

MINUTES OF THE FINANCE, POLICY & ADMINISTRATION COMMITTEE
MEETING HELD ON MONDAY 17 OCTOBER 2016 AT 7.30 PM IN THE ROBINING
ROOM, THE CASTLE, HERTFORD

PRESENT: Cllr Miss Chantal Geall, in the Chair

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

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

259. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Mrs Bolton (prior meeting) and Cllr Deards (work commitment)

260. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Cllrs Miss Sartin and Miss Geall	DPI	Hertford Museum, if discussed	Museum Trustees
Cllr L Radford	DPI	Grants – Hertford Symphony Orchestra	Cllr Dr Radford is a patron of the HSO

261. THE MINUTES

It was **RESOLVED** that:

The Minutes of the Finance, Policy & Administration Committee meeting held on Monday 27 June 2016 be approved as a correct record and the Chairman authorised to sign the same.

262. ACTION SHEET

Asset Register

It was requested that the Finance Manager continues to work on the Asset Register and that it be largely completed by the end of the calendar year for the Chairman and Vice Chairman to check at that time.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

- a) The action sheet be received and noted.

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

None.

264. COMMUNITY GRANT APPLICATION – EAST HERTS CITIZENS ADVICE SERVICE

An application had been received from The East Herts Citizens Advice Service for funding of £1,200 towards the cost of an employee to deliver training to volunteers and supervisors in relation to telephone advice.

The Committee was unable to accede to the grant request given that the nature of the request reflected revenue expenditure as part of the core of the service, rather than capital expenditure, as specified under the grant scheme. The Committee would however consider a future request from the Citizens Advice Service for specific capital expenditure or a one-off project and requested that officers convey this message to the grant applicant.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

The Committee **refuses** the grant request.

265. COMMUNITY GRANT APPLICATION – FUTURE LIVING HERTFORD

An application had been received from Future Living Hertford for funding towards the cost of plants for the Sensory Garden.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

The Committee **approves** a grant for £600.

266. COMMUNITY GRANT APPLICATION – ROSIE STEWART

An application had been received from an individual towards the costs of taking part in a reforestation programme in Malaysian Borneo. The Committee requested feedback from the trip, when completed. The feedback could form part of the case studies for use of community grant funding published on the Council's website

It was **RESOLVED** that:

The Committee **approves** a grant of £250.00

267. COMMUNITY GRANT APPLICATION – HERTFORD SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

An application had been received from the Hertford Symphony Orchestra towards the cost of the hire of a grand piano for use in Hertford Theatre. The requested amount of £1,800 exceeded the maximum payable under the grant

scheme, therefore the Committee approved a grant of £1,200. It was requested that the contribution from the Council be recognised in the event programme.

The Committee requested that future grant reports highlight where the Town Council's grant criteria have not been met.

Note: Cllr Dr Radford took no part in the discussion on this item.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

The Committee approves a grant of £1,200.

268. PERSONNEL SUB COMMITTEE

A copy of the minutes of the Personnel Sub Committee held on 5 September 2016 had been circulated to the Committee.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

- a) The Committee **notes** the report of the Personnel Sub Committee held on 5 September 2016.

269. REVIEW OF THE CIVIC LIST

The Committee had received a report outlining the various bodies and individuals included on the Civic List which had been subject to an initial review by officers and selected members.

Changes to the business list were recommended to reflect businesses currently working with the Council and remove those no longer involved or no longer operational within the town. The current year's Cheerful Trader and HEN winners were added to the list.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

The Committee **notes** the review of the Civic List.
The Committee **adopts** the Civic List for the next year.

270. SCHEDULE OF LEASES

The Committee had received a report with a schedule of the main Leases, Contracts and other agreements currently in force at Hertford Town Council. A query was raised regarding the contract relating to the use of Shire Hall, and Officers were requested to ascertain whether the contract had become null and void.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

The Committee **notes** the Schedule of Leases.

271. WORLD WAR 1 MEMORIAL BENCH

The Committee received a report outlining a proposal by a member of the public to purchase a WW1 memorial bench. The design suggested by the member of the public was not considered appropriate for the proposed location from a planning perspective (as advised by East Herts Council) and was thought to be over decorative for the subject reference. Members were however supportive of the idea of the provision of memorial benches to commemorate WW1 in the Old Cross location. It was suggested that two benches be purchased with one to remember the former Mayor Frank Page who died in the Battle of St Julien in 1917, and the other to remember all soldiers of the Hertfordshire Regiment who died during World War 1.

More research was required to find the most appropriate design of bench for the location and Officers were requested to circulate proposals for members to select the design.

It was further requested that the member of the public who had requested the original design be advised of both the formal planning advice and the planned way forward.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

- a) The Committee **notes** the report.
- b) The Committee **approves** the proposal for two benches to commemorate soldiers who died in WW1 to be placed in Old Cross area adjacent to the old Library. The designs of which to be finalised.
- c) The Committee **approves** that £2,000 be set aside from the New Homes Bonus reserve to fund the project.

272. ADOPT A STREET COMMUNITY LITTER PICKING SCHEME

The Committee received a report on a proposal to implement a community litter picking scheme. Members were keen to bring the proposal to fruition with a publicity launch with the Mayor in the New Year.

Concern was expressed regarding the disposal of large quantities of rubbish that would not always fit in the wheelie bins of the collectors, and it was considered important that East Herts Council be encouraged to become fully engaged in the project and to arrange disposal as required. Cllr Deering, in his capacity as District Councillor, agreed to take the matter forward.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

- a) The Committee **approves** the proposal to adopt a litter picking initiative.
- b) The Committee **allocates** an initial £600 from the New Homes Bonus towards the cost of purchasing the litter picking equipment.

273. MILITIA COLOURS

The Committee received a report outlining costs associated with refurbishing the Militia Colours, currently stored at the Seed Warehouse. The Town Council is the owner of the five historic militia colours, all of which required varying degrees of refurbishment. It was clear from the recent condition report that previous refurbishment and storage decisions had not been successful.

It was noted that not all the Colours related directly to Hertford, with Colours referring to Hoddesdon, Tottenham and Ware and Members enquired whether those Authorities would be interested in contributing to the repair. Additionally it was requested that enquiries be made to both the Imperial War Museum and Hertfordshire Archives to seek assistance with the refurbishment and future storage and/or display, or advice on funding.

It was agreed that £10,000 be earmarked from next year's budget pending the further investigations detailed above.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

- a) The Committee **notes** the current condition of the colours and the issues associated with the current storage case.
- b) The Committee **requests** that the Town Clerk investigates other funding routes and carries out further investigations regarding repair and storage.
- c) The Committee **allocates** £10,000 from the 2017/18 budget to be earmarked against match funded repairs or other options.

274. FINANCE

(a) Bank Reconciliations

The Committee received the bank reconciliation summaries for June, July and August 2016. Members recognised the importance of the bank reconciliations as a key control from a finance oversight perspective and requested that future reconciliations and reviews by the Town Clerk be completed within two weeks of month end.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

The Committee **notes** the bank reconciliation summaries for June, July and August 2016.

(b) Payment Schedules

The Committee received the payment schedules for June, July and August 2016.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

The Committee **notes** the payment schedules for June, July and August 2016.

(c) Past due debtors

The Committee noted that there were no debtors over 90 days.

(d) First Quarter Income and Expenditure 2016/17

The Committee received a report detailing the first quarter income and expenditure for 2016/17 and noted that two budget codes were likely to be overspent at Year End, namely the hanging baskets budget, as a result of the requirement to test the safety of the lamp columns and IT expenditure following the correction of the website hacking damage. The Finance Manager was asked to identify underspent budget codes to ascertain where funds could be vired from. The Finance Manager was also asked to provide the Committee with the first half income and expenditure figures by the end of the calendar year.

It was **RESOLVED** that

- a) The Committee **notes** the first quarter income and expenditure for 2016/17.
- b) The Committee **requests** first half income and expenditure reports before the end of the calendar year.

(e) Financial Risk Assessment

The Committee received a copy of Financial Risk Assessment for 2016/17.

It was requested that non-cheque payments were referred to every meeting of the Committee, along with the payment schedules, as detailed within the Financial Risk Assessment.

Minor adjustments were made to the risk assessment to reflect that cheque stubs were no longer initialled and an item be added to address the risk of bank failure.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

The Committee **recommends** the adoption of the Financial Risk Assessment for 2016/17, with alterations detailed above, to Full Town Council.

(f) Treasury Management and Investment Strategy

The Committee received a report outlining a review of the Council's Treasury Management and Investment Strategy.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

- a) The Committee **continues** to exclude long term investments from the Investment Policy and reviews annually taking into

consideration and changes to the required proper accounting practices.

- b) The Committee **recommends** to Full Town Council the Treasury Management and Investment Strategy 2016/17

(g) Consultation – 2017/18 Local Government Finance Settlement.

The Committee received details of the above consultation which included proposals for Town and Parish Councils to be subject to Referendum Principles from 2017/18.

The Committee considered the proposals to be disproportionate to the cost of holding a referendum and noted that councillors were elected every four years, giving the public the opportunity to hold the Council to account if it was not happy with its budgetary decisions and services. Town and Parish Councils were carrying out more and more work, taking on projects such as Neighbourhood plans and services from principle councils and the proposals to introduce referendum principles appeared to be contrary to the devolution agenda.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

The Committee **authorises** the Town Clerk, in discussion with the Chairman and Vice Chairman to respond to the Consultation outlining the Council's concerns regarding the proposed referendum principles for Town and Parish Councils.

(h) Final External Audit report for 2015/16

The Committee received a copy of the final external audit report for 2015/16.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

The Committee **recommends** the final external audit report and certificate for 2015/16 to the Full Town Council.

(i) Draft Budget 2017/18

The Committee received a copy of the first draft of the budget for the Council for 2017/18, which required further investigation and budget prices. Committee Chairmen and Officers were requested to ensure that budget items relating to objectives had been captured and that the budget for hanging baskets be increased to reflect the new lamp column testing requirements. Taxi marshalling should also be added to the revenue budget and removed from the New Homes Bonus account.

It was noted that based on current projections, the Council could achieve a zero percent rise in the precept for 2017/18 (in line with recent years) without the need to utilise the Local Council Tax support grant reserve.

- (a) The Committee **notes** the draft budget; and
- (b) The Committee **notes** the proposed optional projects for inclusion in the budget to which the Committee will give final approval on 3 January 2017.
- (c) The Committee **adopts** a balance of £160,000 as a prudent target general reserve for 31 March 2018 when considering the calculation of the Precept for 2017/18.

(j) **NEW HOMES BONUS AND OTHER SPENDING PRIORITIES**

A report outlining the current levels of New Homes Bonus Reserves and proposals for spending priorities was considered by the Committee.

The report provided a summary of all funds received and spent to date along with already allocated projects and future proposals.

It was requested that, where funds had been allocated, residual allocations for projects finalised but not fully spent, for example on the Arts Hub and the GoHertford website, should be transferred back into the NHB reserve.

A discussion ensued regarding the allocation of funds for the Maidenhead Street project which amounted to £222,500 in addition to the residual balance of 77,500 from the originally allocated £100,000. The Committee was requested to authorise an initial release of up to £50,000 to cover the cost of public engagement and initial stage engineering design work.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

- a) The Committee **approves** that £10,000 be set aside from the New Homes Bonus for costs associated with developing a Neighbourhood Plan for Bengeo Ward.
- b) The Committee **approves** that £222,500 be set aside from the New Homes Bonus for the package of streetscape improvements in The Wash, Maidenhead Street and Bull Plain, this being in addition to the remaining balance of £77,500 from the originally allocated £100,000.
- c) The Committee **approves** that up to £50,000 of the funds outlined in (b) above be released as required to fund first level engineering investigations and public engagement.
- d) The Committee **approves** that £2,600 be set aside for costs associated with the Adopt a Street initiative and the provision of benches in Old Cross.
- e) The Committee **approves** that up to £10,000 be set aside from the New Homes Bonus for costs associated with replacing the current interpretation boards in the Castle Grounds.
- f) The Committee **approves** that further decisions be taken on New Homes Bonus investment when further information regarding appropriate projects become available.

- g) The Committee **approves** that the funding of the Taxi Marshalling Scheme from an ongoing revenue budget under the Development and Leisure Committee.

275. 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.

276. MANAGEMENT OF THE CASTLE GROUNDS

A report outlining the current management arrangements for the Castle Grounds was considered by the Committee.

The Committee was keen to drive some momentum into the maintenance of the grounds and it was felt that this could be achieved through having a single decision making body, rather than the current piecemeal approach of two authorities. The Council was still awaiting sight of the District Council's management plan for the Grounds, but nevertheless, requested that the Town Clerk expresses the Council's interest in opening discussions with East Herts Council regarding the Council taking over responsibility for the maintenance of the Castle Grounds.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

- a) The Committee **notes** the current maintenance arrangements for the Castle Grounds.
- b) The Committee **approves** that discussions take place with East Herts Council to discuss the future maintenance of the Castle Grounds.

277. LAND ADJACENT TO 145 NORTH ROAD

The Committee considered a report regarding land adjacent to 145 North Road.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

- a) The Committee **notes** the report.
- b) The Committee **approves** that Option 2 of the actions proposed, be pursued.