

MINUTES OF THE FINANCE STRATEGY AND MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY 28 SEPTEMBER 2021

PRESENT

- Deputy Mayor - Councillor Garvey
- Councillor Brady
- Councillor Hall
- Councillor Harper
- Councillor Hart
- Councillor Hawley
- Councillor Jackson
- Councillor Jones
- Councillor McLoughlin
- Councillor Perkin
- Councillor Rogers
- Councillor Salt
- Councillor Yates

50. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Councillor Rushton and Councillor Sheldon.

51. DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

- a) Disclosable pecuniary interests and dispensations: None declared.
- b) Other interests: Councillor Jackson declared an interest as a Board Member of Biddulph Youth and Community Zone regarding the potential detached youth worker provision.

52. MINUTES

- a) The minutes of the Finance Strategy and Management Committee meeting held on 27 July 2021 were confirmed.

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

- b) The notes of the IT Working Group meeting held on 1 September 2021 were received.

Moved by Councillor Hawley, seconded by Councillor Rogers. All in favour.

FINANCE

53. RECONCILIATIONS FOR JULY AND AUGUST 2021

Reconciliations for July and August were received for:

- Current Account / Reserve Account.
- Petty Cash.
- Credit Card.
- CCLA.

Councillor Perkin moved to receive the reconciliations, seconded by Councillor Hart. All voted in favour.

54. STANDING AGENDA ITEM: DISPOSAL OF ASSETS

The disposal of the following assets was agreed. All the listed assets are no longer functioning and beyond reasonable repair:

- Nilfisk Dry Vacuum GM80.
- Nilco Dr Combi Upright Vacuum.
- Numatic dry vacuum.
- 15" Victory rotary scrubbing/buffing machine.

The item was moved by Councillor Garvey and seconded by Councillor Hawley; all in favour.

55. AUDIT REPORTS

Councillor Hart Moved and Councillor Hawley seconded to include item 55b.

a) TO CONFIRM THAT THE EXTERNAL AUDIT HAS BEEN COMPLETED; THERE ARE NO MATTERS THAT HAVE GIVEN CAUSE FOR CONCERN (AGAR AND COMPLETION LETTER ATTACHED)

Councillor Hawley asked for clarity regarding the auditors' area for improvement. The Chief Officer confirmed that the request was for greater detail regarding Councillor scrutiny of the budget monitoring report.

Moved by Councillor Perkin, seconded by Councillor Hawley. All in favour.

b) TO RECEIVE THE INTERNAL MONITORING REPORT COMPLETED BY COUNCILLOR PERKIN

Councillor Perkin briefed the Committee regarding the internal monitoring report from his visit on 8 September 2021. He confirmed the following recommendations:

- All signatories to ensure they sign the stub of the cheques signed.
 - Staff Salaries be paid via BACS on a regular pay date.
- Moved by Councillor Hart, seconded by Councillor Garvey; all councillors voted to receive the report.

56. POLICIES

a) TO CONFIRM THE ATTACHED POLICIES

- **PROCUREMENT POLICY (INCLUDING APPROVED SUPPLIERS)**

The Chief Officer clarified the changes to the Procurement and Approved Suppliers Policy.

Councillor Jackson asked if weighting is given to local suppliers, which was confirmed. Minor wording amendments were suggested by Councillor Harper.

Moved by Councillor Hart seconded by Councillor Hawley. All in favour

- **SEVERE WINTER WEATHER POLICY**

The Chief Officer confirmed that minor amendments had been made, mainly reflecting the new occupancy of the Visitor Centre by the Hideaway Café.

Councillor Jones asked who would refill the grit bins. It was confirmed that this is a Lengthsman role.

Councillor Yates said that gritting on arterial routes should be undertaken and no grit bins on arterial routes should be provided, as these were most open to misuse.

Councillor Yates said that he had concerns about the Staffordshire County Council gritting routes and that they had not taken note of a number of amendments suggested last year. He requested that this be followed up under section 3.3 of the policy.

Councillor Rogers said that Washington Close appears to need gritting and Councillor Hawley said the same of the areas around Moor First and schools in Biddulph.

The Chief Officer requested recommendations for gritting routes from Councillors to refer to the County Council. Councillor Jackson asked that the County Council response be passed back to Councillors.

It was also agreed that costings for providing grit bins on these routes be provided for consideration, should Staffordshire County Council not take on the additional gritting routes suggested.

Councillor Jones said that bins may not need to be provided in some areas, rather just a piles of grit. He also wondered if the purchase of a gritting trailer could be costed and considered for Lengthsman use.

Councillor Salt asked that Councillors formally request funds from the DHP to assist with the funding of the above suggestions.

Moved by Councillor Hart, seconded by Councillor Perkin; all in favour to approve the revised Policy.

- **GRANTS POLICY**

Councillor Salt asked about how a local wildlife rescue would meet the criteria. It was felt that the criteria provided scope for the inclusion.

Councillor Garvey moved to include environment initiatives in the priority criteria for grants, and Councillor Perkin seconded. All in favour.

Councillor McLoughlin queried if services attached to Middle Schools would not be considered for funding as they fall outside the age bracket prioritised in the Policy. The Chief Officer confirmed that schools would not be eligible for funding, but activities for young people related to education would meet the criteria under education initiatives.

Councillor Harper asked to what extent the Town Council needed to scrutinise safeguarding policies for organisations working with Young People. It was noted that these documents could be requested by the Town Council, as needed.

Councillor Yates requested that the grant application form be reviewed to ensure that confirmation was given by the applicant that safeguarding information and any other relevant policies are available.

Councillor Hawley requested that the age criteria be removed from the Young Persons section of the policy.

Councillor Hart proposed to approve the Policy with the agreed amendments, Councillor Harper seconded. All in favour.

b) ITEM REFERRED BY TOWN COUNCIL; TO CONSIDER AND APPROVE A PETITIONS POLICY.

Councillors undertook an extensive review of the Petitions Policy and voted on a number of amendments.

The amended Petitions Policy was approved by the Committee.

GENERAL ISSUES

57. ITEM REQUESTED BY COUNCILLOR JONES: TO CONSIDER CONSULTATION OPTIONS IN RELATION TO THE RE-LOCATION OF THE MINING WHEEL

Councillor Jones requested to defer this item until after a recently received petition regarding the Mining Wheel had been formally received by the Town Council and debated.

Councillor Jackson asked if the outstanding petition would now be rejected based on the current policy, as he had concerns regarding applying the policy retrospectively.

Councillor Jones said this petition should be considered in a reasonable and fair manner and the policy should not be applied retrospectively. Councillor Garvey agreed.

It was agreed to receive the petition in good faith at Town Council and consider referring this to the Town and Community Committee for further debate.

Councillor Yates said the qualification of addresses is an important part of the management of petitions.

58. TO RECEIVE A REPORT IN RELATION TO THE FIRST YEARS OPERATION OF THE TOWN HALL AND PUBLIC CONVENIENCES.

The Chief Officer briefed the Committee on the report regarding the first year of operation of the Town Hall and Public Conveniences. So far, there had been an improvement to health and safety, the appearance and role of the space as a community hub. Many bookings have been generated. There are still ongoing issues in calculating and recharging service charges, though some estimations have now been received.

Councillor Hall noted that a number of figures were still in the pipeline, for consideration and this financial position would need to be regularly reviewed.

Councillor Jackson noted that a review will be necessary to assess the viability of maintaining the Town Hall, as the contribution from Staffordshire Moorlands District Council reduces.

Councillor Yates said he would expect a reduction in the precept to reflect the reduction in Staffordshire Moorlands District Council's charge to pay for the Town Hall.

Councillor Garvey noted that the biggest outgoing is the caretaker costs and Staffordshire Moorlands District Council should continue to contribute at least this amount, or reduce the precept charge to the same figure.

Councillors voted to receive the report.

59. TO RECEIVE THE UNEXAMINED BIDDULPH IN BLOOM ANNUAL GENERAL ACCOUNTS, YEAR ENDED 31 JANUARY 2021.

Councillors voted to receive the accounts.

60. ITEM REFERRED BY THE IT WORKING GROUP: TO CONSIDER THE ANNUAL COST OF PRINTING AND PAPER FOR TOWN COUNCIL MEETINGS. THE PURPOSE OF THIS ITEM IS TO ESTABLISH WHETHER THERE ARE SAVINGS TO BE MADE BY INVESTING IN IT EQUIPMENT FOR COUNCILLORS

Councillor Hawley said he felt that the figure provided for 22 councillors to receive postal agendas did not represent potential savings that could be made. It was noted that all 22 Councillors could request paper copies, even though most don't.

Councillor Yates said District Councillors may not want additional IT equipment.

Councillors had a short discussion on the pros and cons of multiple email addresses and IT equipment for those that have roles in other councils and organisations.

61. BIDDULPH GRANGE COUNTRY PARK

- a) **TO CONSIDER AND APPROVE A PROPOSAL FOR THE USE OF THE WORKSHOP AT THE BIDDULPH GRANGE COUNTRY PARK VISITOR CENTRE**
- b) **TO APPROVE THAT THE TOWN COUNCIL SUPPORT THE PRINCE'S TRUST (STOKE COLLEGE) TO PROVIDE OPPORTUNITIES FOR YOUNG PEOPLE WITH THE VISITOR CENTRE.**

Councillor Jones said he was pleased with the proposals and thought they were good opportunities.

Councillor Salt asked if Biddulph High School could be included in the Prince's Trust project. The Chief Officer clarified that the project in question was an offer made by the Prince's Trust, which was being run with Stoke College. This does not preclude any other groups or schools being involved in other initiatives at the Visitor Centre.

All Councillors voted to approve both items.

CONFIDENTIAL ITEMS

FINANCE TENDERS AND QUOTATIONS

62. TO CONFIRM THE RENTAL FIGURE THAT WILL BE CHARGED FOR THE TENANCY IN THE CAFÉ AT THE VISITOR CENTRE, PAYABLE FROM APRIL 2022

It was agreed to defer the matter, whilst further figures are obtained.

63. TO CONFIRM THE PROVIDER FOR THE EXTENSION TO THE GARDEN OF REMEMBRANCE AT THE TOWN BURIAL GROUND

It was agreed to accept a quotation.

Councillor Hawley moved to suspend the standing order to allow the meeting to continue past 2.5 hours. Councillor Perkin seconded. All voted in favour.

64. TO CONSIDER A TOWN COUNCIL CONTRIBUTION TO THE COST OF DETACHED YOUTH WORK

It was agreed to defer this matter to a future meeting as no figure had been received from Biddulph Youth and Community Zone.

65. ITEM REFERRED FROM THE TOWN AND COMMUNITY COMMITTEE: TO CONFIRM THE ATTACHED CALENDAR QUOTATION

It was agreed to accept a quotation.

66.TO CONSIDER AND APPROVE ADDITIONAL CHRIMSTAS LIGHTS FOR THE CHRISTMAS SEASON 2021

It was agreed to defer the item to the Town Council when quotes are likely to have been received.

67.ITEM REFERRED FROM THE IT WORKING GROUP: TO CONFIRM THAT ALL TOWN COUNCILLORS WILL BE GIVEN A .GOV.UK EMAIL ADDRESS, WHICH WILL BE MANAGED BY THE CURRENT IT PROVIDER.

It was agreed to approve the .gov.uk email address for each Councillor.

STAFFING

68.TO APPROVE THE APPOINTMENT OF A NEW CARETAKER FOR A 12 MONTH PERIOD, FOLLOWING A SUCCESSFUL RECRUITMENT CAMPAIGN.

It was agreed to approve the appointment.

The meeting ended at 8:08pm.

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