

**MINUTES OF THE FINANCE AND GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE HELD ON 10TH MARCH, 2015**

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

Apologies: R Meir

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 10TH FEBRUARY, 2015**

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 11 - 2014/2015**

**a) Expenditure**

RECOMMENDED

- (i) that all payments in Paysheet Number 11 – 2014/2015 be approved, it being noted that the direct debits, BACS and cheque payments including Imprest expenditure amount to £237,466.69 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 £1,823.20 for Civic Expenditure, 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. **SPECIAL BACS PAYSHEET**

RECOMMENDED that authority be granted for the Finance Officer to arrange a special BACS paysheet in order to facilitate payments and avoid unnecessary accounting processes involving accruals in the period up to 31st March, 2015.

6. **APPLICATIONS FOR GRANTS**

a) **County of Durham School Benevolent Fund**

The Committee considered an application from the County of Durham School Benevolent Fund who sought a grant towards their ongoing costs in in the provision of grants to needy families.

RECOMMENDED the Council agree to award a grant of £50.00 to the County of Durham School Benevolent Fund.

b) **Friends of Durham Miners' Gala**

The Committee considered a communication from the Durham Miners' Association which requested the Town Council continue its membership of the Friends of the Durham Miners' Gala at a cost of £24.

RECOMMENDED the Council agree to continue its membership of the Friends of the Durham Miners' Gala and authorise the appropriate payment of £24.

c) **Seaham Triathlon**

Prior to the consideration of this item, Councillor B Taylor declared an interest, left the meeting and took no part in the discussion or voting thereon.

The Committee considered an application for grant in respect of the Seaham Triathlon which was scheduled to take place on Sunday, 28th June, 2015. In discussion Members felt that this event should be supported as an annual event for Seaham but sought clarification on the local charities that would benefit from the Triathlon.

RECOMMENDED the Council agree to award a grant of £250 to the Seaham Triathlon with a request that they notify the Council in writing of the beneficiaries after the event.

## **7. AMENDMENTS TO FINANCIAL REGULATIONS**

The Committee considered the amendments made to the Town Council's Financial Regulations which were necessary due to the introduction of on-line banking, acceptance of debit card payments, and the discontinuance of two accounts.

RECOMMENDED the Council endorse the action taken in updating the Town Council's Financial Regulations.

## **8. AUDIT ISSUES**

### **a) Internal audit report**

RECOMMENDED the report published by the Internal Auditor in relation to the work undertaken in examining the Town Council's Income and Banking arrangements, be accepted.

### **b) Internal Audit – Annual Report**

The Committee considered the Annual Report of the Internal Auditor which outlined work completed over the 2014/15 financial year and Mr. Fletcher elaborated on the report which gave Full Assurance to the Town Council.

RECOMMENDED:

- (i) The Council accept the report.
- (ii) The Finance Officer and relevant staff be commended for their efforts in attaining Full Assurance over the controls implemented throughout the year.

### **c) Internal Audit Annual Plan of Work for 2015/16**

RECOMMENDED the Council accept the report of the Internal Auditor which detailed his proposed annual plan of work for the 2015/16 financial year.

## **9. BUDGET STRATEGY – MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL PLAN**

The Committee considered the Town Clerk's report which identified the key financial issues the Council were to face over the next three years. This initial draft of the Medium Term Financial Plan took account of central Government advice, the loan repayment policy and borrowing strategy, the revised budget for 2014/15 and the budget for 2015/16, budget issues for 2016/17 and risk management issues and the Town Council's financial strategies.

The document had been prepared for discussion by Members and also for initial guidance. The Finance Officer clarified issues raised.

RECOMMENDED the Council accept the Medium Term Financial Plan.

**10. KEY STRATEGIC RISKS**

The Committee considered a list of the current key strategic risks identified following a visit by the Town Council's Insurers in relation to risk assessments. Members' views were sought on whether they believed the list to be accurate or whether they could identify other risks that should be included, modified or excluded. These strategic risks would be incorporated with the Town Council's Annual Report and Council Plan to be published in June of this year. In discussion it was suggested that the risks should be ranked in order of priority and the maintenance of an agreed level of reserves should be included taking into account the potential expansion of services in future years.

RECOMMENDED this item is deferred for consideration to the next meeting.

**11. RISK ASSESSMENTS – ANNUAL REVIEW FOR FINANCIAL YEAR 2014/15**

The Committee considered a summary copy of the annual review of the risk assessments for the financial year 2014/15 in respect of all services. The risk assessments for each individual risk had been assessed previously by the relevant Committees and Sub-Committees and this annual review was a requirement of audit.

RECOMMENDED the Council accept the annual review of the risk assessments carried out in respect of all Town Council services.

**12. CONFERENCES, COURSES AND SEMINARS**

**a) NAC Conference: Safeguarding and Preparing for the Care Act**

The Committee considered details of the National Association of Councillors' Conference entitled 'Safeguarding and Preparing for the Care Act' to take place in Scarborough on 10th to 12th April, 2015.

RECOMMENDED authority be granted for the next two Councillors from the overnight rota to attend this event as the Council's representatives and such attendance rank as an approved duty for payment of appropriate allowances.

**13. PRESS OPPORTUNITIES**

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

**14. 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.

*At this point all members of the public left the meeting.*

**15. SEAHAM TOWN HALL**

**a) Bookings**

The Committee considered the schedule of bookings for the Town Hall for the period February to April, 2015. In discussion it was felt that the schedule should provide more detail such as whether the booking was for an Oldfields event or not. Members noted the number of bookings for physical activity classes and queried whether risk assessments and health and safety aspects had been considered. A Member also queried whether first-aid equipment was in place for the internal facilities as well as the external play area.

RECOMMENDED:

- (i) The Council note the bookings made at Seaham Town Hall for the period February to April, 2015.
- (ii) The schedule be reviewed to show details of whether the bookings shown were purely for room hire arranged by the Town Council, or were for an event booked by Oldfields.
- (iii) At the next scheduled meeting with Oldfields which it had been agreed would be held on a quarterly basis, they be asked to clarify on the on-line booking diary whether catering and bar services were also required.
- (iv) The Town Clerk check that relevant risk assessments had been conducted in respect of potential health and safety issues for users of the Town Hall and that appropriate first aid equipment was in place.

**b) Working Party Meeting**

RECOMMENDED:

- (i) The Council accept the report of the Seaham Town Hall Working Party which met on 5th February, 2015.

- (ii) The Mayor of Seaham, Councillor Bruce Burn, be formally thanked for his interaction with the school children during the Official Opening of Seaham Town Hall on 26th February, 2015.

**16. PARKSIDE COMMUNITY CENTRE – TWINNING HOSTS**

Pursuant to discussion at the last meeting of the Twinning Committee in relation to the hosting by Parkside Community Centre of 10 of the Gerlingen party during April, a breakdown of their envisaged costs for the visit had been circulated to Members.

RECOMMENDED the Council agree to award a grant of £600.00 to the Parkside Community Centre to help with their catering costs.

**17. NEW MULTI-USE PAVILION**

The Deputy Town Clerk provided an update to Members in respect of the new Multi-Use Pavilion which was in the process of being constructed.

RECOMMENDED:

- (i) A special meeting be convened to discuss the issues now raised.
- (ii) The Officers provide a comprehensive report to Members in advance of the special meeting to allow sufficient time for Members to review the information.