

**MINUTES OF THE FINANCE AND GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE HELD ON  
13TH JANUARY, 2015**

Present: Councillor Mrs S Forster (Chair) and  
Councillors B Allen, Mrs B E Allen,  
Mrs M Baird, E Bell, Mrs J A Bell,  
Mrs G Bleasdale, B Burn Jnr, Mrs H Cahill,  
S Cudlip, R Meir, Miss S Morrison,  
N R Page, I Paul, K Shaw, C Snowball,  
R Whitehead

Apologies: Councillors B Taylor, K Younger

Observers: Mrs W Berry

*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 2ND DECEMBER, 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 NUMBER 9 - 2014/2015**

**a) Expenditure**

RECOMMENDED

- (i) that all payments in Paysheet Number 9 – 2014/2015 be approved, it being noted that the direct debits, BACS and cheque payments including Imprest expenditure amount to £141,169.86 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 £6,120.81 for Civic Expenditure which includes the sum of £326.43 for petty cash, and authority be granted for this to be signed by the Chairman and Responsible Financial Officer.

**b) Income**

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

**4. BANK BALANCES**

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

**5. BUDGET SUB-COMMITTEE**

RECOMMENDED the reports of the Budget Sub-Committee meetings held on 20th and 25th November, 2014 previously circulated to Councillors to aid in the budget setting process, be adopted.

**6. REVISED BUDGET FOR 2014/15 AND PROPOSED BUDGET FOR 2015/16**

The Committee reviewed the estimates for all services, a copy of which had been previously circulated. These outlined revised budgets for the current financial year and the proposed estimates for the next financial year covering all income and expenditure issues.

RECOMMENDED the Council defer approval of the budgets for 2015/2016 and the revised budgets for 2014/2015 to a later date.

**7. THE PRECEPT**

The Committee was advised that the Band D information had been received from Durham County Council and viewed a schedule which showed the effect on the precept that various possible percentage increases for both Band D and Band A properties would have. Members were reminded that 85% of properties within Seaham were Band A properties. Members also considered a schedule which detailed what effect such increases would have on balances. In discussion it was stated that until the outcome of the Local Government's Financial Settlement was known, parish and town councils were unable to determine what effect it would have on their precept requirements. Previously due to the potential imposition of a capping mechanism on Town and Parish Councils, strict instruction was given to Durham County Council that the Town Council reserved the right to amend the precept request figure within the legal time frame and this situation is likely to reoccur.

RECOMMENDED the Council defer the decision to determine its precept figure in respect of its requirements for 2015/16 until the outcome of Local Government's financial settlement consultation was known but within the relevant timeframe subject to the required proviso.

**8. RISK ASSESSMENTS – FINANCE AND GENERAL PURPOSES ISSUES**

The Council was reminded of the requirement as part of the corporate governance processes for risk assessments to be undertaken in relation to various activities. At regular intervals Members had been provided with reports on progress made in this area and the Committee was advised of the process involved in carrying out initial assessments made of risks in a range of finance and general purposes activities. The Committee noted the process followed in assessing the risks. In discussion a Member commented on the risk assessment in relation to the Seaham Town Hall and stated that the scores should be increased in light of the recent communication received in relation to KORU.

RECOMMENDED:

- (i) The Council formally agree to accept the risk assessments covering the various items now reported.
- (ii) Amended scores should be detailed on the risk assessment in relation to Seaham Town Hall.

**9. DURHAM COUNTY COUNCIL BUDGET CONSULTATION**

The Committee considered a communication from Durham County Council in relation to their budget consultation to which comments were invited by 15th January, 2015. If any Member wished to raise an issue this could be submitted directly to the County Council or via the Town Clerk for onward submission.

RECOMMENDED the Council note the information now reported.

**10. PRESS OPPORTUNITIES**

RECOMMENDED the Council note that no press opportunities existed from this meeting.

**11. SEAHAM TOWN HALL BOOKINGS**

Pursuant to this item being raised at the last meeting of the Parks and Events meeting held on 6th January, 2015, the Committee viewed a schedule produced by the Deputy Town Clerk which showed the events that had taken place since the opening of the Town Hall, together with future bookings. In discussion it was stated that the full names of the organisers, rather than initials, should be shown to ensure that Members are fully aware of who was using the facility. It was also commented that some external agencies had queried the prices quoted for booking the Town Hall as they were perceived to be too high in relation to other venues available within the town. A meeting comprising a small number of Councillors and Officers would take place with Oldfields later this month when a number of issues were to be raised.

RECOMMENDED:

- (i) The Council note the information now reported.
- (ii) Full details of the organisers of events be identified to Members on booking reports provided to Members in the future.
- (iii) Members be provided with a price list for booking the various rooms within the Town Hall.
- (iv) Reports which are intended for Town Council Members only be retained for distribution until the Members were present, rather than being tabled in advance of the relevant meeting.

**12. RESOLUTION TO EXCLUDE THE PRESS AND PUBLIC**

RECOMMENDED in view of the confidential nature of the following item, 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.

**13. KORU NOTICE OF ADJUDICATION**

The Committee considered a report by the Deputy Town Clerk since the notice of adjudication was received and the Town Clerk elaborated on the issue.

RECOMMENDED:

- (i) The Council note the information reported.
- (ii) The Town Clerk regularly report to Elected Members on any additional information received in relation to this issue.
- (iii) The Town Clerk check the level of the Town Council's Insurance cover.