

## POLICY & FINANCE COMMITTEE – 8<sup>TH</sup> JANUARY 2024

MINUTES OF THE POLICY & FINANCE COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 8<sup>TH</sup> JANUARY 2024 AT 6PM IN THE TOWN COUNCIL'S COMMITTEE ROOM LOCATED IN THE GUILDHALL, NORTHAMPTON

**PRESENT:** Councillors Marriott (Chair), Joyce (Vice Chair), Alwahabi, Birch, Connolly, Hallam, Hibbert, Holland-Delamere, Kilbride, Purser, Russell, Stevens and Tarasiewicz

### 36. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were submitted by Councillor Haque.

### 37. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Hallam declared a non-pecuniary interest in item 42 as a member of West Northamptonshire Council's cabinet and therefore would have to vote on any decision relating to accommodation matters.

Councillor Hallam stated he would leave the meeting when item 42 was discussed.

### 38. 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 of the previous meeting held on 23<sup>rd</sup> October 2023 as a true and accurate record of the proceedings.

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

#### (a) Minutes of the meeting held 13 November 2023

The Chair stated the minutes of the Accounts Sub-Committee meeting held on 13<sup>th</sup> November 2023 had been received and adopted. He continued to request any questions in relation to any items.

#### (b) Minutes of the meeting held 13 December 2023

The Chair stated the minutes of the Accounts Sub-Committee meeting held on 13<sup>th</sup> December 2023 would be received at the next meeting scheduled for 12<sup>th</sup> January 2024. The Finance Officer (FO) explained the pay list had the incorrect date within the title however, the detail was correct.

### 40. TO RECEIVE FOR INFORMATION ONLY THE MINUTES OF THE STAFFING SUB COMMITTEE MEETING HELD 6<sup>TH</sup> DECEMBER 2023

The minutes of the Staffing Sub-Committee meeting held on 6<sup>th</sup> December 2023 were tabled,

**NOTED**

### 41. DRAFT 2024/25 BUDGET FOR RECOMMENDATION TO COUNCIL

The FO circulated an amended version of the budget spreadsheet as outlined in appendix A. The Chair explained the amounts had not been changed with only the narrative slightly amended.

The Chair stated there would be no increase in the Band D precept. The Town Clerk stated the events grant from WNC would cease in 24/25 however, the Town Council had expected this and had a service reserve to cover this shortfall.

In response to a question, the Chair stated it was budgeted for 8 laptops at this stage, but there would be flexibility if required, no final report was yet to be received to this Committee with the final detail.

In relation to the Environmental Services Committee's budget, it was explained by a Councillor it was agreed that the majority of budget lines be maintained however, the Bloom and Allotment budgets be increased. The

Councillor continued that allotments posed a great risk to the Council as a major repair could deplete the allotted budget especially with the large number of sites within our remit.

In response to a question on what would be considered an allotment repair, a Councillor stated this could consist of new fences, padlocks or any damaged to water pipes. The Councillor continued that luckily to date there had been no major repairs required.

A Councillor requested clarification on the difference between Environmental Project and Grant budget codes. The Chair of Environmental Services explained to date the Committee had two successful grant applications and an additional two yet to be reviewed at the next committee meeting. He continued that the Environmental Projects budget was to be used for events or projects commissioned by Council or Climate Change Forum.

In relation to the Community Services Committee budget, a Councillor explained the new budget codes had been created to provide more clarity and transparency. The Councillor continued the Community Needs Analysis Reserve was to be split into thirds and designated to projects or events outside of the Town Centre in the outer wards that require no officer assistance. In response to a question, the Councillor explained that partner events had been reviewed and some would no longer be funded for example, the Town Festival.

In relation to the Planning Committee budget, a Councillor explained the committee wished to continue with a budget of £10,000 for Planning Advice and £10,000 for Neighbourhood Planning.

## Reserves

The Town Clerk made the following points in relation to Earmarked Reserves for Financial year 2024-25:

- There were adequate funds to cover local election costs.
- The sum of underspent funds from the Financial Year 2023-24 Eid budget had been earmarked to be used for the event in the new financial year.
- The underspent funds from the General Community Grant scheme that had been earmarked and it would be for that Committee to decide how this would be utilised.
- Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) was earmarked for clarity and transparency and advice had been sought on which developments the fund derived from.
- Unspent funds from the equipment budget were to be earmarked for the purchase of any item equipment that was required for example, any additional laptops.
- Equipment, earmark unspent money and purchase excess laptops if required.
- Van Hire was to be earmarked as currently officers had been using their private vehicles and a larger vehicle may be required.
- Councillor Community Funding had been earmarked in relation to the Northampton International Academy's trip to America as the Grants Sub-Committee had agreed for the funds to be released once confirmation all funds for the project to go-ahead was raised.
- The Town clerk clarified the earmarked reserves included the Service Reserve to make-up the loss from the end of the West Northamptonshire Council event grant however, this amount would decrease over time.

A Councillor requested detail on the earmarked funds for the memorial in Becketts Park. A Councillor explained the funds were provided under the Shadow Council prior to the Town Council's formation and the funds were to be used for an art installation at Becketts Park. The Councillor continued the project was undergoing a local consultation and costings were being finalised. The Chair requested that a report on the project be presented to the Community Services Committee.

In response to a question, the Town Clerk explained the Democratic Services Officer (DSO) had contacted West Northamptonshire Council's CIL Team for clarification on what developments the funds derived from. The DSO stated she had requested a CIL Officer from West Northamptonshire Council to attend however, there was no capacity. The DSO continued that she would continue to work on CIL and request an Officer to attend a Planning

Committee. In response to a question, the Town Clerk stated that the interest accrued by the Council's Public Sector Deposit fund would be used to offset expenditure.

**RESOLVED:** That the budget principles as per appendix A be presented to Full Council on 22<sup>nd</sup> January 2024 for approval and adoption.

**RECOMMENDED:** The reserves as outlined in the the minutes be earmarked.

#### **42. ACCOMMODATION**

Councillor Hallam left the meeting.

The Town Clerk stated that West Northamptonshire Council had informed the Council it did not intend to extend the Town Council's lease after April 2025 and that accommodation options would be reviewed.

#### **43. ITEMS FOR CONSIDERATION ON THE NEXT AGENDA**

At the end of the meeting Councillor Connolly and Alwahabi verified the two previous Bank Account Reconciliations.

**MEETING CONCLUDED 6:52PM**

**X**

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Councillor L. Marriott  
Chair of Policy & Finance Committee