

**MINUTES OF THE FINANCE, POLICY & ADMINISTRATION COMMITTEE
MEETING HELD ON MONDAY 29 JUNE 2009 AT 7.00 PM IN THE ROBIN
ROOM, THE CASTLE, HERTFORD**

PRESENT: Councillor Miss C J Geall, in the Chair

Councillors Mrs S M Newton, Dr L E Radford, P A Ruffles, and Miss J C S Sartin.

IN ATTENDANCE: Cllr Mrs H P Durbin
Mrs N L Villa, Town Clerk
Mr S Davies, Responsible Finance Officer
Miss M Challis, Assistant to the Town Clerk (minutes)

66. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies of absence were received from Councillor J C Hedley and Mrs B M Wrangles.

67. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillors Mrs S M Newton and P A Ruffles declared prejudicial interests in agenda item 11 as Members of Hertfordshire County Council.

68. THE MINUTES

It was **RESOLVED** that:

The Minutes of the Special Finance, Policy & Administration Committee meeting held on Monday 8 June 2009 be approved as a correct record and the Chairman authorised to sign the same.

69. ACTION SHEET

The Town Clerk updated the Committee on the progress of discussions with East Herts Council regarding the Ashley Webb Shelter; proposed designs are being drawn up but are not yet ready for presentation to Hertford Town Council.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

The action sheet be received and noted.

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

There were no members of the public wishing to speak.

71. **HEALTH AND SAFETY**

The Committee received an update on actions taken to implement safe systems of work within the Town Council.

Health and safety processes were needed as a legal requirement and had to be completed in a timely fashion. Initially, Hertford Town Council had neither the capacity nor properly trained staff to complete this, and so contracted the necessary work to an external supplier, who failed to complete the work in a reasonable time frame.

The Town council now does have the capacity and staff trained to complete the required Health and Safety processes, and so can save the money which we will be reclaiming. The Committee recognises that some work has been undertaken, however much of this was of a standardised nature and training sessions were cancelled at short notice, incurring costs to the Council. The previous supplier will be paid for works completed to date.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

- a) The Committee note the report
- b) The Town Clerk will continue to pursue repayment of money already paid and may, in consultation with the Chair/Vice Chairman, agree the amount to be refunded from the previous supplier of Health and Safety services.

72. **TOWN PLAN UPDATE**

The Committee received an update on progress towards the production of a Town Plan for Hertford.

The first meetings of the sub-groups have been held (transport and retail) and were both well attended and had a positive response.

The aim is to have a Councillor within each sub-group in order to guide the group on the Town Council's powers and keep aims realistic; for example to provide an understanding of the Local Strategic Plan and help the public understand how the Town Plan will link in to such groups. However, it is recognised that the project should be community led.

Ways in which the balance of sub-group membership can be as varied as possible were discussed. Initially, local organisations were approached to join the groups. The sub-group members are then to consult around the community and provide feedback. The Committee also discussed the future use of questionnaires and other methods of public engagement and consultation.

The Committee is aware that there may be conflicts between groups as plans overlap in some areas, but these can be negotiated before the Council agrees the final document.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

- a) The Committee note the progress towards the production of a Town Plan for Hertford.
- b) The following ways to promote the work of Town Plan groups will be pursued:
 - Providing specialised talks to local groups
 - Twitter (Cllr Miss Sartin)
 - The Town Council website
 - The Town Council Newsletter
 - Hertford On-Line (Cllr Dr Radford)
 - Mail shot with Community Voice notices
- c) The following Councillors be assigned to each Town Plan sub-group as follows:
 - Population and households (paper exercise, be circulated to all groups)
 - Tourism – **Cllr Dr L E Radford**
 - Community Development (youth groups, residents associations, community engagement, voluntary sector, isolated groups) – **Cllrs Miss C J Geall and P A Ruffles**
 - Environment – **Cllr Mrs H P Durbin**
 - Transport – **Cllrs Mrs H P Durbin and S M Newton**
 - Retail Sector – **Cllr Miss J C S Sartin**

73. REVIEW OF THE CONSTITUTION OF THE TOWN COUNCIL

The Committee received a report outlining amendments and new policies for inclusion into the Town Council's Constitution.

It was proposed that the Constitution be split into two sections separating Council information from personnel information.

The personnel section will replace many existing staff related policies, and include new policies consolidated into one document.

New policies reviewed were Risk Management Policy, Whistleblowing Policy, Business Continuity Policy and Child Protection Policy. The Town Council Objectives for 2009/10 were also discussed with additional recommendations from Cllr Kim Darby tabled.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

- a) The Committee approve the changes subject to minor amendments proposed at the meeting.
- b) The Committee recommend the adoption of the revised Constitution to the Full Town Council.

- c) All Members be requested to review their copies of the Constitution and suggest any additional changes to the Chairman or Town Clerk

74. FINANCE – PAYMENT SCHEDULES

It was **RESOLVED** that:

Payment schedules to date be noted.

75. FINANCE – YEAR END ACCOUNTS

An informative account of the year end 2008/09 was presented to the Committee. The Chairman thanked the Town Clerk and the Responsible Finance Officer for the hard work that has gone into preparing the year end accounts under tighter time scales.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

The 2008/09 Year End Figures be approved.

76. FINANCE – ANNUAL STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS 2008/09

The Responsible Finance Officer advised that the external audit is ongoing and that minor adjustments to the accounts presented may be required. In particular the methodology for depreciation on the Seed Warehouse will be amended and further information is required to be inserted on the staff pension scheme.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

Subject to non-material recommendations made by the External Auditor, the Committee approve the Annual Statement of Accounts 2008/09.

If material recommendations are made by the External Auditor, a Special meeting of the Finance, Policy and Administration Committee will be called.

77. FINANCE – BANK RECONCILIATION

The Committee received bank reconciliations for March, April and May 2009. Cllr Dr L E Radford advised the Committee that she would shortly be undertaking more detailed spot checks of the bank reconciliations undertaken by the Responsible Finance Officer.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

The bank reconciliations be noted.

78. FINANCE – INTERNAL AUDIT

A report outlining the findings of the Internal Audit was not available to the Committee.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

This item be deferred to the next meeting.

79. EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC

It was **RESOLVED** that:

In view of the confidential nature of the following items, which related to the business matters of other individuals and organisations, the public was excluded whilst the following items were discussed. This was in accordance with the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960, as amended by the Local Government Act 1972.

80. PAST DUE DEBTS

The Town Clerk confirmed to Members that regular contact is made bad debtors both in writing and on the phone, to pursue payment of bad debts. Councillor Mrs S M Newton is able to advise of a contact to pursue payment of a bad debt.

Councillors Mrs S M Newton and P A Ruffles left the room.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

A report and schedule of debts outstanding for more than 90 days at 29th June 2008 be noted.