

**MINUTES OF THE FINANCE, POLICY & ADMINISTRATION COMMITTEE**  
**MEETING HELD ON MONDAY 19 APRIL 2010 AT 7.30 PM IN THE ROBIN**  
**ROOM, THE CASTLE, HERTFORD**

PRESENT: Councillor Miss C J Geall, in the Chair

Councillors Mrs A Emsley, M McCormick, Mrs S Newton, Dr L E Radford, P A Ruffles and Miss J C S Sartin.

IN ATTENDANCE: Ms T Carpenter, Civic Administration Manager  
Mr S Davies, Responsible Finance Officer

**265**      **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Mrs B M Wrangles (previous engagement).

**266**      **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Councillor P A Ruffles declared a personal interest on Agenda item 10 Grants. Cllr Ruffles has previously spoken in public in support of the Music Festival Society.

**267**      **THE MINUTES**

It was **RESOLVED** that:

The Minutes of the Finance, Policy & Administration Committee meeting held on Monday 11 January 2010 be approved as a correct record and the Chairman authorised to sign the same.

**268**      **ACTION SHEET**

It was noted that progress towards Investors in People continued with a view to applying for formal accreditation within the next six months.

It was requested that the progress of the Town Plan be considered as a formal agenda item at the next meeting of the Committee.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

The action sheet be received and noted.

**269**      **QUESTIONS AND/OR STATEMENTS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC**

There were no members of the public wishing to speak.

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### **INTERNAL AUDIT REPORT**

The Committee had received a report providing an update of the results and recommendations from the recent internal audit report, along with a proposed financial risk assessment for the forthcoming financial year. The Committee noted that the financial control measures in place had proved adequate and effective. The Committee was pleased to learn about the ongoing initiative to engage with the External Auditor to understand how it could enhance the remit and scope of the internal audit work and thus reduce the cost of the full audit.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

- (a) The Committee notes the findings of the Internal Auditor
- (b) The Committee approves the Review of the Internal Audit for 2009/10 as adequate and effective and instruct the Town Clerk and the Chairman to continue discussions with the external auditor concerning ways to further improve the scope and effectiveness of the Internal Audit once the reviewed audit regime is known.
- (c) The Committee approves the proposed Financial Risk Assessment.

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### **TREASURY MANAGEMENT REPORT**

The Committee had received a draft Treasury Management Report which had been produced in order to formalise the Council's current investment strategy of only investing in low risk UK banking institutions. It was noted that the paper formalises what is existing practice as the Council currently invested in the one of the best rated banks globally.

It was **RECOMMENDED** that:

The Council formally adopts the proposed Treasury Management Report which would form part of the Council's Constitution.

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### **INSURANCE REVIEW**

The Committee received a verbal report from the Finance and Administration Manager who was pleased to advise that a £4,000 reduction in the cost of Council's annual insurance provision had been negotiated following receipt of competitive alternative quotations. As a result the existing provider had reduced its premium to match the alternative quotation and a three year agreement had been signed. The Committee noted that the claims procedure had operated efficiently with the Council's existing provider.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

- (a) The Committee notes the insurance review.

**273**      **ANNUAL REPORT**

The Committee had been circulated with a draft copy of the Council's Annual Report for 2009/10. The Committee approved the report with minor alterations and requested that, once published, a PDF version be forwarded to the Council's various stakeholders for information.

It was RESOLVED that:

- (a)      The Committee approves the Annual Town Report.

**274**      **GRANTS**

The Committee considered the following applications and **RESOLVED** in accordance with its powers under section 137 of the Local Government Act 1972 that the Committee should incur the following expenditure, which in its opinion is in the interest of the area, or its inhabitants and will benefit them in a manner commensurate with the expenditure:

**Hertford Music Festival** was awarded £1200 towards the running costs of the annual festival. The Committee requested that feedback be requested detailing precisely how the Council's grant had been utilised.

**Home-Start East Herts** was awarded £500 towards the running costs of the Organisation. It was requested that Home Start East Herts be advised that £500 was the maximum payable under the 'small grants for Organisations' category in the Council's Grants Policy and further suggest that other Town Council's such as Ware may be in a position to assist with additional funding.

A discussion ensued regarding the Council's existing grant policy and the Committee requested that this be reviewed at the next meeting following receipt of information concerning best practice policies. The Committee also requested that, in cases where there was a discrepancy between the grant policy and the grant application, it was highlighted within the accompanying report.

The Committee was advised that £1,652 remained unspent from the 2009/10 budget and it was therefore **RESOLVED** to carry this amount forward into the 2010/11 grant provision.

**275**      **PURCHASE OF REPLACEMENT VEHICLE**

The Committee had been circulated with a report providing members with an update of the situation regarding the grounds maintenance vehicle and to ask the Committee to approve the purchase of a new vehicle.

Members expressed disappointment at the situation but recognised that in view of the high repair costs of the current ageing vehicle, the

purchase of a new vehicle would represent better value for money. A discussion ensued regarding the quotations and the merits of the various makes of vans available and it was agreed that the quotation supplied by Company D would be best suited to meet the Council's requirements.

As there was no provision in the current budget for a replacement vehicle it would be necessary for the cost to be met from reserves, however given the timing, so early in the new financial year, it was requested that both Officers and Committee Chairmen examine their various areas of responsibility to establish potential savings in order to offset the expenditure.

A further discussion took place regarding livery of the vehicle and concern was expressed regarding the potential for vandalism given that the Council could not provide secure overnight parking for the vehicle. A decision on this matter was therefore deferred for a future meeting to allow time for any implications to be assessed.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

- a) The Committee note the situation regarding the existing grounds maintenance vehicle.
- b) The Committee approve the waiver of Financial Standing Order 11.1 and retrospectively approve the Town Clerk's instruction to obtain quotations for replacement of the vehicle.
- c) The Committee approve the proposal to purchase a new vehicle from Company D.
- d) The Committee **defer** the proposal to have the new vehicle appropriately marked with the Town Council's logo.

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## **FINANCE**

### (a) Bank Reconciliations

The Committee had received bank reconciliation summaries for December 2009 to February 2010.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

The Committee notes the bank reconciliation summaries for December 2009 to February 2010.

### (b) Income and Expenditure

The Committee had received a report detailing income and expenditure along with budget variances to year end 31 March 2010. It was noted that a further report was pending setting out information concerning accruals, pre-payments and accrued and deferred income. Whilst the schedules provided the Committee with useful information regarding the end of year financial position it was requested that the additional information be circulated to the Committee as soon as practicably

possible in order to provide a more meaningful view of the year end accounts.

The Committee noted the significant investment made in staff training during the last financial year and requested a short report on training initiatives be presented to the next Finance, Policy and Administration Committee.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

The Committee notes the schedules of income and expenditure as a work in progress towards full year end accounts.

(c) Payment Schedules

The Committee had received payment schedules from June 2009 to March 2010.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

The Committee notes the payment schedules from June 2009 to March 2010.

(d) Debtors

There were no debtors as at 31 March 2010.

There being no further business the meeting closed at 8.40pm