

POLICY & FINANCE COMMITTEE – 13TH MAY 2024

MINUTES OF THE POLICY & FINANCE COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 13TH MAY 2024 AT 6PM IN THE TOWN COUNCIL'S COMMITTEE ROOM, LOCATED IN THE GUILDHALL, NORTHAMPTON

PRESENT: Councillors Marriott (Chair), Connolly, Holland-Delamere, Kilbride and Tarasiewicz.

OFFICERS PRESENT: Mr S Carter (Town Clerk) , Mrs C Maclellan (Responsible Finance Officer) and Miss F Barford (Democratic Services Officer).

62. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were submitted by Councillors Alwahabi, Birch, Haque, Hibbert, Hallam, Joyce, Russell and Stevens.

63. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Kilbride declared a non-pecuniary interest in minute 67 as he was the ward Councillor for Park Ward that would be affected.

64. TO AUTHORISE THE CHAIR TO SIGN THE MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING HELD ON 11TH MARCH 2024 AND ASK QUESTIONS AS TO THE PROGRESS OF ANY ITEM (p 3 – p 6)

RESOLVED: The Chair was authorised to sign the minutes held on 11th March 2024 of the previous meeting as a true and accurate record of the proceedings.

The Town Clerk explained the Town Council had started the process for becoming members of Locality and the Local Government Association.

65. TO RECEIVE THE MINUTES OF THE ACCOUNTS SUB-COMMITTEE MEETINGS FOR INFORMATION:

- a) Minutes of the meeting held on 11 March 2024
- b) Minutes of the meeting held on 15 April 2024

The Chair referred to the minutes for information. In response to a question, the Town Clerk explained that under the Allotment Management agreement with Idverde, they retained the income from allotment holders and managed the associated administration. The Town Council did not handle payments or invoices, which is beneficial.

66. TO FORMALLY APPROVE THE APPOINTMENT OF THE EVENTS AND PROJECTS OFFICER (MATERNITY COVER)

The Town Clerk explained the recruitment of maternity cover for one of the Events and Projects Officers was delegated to the Staffing Sub-Committee and the successful candidate was experienced with events at parish council level.

RESOLVED: That Miss Haviland be appointed as maternity cover for the Event and Project Officer role.

67. ANNUAL GOVERNANCE & ACCOUNTABILITY STATEMENT AND AUDIT REPORT

The Town Clerk stated that the AGAR would be presented to Full Council at a future date and reported positive feedback from the internal audit. The RFO confirmed that the internal auditor found the processes and record keeping in good order. In response to a question, the Town Clerk mentioned plans to host an extraordinary Full Council meeting to approve the AGAR.

NOTED

68. CCLA DEPOSIT FUND UPDATE

The RFO presented a report on interest payments received and asked if the Committee wished to explore further investment opportunities. A Councillor noted the substantial funds in the CCLA Deposit Fund and

suggested using some for the Councillor Community Fund. The Chair highlighted uncertainty regarding accommodation and potential financial implications from the Community Governance Review. The RFO explained that a portion of the CCLA funds is earmarked and that expenditure currently exceeds precept income. A Councillor suggested discussing a strategy for the Town Council on any services it wished to provide.

The Chair mentioned the Budget Working Group meets quarterly to review budgets and expenditure in great detail and encouraged all Committee Chairs to attend.

The RFO noted that the main income streams are the precept and interest received. A Councillor raised concerns about some long-term investment opportunity in stocks and shares, which were currently deemed high risk. The RFO explained that reserves would be depleted by year ten due to the loss of the tapering grant from West Northants Council.

NOTED

69. COMMUNITY GOVERNANCE REVIEW UPDATE

The Town Clerk reported that phase two of the Community Governance Review would include further consultation with Moulton Leys residents. He suggested additional consultation in the proposed Weston Favell Parish Council area.

In response to a question, the Town Clerk explained he would share the newsletter once finalised. A Councillor explained the rationale behind consulting on a parish in Abington Park, Abington Vale and Weston Favell Parish Council was residents to provide their views as the option for parish councils in Weston Favell and Billing was not provided during the local government reorganisation within Northamptonshire. The Chair responded there was opportunity for consultation on the formation of new parish councils during the previous Community Governance Review and work was completed which resulted in Far Cotton and Delapre Community Council and Kingsthorpe Parish Council alongside Northampton Town Council.

RESOLVED: Councillors Marriott, Birch, Hallam and Lane work in conjunction with the Town Clerk to provide a response to the Community Governance Review stage two consultation.

70. APPROVAL FOR PUBLICATION OF A NEWSLETTER

The Town Clerk explained Councillor Hallam suggested a council newsletter be trialled in the Moulton Leys area at a previous Full Council meeting and work had been undertaken by the Communications Officer. He added, costings had been sourced and the design was almost finalised. The Town Clerk requested £1,200 be assigned for the cost of the production and delivery.

RESOLVED: That £1,200 be deducted from the Advertising and Marketing budget for the cost of production for a council newsletter and for its delivery in Moulton Leys.

71. VOLUNTEER POLICY

The Town Clerk reported that Mrs Hanam-Jones had developed a Volunteer Policy and noted ongoing work with Voluntary Impact Northampton to finalise the Volunteer Handbook. The Town Clerk sought the Committee's opinion on the age applicability of the handbook, mentioning that children could volunteer with adult supervision. A Councillor suggested a parental consent form for volunteers over 15 without a guardian present. The Town Clerk confirmed some staff have DBS checks. A Councillor noted that volunteers might interact with vulnerable individuals.

RESOLVED: It was agreed young adults over the age of 15-years-old would be able to volunteer for the Town Council without a parent or guardian present if there was a completed consent form from their parent or guardian.

RESOLVED: The Volunteer policy be approved and adopted.

72. BRANDING UPDATE

The branding guidelines were circulated to members. The Town Clerk announced that the Branding Working Group had approved a new logo and branding, with designs differentiated by colour for various council activities. Final items from the designer, such as email signatures and business cards, are pending.

NOTED

73. TO CONSIDER THE PURCHASE OF BRANDED TOTE BAGS

The Town Clerk stated this request was from the Event and Projects Officer as the tote bags were very popular at events and stalls for engaging with the public. The Town Clerk stated the new tote bags would feature a new design and the new branding. A Councillor stated an alternate supplier 'Bag Trade' could provide the bags at a cheaper cost.

Another Councillor stated demographic data should be gained at events to assist with understanding who engages and what parish area they live within. The RFO explained she had spoken with the Community Engagement Officer would take a tablet and suggest visitors to complete a survey.

RESOLVED: The purchase of the tote bags be approved but that Bag Trade be contacted for a quote.

13. TO CONSIDER THE PURCHASE OF ROADSIDE BOARDS

The Town Clerk explained the Town Council could no longer use the West Northamptonshire Council (WNC) owned boards to promote our activities therefore, costings had been sourced to install our own advertisement boards which WNC provided permission for. The Town Clerk added, the boards could be moved if a Weston Favell Parish was formed as a result of the Community Governance Review.

The Town Clerk stated the costing included a noticeboard that was offered within the Town Centre. A Councillor posed whether a digital format might be effective. The Town Clerk responded that marketing via the digital boards within the Town Council was costly and required booking in advance.

RESOLVED: That approval for the purchase of two roadside boards and a noticeboard be given.

74. EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS FROM THE MEETING IN ACCORDANCE TO STANDING ORDER 3.D

RESOLVED: That the public and press be excluded from the meeting in accordance to standing order 3.D due to the confidential nature of the business transacted.

75. ACCOMMODATION UPDATE

The Town Clerk circulated a confidential report to update members on the Town Council's accommodation.

RESOLVED: That the Committee delegate to the Town Clerk the ability to engage the solicitor to formally write to West Northamptonshire Council outlining the points made with regards to the licence, the requirement to find alternative accommodation with the site and the security of tenure.

DSO's Note: Cllr Kilbride abstained from voting on the above recommendation.

MEETING CONCLUDED: 7:15PM

X

Councillor. L Marriott
Chair of the Policy & Finance Committee