

MINUTES OF THE FINANCE AND GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE HELD ON 9TH SEPTEMBER, 2014

Present: Councillor E. Bell (Presiding)
and Councillors Mrs J Bell,
Mrs G Bleasdale, B. Burn (Snr),
B Burn (Jnr), N Page, R Meir,
Miss S Morrison, I Paul, K Shaw,
C Snowball, R Whitehead and K Younger

Observers: R. Arthur, D. Consett, Wendy Berry, Barry
Taylor & one other arrived late and no
name provided.

Apologies: Councillors S Cudlip, Mrs S Forster,
B. Allen. B. E. Allen, M. Baird, H Cahill,

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 1ST JULY, 2014

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 NUMBERS 4 & 5 - JULY & AUGUST, 2014

a) Recess Paysheet 4 – July, 2014

RECOMMENDED

the action taken, in accordance with the authority previously granted by the appointed Members, in meeting during the August recess and approving the paysheet detailing all payments made by BACS, Cheque, Direct Debit, Debit Card and Online Payments be endorsed.

b) Income – July, 2014

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

c) **Paysheet 5 – August, 2014**

Expenditure

RECOMMENDED

- (i) that all payments in Paysheet Number 5 – 2014/2015 be approved, it being noted that the BACS, Cheque, Direct Debit, Debit Card and Online Payments including Imprest expenditure amount to £177,367.59 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;
- (iii) that the cheques relating to suppliers not being paid by BACS be signed by three Members and the payments be released immediately; and
- (iv) that the Clerk's Imprest Account be reimbursed the sum of £1,555.31 for Civic Expenditure which includes the sum of £149.55 for petty cash, and authority be granted for this to be signed by the Chairman and Responsible Financial Officer.

d) **Income**

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

e) **Queries raised concerning Paysheet 3 - June 2014**

RECOMMENDED that the explanation provided by the Finance Officer concerning the three items of expenditure queried at the last Finance and General Purposes Committee held on Tuesday 1st July 2014 be accepted.

4. **BANK BALANCES**

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

5. **MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL PLANNING AND 2015/16 BUDGET SETTING**

The Committee gave consideration to the communication on the Local Council Tax Support Scheme received from Durham County Council. In discussion Members acknowledged the seriousness of the information contained in the document and the requirement for further consideration of this matter during the imminent 2014/15 budget setting process which commences in October.

RECOMMENDED the information be noted and deferred for future consideration during the budget setting process.

6. ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT

RECOMMENDED the Annual Governance Statement be approved and it be signed by the Chair of the Finance and Purposes Committee and the Town Clerk.

7. LETTERS OF THANKS

- a) RECOMMENDED the letter of thanks received from Mr Barry Taylor, Seaham Community Heath and Fitness, a copy of which was circulated, in relation to the Town Council's support for the Seaham Triathlon 2014, be noted.
- b) RECOMMENDED the letter of thanks received from the Great North Air Ambulance, a copy of which was circulated, in relation to the Town Council's donation of £100, be noted.

8. DISPOSAL OF CIVIC OFFICE FURNITURE

In discussion Members considered the issue of how best to dispose of surplus items of furniture from the old Civic Office and it was decided to allow Parkside Community Centre to collect the surplus furniture and allow the same offer to community centres after Parkside Community Centre have taken what they need.

RECOMMENDED the surplus items of furniture be disposed of in line with Members instructions.

9. PROVISION OF REFRESHMENTS

In discussion Members considered the issue of when hot and cold refreshments were to be provided and it was decided that the actual spend on tea bags, coffee and milk would be brought back to this meeting

RECOMMENDED the actual spend on tea bags, coffee and milk would be brought back to this meeting for further discussion.

10. AUDIT ISSUES

a) **External Auditor's Notification of Completion of the Audit of the Annual Return for the Financial Year 2013/14**

The Committee considered the completed Annual Return which had been unqualified for the financial year 2013/14. Members expressed their pleasure that the accounts had received this clean bill of health and thanked the Finance Officer for all her hard work in achieving this result.

RECOMMENDED the Council accept the External Auditor's notification and that congratulations be extended to all relevant staff concerned.

b) Internal Audit Report-Corporate Governance

The Committee considered the findings of the Internal Auditor in relation to the work undertaken in examining the Town Council's Corporate Governance arrangements, a copy of which had been previously circulated.

RECOMMENDED the Council accept the report.

c) Internal Audit Report-Civic Expenses

The Committee considered the findings of the Internal Auditor in relation to the work undertaken in examining the Town Council's Civic Expenses arrangements, a copy of which had been previously circulated.

RECOMMENDED the Council accept the report.

d) Internal Audit Report-Payroll Arrangements

The Committee considered the findings of the Internal Auditor in relation to the work undertaken in examining the Town Council's Payroll arrangements, a copy of which had been previously circulated.

RECOMMENDED the Council accept the report.

e) Resolution to exclude the Press and Public

RECOMMENDED in view of the confidential nature of the items to be discussed at this meeting, the formal resolution be hereby passed to exclude the press and public from the meeting pursuant to the Public Bodies (Admissions to Meetings) Act, 1961.

f) Internal Audit Report-Town Hall and Community Facilities Building Contract

The Committee considered the findings of the Internal Auditor in relation to the work undertaken in examining the New Town Hall and Community Facilities Building contract, a copy of which had been previously circulated.

RECOMMENDED the Council accept the report.

11. TOWN HALL/FUNCTION SUITE – INCOME/EXPENDITURE

The Committee considered the report provided by the Finance Officer giving a detailed breakdown of how the above project has been financed. The Town Clerk explained the detail of the report and Members raised concern about the building contractor and the lack of land surveys prior to building works. A Member explained

that the council could not look back but move forward and that this is the biggest thing that has happened to the town council in its history and the fact that the new Cemetery went very well there was no reason to think any different when looking at the new Town Hall. Members were asked to accept the report and await the final figures.

RECOMMENDED the Council accept the report.

12. GRANT REQUEST FOR THEATRE PLACE

The Town Clerk explained that the Council does have the option to fund this type of enquiry under the Power of Competence. Another Member suggested that it was granted and this was seconded and therefore the issue went to a vote and resulted in 9 in favour and as this was the majority on the night the proposed donation would be honoured and it was then proposed that the sum to be donated was a £100 with any future enquiries being judged on their own merits.

RECOMMENDED the Council provides a grant of £100.

13. PRESS OPPORTUNITIES

After consideration the Committee decided that no item from the meeting presented a press opportunity.