

**MINUTES OF THE FINANCE, POLICY & ADMINISTRATION COMMITTEE**  
**MEETING HELD ON MONDAY 14 OCTOBER 2013 AT 7.30 PM IN THE ROBIN**  
**ROOM, THE CASTLE, HERTFORD**

PRESENT: Cllr Miss C Geall, in the Chair

Councillors: Mrs B Mansfield, Mrs S Newton, Dr L E Radford, Cllr P Ruffles,  
Miss J Sartin and Miss I Sigmac

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

**213. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr M McCormick and Cllr A Stevenson

**214. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Cllr P Ruffles	DPI	Agenda item 9,	Museum trustee – if discussed
Cllr P Ruffles	DPI & Declarable	Agenda item 6 - Grants	St John Ambulance & Disability Support Group
Cllr Mrs S Newton	DPI	Agenda item 6 - Grants	Cruse Bereavement Care

**215. THE MINUTES**

It was **RESOLVED** that:

- a) The Minutes of the Finance, Policy & Administration Committee meeting held on Monday 24 June 2013 be approved as a correct record and the Chairman authorised to sign the same.

**216. ACTION SHEET**

**Service Level Agreement – Hertford Castle Grounds**

It was confirmed that a revised SLA had been received from East Herts Council.

**Seed Warehouse, Phase 2 Repairs.**

The less urgent repair items were currently being investigated, for work to be carried out in the next financial year.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

- a) The action sheet be received and noted.

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

None.

**218. COMMUNITY GRANT APPLICATIONS**

The Committee considered the following applications and **RESOLVED** in accordance with its powers under the General Power of Competence as defined in the Localism Act 2011 and SI 965 The Parish Councils (General Power of Competence) (Prescribed Conditions) Order 2012, that the Committee should incur the following expenditure.

**Note:** Having previously declared a DPI, Cllr Ruffles left the room during the grant discussions

**Herts Disability Support Group** had requested £100 towards their activities. The Committee recognised that the Group's funds had been badly affected by reduced funding from Hertfordshire County Council and that the Group provided a valuable local service. The Committee was keen that the group continued to concentrate on its activities, rather than fundraising, and therefore awarded a grant of £200.

**Courtyard Arts & Community Centre** was awarded a grant of £1,059 towards the cost of kiln equipment.

**St John Ambulance** was awarded £1,200 towards the cost of a pop up shelter for welfare facilities. The Council would purchase the shelter on behalf of St John Ambulance if required.

**East Herts Citizens Advice Service** was awarded £1,200 towards safety and security of the building.

**Cruse Bereavement Care Hertfordshire** was awarded £440 towards its running costs, but a letter would be sent to remind the charity that the Council would not in future provide support for running costs, and future applications should relate to a specific project or capital expenditure

**Note:** Having declared a DPI, Cllr Mrs Newton left the room during the discussion on this item.

The balance of the grant funding available after these applications were approved stands at £10,771.95

## 219. PERSONNEL SUB COMMITTEE

A copy of the minutes of the Personnel Sub Committee held on 2 September 2013 had been circulated to the Committee. These have yet to be approved by the Sub Committee.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

The Committee **notes** the report of the Personnel Sub Committee held on 2 September 2013.

## 220. CIVIC LIST

The Committee received a report which provided details of the individuals and organisations included on the Civic list. Historically it was noted that the list had not been formally reviewed by the Council and, in order to create transparency and to keep the list relevant, it was felt that the list should be reviewed annually.

It was proposed that the list be divided into three categories, those being core members, local organisations and business representatives. A discussion took place regarding inclusions on the list, and around deletion of those where there appeared to be no justification for an annual invitation, with the intention of keeping the guest list as Hertford based as possible. It was further agreed that for the Mayor Making ceremony the incoming Mayor should be allowed to invite a maximum number of personal guests, plus a further maximum number of guests from the Hertford area/ business community/charity representatives. The maximum numbers were not confirmed by the Committee at this stage, but discussions revolved around up to 10 family members and up to 20 other guests.

The current businesses listed on the civic list were approved as permanent invitees, although it was noted that there were many other worthy businesses and organisations that could also receive an invitation, but numbers were restricted. In this respect it was recommended that a rotating business list be created, to ensure that as many local business people as possible could experience the Mayor Making ceremony.

The Committee had also reviewed the Guidance Notes issued to the Mayor on his/her appointment. Several changes were recommended and there was discussion specifically around appropriate management of the officer time, particularly the Mayor's Secretary in Mayoral fund raising activities. The importance of the political impartiality of the Mayor and use of the casting vote in Full Town Council to maintain the status quo was also highlighted. There would remain the expectation that the Mayor or Deputy Mayor will attend as many events as possible in Hertford, however Past Mayors would only attend events in exceptional circumstances when the Mayor and Deputy Mayor were not available for an important Hertford based event.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

- a) The Committee delegates authority to the Town Clerk, in consultation with the Chairman and Cllr Ruffles, to finalise the Civic List for 2014/15.
- b) The Committee delegates authority to the Town Clerk, in consultation with the Chairman and Cllr Ruffles, to finalise the changes to the Guidance Notes to the Mayor and Deputy Mayor.
- c) The Committee formally reviews the Civic List annually, at the first Finance, Policy and Administration Committee of the Calendar Year.

## 221. **FINANCE**

### (a) Bank Reconciliations

The Committee received the bank reconciliation summaries for the months ending June, July, August and September 2013.

The high balance in the September summary was noted as being as a result of the receipt of the second portion of the precept and £98,000 New Homes Bonus. Investment opportunities would be considered once the Investment Management Plan had been reviewed at the next meeting of this committee.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

- a) The Committee **notes** the bank reconciliation summaries for months ending June, July, August and September 2013.

### (b) Payment Schedules

The Committee received the payment schedules for June, July, August and September 2013

It was **RESOLVED** that:

The Committee **notes** the payment schedules for June, July, August and September 2013

### (c) Past Due Debtors

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

### (d) Non Cheque Payments, First half year 2013/14

The Committee received the payment schedule for non cheque payments for the first half of the year 2013/14

It was **RESOLVED** that:

The Committee notes the payment schedule for non-cheque payments for the first half of the year 2013/14.

(e) First Half Income and Expenditure

The Committee had received a report outlining the first half income and expenditure and it was noted that the Council was due to receive £9,000 from East Herts Council as a recharge for the Castle Gardens.

A discussion took place regarding the Local Council Tax Support Grant and it was understood that East Herts Council may not be passing the grant on to Parish Councils next year. It was requested that the Town Clerk write to the Chief Executive to urge the Council to reconsider the support grant to parish councils and the Chairman was also requested to write to the leader of East Herts Council, to reiterate the request.

It was **RESOLVED** that

- a) The Committee **notes** the income and expenditure to 30 September 2013.

(f) Financial Risk Assessment

The Committee reviewed the financial risk assessment for 2013/14 and it was requested that an item be added to review the schedule of leases annually. It was also requested that the adequacy of the Council reserves be reviewed by the Full Town Council as well as the Finance, Policy and Administration Committee.

It was **RECOMMENDED** that:

The Committee **recommends** to the Full Town Council that the amended financial risk assessment for 2013/14 be adopted.

(g) Final External and Interim Internal Audit Reports

The Committee was pleased to note that both the final External Audit for 2012/13, and the Interim Internal Audit for 2013/14 had been good, with no major areas of concern.

(h) Draft Budget 2014/15

The Committee had received an early draft of the budget for 2014/15, with the list of the optional projects for all three Committees. The general consensus of opinion of those members present was that the Council should aim to adopt a 0% increase to the precept for the next financial year.

It was requested that prior to any approval in an increase in the marketing budget for 2014/15 a business plan be presented to the next meeting of the Development and Leisure Committee outlining how any increase in expenditure would increase income.

A discussion took place regarding the current building reserve, and whether this could become the umbrella Community Services Committee reserve to include the War Memorial Reserve and the new Burial Land Reserve. It was acknowledged that this matter required further discussion and agreement from the Community Service Committee.

Several project ideas had been proffered at the recent Aims and Objectives brainstorming meeting and these, if accepted, would also require budget provision. It was also noted that there may be a need for some budget provision for an upgrade of the IT system following a recent meeting held between the Chairman, Cllr P Boyle and the Finance Manager.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

- a) The Committee **notes** the draft budget; and
- b) The Committee defers a final decision on which, if any, of the optional projects should be included in the budget to which the Committee will give final approval on the 16<sup>th</sup> December 2013 until the completion of the next Committee cycle and the feedback from the recent Aims and Objectives meeting became available.
- c) The Committee **adopts** a balance of £140,000 as a prudent target general reserve for the 31<sup>st</sup> March 2015 when considering the calculation of the Precept for 2014/15.
- d) The Committee **approves** the transfer of approximately £42,000 (final figure to be determined upon finalisation of the budget) from the LCTS Grant Reserve to the General Reserve with the intention to use the grant money to offset Precept increases over four financial years.

The meeting closed at 21:55.