

BERKHAMSTED TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the

FINANCE & POLICY COMMITTEE

Held in the Council Chamber, Civic Centre, Berkhamsted on

Monday 23 September 2019 at 7.30 pm

MEMBERS PRESENT:

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

ALSO PRESENT

Councillor A Armytage and G Corry

Officer Mrs J Mason, Town Clerk

1 member of the public.

OPENING MATTERS

FP 63/19 To receive **apologies for absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr P White.

FP 64/19 To receive **declarations of interest** regarding items on the agenda

None

FP 65/19 To approve the **minutes of the previous meeting** held on 29 July 2019

The minutes of the meeting held on 29 July 2019 were approved as a correct record and were duly signed as such by the Chair.

FP 66/19 **Chair's Communications**

- (i) "Thank you" letters and e-mails have been received from organisations who were awarded grants at the 29 July F & P meeting and also from The Hospice of St Francis (granted £1,086 at the 11 March 2019 meeting)
- (ii) NALC Chief Executive's Bulletin dated 23 August 2019 (27-08-19)*
- (iii) NALC Chief Executive's Bulletin dated 30 August 2019 (30-08-19)*

- (iv) BDCC Newsletter September 2019
(4-09-19)*
- (v) NALC Chief Executive's Newsletter dated 6 September 2019
(6-09-19)*
- (vi) Rectory Lane Cemetery Project September newsletter
(10-09-19)*
- (vii) Invitation from the Grants & Funds Officer, Police and Crime Commissioner's office, about Road Safety Fund Round 4 Launch Awareness Event on 10 October 2019
- (viii) NALC Chief Executive's Bulletin dated 13 September 2019
(13-09-19)*

*(Date circulated to Councillors)

FP 67/19 To suspend Standing Orders to allow public participation

The Chair suspended standing orders to enable Tony Noakes, Trusts and Grants Officer, Keech Hospice Care, to make a brief presentation in support of the grant application at FP 68/19 below.

Mr Noakes gave an overview of the BraveHerts Children's Appeal which will provide funds to reach children in Berkhamsted and the wider area who are in need of hospice or palliative care but not as yet receiving the required level of care. A copy of the handout circulated is attached to these minutes. He explained that there were currently three children with life limiting illnesses in Berkhamsted who could benefit. Some funding is provided by the NHS but covers only 30% of existing costs. He emphasised the continuous need for fundraising not just to maintain the current level of services but also to expand and enhance provision through initiatives such as the BraveHerts appeal.

Committee members asked a number of questions particularly around the challenges of fund raising, current benefactors and the number of patients actually residing in Berkhamsted who would benefit. Mr Noakes also explained the differentiation between the services provided by Rennie Grove's Pepper Foundation service and that provided by Keech. In short, Pepper can provide care at home but not inpatient care. There were fewer in-patient beds for children than for adults because of the improved and very welcome survival rates in recent years for childhood cancers. Additionally, other parish councils had been approached for funding and HCC councillors had made donations from localities budgets. It was also noted that funds raised at last year's Festival of Light via the Elves Posting House had been donated to Keech Children's Hospice Care.

Thanking Mr Noakes for his presentation the chair reinstated standing orders.

FINANCIAL MATTERS

FP 68/19 Grant Application

To consider the following grant application:

- (i) To **consider** a grant application of £1,000 from Keech Hospice Care to go towards the BraveHerts Children's Appeal which aims to expand and deliver a full children's hospice specialist service across Berkhamsted Town Council area and Hertfordshire. The application states that some children with life-limiting conditions in Hertfordshire are not currently getting the hospice care they deserve. The project will make support from Keech Hospice Care more accessible by providing more services and support in the local community and reach out to more families that are estimated to need specialist care (see FP 67/19 above).

Following a discussion it was **RESOLVED** that a grant £500 should be awarded. This amount, although less than that requested, reflects the fact that the Town Council has in the past supported Rennie Grove and the Hospice of St Francis. It was **agreed** that the Town Clerk should also pass to Mr Noakes contact details of other organisations in Berkhamsted who might be approached for funding eg Rotary.

FP 69/19 Re-appointment of Internal Auditor for 2018/19

- i. It was **RESOLVED** that Auditing Solutions Ltd, Clackerbrook Farm, 46 The Common, Bromham, SN15 2JJ be re-appointed as the Town Council's internal auditors:
- ii. It was **RESOLVED** that the Town Clerk should confirm the above in writing to Auditing Solutions.

FP 70/19 Annual Accounts for the Year Ended 31 March 2019 – Completion of Limited Assurance Review by PKF Littlejohn LLP (External Auditors)

- i. The Committee **received, approved and accepted** the signed Annual Governance and Accountability Return received under cover of the External Auditor's 9 September 2019 letter.
- ii. It was **noted** that the certificate, notice of conclusion of audit and full return with supporting documentation were published on 16 September 2019 on the Town Council's website. The notice of conclusion of audit was placed on all Town Council notice boards and all papers made available for public inspection as set out on the notice of conclusion of audit. Public access to documents will be available for not less than five years;
- iii. It Committee **noted** the auditor's opinion that on the basis of their review the information in the annual return is in accordance with proper practices and there are no other matters that have come to their attention giving cause for concern that relevant legislation and regulatory requirements have not been met.

FC 71/19 The Committee **noted** that items FP 69/19 & FP 70/19 must also be reported formally to Full Council on 11 November 2019.

FP 72/19 Income and Expenditure including Receipts and Payments Schedule

- (i) It was **noted** that the new finance software package (Rialtas Omega) had now been installed. The majority of data had been input apart from last year's budget. This will be completed shortly.
- (ii) The Committee **noted and approved** the Income and Expenditure and Variance Analysis at 31 August 2019.
- (iii) Budget 2019-20 – it was noted that the Town Clerk will be putting virement proposals to Full Council for discussion on 11 November 2019;
- (iv) The payments and receipts schedules for the period 1 July – 31 August 2019 had been sent to Cllr G Stevens for scrutiny and he reported back that he **had no concerns to report** and added that he found the new reports clearer than those produced by Sage.

POLICY MATTERS

FP 73/19 Standing Orders

- (i) Motion before Cllr P White. (In Cllr White's absence Cllr de Hoest introduced this item)

Notes & preamble:

This council believes that communication with residents is a vital part of an engaged community and successful democracy.

This council encourages councillors to communicate with residents on local issues, events, and future plans, supporting community cohesion and development.

Cllr de Hoest added that standing order 21 allows only the Mayor, Town Clerk and Committee chairs to speak to the press or media on behalf of the Town Council.

Resolution:

It was **noted** that standing orders were last reviewed at Full Council on 18 March 2019 and re-adopted at Full Council on 13 May 2019. It was then **discussed and agreed, following a vote**, that a proposal for recommendation to Full Council with reference to standing order 21, Relations with Press/Media, should be made. Of the committee members present, five voted for the motion and Cllr J Jones voted against it. The motion was therefore carried and standing order 21 is amended as follows:

The removal of the following text is approved:

1) Only the Town Mayor, Committee Chairman and Clerk are authorised to make statements or comments to the press/media representing the views of the Town Council.

2) All requests from the press or other media for an oral or written statement or comment from the Town Council shall be processed in accordance with 21 a (1) above.

3) In accordance with this policy other councillors shall not, in their official capacity, provide oral or written statements or written articles to the press or other media.

The **following text shall be inserted** (deletions shown are amendments agreed during discussion and voted upon)

1) The Town Clerk, Town Mayor, committee chairs ~~and clerk~~ are the primary spokespersons for the Town Council.

2) If councillors ~~or staff~~ wish to respond to questions regarding the views of the Town Council, they should make reference to relevant decisions made by the council, and should avoid speculating on the views of the Town Council if no relevant decision has been made.

3) In any communications regarding the decisions of the Town Council, councillors must take reasonable steps to represent them accurately, including a reference to the date of the decision. Deliberate misrepresentation of decisions taken by the Town Council in communications shall be considered a breach of the code of conduct.

~~4) When referencing decisions of previous Town Councils, this must be made clear in the communication.~~

5) When individual town councillors or groups of councillors are communicating their views, they must make it clear that these are individual views, not those of the Town Council. When communicating with the press or public, as in all activities, councillors should adhere to the Nolan principles set out in the code of conduct.

- (ii) It was **noted** that the Town Clerk is currently researching and preparing a media and social media policy document and has also arranged for a number of Town Councillors to attend social media training at DBC's offices. It was **agreed** that further possible amendments to standing order 21 should be reviewed in the light of this work once completed.
- (iii) It was also **noted** that a further general review of standing orders and financial regulations will shortly be undertaken by the Town Clerk to ensure compliance with legislation, regulations and other advice from statutory and other bodies (note – standing orders must be reviewed at least annually and as necessary at shorter intervals in the light of the factors mentioned).

FP 74/19 Festival of Light Committee

To **receive** an update on arrangements and to **note** that the next Committee meeting will be on 24 September 2019.

The Town Clerk advised that arrangements were progressing well. For example, the new motifs for the lighting columns and new tree lights had been ordered as had the tree itself. The licence application to HCC for erecting the lights had also been submitted and had just been granted. The entertainment was being organised although confirmation was awaited regarding the London Community

Gospel Choir following receipt of which the running order could be agreed and finalised.

FP 75/19 EXCLUSION OF PRESS & PUBLIC

To **RESOLVE** that under Section 1 of the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960 the public and press be excluded for the remainder of the meeting, because it is likely that publicity would prejudice the public interest by reason of the confidential nature of the business or for other special reasons stated in the resolution, arising from the nature of the business or proceedings.

FP 76/19 Swan Youth Project Funding

To **receive** feedback from an informal meeting earlier in the evening with SYP trustees and to **consider** future action.

The Trustees had outlined the financial and other challenges facing SYP. The Committee then discussed the services provided through the Project and the fact that currently the Town Council's annual funding support is £15,000. Clearly, the Trustees would like this figure to be increased. It was **agreed** that this matter should be referred to Full Council for discussion and that other options, such as matched funding up to a certain limit, should also be explored.

FP 77/19 Close of meeting

The meeting closed at 9.36 pm.

Signed.....

Date.....