

**MINUTES OF THE FINANCE, POLICY & ADMINISTRATION COMMITTEE
MEETING HELD ON MONDAY 4 JANUARY 2016 AT 7.30 PM IN THE ROBIN
ROOM, THE CASTLE, HERTFORD**

PRESENT: Cllr Miss Chantal Geall, in the Chair

Councillors: P Boyle, R Deering, Mrs S Newton, Dr L Radford, P Ruffles Miss J Sartin and A Stevenson

IN ATTENDANCE: Mr J Whelan, Town Clerk
Ms P Carpenter, Civic Administration Manager
Mr S Davies, Finance Manager

378. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

None.

379. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Cllrs Miss Sartin and Miss Geall	DPI	Utility re-charges Seed Warehouse, Agenda item 15	Museum Trustees
Cllr P Boyle	DPI	Hertford Voices – Grant application. Agenda item 8	Parent is an active member of Hertford Voices
Cllr P Ruffles	DPI	Agenda item 7 – Grant application Rotary Club	Member of Rotary Club of Hertford. Cllr Ruffles left the room for all grant application discussions
Cllr S Newton	DPI	Agenda item 9 – Grant application, CDA Herts	Cllr Newton sits on a rural issues group which is supported by the CDA.

380. THE MINUTES

It was **RESOLVED** that:

The Minutes of the Finance, Policy & Administration Committee meeting held on Monday 19 October 2015 be approved as a correct record and the Chairman authorised to sign the same.

381. ACTION SHEET

Disability Access to the Castle

It was confirmed that an architect was in the process of drawing up plans for a handrail at the Lion Door entrance to the Castle.

Sword Refurbishment

The Committee was pleased to note that the replacement cross piece to the sword was well made and fitted. It was requested that the original cross piece be safely stored in the safe and be clearly marked as such.

Benches in Parliament Square

It was confirmed that the benches are expected to be installed shortly and Members requested that a small ceremony be organised to mark the installation, with representatives of Hertford & Ware Street Pastors in attendance.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

- a) The action sheet be received and noted.

382. QUESTIONS AND/OR STATEMENTS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

None.

Note: Cllr Ruffles left the room for the duration of the discussion on all grant applications.

383. COMMUNITY GRANT APPLICATION – COURTYARD ARTS

An application had been received from Courtyard Arts for funding of £799.70 towards the cost of the provision of new kiln equipment and towards the big draw in association with Hertford Museum. Whilst it was noted that part of this grant request was retrospective, this was due to an administrative error in the office rather than a mistake by Courtyard Arts. The Committee was therefore happy to accede to the request.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

The Committee **approves** a grant of £799.70.

384. COMMUNITY GRANT APPLICATION - ROTARY CLUB OF HERTFORD

An application had been received from the Rotary Club of Hertford for funding of £800 towards the costs associated with organising Carnival at the Castle.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

The Committee **approves** a grant of £800 towards the costs associated with Carnival at the Castle.

385. COMMUNITY GRANT APPLICATION - HERTFORD VOICES

An application had been received from Hertford Voices for £1,000 towards the costs of entertaining a visiting choir from Wildershausen during 5-8 May 2016.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

The Committee approves a grant of £1000.

Note: Cllr Boyle left the room prior to the discussion on this item.

386. COMMUNITY GRANT APPLICATION – CDA HERTS

An application had been received from CDA Herts of £500 towards the costs of moving offices to Vale House.

Whilst it was noted that the work of the CDA among Hertford residents was limited, nevertheless the Committee considered that in moving to premises within Hertford, a one off payment would be appropriate and could lead to the CDA enhancing its position in the town. The co-location of the organisation with Future Living was also noted as a potential benefit.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

The Committee **approves** a grant of £500.

Note: Cllr Mrs Newton left the room during the discussion on this item.

387. PERSONNEL SUB COMMITTEE

The Committee received a copy of the draft minutes of the Personnel Sub Committee held on 16 November 2015.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

- a) The Committee **notes** the draft report of the Personnel Sub Committee held on 16 November 2015.

388. PROTOCOL, DEATH OF A SENIOR MEMBER OF THE ROYAL FAMILY

The Committee received a draft protocol to be implemented in the event of the death of a senior member of the Royal Family. The protocol would require the approval of the Full Town Council, for inclusion in the Constitution. The Committee considered the document and made a few minor adjustments to the Policy as follows:

- 7.1 Wearing of Black armbands to add '*when acting in an official capacity*'
- 8.1 Amend 'Chairman' to 'Mayor'.
10. Cross reference to the Council's Flag Flying Policy

The Committee also wished to ensure that any timed tweets were monitored for appropriateness during such a time and it was requested that several officers had access to the Council social media accounts.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

The Committee **recommends** the adoption of the protocol, with amendments as above, to the Full Town Council for inclusion in the Constitution.

389. ARTS HUB – FINAL REPORT FROM THE FEASIBILITY STUDY

The Committee received the final report of the Arts Hub Feasibility Study. Cllr Stevenson commented that he felt the Town Council should be commended for the initiative to fund the feasibility study and he hoped that with future funding the Arts Hub would go ahead. The project was very much dependent on sourcing significant funding from a range of external bodies and Cllr Stevenson was waiting to see if East Herts Council would be prepared to pick up the project. Courtyard Arts would be the lead organisation in sourcing funding.

In terms of future Town Council involvement, the Committee was of the opinion that a Member should sit on the Project Steering Group and Cllr Deering was nominated as the Town Council representative.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

1. The Committee **notes** the feasibility study.
2. The Committee **nominates** Cllr R Deering as the Town Council representative on the Project Steering Group.

390. FINANCE

(a) Bank Reconciliations

The Committee received the bank reconciliation summaries for October and November 2015.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

The Committee **notes** the bank reconciliation summaries for October and November 2015.

(b) Payment Schedules

The Committee received the payment schedules for October and November 2015

It was **RESOLVED** that:

The Committee **notes** the payment schedules for October and November 2015.

(c) Past due debtors

The Committee noted there were no debtors over 90 days.

(d) Audit Services Procurement 2017/18 and beyond

The Committee received a report detailing the Audit Services Procurement procedure for 2017/18 and beyond which gave Councils the opportunity to opt out of a newly created sector led body provisionally named the Small Authority Audit Appointment Authority Limited.

A discussion took place on the scope of both the internal and external audits and the Committee was of the opinion that the scope of both was limited. The Chairman recommended that members of the Committee consider which areas they would wish the internal auditor to examine and she agreed to discuss such matters with the auditor prior to his next visit. The Finance Manager was requested to ask the internal auditor to allow an extra half day for his next visit.

The Committee was of the opinion that a collective appointment service would be able to achieve a more favourable external audit rate than an individual Council and therefore considered the Council should opt in to the Appointment Authority for the first five years.

It was **RESOLVED** that

The Committee **opts in** to the newly created sector led body provisionally named the Small Authority Audit Appointment Authority Limited.

(e) Non Cheque Payments First Half Year 2015/16

The Committee received a schedule of the first half year non cheque payments for 2015/16.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

The Committee **notes** the non cheque payments for the first half year 2015/16

(f) Draft Budget 2016/17

The Committee received a report outlining the draft budget for 2016/17, and the Finance Manager advised members that all of the optional projects recommended by the Committees were achievable without an increase on the Town Council's proportion of the Council Tax on a Band D property.

It was noted that a contingency of approximately £10,000 may be necessary for works at the Cemetery but these costs were not yet clear. The Committee agreed that any such costs should be met from reserves and allocated to a budget line.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

- a) The Committee **notes** the draft budget for 2016/17.
- b) The Committee **approves** the recommendation of the Development and Leisure Committee for the purchase and installation of new kitchen units and equipment at a cost of £14,000 to be funded from the Castle building reserve in 2015/16.
- c) The Committee **approves** the recommendation of the Development and Leisure Committee for the provision of a new CCTV camera in Parliament Square at a cost of £7242 to be funded from the CCTV reserve in 2015/16.
- d) The Committee **notes** the likely additional costs associated with works at Hertford Cemetery and approves funding from reserves, allocated to a new budget line.
- e) The Committee **recommends** to Full Town Council the Precept request of £1,076,800 for approval at its meeting of 18th January 2016.

391. EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

It was **RESOLVED** that:

In view of the confidential nature of the following items, which relate to the business matters of other individuals and organisations, the public shall be excluded while the following items are discussed. This is in accordance with the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960, as amended by the Local Government Act 1972.

392. PROPOSED RELOCATION OF THE TOWN AND TOURIST INFORMATION CENTRE

The Committee received a report outlining a potential move of the TTIC to a new location within the Town Centre and the costs associated with the move.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

- a) The Committee **approves** the option to relocate the Town and Tourist Information Centre to new Town Centre premises.
- b) The Committee **authorises** the Town Clerk, in consultation with the Chairman and Vice Chairman of the Committee to negotiate the terms of the new lease.
- c) The Committee **increases** the budget for TTIC Rent in 2016/17 to £22,120
- d) The Committee **increases** the budget for TTIC Rates in 2016/17 to £11,130.
- e) The Committee **requests** information on the current lease and the options for maximising income on the soon to be vacant premises, until the expiry of the lease.
- f) The Committee **reminds** officers of the need to increase and maximise income in the new premises.

393. UTILITY RE-CHARGES FOR SEED WAREHOUSE TENANTS

The Committee received a report detailing an explanation of the current method of recharging tenants the cost of utilities used in the Seed Warehouse. Prior to making a decision regarding future calculations and/or any potential refund to tenants, the Committee wished to examine the terms of the leases of the tenants and the possibility of the purchase of smart meters to monitor water usage.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

- a) The Committee **defers** a decision regarding calculations for utilities pending further information, to be presented to the next meeting of the Committee.

Note: Cllrs Miss Geall and Miss Sartin left the meeting prior to the discussion on this item.

The meeting closed at 21:30