

MINUTES OF THE FINANCE, POLICY & ADMINISTRATION COMMITTEE
MEETING HELD ON MONDAY 27 SEPTEMBER 2010 AT 7.30 PM IN THE
ROBING ROOM, THE CASTLE, HERTFORD

PRESENT: Councillor Miss C Geall in the Chair

Councillors Mrs A Emsley, J Hedley and Miss J C S Sartin.

IN ATTENDANCE: Mrs N L Villa, Town Clerk
Ms T Carpenter, Civic Administration Manager
Mr S Davies, Responsible Finance Officer
Paul Dossett and Nick Taylor, representatives from Grant Thornton UK LLP, External Auditors

183 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors M McCormick (Holiday) Mrs S Newton, (Personal commitment) Dr L E Radford (Previous engagement) P Ruffles (Holiday).

184. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Cllr C Geall	Personal	Agenda item 8 (f) Grants Resident of Fordwich Rise
Cllr J Sartin	Prejudicial	Agenda item12 (e) Draft Budget Trustee of Hertford Museum

185 THE MINUTES

It was **RESOLVED** that:

- (a) The Minutes of the Finance, Policy & Administration Committee meeting held on Monday 28 June 2010 be approved as a correct record and the Chairman authorised to sign the same.

186 ACTION SHEET

It was **RESOLVED** that:

- (a) The action sheet be received and noted.

187 QUESTIONS AND/OR STATEMENTS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

There were no members of the public wishing to speak.

188 EXTERNAL AUDIT 2009/10

The Committee received a report of the findings and recommendations of the external audit conducted by Grant Thornton UK LLP.

Representatives from the Company were present to provide a detailed explanation of the report, and how their findings link with the final Statement of Accounts under the new Financial Reporting Standard for Smaller Entities (FRSSE) accounting practices.

The comments of the External Auditor were positive, and confirmed that Hertford Town Council's financial statements and arrangements for ensuring economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources (value for money conclusion) had both received unqualified opinions.

The Committee received clarification from the Auditor that the audit regime would remain unchanged for 2011. The Committee also sought an explanation from the Finance and Administration Manager regarding two suggested adjustments by the Auditor which had remained unadjusted, and the Committee was comfortable to note that the adjustments did not arise from control issues and netted off such that they were immaterial.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

- (a) The Committee approve the final version of the Annual Statement of Accounts 2009/2010.
- (b) The Chairman and Responsible Finance Officer be duly authorised to sign the letter of representation.

189 **INTERNAL AUDIT**

The Committee had received a report providing details of the recommendations of the recent internal audit along with a proposed financial risk assessment.

The Committee requested the following amendments to the Risk Assessment:

- (a) 'Budget overspend' - To note the Council did not approve projects it could not afford.
- (b) 'Injury to the public' – Full risk assessments were carried out for all events.
- (c) 'Key man risk' – Change wording to read Finance Assistant being trained in *key* aspects instead of *all* aspects.'

It was **RESOLVED** that:

- a) The Committee **notes** the findings of the Internal Auditor
- b) The Committee **approves** the Review of Internal Audit for 2009/10 as adequate and effective and **instructs** the Town Clerk and Chairman to continue discussions with the External Auditor concerning ways to further improve scope and effectiveness of Internal Audit once the reviewed audit regime is known
- c) The Committee **approves** the proposed Finance Risk Assessment subject to the recommended amendments.

190 GRANTS

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:

Street Pastors was awarded £600 as a one off payment towards equipment costs. The Committee requested that the Organisation be advised that the grant scheme was available for capital expenditure as opposed to revenue funding.

East Herts Citizens Advice Service was awarded £1000 towards the purchase of a projector, screen and new chairs. **Note:** The expenditure for this grant was incurred under s142 Local Government Act 1972.

East Herts and Broxbourne Domestic Violence Forum (Hertford Contact Centre) was awarded £400 towards the cost of replacement items. The Committee requested that the Organisation be advised that the grant scheme was available for capital expenditure as opposed to revenue funding.

Hertford Film Club was awarded £150 towards the cost of the purchase of a new DVD player. In addition the Council gifted to the Club the items previously purchased on the Club's behalf. The Committee however expressed concern that the Club appeared to have made no attempt to raise money from among its members and relied solely on income from grants.

St John's Ambulance was awarded £570 towards the cost of a new orthopaedic stretcher.

Fordwich Tree Project was awarded £250 towards the cost of replacement trees in Fordwich Rise.

191. REVIEW OF CONSTITUTION

The Committee had been circulated with a copy of the proposed Constitution, which included minor alterations from the previous year. The Committee suggested the following amendments:

- (a) Two formal meetings with Police per year instead of three.
- (b) A change to the wording of the section concerning Museum funding was recommended to ensure the Council was not committing itself to expenditure outside of the budget process.

Note: Having declared a prejudicial interest, Cllr Miss Sartin vacated the room during the discussion concerning the Museum funding.

It was **RECOMMENDED** that:

- (a) Having taken account of the above amendments, the proposed Constitution be referred to the next meeting of the Town Council for approval.

192. CASTLE GROUNDS

The Committee had received a report detailing a proposal for the Council to assume responsibility for the maintenance of the Castle Grounds from East Herts Council on 1 April 2011 and to enter into a full tender process for the appointment of a new Contractor, as well as to seek volunteers to lock and unlock the gates outside of normal working hours.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

- a) The Committee **notes** the current discussions relating the maintenance of the Castle Grounds and Moat Garden
- b) The Committee **approves** the proposal to appoint a new contractor to maintain the grounds and Moat Garden under a competitive tendering process
- c) The Committee **instructs** the Town Clerk to seek volunteers to lock/unlock the Castle Gates outside of office hours
- c) The Committee **transfers** the management of the grounds to the Community Services Committee once the tender process had been completed.

193 HEALTH AND SAFETY REVIEW

The Committee had received a report providing an update on the actions taken to implement safe working systems within the Town Council to ensure the Council meets its Health and Safety obligations.

The Committee was pleased to note that the Council's health and safety obligations were being adequately monitored and controlled.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

The Committee notes the report.

194 FINANCE

- (a) Bank Reconciliations

The Committee had received bank reconciliation summaries for June to August 2010.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

The Committee notes the bank reconciliation summaries for June 2010 to August 2010.

(b) Payment Schedules

The Committee had received payment schedules from June 2010 to August 2010

It was **RESOLVED** that:

The Committee notes the payment schedules from June 2010 to August 2010.

(c) 1st Quarter Income and Expenditure

The Committee had received a report providing a commentary on income and expenditure in the first quarter of 2010/11.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

The Committee notes the income and expenditure to 30th June 2010.

(d) Anti Corruption Policy

The Committee had received a proposed Anti Corruption Policy for inclusion within the Council's Constitution.

It was **RECOMMENDED** that:

The proposed Anti Corruption Policy be referred to the next meeting of the Council for adoption within the Council's Constitution.

(e) Budget for 2011/12 (First Draft)

To Committee had received a first draft of the budget for 2011/12 and requested to consider optional projects for the forthcoming financial year.

The Committee noted the budget preparation progress and was pleased to note that the 0% increase in the precept remained on target.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

The Committee notes the first draft of the budget.

(f) Medium Term Financial Plan

The Committee had received a first draft of a proposed five year financial plan for the period 1 April 2011 to 31 March 2016, which was designed to support achievement of the Council's overall objectives and delivery of services as well as drawing attention to a potential growth of the Precept.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

The Committee notes the content of the draft of the five year financial plan and acknowledges that the document served as a guideline for future years based on current Council thinking.

195. EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC

It was **RESOLVED** that:

In view of the confidential nature of the following item, which relates 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.

196. LEASE ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE SEED WAREHOUSE

The Committee had received a report regarding lease negotiations for the Seed Warehouse.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

- (a) The Town Clerk, in consultation with the Chairman, seek to negotiate an overall settlement in the lease negotiations subject to both parties being able to agree.
- (b) That an independent valuation on the premises be sought.

There being no further business the meeting closed at 21:20.