

MINUTES OF THE FINANCE STRATEGY AND MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 27 APRIL 2021

PRESENT

- The Mayor – Councillor Jones
- Deputy Mayor – Councillor Rushton
- Councillor Hall
- Councillor Harper
- Councillor Hart
- Councillor Hawley
- Councillor Jackson
- Councillor McLoughlin
- Councillor Perkin
- Councillor Rogers
- Councillor Sheldon
- Councillor Smith
- Councillor Yates

Councillor Hall read out a statement regarding the livestreaming of the meeting via Facebook and etiquette for remote meetings.

91. DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

a) Disclosable pecuniary interests and dispensations

Councillor Sheldon declared an interest in any matter related to Biddulph in Bloom. She also advised of an error in the Biddulph in Bloom accounts submitted to the Committee members prior to the meeting.

b) Other interests

Councillor Jones declared an interest in the Visitor Centre Expressions of Interest to be discussed as Chairman of the Biddulph Grange Country Park Friends.

92. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Councillor Brady.

93. MINUTES

- a) The Minutes of the Finance Strategy and Management Committee Meeting held on 23 March 2021 and approved at the Town Council meeting on 13 April 2021 were confirmed.

b) The Notes from the Emergency Planning Working Group meeting held on 15 April 2021 were received.

**94. TO RECEIVE MARCH 2021 BANK RECONCILIATION
(INFORMATION ATTACHED)**

The March 2021 bank reconciliation was received.

95. TO RECEIVE UNAUDITED 2020-21 REPORTS:

a) Earmarked Reserves 2020-21

Moved by Councillor Hawley and seconded by Councillor Perkin. Received.

b) Trial Balance for Month 12 2020-21 a & b

Moved by Councillor Hawley and seconded by Councillor Perkin. Received.

c) Detailed Income & Expenditure by Budget Heading 31-03-2021

Moved by Councillor Hawley and seconded by Councillor Perkin. Received.

**96. TO APPROVE EMPLOYEE AND EMPLOYER PENSION
CONTRIBUTIONS (INFORMATION ATTACHED)**

Moved by Councillor Perkin; seconded by Councillor Jones and agreed.

**97. TO APPROVE THE PURCHASE AND USE OF A CARD
PAYMENT MACHINE FOR TOWN COUNCIL PAYMENTS, LINKED
WITH THE NATWEST CURRENT ACCOUNT (INFORMATION
ATTACHED)**

Councillor Hawley recommended that the quote for Sum Up looked the most favourable and asked if there was any ratings that had been considered. The Chief Officer confirmed that all three quotes provided were the highest rated items on the market. Councillor Hawley moved to accept the quote for Sum Up, Councillor Hart seconded.

Councillor Jones said he felt the acquisition of a card machine was a positive move forward.

Councillor Yates asked if there was a difference in cost for credit cards and debit cards. The Chief Officer confirmed that there was no difference.

Councillor Hawley asked if there was an acquirer for the card payments. The Chief Officer said that she didn't believe this was necessary but would double-check.

Councillor Smith said that in a personal capacity she used the Sum Up card system and found it very good.

All Councillors voted in favour of the purchase of the Sum Up machine; this would be reviewed annually.

98. POLICY REVIEW (DOCUMENTS ATTACHED):

a) To approve the revised Employee Code of Conduct
Councillor Hart moved to approve the policy; Councillor Jackson seconded, agreed.

b) To approve the revised Investment Strategy

Councillor Jones moved to approve the policy; Councillor Hart seconded.

All councillors voted to accept the policies in both (b) and (c), except Councillor Harper who voted against and requested further discussion.

c) To approve the revised Anti-Fraud Bribery and Corruption Policy

Councillor Jones moved to accept. Councillor Hart seconded.
Councillor Harper queried some phrasing on the policy.

The Chief Officer confirmed that the policy is already in place, and only the bits outlined in red are revisions. She also confirmed that it has been considered by the Employment Advice solicitor and send to staff for their input.

The Chief Officer said she was happy to rephrase some words, if Councillors felt this was appropriate. Councillor Harper felt more scrutiny was necessary.

Councillor Jones said that the level of detail being discussed was unnecessary as the policy was sound.

All Councillors reiterated their approval of policies in both (b) and (c), except Councillor Harper who voted against.

**99. CONFIRMATION OF 2021-22 DIRECT DEBITS AND
REGULAR CREDIT CARD PAYMENTS (CONTRACT SPREADSHEET
TO BE SENT SEPARATELY)**

Moved by Councillor Jones and seconded by Councillor Hart. All in favour.

100. TO CONSIDER RESPONSES FROM SURVEY MONKEY IN RELATION TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE BUS HUB AND TO CONSIDER FURTHER ACTION

[\(https://www.surveymonkey.com/stories/SM-7ZDB99RC/\)-](https://www.surveymonkey.com/stories/SM-7ZDB99RC/)

PAPER VERSION AVAILABLE

The Chief Officer shared the results of the survey regarding the bus hub. There were 203 responses, with most visitors to the town centre going by car, and walking.

The most popular preferred use was 'Bus Hub with Coffee Bar' and 'Drop in Occasional Space / Pop Up'. Approximately 65% of respondents said they didn't use the public toilets at the bus hub.

Councillor Salt asked what the age group of the respondents were. The Chief Officer said that they didn't ask about ages, but is aware that most the Facebook followers are from the 35+ age brackets. It had been a 'snapshot' to gauge views, rather than an in-depth study. The Chief Officer would consider seeking views from young people via another method.

Councillor Jones moved to approve, Councillor Hart seconded.

101. TO REVIEW AND APPROVE THE 2021-22 FINANCIAL REGULATIONS (ATTACHED)

Councillor Hall outlined the changes to the 2021-22 Financial Regulations.

The Chief Officer explained that an additional section was added about storage due to the change in business activities. Councillor Perkin moved; Councillor Hawley seconded, agreed.

102. TO RECEIVE BIDDULPH IN BLOOM ACCOUNTS FOR 2020 (ATTACHED)

Councillor Sheldon explained that the accounts are unexamined and there was an error in the income from December. This has been corrected now.

Councillor Hart moved to accept, Councillor Hawley seconded. All voted in favour.

103. TO NOTE THAT THE SPRINGFIELD ROAD GRASS CUTTING CONTRACT HAS BEEN EXTENDED UNTIL JUNE 2021. THE

TENDER WILL BE ADVERTISED SHORTLY (2017 DOCUMENT ATTACHED); COUNCILLORS TO PROVIDE FEEDBACK ON REQUIREMENTS

Councillor Jackson stated that he had no complaints with the contractors and is pleased with how the boulders compliment the area. He said he hoped the current contractors retender competitively, and that the standard of work thus far is taken in to consideration. There was no further feedback.

Councillor Jackson moved, Councillor Hart seconded. All on favour.

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

104. TO CONSIDER THE TOWN COUNCIL'S RESPONSE IN RELATION TO THE DEATH OF HRH PRINCE PHILIP

Details of the Council's response were noted and Council staff thanked.

105. TO RECEIVE AN UPDATE IN RELATION TO PAYMENT RECEIVED FROM STAFFORDSHIRE MOORLANDS DISTRICT COUNCIL REGARDING THE MANAGEMENT OF THE TOWN HALL AND TO CONSIDER AN APPROPRIATE RESPONSE

It was agreed to send a letter regarding the matter to Staffordshire Moorlands District Council.

106. TO RECEIVE A VERBAL UPDATE FROM COUNCILLORS HAWLEY AND PERKIN IN RELATION TO THE INTERNAL CONTROL VISITS COMPLETED IN APRIL 2021 (FORMAL REPORT TO FOLLOW AT A LATER DATE)

It was agreed a report would be completed with recommendations.

**107. TO APPROVE A QUOTATION FOR REPLACEMENT
'WELCOME TO BIDDULPH' SIGNS (QUOTATIONS TO BE SENT
SEPARATELY)**

It was agreed to accept a quotation. All Councillors voted in favour.

**108. TO RECEIVE AN UPDATE FROM THE CHIEF OFFICER IN
RELATION TO A STAFFORDSHIRE MOORLANDS ARTS COUNCIL
BID AND TO AGREE WHAT THE TOWN COUNCIL'S
INVOLVEMENT WILL BE (further information can be read here:
<https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/creative-people-and-places/creative-people-and-places-2022-25-joining-national-portfolio>)**

It was agreed to support the bid without direct funding.

**109. TO RECEIVE AN UPDATE IN RELATION TO THE ALDI SITE
BUS ACCESS AND TO AGREE THE NEXT STEPS**

It was agreed the Chief Officer will contact Aldi regarding the outstanding matters.

**110. TO CONSIDER THE DRAFT TENDER DOCUMENTATION
FOR THE TOWN HALL BAR AND TO AGREE A PROCESS FOR
PROGRESSING THIS (INFORMATION ATTACHED)**

It was agreed to accept the documents.

**111. TO RECEIVE AN UPDATE FROM THE CHIEF OFFICER IN
RELATION TO TENANCIES WITHIN THE TOWN HALL**

An update was provided and it was agreed to lease Room A.

**112. TO CONSIDER INVESTMENT IN A TOWN CENTRE
PROPERTY (INFORMATION TO BE SENT SEPARATELY)**

It was agreed the Chief Officer would complete an options appraisal/ business case and discuss this further, as appropriate.

**113. TO RECEIVE RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE MAYOR
AND CHIEF OFFICER IN RELATION TO THE BIDDULPH GRANGE
COUNTRY PARK EXPRESSIONS OF INTEREST AND TO AGREE
THE INDIVIDUALS OR ORGANISATIONS WHO WILL BE INVITED
TO DISCUSS THIS OPPORTUNITY FURTHER (SUBMISSIONS TO
BE SENT SEPARATELY)**

It was agreed to progress the shortlisting and interviewing process for the visitor centre.

The meeting ended at 8.05pm.

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