

MINUTES OF THE FINANCE, POLICY & ADMINISTRATION COMMITTEE HELD ON MONDAY 16 FEBRUARY 2009 AT 7.30 PM IN THE ROBIN ROOM, THE CASTLE, HERTFORD

PRESENT: Councillor Miss C J Geall, in the Chair

Councillors J F Cook, J C Hedley, P A Ruffles, Dr L E Radford

IN ATTENDANCE: Cllr R A K Radford
Mrs N L Villa, Town Clerk
Mr S Davies, Finance and Administration Manager
Miss M Challis, Assistant to the Town Clerk

259. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies of absence were received from Councillor Miss J C S Sartin and Councillor Mrs B M Wrangles.

260. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor P A Ruffles declared the following interests in item 6(d) – Finance (Grant Applications):

- a) A personal interest in the Classic Bus Rally application as he has a friend involved with Country Bus Rallies; and
- b) A prejudicial interest in the Scout Association application as he is Chairman of the Trustees of Scout Properties. He left the meeting whilst this matter was discussed.

Councillor Dr L E Radford declared a personal interest in item 6(d) – Finance (Grant Applications) as she has piano lessons with the Chairman of Hertford Music Society.

261. THE MINUTES

It was **RESOLVED** that:

The Minutes of the Finance, Policy & Administration Committee held on Monday 8 December 2008 be approved as a correct record and the Chairman authorised to sign the same.

262. ACTION SHEET

Members asked for an update on the Ashley Webb shelter. The Town Clerk informed the Committee that East Herts Council (EHC) has assured her that they will seek approval from Hertford Town Council prior to commencing any works.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

The action sheet be received and noted.

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

There were no members of the public wishing to speak.

264. FINANCE – INTERNAL AUDIT

The Committee received a report detailing the results and recommendations of the internal audit conducted by EHC in December 2008.

There was a discussion concerning whether the audit was adequate or too excessive. The Town Clerk advised that the process is consistent with audits undertaken by similar sized councils and used in conjunction with the other internal control systems, it does give the Town Council a degree of reassurance about the council's procedures.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

- a) The Committee note the findings of the Internal Auditor.
- b) The Committee approve the appointment of Councillors C J Geall and Dr L E Radford to undertake "spot checks" on the system of internal control.
- c) The Committee approve the Review of the 1st Internal Audit for 2008/09 as adequate and effective.

265. FINANCE – CHEQUE PAYMENT SCHEDULES

The Committee received a list of cheque payment schedules to date.

Members queried a payment for the installation of a grill outside the Castle and asked for an explanation. The Town Clerk advised that an incident had occurred which suggested that covering a 4ft pit behind the Castle Lions was advisable.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

The Committee note the cheque payment schedules to date.

266. FINANCE – INCOME/EXPENDITURE REPORT

The Finance Manager highlighted two areas which deviated from the base budget. These were that the staff training expenditure for 2008 was overspent and that there was an increase in income from the Town and Tourist Information Centre which stemmed from an increase in ticket sales. He confirmed that the term "Public Amenities" was used to describe donations for the Christmas Lights appeal.

Members requested a short written report to accompany the spreadsheet, which highlights and explains any deviations for future meetings. A clear

distinction should be made between the general reserve and ear marked reserve on future reports to improve transparency of the Council's finances.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

The Committee note the income and expenditure report to 31 December 2008.

267. FINANCE – COMMUNITY GRANTS APPLICATIONS

Grant applications are usually covered by the relevant committee; however they were to be considered at this meeting, in order for the applicants to receive an early response.

The Committee noted that there was a balance of £5,610 to award for Community Grants in 2008/09.

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:

It was **RESOLVED** that:

Hertford Music Club be awarded a grant of £200 towards running costs.

The Committee agreed to accept an additional grant from the Music society this year if requested to support the purchase of a new piano.

Country Bus Rallies be awarded £750 towards running costs.

(Councillor P A Ruffles left the room)

2nd Bengoe Scout Group be awarded a grant of £1,200 towards the cost of building repairs and the purchase of new equipment.

(Councillor P A Ruffles returned to the room)

Stop Stansted Expansion. A donation of £200 towards the campaign was proposed and considered as it was felt that, in the opinion of the Committee, the campaign would directly benefit all or some of the residents in Hertford and that the benefit was commensurate with the expenditure.

It was **RESOLVED**

To award Stop Stansted Expansion £200 towards running costs. There was one vote against this resolution.

268. FINANCE – BANK RECONCILIATIONS

Bank reconciliations were tabled at the meeting for the Committee to note. This procedure was previously agreed by the Committee for transparency purposes.

Some Members felt that provision of the full bank reconciliation was excessive in time and cost and as the papers were not circulated prior to the meeting, Members did not have adequate time to study them properly. The Chairman explained that Members are not necessarily expected to study each transaction but to acknowledge that the system of internal control is being undertaken on a regular basis and the summary sheet provides a record of the reconciliations done on a monthly basis by the Finance Manager and verified by the Town Clerk. The Town Clerk endorsed the requirement for full transparency as a protection for staff and stated that the full papers can be made available to any Councillor at any time.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

- a) Future reconciliation reports would contain cost summary sheets and bank statements only.
- b) Councillor Miss C J Geall and Councillor Dr L Radford would inspect the full papers and processes as part of the “spot checking” procedure discussed in minute 265(b).