

**MINUTES OF THE FINANCE AND GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE HELD ON 3RD NOVEMBER, 2015**

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

Apologies: Councillors B Allen, Mrs B E Allen,  
Mrs J A Bell, Mrs H Cahill

*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 6TH OCTOBER, 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 7 - 2015/2016**

**3.1 Expenditure**

RECOMMENDED:

- (i) that all payments in Paysheet Number 7 – 2015/2016 be approved, it being noted that the direct debits, BACS and cheque payments including Imprest expenditure amount to £87,583.12 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 £3,769.68 for Civic Expenditure, and authority be granted for this to be signed by the Chairman and Responsible Financial Officer.

**3.2 Income**

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

**3.3 Bank Balances**

The Committee considered a statement of Bank Balances held by the Council at the month end, a copy of which had been previously circulated. The Chair examined statements in respect of the Town Council's three bank accounts which were made available to view and the Finance Officer responded to queries raised.

RECOMMENDED the Council note the information and approve the Finance Officer's report.

**4. AUDIT ISSUES**

**4.1 External Auditor's Notification of Completion of the Audit of the Annual Return for the Financial Year 2014/15**

The Committee considered the completed Annual Return for 2014/15 and the audit undertaken by the external auditors on the Return which had resulted in an unqualified opinion. Members noted that one issue had been raised and details of this had been previously circulated. Appropriate action had been taken to remedy this in future years.

RECOMMENDED the Council note the information and accept the report.

**5. AMENDMENTS TO FINANCIAL REGULATIONS AND STANDING ORDERS**

The Committee was advised that as a result of changes in the Public Contract Regulations 2015/102 which came into force this year, amendments had been required to be made to the following:

Sections 9 and 13 of the Town Council's Financial Regulations;  
Section 25 of the Business and Proceedings Standing Orders;  
Sections 4, 7, 11, 12 and 19 of the Tendering/Contracting Procedures

Copies of these amendments had been previously provided to Members.

RECOMMENDED:

- (i) The Council endorse the action taken in amending the above documents to reflect current legal requirements.
- (ii) A copy of each of the revised documents be distributed to all Members.

**6. MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL PLANNING AND 2016/17 BUDGET SETTING**

The Committee considered a communication from Durham County Council which provided an update on the future implications of the Local Council Tax Support Scheme on Seaham Town Council's finances. This was initially submitted to the September meeting of this Committee when it was considered it should be revisited during the budget setting process. The Town Clerk elaborated on the content of the document and reminded Members that the figures shown gave only an indication of what the potential impact could be in future years on the Town Council's budget and was not definitive figures.

RECOMMENDED the Council note the information.

**7. REVISED BUDGET FOR 2015/16 AND PROPOSED BUDGET FOR 2016/17**

The Committee considered the estimates for finance and general purposes 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. Members were advised that a meeting of the Budget Sub-Committee would be convened in the near future to enable discussion on where savings could be made, after which their proposals would be submitted for further consideration to the next meeting of the Finance and General Purposes Committee, with the intention of the Council setting their precept at the meeting of the full Council in December.

RECOMMENDED:

- (i) Arrangements be put in place for the Budget Sub-Committee to meet in the near future.
- (ii) The Council await the submission of proposals from the Budget Sub-Committee at the next meeting of this Committee.

**8. SEAHAM TOWN HALL – BOOKINGS**

**8.1 Income and Expenditure**

The Committee considered schedules which detailed the income and expenditure for the Function Suite and Café for October, 2015, a copy of which was circulated. A Member queried why there was a variance in some of the charges being levied and the Town Clerk provided an explanation.

RECOMMENDED the schedule be noted and be updated to include an explanatory note to detail the reason for any reduction in fee.

## **8.2 Bookings**

The Committee considered a schedule which detailed the bookings made for use of the Town Hall for September, 2015, a copy of which had been previously circulated.

RECOMMENDED the schedule be noted.

## **9. REPORT OF THE TOWN HALL WORKING PARTY**

The Committee considered the minutes of the last meeting of the Town Hall Working Party held on 30th September, 2015, a copy of which had been circulated separately. In respect of item 6.3 (ii) Members were advised that The Arc (working in association with East Durham Creates) had visited the Town Hall and had been asked to provide a report in respect of what would be required to bring the sound and lighting quality up to a specific standard which would enhance the facility for a varied range of events to take place. It was recognised that in respect of the lighting quality, the facility to enable lights to be dimmed was urgently needed in readiness for Christmas events to create a better ambience. The Town Clerk advised that there was some provision within the draft budget for lighting and Members considered that the acquisition of dimmable lighting should be implemented as a matter of urgency.

RECOMMENDED:

- (i) The Council agree the recommendations and relevant stipulations made by the Town Hall Working Party as detailed in the report, with the exception of items 6.3 (ii) and 6.3 (vii).
- (ii) In respect of item 6.3 (ii) the Town Clerk make arrangements to progress the acquisition of dimmable lighting.
- (iii) The Town Clerk contact Nicky Clark of East Durham Creates to chase up their report to ensure that opportunities to access grants were not missed.
- (iv) In respect of item 6.3 (vii) the Council note that cost effective solutions were being looked into to overcome the flooding problem.

## **10. REMEMBRANCE DAY PARADE**

A Member questioned whether the itinerary was available as yet for the Remembrance Day Parade. This information was awaited from the Royal British Legion and the itinerary would be sent out tomorrow to all Members.

RECOMMENDED the Council note the information.

11. **PRESS OPPORTUNITIES**

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