

**MINUTES OF THE FINANCE STRATEGY AND MANAGEMENT  
COMMITTEE MEETING, BIDDULPH TOWN COUNCIL  
TUESDAY 26 APRIL 2022, 5.30PM  
HELD AT BIDDULPH TOWN HALL, HIGH STREET, BIDDULPH ST8 6AR**

**PRESENT:**

- **The Mayor:**  
Councillor S Rushton
- **Deputy Mayor:**  
Councillor J Garvey
- Councillor C Brady
- Councillor D A Hall
- Councillor K Harper
- Councillor A H Hart
- Councillor D J Hawley
- Councillor J T Jones
- Councillor C R Perkin
- Councillor W Rogers
- Councillor J Salt
- Councillor N R Yates

**IN ATTENDANCE:**

- Mrs Sarah M Haydon – Chief Officer (Minute Taker)
- Ms Jodie Hancock – Events and Partnerships Officer
- Ms Esther Gladstone – Finance and Administration Officer
- Ms Susan Booth – Customer Support Assistant

**140. APOLOGIES**

Apologies were recorded for:

- Councillor K H Jackson
- Councillor A J McLoughlin (Absent)
- Councillor H M Sheldon MBE

**141. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

- a) **Disclosable Pecuniary Interests:** None.
- b) **Other Interests:** None.

**142. MINUTES**

- a) The Minutes of the Finance Strategy and Management Committee meeting held on 22 March 2022 (approved at the Town Council meeting on 12 April 2022) were confirmed.
- b) The Notes of the Asset Management Working Group meeting held on 12 April 2022 were received.

### **143. RECONCILIATIONS FOR MARCH 2022**

To **receive** the following documents (attached):

- Current Account/ Reserve Account
- Petty Cash
- Credit Card
- CCLA
- Sum Up

Councillor Hall noted that there were no discrepancies. Proposed by Councillor Perkin, seconded by Councillor Hart and received.

### **144. 2021-22 AUDIT ARRANGEMENTS**

- a) To **receive** the internal control report completed by Councillors Perkin and Hawley on 23 March 2022 (attached)

The Chief Officer noted that amendments had been made to the reporting processes for the credit card. Proposed by Councillor Hart, seconded by Councillor Harper. Received.

- b) To **note** that the internal audit will be completed on Thursday 28 April 2022
- c) To **note** that the Rialtas finance system close-down will be completed on 31 May 2022
- d) To **note** that the external audit documentation has been received; the deadline for submission of the required files is 30 June 2022

Items b) to d) were proposed on-block by Councillor Perkin, seconded by Councillor Hart. Noted.

### **145. RISK MANAGEMENT**

*Risk management is considered regularly by this Town Council. On 8 February 2022, Councillors considered insurance requirements, based on the perceived level of risk. On 22 March 2022, the revised Risk Management Policy was approved.*

*To **receive** the attached risk management spreadsheet, detailing medium/ high-level risk and to consider controls required to mitigate this risk.*

Councillor Salt and Councillor Yates enquired how risk was calculated, the Chief Officer explained the matrix used for individual risk assessments, which forms part of the Risk Management Policy.

Councillor Harper asked whether there needed to be more lifesaving equipment at the lake at Biddulph Grange Country Park, but Councillor Jones noted that this was already in place through Staffordshire Moorlands District Council (SMDC). The Chief Officer added that risk is considered where there is nearby water for events.

Councillor Harper also enquired about vermin and chemical usage at the allotments. The Chief Officer noted that the allotment policy prohibits unnecessary pesticide and herbicide usage and vermin will be dealt with as reported.

Councillor Rogers requested that 'Calor Gas' be updated to LPG.

Proposed by Councillor Hart, seconded by Councillor Harper; all in favour.

#### **146. NEW PROTOCOLS AND PROCEDURES**

i) To **approve** the following documents (attached):

*a) Protocol to Mark the Death of a Local Holder of Office*

Councillor Hart moved, Councillor Rushton seconded. All in favour.

*b) Flag Flying Protocol*

The Chief Officer explained that this had been considered since Biddulph Town Council took on responsibility for the Town Hall site. Moved by Councillor Harper, seconded by Councillor Perkin.

*c) Mayoral Handbook 2022-23*

Councillor Salt asked that the role of the Mayor's partner or consort be rephrased to say that they 'can play a full role' rather than that they are expected to, as some partners or consorts may not wish to play a significant role. She also asked that the sentence 'this should not be an excuse not do the gardening or shopping' be removed. All were in favour to remove the sentence and for suitable rephrasing.

Councillor Hawley asked if the Mayor had to have a consort, and suggested that it be made clear if that was not the case.

Councillor Rushton said she was keen that the Mayoress role be retained.

Councillor Salt asked that under 4.1 a gender neutral form of address for the Mayor be included.

Councillor Garvey queried the requirement for formal wear when wearing the chain and noted occasions when alternative clothes may be suitable. It was agreed to add the word 'appropriate' to this statement.

Moved by Councillor Hart, seconded by Councillor Rushton, all in favour.

*d) Councillors Handbook 2022-23*

Councillor Garvey requested that the reference to Mr Mayor or Madam Mayor be updated to reflect the option of a gender neutral form of address, as mentioned previously.

Moved by Councillor Hart, seconded by Councillor Harper. All in favour.

*ii) To **approve** the format of a 'Who Stands for Council' document*

The Chief Officer noted that this document was intended to support the recruitment of Town Councillors.

Councillor Hawley asked if the reference to the European Union should be removed under eligibility, the Chief Officer explained that this legislation has not been changed, so the statement still stands.

Councillor Salt asked how the document would be circulated. She suggested that they be sent to schools for children to take home.

Councillor Jones suggested taking an advert in the Biddulph Times.

Councillor Rushton asked that it be made explicit that those with a disability can still be a Councillor. Councillor Salt suggested that an equal opportunities statement be included.

Councillor Harper moved to advertise via the Biddulph Times, Facebook and Schools.

Moved by Councillor Hart, seconded by Councillor Garvey; the document was approved.

#### **147. TO APPROVE THE ATTACHED RESERVES POLICY**

Moved by Councillor Perkin, seconded by Councillor Hart, all in favour.

#### **148. ITEM REQUESTED BY COUNCILLOR PERKIN AND COUNCILLOR HAWLEY**

*To **agree** an appropriate response, which will be incorporated (as necessary) into the revised Standing Orders for consideration in May 2022.*

Councillor Hawley noted that the public participation section of the Town Council is limited to 20 minutes in total or 5 minutes per speaker in the Standing Orders, though this is not strictly adhered to without suspending Standing Orders. He suggested that either the Standing Orders are strictly adhered to or amended to allow additional discussion.

Councillor Perkin said he felt this was important not to ignore some rules and not others.

Councillor Garvey said he felt that this rule is stretched by a County Council representative. He felt that the current rules should be adhered to, and better enforced. He suggested a written summary be submitted in advance.

Councillor Salt suggested a stop-clock be utilised, and that the Police and County Council representatives could be invited to speak under a committee agenda item rather than full Town Council to cover further debate.

Councillor Hart said that we was concerned that the Town Council meeting can overrun making it very difficult to manage the Recreation and Amenities Committee agenda.

Councillor Rogers wondered if the same restrictions be applied to Committee items.

Councillor Yates felt that the County Council and Police update should not be considered public participation but supported the idea of a written report, and a time limit.

Councillor McLoughlin felt that the Police, and County Council representatives should be present at the full Town Council when there is a greater Councillor

presence, but would like these covered by the main agenda rather than the public participation section. He also supported written submissions prior to the meeting.

Councillor Jones said he agreed that the rules need to be adhered to but he wanted to limit the amount of time presenting.

Councillor Salt noted that if the item became an agenda item rather than public participation, this prevents more detailed questioning.

Councillor Hawley noted that the Town Councillors ask a lot of questions which does take additional time.

Councillor Hart and Councillor Yates said they were very grateful that the County Councillor representative consistently attends but it is important that the time is managed.

The Chief Officer queried how Councillors felt that questioning should fall within the time frame as there are a significant number of queries from Councillors.

Councillor Harper noted that the Mayor has the discretion to manage this.

Councillor Rogers proposed that the County Councillor gets a 15 minutes maximum, seconded by Councillor McLoughlin.

Councillor Garvey proposed that the Standing Orders be applied as stands and better written reports be provided prior to the Town Council.

Councillor Yates asked how this would be applied where the County Councillor was a Town Councillor.

Councillor Jones said he supports keeping the agenda as stands.

Councillor Salt recommended that County Councillor participation remain within public participation, and felt that many of the issues and questions asked should be dealt with on a one-to-one basis. She felt the aim of the County Councillors attendance was to receive updates.

Councillor Hawley said that providing 15 minutes of public participation for the County Councillor may reduce the ability of other members of the public to speak, though Councillor Hall noted that members of the public would need to submit the request prior to the Town Council prior to the meeting.

Councillor Hawley said that if there is to be no amendment to Standing Orders, a clear process of suspending Standing Orders should be followed.

Moved By Councillor Hart, seconded by Councillor Salt. All in favour.

## **149. GRANTS**

To **approve** the attached grant form guidance, for 2022-23.

The Chief Officer explained that the new checklist requires that all requested information is received prior to Councillors viewing the application.

Councillor Salt asked for the addition of a tick box regarding commitment to the Town Council's equal opportunities statement. All agreed.

Councillor McLoughlin enquired how we would know whether previous grants had been spent appropriately. It was confirmed this was covered by the requirement for a previous year's evaluation.

Moved by Councillor Hart, Councillor Harper seconded. All in favour.

## **STANDING AGENDA ITEMS**

### **150.**

- a) To **consider** disposal of any assets, in line with the Asset Management Policy and Financial Regulations

None to consider.

- b) To **confirm** approved suppliers as part of the Procurement Policy

None to consider.

### **151. PRACTITIONERS GUIDE**

To **receive** a copy of the Joint Panel on Accountability and Governance Practitioners' Guide March 2022.

Councillors received the document.

## **152. ENERGY COSTS**

To **receive** a tabled document about energy costs for Town Council buildings and to **consider** potential fixed-term deals.

Councillors considered costs provided by potential energy suppliers.

Councillor Salt requested that carbon off-setting be considered for the gas provision.

Councillor Yates suggested that figures be brought back for consideration regarding whether to outsource this to a third party or take on carbon offsetting within the Town Council.

Councillor Perkin said he was pleased with the offer from Octopus.

Councillor Garvey proposed, Councillor Hart seconded. All in favour.

## **153. FUNDING BIDS**

To **receive** a verbal update on funding received by the Town Council. The Chief Officer noted that several grants had been applied for and gave an update as to the progress of the different grant awards. The Chief Officer noted that the outcome of the Severn Trent grant had not been released but the Town Council had invested a lot of time in promoting the scheme and encouraging the public to vote.

A grant of £7100 had been awarded for Jubilee celebrations from the National Lottery Community Fund.

The Woodland Trust are providing 420 Saplings.

Other grant funded projects include refurbishing the railings at Station Roads, potentially more work with the Neighbourhood Plan and also environmental projects.

Councillor Salt asked why the funding for Heritage Planters didn't go through. Councillor Hart said that District Councillors didn't support the grant award for planters.



*In accordance with the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960, s1, the Council is to determine which items, if any, should be taken with the public excluded.*

## **CONFIDENTIAL ITEMS**

### **154. STAFFING**

- a) To approve tabled information in relation to additional remuneration for weekend and bank holiday work.*

Agreement was reached to offer additional payments.

- b) To receive the resignation of the Finance and Administration Officer; end date 11 May 2022.*

The resignation was received.

- c) To approve the informal recruitment 'interview' process for the new role of Compliance and Governance Officer.*

An application has been received and an interview date has been arranged; Councillor Hall would support this process.

### **155. EMERGENCY ITEM: Urgent Electrical Work**

Two significant electrical issues have been identified. An additional circuit is needed at the Visitor Centre to accommodate the electrical needs of both the Café and the Workshop.

It has also been identified that the bar area circuit at the Town Hall is linked to the Kitchen and does not have enough capacity to accommodate the fridges for the bar, therefore an additional circuit it needed to enable the bar to function.

A quotation from an Approved Supplier had been received.

Moved by Councillor Hart, seconded Councillor Perkin. All agreed.

The meeting ended at 7.09pm.

Signed..... Date.....

