

**MINUTES OF THE FINANCE, POLICY & ADMINISTRATION COMMITTEE  
MEETING HELD ON MONDAY 19 OCTOBER 2009 AT 7.30 PM IN THE ROBIN  
ROOM, THE CASTLE, HERTFORD**

PRESENT: Councillor Miss C J Geall, in the Chair

Councillors, Mrs A Emsley, J C Hedley, M McCormick, Dr L E Radford  
and Miss J C S Sartin.

IN ATTENDANCE: Mrs N L Villa, Town Clerk  
Mr S Davies, Responsible Finance Officer  
Ms T Carpenter, Civic Administration Manager (minutes)

**149. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies of absence were received from Councillor P A Ruffles and  
Mrs B M Wrangles

**150. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Councillor Miss C J Geall declared a personal interest on  
Agenda item 12(e) Budget, in respect of her patronage of the  
Museum, grant aid for which was included within the Budget  
proposals.

**151. THE MINUTES**

It was **RESOLVED** that:

The Minutes of the Special Finance, Policy & Administration  
Committee meeting held on Monday 21 September 2009 be  
approved as a correct record and the Chairman authorised to sign  
the same.

**152. ACTION SHEET**

The Town Clerk updated the Committee on the progress of the  
lease agreement of the second floor; the tenancy was due to  
commence in December 2009 at a rent of £7,500 per annum plus  
£7,500 per annum service charge. Suitable credit checks had  
been undertaken and a deposit was to be held.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

The action sheet be received and noted.

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

There were no members of the public wishing to speak.

**154. HEALTH AND SAFETY**

The Committee had received a report regarding the updated position with regard to the Council's Health and Safety liabilities. The Town Clerk confirmed that health and safety provision was now being administered in house and the Council could be confident that it was meeting its health and safety responsibilities. The Town Clerk further confirmed that a robust Business Continuity Plan was now being considered.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

- (a) The Committee notes the work currently being undertaken to develop safe systems of work for Hertford Town Council.
- (b) The Committee approves the allocation of the refund of £4710.78 to budget code 7015, as detailed in the report

**155. TOWN PLAN UPDATE**

The Committee had received a report which provided details of the updated position regarding the progress towards the production of a Town Plan for Hertford. The Committee requested information regarding any findings of the various working groups which could be considered or actioned by the Town Council at an early stage. The Town Clerk confirmed that the majority of the initial findings involved the influence of Councils at a higher level, recommendations for which would eventually feed into East Herts Council's Local Development Framework. It was confirmed that there were currently no recommendations which would impact on either Town Council Officers or the Council at this early stage. The Committee also requested that appropriate Town Council approval be obtained for the use of Town Council resources where necessary. It was noted that currently the commitment only arose from the time spent on the project by the Town Clerk.

The Committee considered the content of the Questionnaire and requested that a comment box be included under every subject heading in order to retain a uniformity of design within the document. The Committee was advised that the questionnaire would be professionally printed in the corporate image of the Council and would include a breakdown of the responsibilities of each tier of local government within Hertfordshire.

The Committee was keen to ensure maximum circulation of the Questionnaire but remained mindful of the cost involved in such a project. The cost of providing a pre-paid envelope for each household to return the questionnaire was considered prohibitive and it was therefore agreed to encourage residents to hand deliver completed questionnaires to either the Town Council offices or Town and Tourist Information Centre. The questionnaire would be available for completion online and further paper copies would be readily available.

A timed press release to the Mercury and advertising on the Town Council website would it was hoped ensure maximum publicity for the project.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

- (a) The Committee notes the progress on the production of a Town Plan for Hertford
- (b) The Committee approves the draft questionnaire, with amendments and approves the distribution of the questionnaire to all households in Hertford at a price to be agreed with the Town Clerk in consultation with the Chairman.

**156. TRAINING REPORT**

The Committee received a report of the training undertaken by officers and members in 2008/09 and the first half of 2009/10.

The Committee was pleased to note the breadth of training undertaken by officers and recognised that the Town Council would benefit from its investment in its officers. The Committee recognised that councillor training was a matter which would need to be addressed once suitable, quality courses had been designed by the National Association of Local Council.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

- (a) The Committee notes the report.

**157. INVESTORS IN PEOPLE**

The Committee had received a report on the proposal to work towards gaining the Investors in People award. The Town Clerk was of the opinion that this nationally recognised award would help the Council when interacting with both local government and external organisations/stakeholders and raise the Council's profile as a leading local Council. Gaining the accreditation would not involve a huge amount of officer time and monetary investment would be in the region of £2000. The Town Clerk would aim for completion of the accreditation by mid 2010.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

The Committee approves the proposal that Hertford Town Council commences working towards Bronze level of the Investors in People Award.

**158. CASTLE FLOODLIGHTING**

The Committee had received a report recommending a proposal to replace the existing Castle floodlighting with a new system, as opposed to looking to repair of the current system. The Committee recognised that the floodlighting was both an important feature and part of the heritage of Hertford, but were mindful of the environmental impact such lighting would have in terms of CO2 emissions. Having read the environmental impact studies which had been included within the report it was clear to the Committee that the replacement of the system with a less polluting system would be the preferred option and the Committee further stipulated that the lighting would be switched off at 11pm to ensure greater energy efficiency.

The cost to replace the system was in the region of £11,000 excluding VAT and the Town Clerk had requested an additional small contingency budget to allow for any unforeseen expense.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

- (a) The Committee approves the proposed replacement of the existing floodlighting with a new system.
- (b) The Committee approved acceptance of the best value quotation tabled.

**159. CHRISTMAS AND NEW YEAR OPENING HOURS**

The Committee had received a report requesting the Committee's consideration to the opening hours of the Castle, Town and Tourist Information Centre during the Christmas period.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

The Committee approves the proposed Christmas and New Year opening hours.

**160. FINANCE**

- (a) Debtor and Creditor Payment Times

The Committee had received a report detailing the payment times for both debtors and creditors. The Committee was pleased to note the very effective credit control system in operation and wished to pass on its appreciation to the officer concerned.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

The Committee notes the report.

(b) Bank Reconciliations

The Committee had received bank reconciliation summaries for June to September 2009. It was requested that where a summary included the pro rata precept, it should be annotated to provide an explanation for the increased income.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

The Committee notes the bank reconciliation summaries for June to September 2009.

(c) The Audit Certificate for the Statement of Accounts 2008/09

The Committee had received a copy of the audit certificate issued by Grant Thornton LLP following completion of the audit for 2008/09

It was **RESOLVED** that:

The Committee notes the audit opinion and Certificate.

(d) Income and Expenditure

The Committee had received a schedule detailing income and expenditure to 30<sup>th</sup> September 2009.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

The Committee notes the schedule of income and expenditure.

(e) Budget 20010/11

The Committee had received a draft first copy of the proposed budget for 2010/11. The Committee considered it useful to receive early sight of the document and reiterated the desire to set a non-inflation budget for 20010/11, with the ultimate aim being to achieve a zero percent increase in the precept.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

(a) The Committee approves the objective of a reduction in the precept for 2010/11

(b) The Committee notes that further challenge will be undertaken in respect of the 2010/11 budget to understand where further cost reductions may be achievable with a view to reducing the precept requirement for 2010/11.

**161. EXCLUSION OF THE 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 item is discussed. This is in accordance with the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960, as amended by the Local Government Act 1972.

**162. NON CHEQUE PAYMENTS**

The Committee had received a schedule of Direct Debit and BACS payments made during the 2008/09 financial year.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

The Committee notes the schedule of non-cheque payments.

**163. PAST DUE DEBTS**

The Committee was pleased to note that as at 30<sup>th</sup> September 2009 there were no debtor balances that exceeded 90 days.