

**POLICY & FINANCE – 15<sup>TH</sup> JULY 2024**

MINUTES OF THE POLICY & FINANCE COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 15<sup>TH</sup> JULY 2024 AT 6PM IN THE TOWN COUNCIL'S COMMITTEE ROOM, LOCATED IN THE GUIDHALL, NORTHAMPTON

**PRESENT:** Councillors Marriott (Chair), Evans (Vice Chair), Haque, Holland-Delamere, Hibbert, Hallam, Purser and Tarasiewicz.

**OFFICER PRESENT:** F Barford (Democratic Services Officer)

**1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies were submitted by Councillor Stevens and the Town Clerk.

**2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Councillor Kilbride declared a non-pecuniary interest in minute item XX

Cllr Hallam item 13 as WNC Cabinet member.

**3. TO AUTHORISE THE CHAIR TO SIGN THE MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING HELD ON 13<sup>TH</sup> MAY 2024 AND ASK QUESTIONS AS TO THE PROGRESS OF ANY ITEM**

In response to a question, the Chair of the Community Services Committee explained a design had been completed for new tote bags which had arrived however, the size of the design was different to the proof provided. The Chair of the Community Services Committee continued the relevant officer would request the design be amended with a large logo of the Town Council on the back. In response to a question, the Chair of the Community Services Committee stated in future design would be presented for approval in future.

**RESOLVED:** The Chair was authorised to sign the minutes of the previous meeting held on 13<sup>th</sup> May 2024 as a true and accurate record of the proceedings.

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

The Chair referred to the following minutes and requested if there were any questions:

- a) Minutes of the meeting held on 10<sup>th</sup> June 2024
- b) Minutes of the meeting held on 8<sup>th</sup> July 2024

A Councillor commented on the purchase of Community Governance Review leaflets with Solopress. The Democratic Services Officer explained Solopress were the cheapest supplier who could provide the leaflets within the required timeframe compared to other local printers. The Councillor explained that local suppliers should be the preferred choice even if there was a cheaper supplier elsewhere.

**RESOLVED:** The minutes of the Account Sub-Committee meeting held on 10<sup>th</sup> June and 8<sup>th</sup> July 2024 were reviewed.

**5. TO RECEIVE THE MINUTES OF THE STAFFING SUB COMMITTEE MEETING DATED 10<sup>TH</sup> JULY 2024 AND TO CONSIDER ANY RECOMMENDATIONS CONTAINED THEREIN**

The Chair explained as the Town Clerk was unable to attend and present the Staffing Sub-Committee minutes, he proposed these be deferred to a future meeting.

**RESOLVED:** The minutes of the Staffing Sub-Committee meeting dated 10<sup>th</sup> July 2024 be deferred and presented at a future meeting.

#### **6. CCLA DEPOSIT FUND UPDATE**

The Chair referred to the CCLA Deposit Fund report. A Councillor commented on the beneficial return of interest provided from the CCLA Deposit Fund and posed whether this would be earmarked for a purpose. In response, the Chair explained the funds had not been earmarked for a purpose yet and this was to be discussed during budget setting.

**REPORT NOTED**

#### **7. REVIEW OF THE COUNCIL'S STANDING ORDERS**

The Chair explained a review of the Standing orders was required to ensure these were inline with the Council's financial regulations and it was intended this would be completed in the coming months. A Councillor explained the current standing orders were based on an example provided by NCALC. The Chair commented it would be beneficial to review other large Town Council's standard orders for comparison.

**RESOLVED:** It was agreed to retain the current standing orders pending the completion of the review.

#### **8. REVIEW OF THE COUNCIL'S FINANCIAL REGULATIONS**

The Chair stated that NCALC had recently updated the financial regulations and had advised other councils to review and formulate in line with their Councils' practices.

**RESOLVED:** It was agreed to retain the current financial regulations pending the completion of the review.

#### **9. REVIEW OF DIRECT DEBITS AND BANK STANDING ORDERS**

The Chair requested members to review the list of Direct Debit and Standing orders outlined within the report. A Councillor posed what Xerox consumable charges were for. The Democratic Services Officer explained in response, consumables were toner and staple cartridges etc that were automatically shipped when low. A Councillor asked what was the amount of copies allowed each month within the contract and on average how many was used. The Democratic Services Officer explained she did not have this information and would report back at the next meeting.

**RESOLVED:** The Committee reviewed and approved the Direct Debits as outlined within the agenda.

**RESOLVED:** The Committee reviewed and approved the Standing Orders as outlined within the agenda.

#### **10. CHANGE IN PAYROLL PROVIDER**

The Chair explained the CVS the previous payroll provider was ceased their payroll services and the Town Council had six-weeks to find a new provider therefore, the Responsible Finance Officer had completed a request for quotes. The Chair continued, the contract would be reviewed after 6-months to ensure the Webb House's services were suitable. A Councillor commented that customer feedback was taken into consideration during the request for quotes. The Democratic services officer explained the online portal was easy to use and access.

*DSO's Note: After the meeting the Responsible Finance Officer explained that Webb House's payroll services costs were an increase of £168 compared to CVS, the Town Council's former pay roll provider.*

## **REVIEW OF SUBSCRIPTIONS**

A Councillor commented there was a variety of professional subscriptions within the report for NCALC, SLCC and the Association for Democratic Services Officers and asked whether these provided value for money and not duplicating training resources.

**RESOLVED:** The Committee reviewed the subscriptions as outlined within the report enclosed within the agenda and approved these in principle.

**ACTION:** Town Clerk to provide a report on the use of the subscriptions and value for money at a future meeting.

## **11. COMMUNITY GOVERNANCE REVIEW – RESPONSE TO STAGE 2 OF THE CONSULTATION**

The Chair explained himself, Councillor Birch and Lane were going to finalise the Town Council's response to the Community Governance Review and have this submitted. A Councillor stated the West Northants Council's consultation closes at the end of July 2024 and encouraged any interested Councillors to provide their views. A Councillor stated the 2<sup>nd</sup> September 2024 he believes the Community Governance Review would go to the Democracy & Standards Committee at West Northants Council.

## **12. ACCOMMODATION UPDATE**

Councillor Hallam left the meeting.

The Chair stated there was no much of an update due to the Town Clerks sickness however, he had informal discussions with a representative from West Northamptonshire Council.

## **13. ITEMS FOR CONSIDERATION ON NEXT AGENDA**

Appointment of Internal Auditor

**MEETING CONCLUDED: 18:46**

## **ACTIONS:**

- The Town Clerk to provide the cost of Webb Houses' costings in detail at the next meeting.
- The Town Clerk to report to the committee the benefits of the professional subscriptions and demonstrate value for money.
- The Responsible Finance Officer to provide detail on the amount of printing included as detailed in the contracts. I can include this as a note within the minutes.