

MINUTES OF THE FINANCE STRATEGY AND MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 24 SEPTEMBER 2019

PRESENT

- The Mayor - Councillor Davies
 - Councillor Hall
 - Councillor Hawley
 - Councillor Jackson
 - Councillor Perkin
 - Councillor Rogers
-
- Councillor McLoughlin was also in attendance

17. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

- a) Disclosable Pecuniary Interests and Dispensations:
None declared.
- b) Other Interests:
None declared.

18. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from:

Councillor Adams
Councillor Brady
Councillor Hart
Councillor Jones
Councillor Salt
Councillor Sheldon

19. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 25 June (signed at the Town Council meeting on 9 July 2019) were **confirmed**.

20. TO NOTE THAT RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE EXTERNAL AUDITOR HAVE NOT BEEN RECEIVED AT THE TIME OF AGENDA SETTING; RECOMMENDATIONS AND UPDATE TO BE PROVIDED AT NOVEMBER 2019 MEETING OF THIS COMMITTEE

There were no issues to concern members. There were ongoing discussions about the report that had been produced, but this would be resolved before the next meeting in November.

21. TO APPROVE A CONTINUING RELATIONSHIP REGARDING THE STORAGE OF ARTISAN MARKET EQUIPMENT- DUE TO BE RENEWED 4 OCTOBER, CURRENTLY £1300 FOR 6 MONTHS (PHOTOGRAPHS OF INSIDE OF SHED ATTACHED)

The Chief Officer reported that the shed was dry secure and gave tractor access.

Councillor Rogers noted that this is cheaper than the garage had been and was a better facility.

Councillor Davies noted that cost included transporting the equipment from the shed to the town and back on market and event days.

It was proposed by Councillor Davies and seconded by Councillor Perkin to continue with the agreement for a further six months.

22. TO APPROVE QUOTE FOR 2020 CALENDAR (TO BE TABLED). COUNCILLORS PLEASE NOTE THAT THE SUBMITTED PHOTOGRAPHS ARE DISPLAYED IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER FOR CONSIDERATION

The Chief Officer noted that the bottom quote on the tabled document had printed the 2019 calendar and the middle quote was responsible for the 2018 calendar; both had been acceptable.

Councillor Rogers asked if the finish would be matt or satin; the Events and Partnerships Officer responded that it would be a silk finish.

Councillor Hawley asked if the artwork was included, the Chief Officer responded that it was.

Councillor Perkin asked which the staff had preferred to work with; the Chief Officer responded that they were all good.

Councillor Rogers suggested that the most local of the quotes should be chosen, this was the most expensive. The Chief Officer noted that the company with the middle quote was based nearby, but the owner was a Biddulph resident.

It was agreed to accept the middle quote.

23. USE OF THE COUNCIL SEAL (REFERRED FROM TOWN COUNCIL)- SAMPLE FORM ATTACHED, PROVIDED BY OVERSEES PENSION CLAIMANT

Members considered the form which was to verify that the person living in this country and claiming a pension from another country was still alive.

Councillor Jackson noted that there was no legal comeback to this Council, and it did not seem to be an onerous task.

Councillor Hawley felt the previous concerns had been addressed; he wondered if there should be a charge for the service. He asked if the use of the seal would just apply to current 'customers' or be open to new applicants.

Councillor Jackson proposed that the service continues for a further 12 months, open to all Biddulph residents, with staff keeping a running tally; this was seconded by Councillor Perkin and agreed.

24. TO RECEIVE JUNE, JULY AND AUGUST BANK RECONCILIATIONS

Councillor Hall queried the unrepresented cheques; the situation with the unrepresented cheques from the previous year would be resolved by staff before the next meeting.

25. TO APPROVE THE REVIEWED PROCUREMENT POLICY (ATTACHED)

The Chief Officer noted that there were only small amendments, in line with revised financial levels. It had now become standard practice to use Contract Finder website.

There was discussion about the use of local contractors (section 5.2); this section noted that the Town Council may consider whether groups or organisations had local knowledge; this would depend on the project.

Councillor Jackson felt the Town Council should look at the public purse where possible. Councillor Davies felt our track record showed we considered local people.

It was proposed to approve the policy by Councillor Perkin, seconded by Councillor Hawley and agreed.

26. TO APPROVE THE 'ADDITIONAL CONTRIBUTIONS' PROCESS FOR STAFFORDSHIRE PENSION FUND MEMBERS (ATTACHED)

The Chief Officer reported that this was a requirement for those employers that are part of the Local Government Pension Scheme; the wording had been provided by Staffordshire County Council.

There was discussion about the appropriate management of staff absence and the advice given. The Town Council would seek external advice, should this be necessary.

It was proposed to accept this process by Councillor Perkin, seconded by Councillor Davies and agreed.

27. TO APPROVE DOCUMENTATION (ATTACHED) FOR A TRIAL TOWN COUNCILLOR GRANTS SCHEME:

The Chief Officer reported that the process was based on the District Council fund. A few minor amendments were agreed.

a) Application Form 2019-20

Proposed by Councillor Perkin seconded by Councillor Davies, agreed.

b) Guidance Notes 2019-20

Proposed by Councillor Perkin seconded by Councillor Jackson, agreed.

It was agreed that this would be a 12-month trial and that applicants could apply from anywhere in the town to any Town Councillor. This is not just top-up funding, but should support new projects or ideas that have not formed part of a previous grant application.

c) Reviewed Grants Policy, September 2019

Proposed by Councillor Davies seconded by Councillor Rogers, agreed.

28. TO CONSIDER AN UPDATE ON THE 2019/20 ACTION PLAN

The update was received.

The Chief Officer would bring information to the November meeting from a company which could provide analysis of footfall on High Street. This would help us to understand who used the Town Centre and be helpful going forwards.

Councillors Hawley and Rogers were addressing the next meeting of the Parish Assembly – giving a presentation on Biddulph, this document would form the basis of the presentation.

Councillor Hall reported that we were seeing progress.

29. TO NOTE PROGRESS IN RELATION TO A CENTRALISED GRASS CUTTING CONTRACT FOR THE TOWN

The Chief Officer had attended a meeting of Staffordshire Council Clerks at Barlaston. It was reported that Barlaston Parish Council had a contract to cut County Council grass and was reimbursed. The Chief Officer had approached Mr Greatbatch and received a positive response. Consideration should be given to the town boundaries; similar discussions were taking place with the District Council.

Councillor Jackson noted that this discussion had come from the frustration of residents with the timing of the cuts. He noted that Your Housing had recently

entered a new national contract for grass cutting so would not be able to participate in these discussions at the moment.

Exclusion of the Press and Public

The Chair to move:-

“That, pursuant to Section 100A(2) and (4) of the Local Government Act, 1972, the public be excluded from the meeting in view of the nature of the business to be transacted or the nature of the proceedings whereby it is likely that confidential information as defined in Section 100A (3) of the Act would be disclosed to the public in breach of the obligation of confidence or exempt information as defined in Section 10 I (1) of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act would be disclosed to the public by virtue of the Paragraphs indicated.”

CONFIDENTIAL ITEMS

30. TO RECEIVE RECOMMENDATIONS ON SALARY LEVELS AND STAFFING STRUCTURES

The structure was agreed in principle; there would be further consideration.

31. TO RECEIVE AN UPDATE ON GRANT FUNDING AND SUPPORT PROVIDED TO A LOCAL ORGANISATION IN MARCH 2019

The update was received.

The meeting closed at 7.20pm

Signature

Date