

MINUTES OF THE FINANCE, POLICY & ADMINISTRATION COMMITTEE
MEETING HELD ON MONDAY 13 OCTOBER 2014 AT 7.30 PM IN THE ROBIN
ROOM, THE CASTLE, HERTFORD

PRESENT: Cllr A Stevenson, in the Chair

Councillors: Miss C Geall, M McCormick, Mrs S Newton, Dr L E Radford, P Ruffles, Miss J Sartin and A Turner

IN ATTENDANCE: Ms P Carpenter, Civic Administration Manager

208. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Mrs M Mansfield (Unwell) and Cllr Miss I Sigmac (Work Commitment)

209. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Cllr S Newton	Declarable	Agenda item 9 – Community Grant NHS County Hospital	Applicant is known to Cllr Mrs Newton.
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210. THE MINUTES

It was **RESOLVED** that:

- a) The Minutes of the Finance, Policy & Administration Committee meeting held on Monday 23 June 2014 be approved as a correct record and the Chairman authorised to sign the same.

211. ACTION SHEET

Salary Apportionment

It was requested that a report on salary apportionments be available for the December meeting.

Leases.

Concern was expressed at the amount of time taken by the Council's Solicitor to complete the lease work and it was considered that it may become necessary to change to a new Company.

Benches Parliament Square

It was confirmed that Cllr Ruffles had been in touch with an officer working on the Highways Together project, and it was hoped that this matter could now be expedited.

Museum Business Plan

It was confirmed that the Museum Curator was currently working on strategic documentation which would outline sources of alternative funding, however, funding was generally only available for capital projects as opposed to revenue funding.

It was proposed that a meeting be arranged between the Museum Curator and members of the FPA Committee to discuss access to alternative funding. The Town Clerk was requested to organise a suitable date for an evening meeting.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

- a) The action sheet be received and noted.

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

None.

213. COMMUNITY GRANT APPLICATION – COURTYARD ARTS

An application had been received from Courtyard Arts for funding of £750 towards the cost of providing free family drop in art activities as part of the national Campaign for Drawing.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

The Committee **approves** a grant of £750 to Courtyard Arts towards the cost of the art activities under the Campaign for Drawing national event.

214. COMMUNITY GRANT APPLICATION – HERTFORD CHILDREN'S BOOK FESTIVAL

An application had been received from the organisers of the Hertford Children's Book Festival requesting £1200 for funding towards filming for the 2014 festival. It was noted that the Council had however already provided funding for the 2014 event and was therefore not able to accede to the request. Nevertheless, the Council would welcome a timely application for a request for funding towards the 2015 Festival.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

The Committee **refuses** the grant request on this occasion.

215. COMMUNITY GRANT APPLICATION – HERTFORD DISABILITY SUPPORT GROUP

An application had been received from the Hertford Disability Support Group for funding of £200 towards the cost of outings and social events. The Council was happy to accede to the request.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

The Committee **approves** a grant of £200 to the Hertford Disability Support Group towards the cost of outings and social events.

216. COMMUNITY GRANT APPLICATION – NHS HERTFORD COUNTY HOSPITAL

An application had been received from a member of staff of the Hertford County Hospital for £20 towards the cost of a small incentive driven prize for the nurse who obtained the most referrals to a cessation of smoking programme for patients. This was not considered to be an application that the Council could support under the grant scheme, however the Mayor agreed to provide the funding from her allowance.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

The Committee **refuses** the request, but that an award of £20 be made by the Mayor from her allowance.

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

217. COMMUNITY GRANT APPLICATION – RUSSELL HOOPS

An application had been received from an individual seeking funding towards extra-curricular basketball training to pupils of Richard Hale School. The Council could not however accede to a request for funding towards a private business.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

The Committee **refuses** the grant request.

218. COMMUNITY GRANT APPLICATION - SELE FARM TABLE TENNIS CLUB

An application had been received for funding of £250 towards the start-up costs of a new table tennis club at Sele Farm Community Centre. The Committee was happy to accede to the request on the basis that the Club would be open for all Hertford residents and not just those living on Sele Farm. Regular revenue funding would not be provided in the future.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

The Committee approves a grant of £250 towards the start-up costs for the Sele Farm Table Tennis Club.

219. COMMUNITY GRANT APPLICATION – ROO RECORDS MUSIC

An application for funding of £1500 had been received from an individual who wished to run a one day music project for members of the public. The Committee did not consider that this was a project the Council could support financially, but suggested that the group could have free use of the Millbridge Rooms for the day.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

The Committee **refuses** the grant request.

220. PERSONNEL SUB COMMITTEE

A copy of the minutes of the Personnel Sub Committee held on 1 September 2014 had been circulated to the Committee. These have yet to be approved by the Sub Committee.

It was requested that an overtime report be produced for the next meeting of the Personnel Sub Committee which differentiated between overtime paid for funded events (i.e weddings etc) and overtime under the Events Programme. The report should be further broken down to show time off in lieu hours earned at each type of activity.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

The Committee **notes** the report of the Personnel Sub Committee held on 1 September 2014.

221. REVIEW OF THE CIVIC LIST

The Committee received a report which provided details of the individuals and organisations included on the Civic list. The Committee reviewed the list to ensure that it remained up to date and relevant and made one or two deletions and additions. A business database would also be introduced which would be used to invite businesses to take part in other activities apart from Mayor making and the Remembrance Services. It was further requested that another check on the full civic list be made in the Spring prior to the Mayor making invitations being sent out.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

- a) The Committee **approves** the creation of a separate business database.
- b) The Committee **notes** the report.

222. ENHANCEMENTS TO MAIDENHEAD STREET

The Committee had received a recommendation from the Development and Leisure Committee for funding of £100,000 from the New Homes Bonus towards the cost of providing enhancements to Maidenhead Street, with Honey Lane, Evron Place and Dolphin Yard, with a view to reinvigorating that area of the Town Centre. The Committee received a report outlining proposals for the enhancements and it was confirmed that a further avenue of funding was currently being pursued and would need to be in place.

The Committee welcomed the proposals and noted that the funding would include the cost of a project manager, who would be appointed at the earliest opportunity in order to drive the project forward. It was requested that more detailed plans be presented to the Development and Leisure Committee for approval as the next step with regular communication on progress to the Chairman of the Development and Leisure Committee and Cllr Miss Sartin. Regular reports on progress should also be presented to the meetings of the Development and Leisure Committee and the Finance, Policy and Administration Committee.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

- a) The Committee **approves** funding of £100,000 from the New Homes Bonus to provide enhancements to Maidenhead Street subject to an acceptable detailed plan
- b) The Committee **approves** the appointment of a Project Manager to drive the project to work under supervision of Development and Leisure Committee.

223. HIGHWAYS TOGETHER PROJECT

The Committee received a report which clarified the purpose of the Highways Together project and the distinction between that and the Town and Parish Charter which is currently being drafted by Hertfordshire County Council.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

The Committee **notes** the report.

224. FINANCE

- (a) Bank Reconciliations

The Committee received the bank reconciliation summaries for the months ending June, July, August and September 2014.

The Committee expressed concern at some delays between the RFO completing the Bank Reconciliation summaries and the Town Clerk checking and signing the reports. It was requested that all bank reconciliations be checked and signed within one week of completion, and that the Financial Risk Assessment be amended to reflect this.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

a) The Committee **notes** the bank reconciliation summaries for months ending June, July, August and September 2014.

(b) Payment Schedules

The Committee received the payment schedules for June, July, August and September 2014.

The Committee noted the large payment of £43,000 towards the Pinehurst project and sought clarification that the invoice for reimbursement had been issued. It was requested that in future, large payments for which reimbursement was due be detailed on both the payment schedules and the information posted on the website for payments over £500.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

The Committee **notes** the payment schedules for June, July, August and September 2014

(c) Past Due Debtors

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

(d) First Half Income and Expenditure

The Committee had received a report outlining the first half income and expenditure for 2014//15 and noted that the Council remained in budget with its expenditure.

The Committee requested a report for the next meeting to give clarity regarding the costs of the larger events and the sponsorship that had been received to mitigate those costs. A similar report was requested for the larger civic events for which there had been no budget, i.e the Homecoming Parade and the World War 1 Commemoration Service.

It was **RESOLVED** that

a) The Committee **notes** the income and expenditure to 30 September 2014.

(e) Financial Risk Assessment

The Committee reviewed the financial risk assessment for 2014/15 and requested that changes be made to reflect the checking procedure of one week following the Finance Manager's completion of month end reconciliation summaries. Further changes included the deletion of the item for provision of glasses for VDU use for staff as this did not correlate with Council policy and the addition of an explanation under the risk 'lack of Responsible Officer' to read 'Appointment of RFO or a temporary resource to cover long term absence'.

It was requested that the Auditor be approached to establish what added value is achieved through cheque signatories initialling cheque stubs.

It was **RECOMMENDED** that:

The Committee **recommends** to the Full Town Council that the amended financial risk assessment for 2014/15 be adopted.

(f) Final External and Interim Internal Audit Reports

The Committee was pleased to note that both the final External Audit for 2013/14, and the Interim Internal Audit for 2014/15 raised no areas of concern.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

The Committee **notes** the Final External Audit for 2013/14 and the Interim Internal Audit Report for 2014/15.

(h) Draft Budget 2015/16

The Committee had received an early draft of the budget for 2015/16, with the list of the optional projects for all three Committees.

The draft budget for the Community Services Committee included an optional budget for the purchase of a new van, and the Committee requested that this item be looked at closely to assess the need for a replacement van.

It was requested that the next budget report clearly highlighted the income and expenditure for both the Pinehurst project and HEN so that the full picture can be assessed. In principal the budget should identify both income and expenditure so that the net effect can be understood

The final draft budget should be referred to the Chairman prior to its presentation to the December FP&A committee.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

- a) The Committee **notes** the draft budget; and
- b) The Committee **adopts** a balance of £140,000 as a prudent target general reserve for the period to 31st March 2016 when considering the calculation for the Precept for 2015/16
- c) The Committee **approves** the transfer of £21,000 from the LCTS Grant Reserve to the General Reserve with the intention to use the grant money to offset Precept increases for a third year.

225. EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

It is recommended 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 item is discussed. This is in accordance with the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960, as amended by the Local Government Act 1972.

226. STAFFING REVIEW

The Committee received a report outlining the results of the recent consultation with staff and the advice provided by the Council's HR advisors. This had proven to be a useful exercise but no need for staff reductions was identified. Staffing requirements at the Town and Tourist Information Centre would be finalised at the next meeting of the Personnel Sub Committee.

Note: Cllr McCormick stated and wished it to be noted that he was of the opinion that staff efficiency savings should be considered next year by the new Council.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

- a) The Committee **notes** the report.
- b) The Committee would **not** make any staff reductions as a result of the recent staff review.
- c) The Personnel Sub Committee **assess** the level of additional staff resource required at the Town and Tourist Information Centre.

The meeting closed at 2200.