

# BERKHAMSTED TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the

## FINANCE & POLICY COMMITTEE

Held in the Council Chamber, Civic Centre, Berkhamsted on

Tuesday 28 May 2019 at 7.30 pm

### MEMBERS PRESENT:

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

### ALSO PRESENT

Councillor M Hardinge  
Officer Mrs J Mason, Town Clerk

### OPENING MATTERS

#### FP 32/19 (i) To **elect a Chair** of the Committee for the Council year **2019/20**

Cllr P White proposed and Cllr N Taylor seconded that Cllr G Stevens be appointed as Chair for the forthcoming year. There being no other nominations Cllr Stevens was appointed unanimously.

#### (ii) To **elect a Vice-Chair** of the Committee for the Council year **2019/20**

Cllr G Stevens proposed and Cllr P White seconded that Cllr R Freedman be elected as Vice Chair for the forthcoming year. There being no other nomination Cllr Freedman was appointed unanimously.

#### (iii) To receive **apologies for absence**

The Chair welcomed members to their first meeting of the new Council term.

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr N Woolner who was attending a rescheduled meeting of the Development Management Committee at DBC.

#### FP 33/19 To receive **declarations of interest** regarding items on the agenda

Cllr G Stevens declared a personal interest in item 37/19 Grant Applications because the treasurer of the Happy Wanderers Club was known to him.

**FP 34/19** To approve the **minutes of the previous meeting** held on 11 March 2019

The minutes were approved as a correct record and were duly signed as such by the Chair.

**FP 35/19 Chair's Communications**

(i) Information forwarded from HAPTC for Councils in the Local Government Pension Scheme regarding Pension Board Employer Representative Recruitment.

(ii) HAPTC - VE Day 75 - 8 May 2020

It was **agreed** that the Town Clerk should contact the chair of the local British Legion branch to discuss their plans for the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the victory in Europe and then report back to this committee.

**FP 36/19 To suspend Standing Orders to allow public participation**

Not applicable

**FINANCIAL MATTERS**

**FP 37/19 Grant Application**

To consider the following grant applications:

(i) Following a discussion it was **RESOLVED** that the grant application made by Mrs B Bonwitt on behalf of Happy Wanderers Club for the Disabled requesting £300 should be **approved**. The grant will go towards the cost of hiring a disabled-access boat and other costs associated with arrangements for an afternoon boat trip on the canal from Apsley Lock.

The Town Clerk will circulate to members a list of grant applications made in the last two years together with a copy of the grant policy and application form.  
**Action Town Clerk**

**FP 38/19 Income and Expenditure including Receipts and Payments Schedule**

**(i) The Income and Expenditure and Variance Analyses**

The Income and Expenditure and Variance Analyses at 31 March 2019 and 30 April 2019 were **noted and approved**. Given that this was the first F & P meeting of the new committee, there was a detailed discussion arising from a variety of queries relating to items on the reports.

In particular, it was noted that the services of the Data Protection Office should be reviewed during the next round of budget discussions. The difficulty of predicting CIL receipts for budgetary purposes was also discussed. This is because CIL monies are not liable until a development commences and given that planning permissions are valid for three years

it is difficult to estimate receipts in a given year. The Town Clerk advised that DBC's CIL Officer attended CIL Working Group meetings and was able to give more precise updates on anticipated receipts based on her knowledge of commencements. The committee was pleased to note that there were funds in the budget for the continuance of the recently re-established newsletter and a contribution to Hertfordshire Constabulary towards PCSO funding. The details of the latter had still to be discussed with the constabulary.

**(ii) To approve ear marked reserves.**

Referring to page 1 of the I & E report at 31 March 2019, the Town Clerk went through the detail of the Town Council's ear marked reserves which were set out at the foot of that page. The General, Election Cost, Asset Renewal Fund, Allotment, Defibrillator, CIL and Alan Dickman Fund reserves were all pre-existing reserves. However, the CIL reserve had, more correctly, been expanded to show receipts into the reserve on a year by year basis. This would facilitate spending decisions and help to ensure that the five year rule on spending CIL receipts was adhered to. A new reserve, 1342 YC Kick Boards and Astro Turf, had been set up to cover the cost of a delayed 2018 -19 project that had been undertaken in April 2019. The cost of this project would be taken from the reserve (£7,640). Similarly, the water supply extension project at Sunnyside New had been delayed until April and these costs (£2,640) would be taken from the Allotment Reserve Fund.

Following a discussion the above allocation of ear marked reserves was **approved**. It was also **noted** that a Festive Lighting Reserve might also be requested by the Town Clerk once costings for the revised lighting scheme and infrastructure costs had been finalised.

**(iii) Payments schedules for the period 1 March 2019 – 31 March 2019 and 1 April – 30 April 2019**

Cllr Stevens reported that he had reviewed the payments schedules and had no concerns regarding the content. Committee members had a short discussion regarding items on the schedule.

**FP 39/19 Draft Accounting Statements Annual Governance & Accountability Return**

The draft statement had been circulated with the agenda for information. This had been reviewed by the Internal Auditor when she visited on Friday 24 May 2019 and she had agreed that the figures were correct. The results of the Internal Audit report will be formally received at Full Council on 10 June 2019 when the AGAR will also be received. In the meantime, the Committee was pleased to note that the Internal Auditor was of the view that the Town Council had maintained more than adequate and effective internal control measures during the financial year 2018-19.

## **FP 40/19 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.

No members of the public were present.

## **FP 41/19 Update on recent budgeted projects**

### **(i) Extension to water system at Sunnyside New Allotments**

The allocation of an ear marked reserve for this project's costs had already been considered at FP 39/19 (ii) above. The work itself had gone well and allotment holders were pleased to have some additional water tanks on the site.

### **(ii) Restoration of vandalised astro turf area to grass**

Similarly this project, to remove the concrete base, reinstate base layer, soil, top soil and seed, had been successful subject to the grass seed taking satisfactorily. Currently the site was still fenced off to allow the grass to grow.

## **FP 42/19 Sunnyside Rural Trust Lease Renewal**

The new 25 year lease had been signed on 26 April 2019. A contribution towards legal fees had been received from the Trust

## **FP 43/19 Festive Lighting Project**

Last year there had been some criticism of the festive lighting and the Town Clerk hoped to be in a position to report proposed costs of a revised scheme for 2019/20 at Full Council on 10 June 2019.

There was a general discussion about the makeup of the Festival of Light Committee and events at the Festival itself. The view was expressed that the next newsletter would be a good opportunity to advertise the event and to alert charities and organisations regarding the availability of stalls.

## **FP 44/19 Allotment and Finance Officer Vacancy**

The closing date for this post had been 20 May and it was reported that four applications had been received. It was **agreed** that interviews would not take place on 4 June as anticipated and that the post should instead be reviewed and readvertised in late September. In the meantime the student who had been employed the previous summer was available again and it was **further agreed** that she should be employed to help out in the office during her vacation.

There followed a brief discussion about the use of Facebook for advertising vacancies and the dissemination of other Town Council related information. The

Committee expressed the view that a piece meal approach to the use of social media was inappropriate. It was hoped that the need for a coordinated communications strategy could be discussed at a future meeting so that proposals could be developed for formal consideration.

**FP45/19 Close of meeting**

The meeting closed at 9.20 pm.

**Signed.....**

**Date.....**