



## **Minutes of the Policy and Finance Committee Meeting held on Monday 3<sup>rd</sup> October 2022 at 18:00 in the Town Council Committee Room**

**IN ATTENDANCE:** Cllrs Marriott (Chair), Birch, Connolly, Hallam, Hibbert, Holland-Delamere, Kilbride, Purser, Russell

**OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:** J Thorneycroft (Assistant Town Clerk) and C Maclellan (Finance Officer)

### **12. Apologies for Absence**

Apologies were received from Cllrs Alwahabi, Tarasiewicz, Stevens, T Eales, G Eales and S Carter (Town Clerk)

### **13. Declarations of Interest**

Cllr M Hallam declared a non-pecuniary interest in minute 25 as he sits on the West Northants panel.

### **14. To authorise the Chair to sign the minutes of the last meeting and ask questions as to the progress of any item**

**RESOLVED:** The Chair was authorised to sign the minutes from 6<sup>th</sup> June 2022.

### **15. To receive the minutes of the Accounts Sub-Committee meetings for information, held 13<sup>th</sup> June 2022**

There was no comment on the minutes.

### **To receive the minutes of the Accounts Sub-Committee meetings for information, held 14<sup>th</sup> July 2022**

Cllr Birch commented on a payment relating to advertising and publicity listed under Public Events. In response the Finance Officer confirmed she is working to introduce an account code for advertising and marketing under Public Events.

### **To receive the minutes of the Accounts Sub-Committee meetings for information, held 15<sup>th</sup> August 2022**

Cllr Kilbride asked if the Bands in the Park project could be extended into October and enquired why varying amounts had been paid to the bands taking part. The Assistant Town Clerk responded that the weather at this time of the year must be taken into account, also extra funding would be required if the project was to be extended. The cost of the bands depends upon the number of band members/experience etc.

### **To receive the minutes of the Accounts Sub-Committee meetings for information, held 12<sup>th</sup> September 2022**



Cllr Birch commented that the Central Administration costs will need to be reviewed due to the increased costs of inflation.

#### **16. Notes of the Civic Matters Working Group**

The Chair of the meeting thanked the members of staff who had worked hard to make the evening of thanks to Brian W. Sargeant a success on Saturday 1<sup>st</sup> October. Staff were also thanked for their hard work on the forthcoming Remembrance Sunday, this was seconded by Cllr Hallam.

Cllr Russell thanked Cllr Marriott on his work with the Civic and Mayoralty Officer on his input into Remembrance Sunday.

Cllr Birch informed the committee that Cllr Jonathan Nunn and Cllr Adam Brown (WNC) had verbally agreed to the Twinning Association using the Marburg Room in the Guildhall and that Cllr Birch would get written confirmation of this.

#### **17. Options on the replacement of councillor's civic robes**

It was noted that the Civic Matters Working Group had recommended that the council replace the councillors' blue robes which had been assessed and were in a poor condition. They were beyond repair and were thought to be about 50 years old.

Robes – Only 1 set of costings were submitted at the time of the meeting, second and third quotes had been requested but had not arrived in time.

It was agreed that this item would come back to the committee once the further two quotes were obtained.

#### **18. Budget report as of end of September 2022**

The Finance Officer suggested that the members review the budget and ask any questions or items they needed clarity on.

Cllr Hallam requested clarity that the overall budget is £1.7 million and the unspent value of £922k is correct. The Finance Officer confirmed that was the case at the time the papers were submitted.

Cllr Hallam asked the Finance Officer to advise how much money we were likely to spend in the next 6 months, the Finance Officer responded that NTC are half way through the year and have spent approximately half the money, budgeting and spending is monitored at the accounts subcommittee on a monthly basis, a much clearer picture of the annual spend will be available in the last quarter of the year.

**Clerk's note:** *A proportion of the budget has to be earmarked to support future events when funds are no longer coming through via WNC at the end of year 3.*

A question was raised that the climate emergency budget had not been spent and how likely was it that the budget would be appropriately allocated by the end of the year. In response to that question the Assistant Town Clerk said each committee would be meeting shortly as part of the



budget setting timetable to review their 2022/23 expenditure and would be preparing a forecast for 2023/24.

It was noted that further work and understanding was required for the Allotments service.

Cllr Birch stated she was pleased to have received a thank you card for the Town Council's efforts relating to the Northampton in Bloom project.

Under Public Events it was highlighted that more realistic numbers were required, the Community Services committee will be meeting shortly to prepare a forecast for next year.

#### 19. Budget timetable 2023/24

The budget setting timetable was detailed to the committee.

Date	Event
TBC	Informal meeting of the Committee Chairs and Vice Chairs to go through the budget and consider initial draft undertaken by officers
14 <sup>th</sup> November	Policy and Finance Committee (Budget Principles) – Initial opportunity for the Policy and Finance Committee to finalise the principals of the budget
21 <sup>st</sup> November	Environmental Services Committee – To put forward their recommended budget for the headings managed by that committee
TBC	WNC inform town and parish councils of the initial tax base calculation
7 <sup>th</sup> December	Planning Committee – To put forward their recommended budget for the heading managed by that committee
12 <sup>th</sup> December	Community Services Committee – To put forward their recommended budget for the heading managed by that committee
9 <sup>th</sup> January 2023	Policy and Finance Committee (Budget recommendation) – To consider all the recommendations from the committees and make submit a final budget to council
23 <sup>rd</sup> January	Council – To approve the final budget and therefore set the precept requirement that West Northants Council (the precepting authority) collect on the Town Council's behalf

Before the end of Jan Formally submit the precept requirement to WNC

The Finance Officer suggested that where the Chairs and Deputy chairs of the Council's committees were present to please note the dates of the budget timetable.

The Chair suggested that Cllr Hallam be involved.



**NOTED**

**20. Town Council Strategy Update**

A discussion took place around the Town Council strategy. It was reported that the group delegated to lead this had appointed James Corrigan to undertake the work. The following comments were made:

It was commented that the council itself should lead on setting and could undertake this work themselves, he suggested it might be an option to contact NCALC for advice and the wards outside the town centre should not be forgotten.

**Recommended:** The Town Clerk to provide a background as to why a consultancy service is required.

*Clerk's note: At the previous meeting the clerk set out the reasons for appointing a consultancy, these being resource, expertise, independence etc and this was agreed by the committee. Advice was taken from NCALC on this too.*

*The minute is pasted below for reference:*

*The Town Clerk explained that the council was now a year in and the development of a strategy/vision was essential in order to progress forward. The strategy would aid both councillors and officers as we progressed.*

*There were a number of elements to consider, the first being whether to do the plan in-house or with the help of a consultant. It was explained that a consultant could be used just to launch the process, or to manage the whole thing and deliver a document at the end of it. There were pros and cons. Some of the pros of using a consultant was that it would add capacity, bring in expertise (often with a wider view of what councils do), and ensure the process was run professionally and on time. Some of the cons were that the council "hands over" responsibility for the process to the consultant, and then doesn't feel ownership of the final plan. The Clerk highlighted that at present there was not a capacity to deliver a full strategy in house and that outside help would be beneficial.*

*The Clerk also highlighted that importance of a strategic plan should be driven by the residents which went into the realms of the Community Needs Analysis.*

*Attached to the agenda was a proposal and costing. Members agreed that outside help was required and that a strategy was required, especially as the council grows and begins to consider what assets and services it wants. It was agreed that further proposals be sought and that these be considered by a small group of councillors in order for them to make a recommendation and speed up the process.*

**RESOLVED:** *That the authority be delegated to the Clerk in consultation with Councillors Birch, Marriott, Russell and one member of the Conservative Group, most likely Cllr Hallam to consider the proposals and make the final decision.*



More broadly on a strategy, it was commented that cleanliness and safety should be key aspects.

Cllr Marriott confirmed that the strategy is there to guide NTC in its future aspirations.

The Town Clerk was asked to provide an explanatory note on why this consultant had been chosen and why this was needed to develop the strategy.

**21. Establishment of a formal working group to consider the Council's future accommodation options**

It was noted that with 18 months left on the licence to occupy the Guildhall, options on accommodation needed to be formally considered and that a working group would be a means of undertaking this.

A draft terms of reference for the working group was included in the report as follows:

Draft Terms of reference:

Aim: To consider all options for the town council with regards to its future accommodation

1. Membership to the Chair and up to 4 cllrs nominated by the Policy and Finance Committee
2. Quorum to be 3
3. Officer support from the Town Clerk or Assistant Town Clerk and the Democratic Services Officer
4. Meetings to be held when required but at least every 6 weeks at the Guildhall in person in the day
5. Remote attendance to only be considered if physical attendance is not possible
6. Chair and Vice Chair to be appointed at the first meeting
7. Chair (with support from officers) to provide written progress reports including recommendations and requests for resource (when required) to each meeting of the Policy and Finance meeting

These terms of reference will be considered at the first meeting of the working group.

**Recommended:** that a working group be established with the following membership: Cllrs Marriott, Birch, Holland-Delamere, Kilbride, Connolly and Hibbert.

**22. Asset Register Review**

The Asset Register was reviewed and approved.

**RESOLVED:** That the asset register be approved.



It was suggested adding the events assets now the Events Grant Funding Agreement between NTC and WNC had now been signed.

*Clerk's notes: Any physical asset purchased or donated with a value over a certain amount will be added to the register. Consumables etc are not included in the register.*

**23. Assessment and review of Risk Management and Internal Controls Statement and Strategic Risk Register**

The covering report, statement and updated strategic risk register were reviewed.

**Recommended:** In the absence of the Town Clerk due to sickness, that this item be deferred.

**24. Town Council Branding**

**RESOLVED:** To allocate £7,000 funding for the creation of an NTC branding package and to set up a branding working group consisting of the following members - Cllrs Birch, Kilbride, Russell and Holland-Delamere and officers.

**25. Councillor Allowances Review – Independent Remuneration Panel**

Members considered the report of the town clerk which advised that at present WNC were not looking to review their own allowances but may do so in 2024 in preparation for the elections in 2025. However, WNC would consider requests from towns and parishes.

A consensus was not reached and therefore and no resolution made on this matter.

**26. Items for consideration on the next agenda**

No items were put forward.

The meeting concluded at 19:30