

**MINUTES OF THE FINANCE, POLICY & ADMINISTRATION COMMITTEE
MEETING HELD ON MONDAY 21 JANUARY 2013 (POSTPONED FROM 14
JANUARY 2013) AT 7.30 PM IN THE ROBIN ROOM, THE CASTLE,
HERTFORD**

PRESENT: Councillor Miss C Geall, in the Chair

Councillors: Mrs B Mansfield, Ms P Moore, Dr L E Radford, Miss J Sartin,
Miss I Sigmac, A Stevenson

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

314. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Councillors McCormick (work commitment) and Mrs S Newton (Unwell).

315. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Cllr Mrs L Radford		Agenda item 6, Grants	Hertford Football Club had assisted with the Fun Run
Cllr P Ruffles		Agenda item 6 Grants	Has associations with both the Civic Society and the Rotary Club

316. **THE MINUTES**

It was **RESOLVED** that:

- a) The Minutes of the Finance, Policy & Administration Committee meeting held on Monday 15th October 2012 be approved as a correct record and the Chairman authorised to sign the same.

317. **ACTION SHEET**

Fly posting

The Clerk confirmed that the full training programme for the removal of flyposting was not appropriate and that a briefing note for members would be prepared instead.

Code of Conduct Training

The Clerk confirmed that she was shortly to attend a training course organised by the SLCC on the new Code of Conduct, which she would then feed back to Councillors.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

- a) The action sheet be received and noted.

318. **QUESTIONS AND/OR STATEMENTS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC**

None.

319. **COMMUNITY GRANT APPLICATIONS**

The Committee had received a report requesting that consideration be given to an amendment to the decision making process to allow the consideration of urgent applications between meetings. On rare occasions in the past the Clerk had circulated urgent requests to members of the Committee for a decision. It was however generally agreed that the grant process had to be both fair and transparent, and it was felt that, in determining applications between meetings, there could be a perceived lack of transparency.

It was considered that a formal re-launch of the grant scheme, with clear publicity regarding the dates that applications had to be submitted, would ensure that grant applications would not need to be considered in between meetings.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

- a) Grant applications would not be determined between committee meetings and accordingly no process be implemented.
- b) That the Community Grant Scheme be re-launched in April 2013, with suitable press releases and publicity on the Town Council website.

There was a budget of £15,000 for Community Grants in 2012/13 and an additional £3,955 rolled forward from 2011/12.

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 Civic Society had requested £1200 towards the cost of a bronze resin bas-relief of Alfred Russell Wallace to commemorate the centenary of his death. The Committee considered that such a sculpture would boost

Hertford from a tourist angle and generate publicity for the Town and was therefore happy to accede to the grant request.

Magpas The Emergency Medical Charity had requested a contribution towards its running costs. The Committee did not support the grant request noting that the Council's grant scheme had been designed to focus more on local charities and organisations.

Sele Farm Carpet Bowls Club was awarded £200 towards its running costs.

Mr D Howells, a pupil of Richard Hale School had requested a contribution towards a school expedition to Tanzania. The Committee was happy to accede to this request on the basis that it had supported similar requests historically and agreed to contribute £200. The Committee did however recognise that the grant scheme would not be able to cope with a large amount of similar applications in the future.

Hertford Football Club was awarded £1200 towards the cost of the refurbishment of the changing facilities and a replacement boiler. The Committee noted that the club was struggling financially and that a lot of people were working hard to keep the football club open.

River Beane Restoration Association was awarded £100 towards its running costs.

Rotary Club of Hertford was awarded £1200 for specific funding towards the Hertford Carnival. The Committee was grateful to the Rotary Club for its work in arranging the 2013 Carnival and was happy to provide assistance with funding.

The balance of the grant funding available after these applications were approved stands at £4615

320. **PERSONNEL SUB COMMITTEE**

The Committee had been circulated with a copy of the minutes of the Personnel Sub Committee held on 10 December 2012 which had yet to be approved. It was noted that the role of Marketing and Events Manager had been advertised and that the recruitment process was in place. It was further noted that the annual salaries of all Council staff were approved for 2013/14.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

The Committee **notes** the report of the Personnel Sub Committee held on 10 December 2012.

321. **FINANCE**

(a) **Bank Reconciliations**

The Committee received the bank reconciliation summaries for the period October – December 2012.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

- a) The Committee **notes** the bank reconciliation summaries for October - December 2012 inclusive.

(b) Payment Schedules

The Committee received the payment schedules for the period October – December 2012.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

- a) The Committee **notes** the payment schedules for October – December 2012 inclusive.

(c) Third Quarter Income and Expenditure 2012/13

The Committee had received a report outlining the income and expenditure for the third quarter of 2012/13 and a report on the currently identified over and under spends. The Committee was particularly disappointed to note the downturn in wedding bookings for the Downshire Suite but recognised that this would be a matter for the new Marketing and Events Manager to address.

The high postage costs were also of concern and it was requested that the matter of how Committee papers were circulated to members was discussed at the next meeting of this Committee.

It was **RESOLVED** that

- a) The Committee **notes** the income and expenditure to 31 December 2012.
- b) The Committee **approves** the proposed virements within the Committee's budget.

(d) Budget 2013/14

The Committee received a report outlining the second draft of the proposed budget for the Committees for 2013/14 and were requested to consider which projects it would wish to undertake in the forthcoming year.

The Committee was reminded that it currently held £72,000 in reserves from the New Homes Bonus, with a further £50,000 expected in the next financial year. Whilst it was not considered appropriate to use this reserve to fund day to day expenditure, it was felt that certain items

from the optional projects could reasonably be funded in this way, namely a Cemetery Investment Programme, Taxi Marshalling and an upgrade to the Town Council website. The Committee was keen to highlight that, although it was approving £10,000 towards the initial exploratory work for a new cemetery mess room as part of the cemetery investment programme, it was not committing the Council to any future expenditure on this particular item at this stage.

In addressing the optional projects for the Development and Leisure Committee it was considered that due to the current lack of clarity regarding funding issues for the ANPR cameras (including the requirement for match funding), this was not a project which could be approved at this time. However should greater clarity be received, the Committee felt comfortable that this could also be funded from the New Homes Bonus reserve should the need arise.

The optional projects for the Finance, Policy and Administration Committee were also discussed and it was considered that the proposed budget of £10,000 for professional fees to research the viability of a heritage centre could reasonably be excluded given that this exercise could be addressed in house by the new Marketing and Events Manager.

The localisation of Council Tax Scheme and the impact that this would have on both this year's precept and that of following years was discussed. However, with the tight financial management the Council had adopted, it could achieve the majority of the optional projects for 2013/14, whilst keeping both an appropriate level of reserves and achieving a reduced precept demand to East Herts Council in absolute terms.

In conclusion, the Committee approved all of the optional projects for the Community Services Committee and the majority of the projects from the Development and Leisure and Finance, Policy and Administration Committee, whilst recommending a precept of £1,037,262 for 2013/14, the sum being £22,293 less than that for 2012/13.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

- a) The Committee **notes** the draft budget report; and
- b) The Committee adopt a balance of £140,000 as a prudent target general reserve for the 31st March 2014 when considering the calculation of the Precept for 2013/14.
- c) The Committee **recommends** a Precept of £1,037,262 to Full Town Council at a meeting to be held on the 28th January 2013.
- d) The Committee **approves** the request from the Community Services Committee to fund the initial costs of £10,000 for a new Cemetery Mess Room from the New Homes Bonus Reserve

along with other Cemetery Infrastructure items as part of Cemetery investment package, the upgrade to the Council website and the Taxi Marshalling Scheme. (Projects totalling £52,000)

- e) The Committee **recommends** that the additional optional projects totalling £91,375 be included in the budget to which the Full Town Council will give final approval on the 28th January 2013.

The meeting closed at 9.20pm