

BERKHAMSTED TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the

FINANCE & POLICY COMMITTEE

Held in the Council Chamber, Civic Centre, Berkhamsted on

Monday 16 March 2020 at 9.05 pm

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Councillors G Stevens (Chair)
 R Freedman (Vice Chair)
 P de Hoest
 J Jones
 N Taylor
 P White

ALSO PRESENT

Officer Mrs J Mason, Town Clerk

OPENING MATTERS

FP 10/20 To receive **apologies for absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr N Woolner.

FP 11/20 To receive **declarations of interest** regarding items on the agenda

Cllr G Stevens declared a personal interest in agenda item FP 15/20 (i) because he is a member of the Rotary Club of Berkhamsted who are requesting grant funding;

Cllr R Freedman declared a personal interest in item FP 18/20 because his wife had been involved in writing HCC's advice on Covid-19 (Coronavirus);

Cllr P de Hoest declared a personal interest in agenda item FP 15/20 (ii) because the Chair of Dacorum First Credit Union, who has been making the application, is known to him.

FP 12/20 To approve the **minutes of the previous meeting** held on 6 January 2020

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 6 January 2020 were **approved** as a correct record and were duly signed as such by the Chair.

FP 13/20 **Chair's Communications**

- (i) CPRE Herts Award Scheme - Recognising Good in Hertfordshire – closing date for nominations is 31 May 2020.
(17-02-20)*

- (ii) Walking in Hertfordshire February 2020 e-Bulletin
(17-02-20)*
- (iii) NALC Chief Executive's Bulletin
(21-02-20)*

*(Date circulated to Councillors)

FP 14/20 To suspend Standing Orders to allow public participation

There were no members of the public present.

FINANCIAL MATTERS

FP 15/20 Grant Applications

- (i) The Committee **considered** a grant application from the Rotary Club of Berkhamsted for £225 to fund 30 “extra” veterans to attend a trip to the National Memorial arboretum for Forces to tie in with the 75th anniversary of VE Day.

Following a discussion the grant application **was agreed** in full. The Town Clerk will prepare and send a cheque and covering letter.

- (ii) It was **noted** that consideration of a grant application from Dacorum First Credit Union for £1,000 will be deferred pending receipt of information requested.

- (iii) The Committee **considered** a grant application from Berkofest for £750 to go towards updating the Berkofest website and on-line marketing tools in support of activities, including the Berkofest Book Festival to be held on 11 May 2020.

Following a discussion the grant application **was agreed** in full. The Town Clerk will prepare and send a cheque and covering letter.

- (iv) To **consider** a grant application from Berkhamsted Castle Trust for £982 towards the cost of a wild life survey at the Castle. This will be undertaken by Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Trust.

Following a discussion the grant application **was agreed** in full. The Town Clerk will prepare and send a cheque and covering letter.

- (v) To **consider** a grant application for £1,000 from the Hospice of St Francis towards the cost of a new hairdressing service for people with life-limiting illnesses staying in the Inpatient Unit.

Following a discussion the grant application **was agreed** in full. The Town Clerk will prepare and send a cheque and covering letter.

FP 16/20 Hanging Baskets

- (i) It was **noted** that a seminar organised by HCC regarding the regulations relating to attachments in the highway was held in Stevenage on Monday

9 March; this is an annual update which relates to hanging baskets and festive decorations;

- (ii) During the coming weeks the Town Clerk will be seeking quotations from container suppliers/ installers and also nurseries who will provide the planting and care. The containers will be installed on lighting columns along the section of the High Street running from the main junction up towards Marks and Spencer. This is subject to granting of the necessary licence from HCC.
- (iii) The intention is to enter into a three year agreement with the planting provider.
- (iv) Plants selected would be bee and insect friendly.

FP 17/20 Income and Expenditure including Receipts and Payments Schedule

- (i) The Committee **noted and approved** the Income and Expenditure and Variance Analysis at **31 January 2020** (attached to agenda).
- (ii) The payments and receipts schedules for the period **1 December 2019 – 31 January 2020** had been sent to Cllr G Stevens for scrutiny and he reported back that everything was in order. These had been attached to the agenda apart from the receipts schedule for January which has been sent under confidential cover to Cllr Stevens. This was because it contained personally identifiable information which if redacted would render the document illegible. Total receipts for the month were £6,959.28 mainly accounted for by a VAT repayment of £5,175.74
- (iii) The Committee **noted** the balance sheet at **31 January 2020** (attached to agenda).

POLICY MATTERS

FP 18/20 Coronavirus – Government Action Plan and Guidance

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-action-plan>
<https://www.who.int/docs/default-source/coronaviruse/getting-workplace-ready-for-covid-19.pdf>;

- (i) The links above are to the Government's action plan on dealing with the coronavirus together with workplace guidance. These were published on 3 March 2020 and copies have been placed on the website;
- (ii) It was **noted** that at a recent staff meeting preparations for dealing with an outbreak affecting the locality and the Town Council were discussed. In the light of the above guidance we are in the "contain/delay" stage so the key actions therefore are good hygiene, care in interactions with others eg avoiding hand shaking, employing social distancing together with self-quarantining and self/household isolation depending on circumstances. The aim is to be flexible within the bounds of government guidance so as to ensure service to councillors and members of the public. Hand sanitisers are available in the office and council chamber. Arrangements

for working from home and closing the office to visitors have been discussed and will be implemented as necessary in line with updated advice from Government or health authorities;

- (iii) To **consider and agree** any further actions arising from government advice issued in the interim
 - a. Annual Town Meeting – As discussed by e-mail with working group chairs and after further consideration of the current status of advice, it was **agreed** that this should go ahead on 19 March with a much curtailed agenda (subject to evolving circumstances and advice). Although NALC were engaging with Government about possible legislation to amend the 1 March – 1 June statutory window during which Town/Parish meetings must be held, no guidance had been published. An amended agenda (with no visiting speakers and no “market place” event) will be circulated and placed on the notice board, website and Facebook page. There will be no refreshments and chairs will be spaced well apart. People in at risk categories especially will be asked not to attend. A future public meeting covering environmental and climate change issues in particular will be arranged later in the year;
 - b. Remote meetings – Cllr White had raised this as a possibility. It was **noted** that at this stage council and committee meetings held in this manner could not be accommodated under current legislation;
 - c. Meeting Statutory and Other Deadlines and Obligations It was **agreed** that the focus during the crisis should be to ensure continuity of business/service to the public and the meeting of deadlines, such as the approval of the accounts. Every effort would be made to ensure a quorum was met at meetings and a de minimis approach should be adopted as necessary in the setting of agenda. The key risk areas are staff availability, failing to meet statutory deadlines, continuing to make timely payments to suppliers and managing the three weekly cycle of planning committee meetings. Planned activities may have to be postponed depending on circumstances.

FP 19/20 Festival of Light

The Committee **received, reviewed and adopted** the notes of the Festival of Light “wash-up” meeting held on 11 February 2020. The 24 November 2019 event had been very successful and this year’s event would be on Sunday 6 December 2020. Councillors passed there thanks to the Town Clerk and all members of the Festival of Light committee.

FP 20/20 Close of Meeting

The meeting closed at 9.55 pm.

Signed.....

Date.....