

**MINUTES OF THE FINANCE, POLICY & ADMINISTRATION COMMITTEE  
MEETING HELD ON MONDAY 25 MARCH 2013 AT 7.30 PM IN THE ROBIN  
ROOM, THE CASTLE, HERTFORD**

PRESENT: Councillor Miss C Geall, in the Chair

Councillors: Mrs B Mansfield, Dr L E Radford, Miss J Sartin, Miss I Sigmac,

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

417. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Councillors McCormick (work commitment), Mrs S Newton (Unwell) and A Stevenson (work commitment)

418. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

None			

419. **THE MINUTES**

It was **RESOLVED** that:

- a) The Minutes of the Finance, Policy & Administration Committee meeting held on Monday 21 January 2013 be approved as a correct record and the Chairman authorised to sign the same.

420. **ACTION SHEET**

**Castle Grounds SLA**

The Town Clerk confirmed that she had reminded East Herts Council that the SLA Agreement had yet to be received and signed. However it was also confirmed that the Town Clerk had been in regular contact with the Officers at East Herts Council, who had expressed satisfaction that the Council's contractor was working in line with the maintenance standards required.

**Flower Bed in front of the Castle**

A quotation had been received from Mudlarks for £1,244 in respect of additional planting of roses and bulbs at the front of the Castle. The Clerk and Chairman, with the previously delegated authority to expedite the design, approved the scheme. It was however requested that the bulbs be recycled for use the following year.

## Museum Lease

Concern was expressed that the Museum lease had still not been finalised. The Town Clerk confirmed that whilst this was currently with the Council's Solicitor, progress had been delayed as the solicitor was focusing on trying to finalise the MIND lease, which had experienced significant delays. As this lease was now more than two years overdue it was requested that the matter be escalated to the national body of MIND for urgent action.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

- a) The action sheet be received and noted.

## 421. QUESTIONS AND/OR STATEMENTS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

None.

## 422. COMMUNITY GRANT APPLICATIONS

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 and Ware Street Pastors** had requested a grant towards the revenue costs of the organisation. The Council would not normally support grants for revenue expenditure, preferring to sponsor specific items of equipment or projects. The Committee therefore approved a grant of £1,000, towards the purchase of equipment and training which had been outlined within the annual report.

**Country Bus Rallies** had requested a contribution of £595 towards the cost of event publicity, print costs, public liability insurance and the running costs of the bus tours. The Committee, whilst supportive of the request, expressed concern that the previous year's bus tour had not been well publicised and it was therefore requested that the 2013 tour should be linked with a Council event, to be confirmed in discussion with the Chairman of the Development and Leisure Committee, to ensure maximum publicity for both the Council's event and the bus tours.

**Home Start East Herts** was awarded £500 to contribute towards the cost of running the group, summer outings and a Christmas Party for 2013.

**Hertford Cricket Club Under 15's** was awarded £750 to assist with a cricket playing tour of Gibraltar and mainland Spain.

**East Herts Neighbourhood Watch** was awarded £342.50 to fund 'Operation Stomp' which is designed help protect elderly or vulnerable residents from possible break ins and scams

**Hertford and District Churches Together** was awarded £1,200 to contribute to funding for the initial set up and running costs of a new food bank to be based at the United Reform Church in Cowbridge.

**North Road Plotolders Group** had requested £500 towards phase one of the repair of the compost bins. The Group received a £2,000 grant from the Council annually, and the Committee therefore felt unable to accede to the grant request. It was recommended that the group consider alternative sources of funding, such as the East Herts Council Local Environmental Action Fund.

The balance of the grant funding available after these applications were approved stands at £1,822.00

423. **PERSONNEL SUB COMMITTEE**

The Committee had been circulated with a copy of the minutes of the Personnel Sub Committee held on 11 March 2013 which had yet to be approved by the Sub Committee.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

The Committee **notes** the report of the Personnel Sub Committee held on 11 March 2013.

424. **POSTAGE/DISPATCH OF COUNCILLOR MAIL**

The Committee received a report to update the Committee on the results of an investigation into alternative methods of dispatch of Councillor agendas and post. The report outlined that the Town Clerk was legally required to forward agendas to the place of residence of each member and that routinely leaving the envelopes at a central point for collection was illegal. Hand delivery by a member of staff would be the only alternative, but once mileage costs and staff time had been taken into account, this method appeared unfeasible.

Whilst disappointed at the lack of alternatives, members were requested to pick up their envelopes on a Friday whenever possible, and it was agreed that all publications and magazines be left in the office for members to collect at a convenient time, in order to reduce postal costs.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

The Committee **notes** the report.

425. **CODE OF CONDUCT**

The Council received a draft revised Code of Conduct which included an Appendix B and C to the original code adopted by the Council in June 2012. Appendix B related to those Councillors involved in a position of general control or management, or for gifts received by virtue of his/her office to the value of £50. Where a matter arises at a meeting which relates to an interest in Appendix B, the Councillor concerned will be required to withdraw from the room for the duration of the discussion of the item, however, he/she may speak on the matter as long as the Council's Constitution continues to allow members of the public to speak.

In regard to the value of the declarable gifts received, it was requested that the value be reduced from £50 to £25 to remain in line with both the County and District Councils.

Appendix C related to declarable interests. These interests are not pecuniary but may reasonably be regarded by a third party as affecting the well being or financial standing of a family member or close associate of the Councillor. The Councillor may speak and vote on declarable interests arising from Appendix C.

Members noted that the requirements of the Code of Conduct were complex and it was requested that the Town Clerk prepare a simple explanation sheet by way of clarity for members and this would be included with agenda papers going forward.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

- a) Appendix B be amended in regard to the value of gifts received from £50 to £25
- b) Having taken effect of the amendment in (a) above, the revised Code of Conduct be **RECOMMENDED** to the Council for adoption into the Constitution.

#### 426 **AWARDS AND GIFTS POLICY**

The Committee received a proposed Awards and Gift Policy for consideration and recommended several amendments relating to the following items:

- 2.1 Retiring Councillors – to clarify that this related to those members choosing not to stand for re-election as opposed to those not being elected.
- 4.3.4 Honorary Freeman – to clarify that this honour related to exceptional service to Hertford and not to those who simply met any of the criteria listed.

Procedure for Nomination of Honorary Freeman – that at least 6 members must be required to sign a nomination paper for recommendation to the Council.

Within the procedure, it was recommended that paragraph 2 be deleted. This related to other national and local honours.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

Having given effect to the amendments listed above, that the Awards and Gifts Policy be **RECOMMENDED** for adoption by the Council into the Constitution.

427. **HERTFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL COMMUNITY PROTECTION DIRECTORATE CORPORATE PLAN 2013 -18**

The Committee had received a report which provided a brief summary of the draft Community Protection Corporate Plan conducted by Hertfordshire County Council.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

The Town Clerk, in consultation with the Chairman, be granted delegated powers to respond to the Corporate Plan on behalf of the Council. The final response document would be circulated to all members for information.

428. **SEED WAREHOUSE REPAIRS**

The Committee had received a request to utilize approximately £2,400 from the Building Maintenance Reserve to fund priority repairs to and redecoration of the Seed Warehouse.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

- (a) The Committee **approves** that a balance of £5,621 be added to the current budget provision (code 7399) for building repairs at the Seed Warehouse.
- (b) The Committee **approves** that a balance of approximately £2,400 be funded from the Building Maintenance Reserve to enable completion of the priority repairs and redecoration of the Seed Warehouse in 2013/14.

429. **FINANCE**

(a) **Bank Reconciliations**

The Committee received the bank reconciliation summaries for the period January and February 2013.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

- a) The Committee **notes** the bank reconciliation summaries for January and February 2013.

(b) **Payment Schedules**

The Committee received the payment schedules for January and February 2013.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

- a) The Committee **notes** the payment schedules for January and February 2013

(c) Debtor and Creditor Payment Times

The Committee received a report which outlined the time taken for the Council to make payments to its suppliers and to receive payments from its customers in the first three quarters of the financial year 2012/13

It was **RESOLVED** that:

The Committee notes the debtor and creditor payment times for the first three quarters of 2012/13.

(d) Past Due Debtors

It was noted that there were no debtors over 90 days.

(e) Income and Expenditure to 28 February 2013

The Committee had received a report outlining the income and expenditure for the period up to 28 February 2013. It was noted that the accounts were expected to finish in surplus at year end, enabling the deficit in the budget for 2013/14 to be funded from reserves.

The Committee expressed disappointment in the way in which the Council's precept request had been represented in the East Herts Council Link Magazine, and it was requested that the Chairman write to the Leader of East Herts Council to express the Council's concern.

It was **RESOLVED** that

- a) The Committee **notes** the income and expenditure to 28 February 2013.

The meeting closed at 8.45 pm