

**MINUTES OF THE FINANCE, POLICY & ADMINISTRATION COMMITTEE
MEETING HELD ON MONDAY 16 DECEMBER 2013 AT 7.30 PM IN THE ROBIN
ROOM, THE CASTLE, HERTFORD**

PRESENT: Cllr Miss C Geall, in the Chair

Councillors: Mrs B Mansfield, Cllr P Ruffles, Miss J Sartin, Miss I Sigmac and A Stevenson

IN ATTENDANCE: Ms N Villa, Town Clerk
Ms P Carpenter, Civic Administration Manager
Mr S Davies, Responsible Finance Officer

317. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr M McCormick, Cllr Mrs S Newton and Dr L Radford

318. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

All members present	Declarable	Agenda item 6 – Grant applications.	Cllr Willis is known to all members.
Cllrs Miss Geall, P Ruffles and Miss Sartin	DPI	Agenda item 10(c), Draft Budget – Museum request for increased funding	Trustees of the Museum

319. THE MINUTES

It was **RESOLVED** that:

- a) The Minutes of the Finance, Policy & Administration Committee meeting held on Monday 14 October 2013 be approved as a correct record and the Chairman authorised to sign the same.

320. ACTION SHEET

Museum Lease & SLA

It was noted that a meeting was due to be held with the Chairman of the Museum this week to progress the lease arrangements.

Mind in Mid Herts

It was noted that Mind in Mid Herts had secured funding for a further year and would be continuing to occupy the Seed Warehouse under licence.

Militia Colours

A condition report was still awaited and the Museum was hoping to engage the services of a Conservator, prior to inspection of the Colours.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

- a) The action sheet be received and noted.

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

None

322. COMMUNITY GRANT APPLICATIONS

The Committee considered the following applications and **RESOLVED** in accordance with its powers under the General Power of Competence as defined in the Localism Act 2011 and SI 965 The Parish Councils (General Power of Competence) (Prescribed Conditions) Order 2012, that the Committee should incur the following expenditure.

Cllr R Willis had requested £1200 towards the cost of a Charity Fashion Show in aid of Herts Aid. The Committee was reluctant to fund a fund raising event and considered it would be preferable for Herts Aid to apply directly for a grant, but wished to defer the item to receive further information from Cllr Willis and the charity.

Breathe Easy Hertford was awarded £480 towards a Christmas meal.

The balance of the grant funding available after these applications were approved stands at £10291.95

The committee requested that officers promote HTC grants in the new year via social media.

323. PERSONNEL SUB COMMITTEE

A copy of the minutes of the Personnel Sub Committee held on 11 November 2013 had been circulated to the Committee. These have yet to be approved by the Sub Committee.

The Sub Committee had requested that written reports be submitted to each Committee to ask for the relevant personnel structures of the Committees to be reviewed.

It had further been recommended by the Sub Committee that the Terms of Reference be reviewed to include member issues.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

1. The Committee **notes** the report of the Personnel Sub Committee held on 11 November 2013.
2. The Committee **approves** the changes to the Terms of Reference of the Sub Committee to include Member issues.

324. REVIEW OF CONSTITUTION

It was noted that the review of the Constitution was under way but was pending the release of revised Standing Orders and Financial Standing Orders being issued by the National Association of Local Councils.

Changes expected included removal of the 2 signatures rule to allow for online payments and the issuing of electronic agendas.

The Chairman requested that, in the meantime, whilst awaiting the revisions to the Standing Order documents the other documents included in the Constitution be referred to the Committee for review.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

The Committee **notes** the proposed changes to the Standing Order documents pending full information.

325. MOAT GARDEN TRANSFER

The Committee received details of the draft Heads of Terms Schedule to enable the transfer of the Moat Garden into Town Council ownership.

A query was raised regarding the boundary lines of the Moat Garden and the Clerk was requested to investigate the precise boundary.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

The Committee **notes** the draft Heads of Terms of Schedule for the transfer of the Moat Garden into Town Council ownership.

326. FINANCE

(a) Bank Reconciliations

The Committee received the bank reconciliation summary for October 2013.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

a) The Committee **notes** the bank reconciliation summary for October 2013

(b) Payment Schedules

The Committee received the payment schedules for October and November 2013.

Concern was raised regarding the level of Officer travelling expenses listed in the schedules and the Finance Manager was requested to provide a breakdown of the expenses to the Chairman.

The Committee requested that the signatory paragraphs at the bottom of the schedules be amended to reflect the changes of signatories to the accounts.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

The Committee **notes** the payment schedules for October and November 2013.

(c) Draft Budget 2014/15

The Committee received a report outlining the second draft of the proposed budget for the Committees for 2014/15 and were requested to consider which projects it would wish to undertake in the forthcoming year. The Council's aim for the forthcoming year was to maintain a 0% increase in the precept.

It was noted that the Employers liability to the pension scheme had been increased by 0.2% which was a reduction from the forecast in the draft budget. The Finance Manager was requested to provide information of the out-turn in the budget as a result.

The Committee considered the recommendations of each Committee:

Community Services Committee:

It was noted that £5000 had been recommended to be set aside for a War Memorial Reserve, however the Committee considered it would be more appropriate to increase the War Memorial maintenance budget from £5,000 to £10,000 to enable the re lettering works to be carried out prior to the WW1 Commemorations in 2014.

£2000 had been recommended to be set aside in a reserve for the future purchase of burial land, however given the number of years before the purchase would be required, this reserve seemed both small

and inappropriate. It was considered more important to look out for and procure the land at an earlier stage. It was therefore decided that this sum be re-allocated to Memorial Repairs in accordance with advice from the Town Clerk.

A further £2000 had been recommended for Community Gardening projects, however the Committee noted that the budget from the current year had not been, and was unlikely to be spent, it was therefore decided that this sum should be deleted from the budget. A strategic review would take place regarding the continued inclusion of this project within the Council's Aims and Objectives.

Development and Leisure Committee

It was noted that £2000 had been recommended to provide a feature kitchen in the basement, however, following a discussion, it was decided to increase this sum to £5000 to provide additional signage displays and cosmetic improvements to the whole basement area, including some tidying to the cabling.

The recommended budget for provision of town centre notice boards was also increased from £2000 to £5000, to be funded from the New Homes Bonus.

Finance Policy and Administration Committee

Note: Having previously declared a DPI as Trustees of the Museum, Cllrs Miss Geall, Ruffles and Miss Sartin left the room during the following discussion:

A request had been received from the Museum Curator for an increase in the Museum grant by a further 4% in order to fund an additional member of staff in the Outreach Team. The Committee was supportive of the work the Museum was doing in terms of outreach and decided to grant the request, however it was requested that as a proviso for the additional support, the Curator be asked to produce a strategic business plan within six months which identified alternative future funding methods in order to avoid the need to request further funds from the Council in future years.

Note: Cllrs Miss Geall, Ruffles and Miss Sartin returned to the meeting.

Following the above discussions the Finance Manager confirmed a precept of £1,025,845, which represented a 0% precept increase for a Band D household. This precept ensured there remained a general reserve in excess of £140,000 and £198,000 in the New Homes Bonus reserve. The localisation of Council Tax support grant would continue to be drip fed into the budget over the following years.

A future project, to be considered by the Council shortly, and funded from the New Homes Bonus, was the enhancement of Maidenhead

Street, with a proposal to improve signage, install street furniture along with possible full pedestrianisation in order to create a café style culture in the street.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

- a) The Committee **notes** the draft budget;
- b) The Committee **approves** the optional projects, with adjustments as discussed above.
- c) The Committee **approves** funding Town Council Noticeboards £5000, and Town signage and Maps £5000, Taxi Marshalling £10,000 from the New Homes Bonus Reserve.
- d) The Committee **RECOMMENDS** a precept of £1,025,845 to Full Town Council at its meeting of 6 January 2014.
- e) The Committee **approves** that any unspent budget proposed for the Cemetery Mess Room for the current year be carried over.
- f) The Committee **approves** the second payment for the Localisation of Council Tax Support Grant be transferred immediately to the LCTS Grant reserve on receipt with the intention to extend the phased use of the grant by a further two years until 2018/19.

327. 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 the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960, as amended by the Local Government Act 1972.

328. DEBTOR OVER 90 DAYS

The Committee noted the details of the debt which had been outstanding for over 90 days, which was for a cancelled wedding. Given that the cancellation incurred no Council expenditure it was decided not to pursue the debt through the small claims court.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

In the circumstances it was **decided not to** seek to recover the debt via the small claims court, but to write off as a bad debt.

329. REVIEW OF SCHEDULE OF LEASES AND CONTRACTS

The Committee had received a report with a schedule of the main Leases, Contracts and other agreements currently in force at Hertford Town Council.

The schedule was a useful reference document which enabled the Council to be clear of the various leases and contracts it held and it was requested that the document be updated and referred to the Committee annually.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

The Committee **notes** the report

The meeting closed at 21.25