive **declarations of interest** regarding items on the agenda

Cllr T Ritchie and Cllr J Jones advised that they were both Town Council appointees to Northchurch United Charities.

FP 15/19 To approve the **minutes of the previous meeting** held on 14 January 2019.

The minutes of the meeting held on 14 January 2019 were approved as a correct record and were duly signed as such by the Chair.

FP 16/19 **Chair's Communications**

- (i) Chiltern Society Events - February and March 2019
- (ii) NHS Herts Valley CCG - Meeting to share options for developing hospital provision in West Herts on 7 March 2019 at Shendish Manor 7 – 9 pm

It was **noted** that the Town Mayor had attended this meeting. Cllr Yearwood had also been present and reported that despite the very professional and informative presentation made by CCG representatives, it appeared that very few of the many attendees were persuaded that the

refurbishment of Watford General, rather than building a new hospital elsewhere, was a viable option.

- (iii) Berkhamsted Citizens Association February Newsletter
- (iv) Public Health eNews - a newsletter from Hertfordshire's Public Health Service.

FP 17/19 To suspend Standing Orders to allow public participation

No members of the public were present.

FINANCIAL MATTERS

FP 18/19 Grant Application

The following grant applications were considered:

- (i) Application from Mr P Elsworth on behalf of Berkofest requesting £300 towards the cost of redesigning a website to market a book festival in Berkhamsted on Sunday 12 May 2019

It was **RESOLVED** to award a grant of £300.

- (ii) Application from Northchurch United Charities requesting £450 towards the cost of the charity's projects. This is to enable it to disburse funds to individuals in financial straits and community groups based in the town to support those of any age who are disabled or disadvantaged due to restrictions imposed by health or infirmity or difficult circumstances

It was **RESOLVED** to award a grant of £450.

- (iii) Application from The Hospice of St Francis requesting £1,086 to purchase a syringe driver for the community team

It was **RESOLVED** to award a grant of £1,086.

- (iv) Grant application from Chiltern Open Air Museum for £500 towards the cost of making 10 of the 30 costumes needed for a new project to bring buildings, such as the Rossway Granary from Berkhamsted, and the ordinary Chilterns people who lived in them, back to life through the use of costumed interpreters.

It was **RESOLVED** to award a grant of £500.

FP 19/19 Income and Expenditure including Receipts and Payments Schedule

- (i) The committee **noted and approved** the Income and Expenditure and Variance Analysis at 28 February previously circulated. The report is also on the website.
- (ii) The **Receipts and Payments Schedule for the period 1 December 2018 – 28 February 2019** had been sent to Cllrs B Newton and G Stevens

for scrutiny. They had no issues to raise and signed and dated the schedule. A copy of the schedule is also on the website.

FP 20/19 Account Signatories

In view of the forthcoming elections the Town Clerk **was authorised** to seek two additional signatories for the current account.

FP 21/19 Investment Strategy

- (i) A proposal that the funds with the Saffron Building Society (£83,861) be transferred from the corporate maturity account (0.20% per annum AER) to a Saffron Building Society one year fixed rate bond (1.5% per annum AER) **was approved**. The opportunity will also be taken to review the signatories and the amount deposited will be topped up to £85,000;
- (ii) It was **noted** that further savings accounts will be sought to mitigate the risk associated with holding balances over £85,000 in individual accounts.
- (iii) On receipt of the precept it **was agreed** to transfer £38,800 to the Santander deposit account (balance at 31 January 2019 £46,165). The interest rate is currently 0.35% per annum.

FP 22/19 Pension matters – the Town Clerk gave a brief update on the following

- (i) Hertfordshire Pension Fund's Annual Employers' Forum 16 January 2019

The fund actuaries had seemed optimistic about performance. The importance of accurate employee data had been emphasised. The funding strategy and areas of investment had been an interesting area of discussion.
- (ii) McCloud Appeal Court Judgement

On 20 December 2018 the Court of Appeal had held that transitional provisions put in place as part of reforms to both the judicial and firefighters pension schemes had been constituted as unlawful, direct, age discrimination. It is indicated that the final outcome of the case would have implications for pension arrangements in local government. In the meantime, there will be no change on 1 April 2019 to current contribution rates.
- (iii) The triennial valuation of the scheme will take place in 2019.

POLICY MATTERS

FP 23/19 Berkhamsted Town Council Privacy Notices

The document prepared by the Town Clerk was reviewed and approved. It will be put forward for ratification at Full Council on 18 March 2019.

FP 24/19 Festive Lighting 2019

- (i) To **receive** an update following HCC seminar on 25 February 2019 attended by the Town Clerk

The seminar, which is held annually, is a useful reminder and update on the regulations associated with festive lighting and other attachments in the highway such as hanging baskets. HCC had announced that licence applications had to be submitted by the beginning of July which is several months earlier than previously.

- (ii) To **discuss** installation of additional infrastructure, tendering and project timing issues in the light of the above

The timetable impacts significantly and adversely on the Town Clerk's project planning for the anticipated new lighting scheme and retendering of the contract. HCC had been asked to attend a site meeting to discuss proposals but had said this would not be necessary. The Clerk will continue to press for a meeting and will obtain quotes for additional infrastructure and stress testing of columns as soon as possible.

FP 25/19 Review of Standing Orders and Financial Regulations

To **note** that this review will take place at Full Council on 18 March 2019. In view of other workload commitments, the Full Council will be asked to approve the areas that need reviewing. The Town Clerk will then revise the document and circulate to Councillors. **Action Town Clerk**

YOUTH MATTERS

FP 26/19 Youth Town Council

It was **noted** that meetings were held on 6 February and 6 March 2019.

FP 27/19 EXCLUSION OF PRESS & PUBLIC

No members of the public were present.

FP 28/19 Update on awarding of budgeted projects and costs

The Town Clerk outlined the work to be undertaken and reviewed the costings received from each contractor as set out in a summary document for each project. The Committee was pleased **to approve** the following:

(i) Extension to water system at Sunnyside New Allotments

Three quotes had been sought and the work will include two new water tanks and the repair and repositioning of an existing tank damaged by an unidentified vehicle. The work will be undertaken by Agripower.

(ii) Restoration of vandalised astro turf area to grass

Three quotes were sought and the work will include the removal of the carpet, the concrete sub surface, remove from site, replace subsoil, top soil, seed and replace Heras fencing until seed has taken. The work will be undertaken by Agripower.

It was **noted** that the grass would have to be cut and that a lawn mower would need to be purchased, unless DBC or another organistaion could undertake this task. The Town Clerk will be looking at the options. At Cllr Yearwood's suggestion it was proposed that the Town Clerk should explore the possibility of the contractor taking responsibility until after the first cut.

Action Town Clerk

FP 29/19 Sunnyside Rural Trust Lease Renewal

To **discuss** legal issues arising.

The Town Clerk referred to a letter received on 8 March from the Town Council's solicitor the content of which would impact on her drafting of a revised lease and could also lead to unanticipated delay. She had been investigating and was seeking further advice and clarification prior to Full Council on 18 March. The issues would also be discussed on 12 March at a meeting already scheduled with Sunnyside Rural Trust.

Action Town Clerk

FP 30/19 DCK Accounting Solutions / Staff Vacancy

To **receive** feedback following the first day of the contract

A member staff from DCK Accounting Solutions had attended the office on 8 March for the first one day monthly visit to undertake some of the tasks previously undertaken by the Finance and Allotment Officer. All had gone well with all tasks allocated completed in a timely and efficient manner.

It was agreed that the Town Clerk should put forward proposals to the Support Services Group for filling the vacant post at an early opportunity.

Action Town Clerk

FP 31/19 Close of meeting

The meeting closed at 8.14 pm.

Signed.....

Date.....