

MINUTES OF THE FINANCE AND GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE HELD ON 1ST MAY, 2018

Present: Councillors S Cudlip (Chair) and Mrs B E Allen, E Bell, Mrs J A Bell, S P Colborn, D Cummings, Mrs V Cummings, Mrs S Forster, Ms R M Gratton, G N Hepworth, Mrs L Kennedy, D McKenna, K Shaw A Shepherd, B Taylor, R Whitehead, Miss L Willis.

Apologies: Councillors R Arthur, Mrs G Bleasdale, Mrs K Brace.

Prior to commencement of the meeting the Chair advised members of this Committee and members of the public that in line with the amendment to 'the public bodies (admission to meetings) act 1960', which came into force in August, 2014, parts of this meeting may be recorded by photographic, video and audio means.

1. DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS

Members were reminded prior to the start of the meeting of the need to disclose any interests, prejudicial or personal, in accordance with the Code of Conduct.

2. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING HELD ON 3rd APRIL, 2018

RECOMMENDED the Minutes of this meeting, a copy of which had been previously printed and circulated to each Member, be approved and signed as a correct record by the Chairman.

3. PAYSHEET NUMBER 1 – APRIL 2018/19

a) Expenditure – April 2018

RECOMMENDED:

- (i) that all payments in Paysheet Number 1 – 2018/19 be approved, it being noted that the direct debits, Bacs, Online and Debit Card payments including Imprest expenditure amount to £95,289.80 being the total sum authorised under this Paysheet;
- (ii) that the BACS authorisation sheet be signed by three Members and the credit transfers be actioned immediately; and
- (iii) that the Clerk's Imprest Account be reimbursed the sum of £1,531.96 for Civic Expenditure and authority be granted for this to be signed by the Chairman and Responsible Financial Officer.

A Member raised an issue with the grant that was paid to Soccer 6's. It was noted that Soccer 6's is run as a business and they charge people to attend which was noted was a usual occurrence for these types of clubs so they can pay for referees and pitch fees. It was suggested that Soccer 6's is run throughout the County and not just in Seaham. A Member stated that there has to be a distinct difference between a business in Seaham and one that is run throughout the County as the money should only be used for Seaham. It was requested that clarification is sought as to whether this is a business that is run throughout the County as the grant should only be used for Seaham.

RECOMMENDED that the Acting Town Clerk seeks clarification on this matter and reports back to the next meeting.

b) Income – April 2018

RECOMMENDED the summary sheet showing the range of income received by the Council during the current month be accepted.

c) Bank Balances – April 2018

RECOMMENDED the report of the Finance Officer a copy of which was circulated, be approved.

4. AUDIT ISSUES

a) Internal Auditor's Report – Risk Assessment

RECOMMENDED that Members note a substantial assurance was given for the Risk Assessment audit report.

5. RISK ASSESSMENTS

A Member stated that the Auditor made a reference to the level of checks needed to be made on contractors. The Auditor highlighted in his report that there is a lack of training which should be rectified. The Council needs to be aware of risk assessments and these should be reviewed and updated more than once per year. Risks should be reviewed on a daily basis as it's a huge priority.

It was noted that with any new scheme or new works the Council are undertaking risk assessments and it is the Acting Town Clerk's responsibility to re-assess the risks.

It was noted that the Town Council's insurers Zurich offer risk assessment training and they should be contacted to arrange this.

RECOMMENDED that the Acting Town Clerk contacts the Council's insurers to arrange training.

6. APPOINTMENT OF EXTERNAL AUDITOR

It was noted that the Town Council's new external auditor is Mazars who have replaced BDO. Mazars were recommended by Central Government and they are appointed regionally and are not appointed directly by the Town Council.

RECOMMENDED that Members note the information.

7. PRESS OPPORTUNITIES

RECOMMENDED the Council note that the Mayor could hand over the cheques for the donations.

8. GDPR

The Acting Town Clerk was seeking approval for all Councillors to be registered which will be compulsory from the 26th May, 2018 at a cost of £35 each. It was agreed that the Acting Town Clerk would seek clarification if this can be done centrally on-line for all Councillors.

RECOMMENDED that it be approved for all Councillors to be registered and the Acting Town Clerk to seek clarification on whether the registration can be done centrally for all Councillors.

9. DAWDON PARK

The Acting Town Clerk shared his report and minutes of the last meeting of Dawdon Park Working Group. He informed Members that a lot of due diligence has taken place and an interview was held between the Quantity Survey, Architect, Acting Town Clerk and Cornforth Industrial Services who provided the lowest price for the football pavilion and Phase 1 of the cricket pavilion.

It was noted that Cornforth will be the principle contractor and Pickering's who are providing the modular building will be a sub-contractor. It was noted that the works to both the cricket pavilion and the football pavilion will be carried out simultaneously and expect to be completed in 12 weeks.

The Acting Town Clerk requested approval from Members to appoint Cornforth Industrial Services subject to the final checks being completed and being satisfactory and that the appropriate assurances are given to the AAP prior to the contract being signed.

A Member noted that this was a recommendation from the Dawdon Park Working Party.

It was noted that the cost of the works to both pavilions and includes the price for the modular building are £142K which is significantly lower than was originally expected.

RECOMMENDED that Cornforth Industrial Services be approved as the principle contractor for the football pavilion and Phase 1 of the cricket pavilion renovations subject to the final checks being completed and all assurances are given to the AAP prior to signing the contract.

10. FUTURE ATTENDANCES AT CONFERENCES

A Member requested that this item be raised as an exceptional item as this item had previously been missed from the Finance and General Purposes agenda.

It was suggested that a moratorium be placed on future attendances at conferences until the situation with Oldfields was resolved.

The Member stated that he had not seen any information from the last conference attended in April, 2018. The two delegates who attended the meeting stated that they had handed in their evaluation and presentations from the conference and these would be available for all Members to see at the next Arts and Information Committee.

The Member stated that he felt whoever had attended a conference should come back to the Council and give a presentation from what they have learned. He also felt that it would be a better idea to pay an expert to come to the Council and do a presentation for all Members. It was noted that this is quite expensive to bring speakers into the Council and would be more costly than attending a conference. All papers are shared with Members and are kept in the library for Members perusal.

It was noted that whilst Members are attending conferences they are networking with other Councillors from other areas and Members find out how other Council's do things which can often resolve issues within your own Council. It is important to network so that the Town Council does not become insular. If you don't talk to people you don't know what is happening and you don't learn. A Member stated that was correct it is the networking aspect which is important as Councillors can resolve issues from talking to other Councillors.

It was noted that speakers charge in the region of £250-£300 each to address Members and conferences have at least 4 speakers which it becomes cheaper to send people to conferences. A Member stated that he had asked if only one speaker could come here to inform Members. A Member stated that the Town Council have had people previously come to the Town Council and barely anyone attended. Each conference that is brought to the Members attention is discussed and sometimes Members agree that a particular conference is not relevant to the Town Council and Members do not attend for this reason.

A Member stated that Members do not have personal development plans and opportunities have to be available for all Members to learn and develop. Members pick and choose which conferences are relevant.

The Chair stated that a Member wished to have a moratorium on conferences and asked the meeting if this was seconded by any Members. This was not seconded

by any Members so it was agreed that the existing policy of attending conferences will continue.

A Member who had attended the last conference on Austerity felt that it would have been more appropriate for 1 Member to attend along with the Finance Officer who the conference would have benefitted due to her finance role within the Town Council. It was noted that this would be taken into consideration for future conferences.

RECOMMENDED that the Town Council's existing policy of attending conferences to continue.

11. MEETING WITH SEAHAM PARK CRICKET CLUB

It was reported at the last Parks and Events Committee that Seaham Park Cricket Club had requested that the Town Council purchase a ride on roller for the club. It was agreed at the meeting that the Chair, Vice-Chair and Acting Town Clerk should meet with the Cricket Club and request to see the clubs accounts.

The Chair of Parks and Events Committee stated that the club currently has a walk behind roller which does not give the required standard that the club needs. The Club want to purchase a sit on roller as they have aspirations to join the premier league. It was noted that the club have 100+ members.

It was noted that the club had a previous debt of £7k to the Town Council from a former liability and they have reduced this debt to £3k which they intended to clear over the next two years. The Club are requesting that the debt of £3k is waived in order for them to purchase the sit on roller which would then become an asset of Seaham Town Council.

It was noted that it is now an entirely new club and this club agreed to pay the debt of the previous club which they have continued to honour. The club wants to buy the roller and then donate it as a fixture for the Council and the Council will have to maintain the equipment.

A Member questioned whether the Chair and Vice-Chair had seen the clubs accounts and whether there was anything in the accounts about paying professionals. The Chair stated that he had seen the accounts and there was a sum of £7k for player expenses which included the professional providing training for the junior members.

A Member questioned whether any research would be carried out on the costs of repairs and upkeep of the equipment. The Acting Town Clerk stated that it would be hard to envisage costs.

RECOMMENDED that approval is given for the cricket club to purchase the sit on roller and then donate it to Seaham Town Council in replace of the £3k debt owed to the Council.

