

MINUTES OF THE FINANCE AND GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE HELD ON 9TH FEBRUARY, 2016

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

Apologies: Councillors B Allen, Mrs B E Allen,
B Burn Jnr, Mrs H Cahill, K Shaw

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 12TH JANUARY, 2016

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 10 - 2015/2016

3.1 Expenditure

RECOMMENDED:

- (i) that all payments in Paysheet Number 10 – 2015/2016 be approved, it being noted that the direct debits, BACS and cheque payments including Imprest expenditure amount to £114,131.45 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 £2,079.03 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. APPLICATION FOR GRANT

4.1 Friends of Durham Miners' Gala

The Committee considered an application from the Friends of Durham Miners' Gala who sought a grant towards the costs of continuing the event.

RECOMMENDED the Council agree to award a grant of £24 to the Friends of Durham Miners' Gala.

4.2 Letter of Thanks - Great North Air Ambulance

RECOMMENDED the letter from the Great North Air Ambulance which thanked the Town Council for its recent donation of £200, be accepted.

5. QUARTERLY BUDGETARY REVIEW FOR QUARTER ENDED 31ST DECEMBER, 2015

The Committee considered the quarterly budgetary review for the quarter ended 31st December, 2015.

In discussion, Members acknowledged that there were very few overspends and questions was raised concerning:

- Code 101 4601 Insurance – Business in respect of the budgeted amount of £70,000 and the actual amount to date of £84,501. The Finance Officer explained to the Committee that this was an accounts anomaly. At financial year end an adjustment would be made and the £16,816 would be removed from this code for the current financial year and placed in the following financial year as it was in respect of insurance for that following financial year.

- Code 450 4503 Vehicle Fuel in respect of the budgeted amount of £7,000 and the actual amount to date of £9,754 indicating an overspend of 2,754 at nine months. Members acknowledged that this needed to be closely monitored for the future. Previous assessment of having a diesel tank at the new cemetery had proved unviable and even with the use of red diesel by Council vehicles the savings hadn't been as high as expected. Members hoped that falling fuel prices would be reflected in the remaining quarter of the financial year.

RECOMMENDED the Council accept the budgetary review statements for the quarter ended 31st December, 2015.

6. SEAHAM TOWN HALL – BOOKINGS

In discussion, Members were reminded that due to food hygiene and health & safety requirements Council policy is that food served at the Town Hall must be provided by Oldfields Events.

RECOMMENDED the schedule which detailed the bookings made in respect of the Town Hall for December, 2015, together with Income and Expenditure be noted.

7. REPORT OF THE TOWN HALL WORKING PARTY

The Committee considered the minutes of the last meeting of the Town Hall Working Party held on 28th January, 2016, a copy of which had been circulated separately. In discussion a Member queried whether the Working Party also considered the quality of the food provided by Oldfields. It was clarified that this was not within the remit of the Working Party and that any concerns received with regard to the food or other aspects of the service were taken up immediately with Oldfields for investigation and resolution.

It was further highlighted that the increasing number of repeat customers for large functions was indicative of the fact that the service provided at the Town Hall was of a very high quality.

Members also wished to acknowledge the increased focus by Oldfields on business at the Town Hall as a result of the closure of their Durham City restaurant, and on the good work of Oldfields with regard to the Town Hall and their recent investment in a new sound system and coffee machine to enhance the service provision even further.

RECOMMENDED the Council agree the recommendations made by the Town Hall Working Party as detailed in the report.

8. AUDIT ISSUES

8.1 Internal Audit Report – Accounts Payable

The Committee considered the findings of the Internal Auditor in relation to

the work undertaken in examining the Town Council's Accounts Payable arrangements, a copy of which had been previously circulated. In discussion Members noted the opinion was Full Assurance, the highest level and congratulated the Finance Officer on the achievement.

RECOMMENDED the Council accept the report.

9. FEES AND CHARGES

The Committee considered the joint report of the Deputy Town Clerk and Finance Officer, a copy of which had been previously circulated, which contained proposals on the level of fees and charges for the following services to be levied during the next financial year:

- Parks and Recreation Services covering allotment and garage rents, grazing land rents, cemetery fees and charges;
- Arts, Information and Finance Services covering photocopying charges, hire of Function Suite/Meeting Room facility and sale of Civic items.

In discussion Members acknowledged that the Council's fees and charges were very competitive when compared to those of other providers of similar services within the Town.

RECOMMENDED The Council accept the proposals within the report and authority be granted for the proposed fees and charges in respect of all the services outlined, to be implemented from 1st April, 2016.

10. RECRUITMENT OF CLEANER (TOWN HALL)/OUT OF HOURS COVER RE THURSDAY NIGHTS

Members were reminded that there is still a need to be able to provide out of hours cover on a Thursday evening and currently Oldfields are paid to do this when required.

The recruitment of a new cleaner presents an opportunity to resolve the issue and the most cost effective way to do this is to increase the hours of the current cleaner and new cleaner posts from 11.5 hours per week to 14.5 hours per week to take effect on the appointment of the new cleaner. The additional salary costs were indicated to be approx. £190 per month (£2,300 per year) in total and this increase could be accommodated within the salary budget. In discussion, Members agreed this was the most cost effective solution.

RECOMMENDED the Council approve the increase to the hours of the current cleaner and new cleaner posts from 11.5 hours per week to 14.5 hours per week to take effect on the appointment of the new cleaner.

11. **COUNTY DURHAM & DARLINGTON NHS TRUST WELLBEING FOR LIFE EVENT**

The Committee were reminded of a Wellbeing for Life event scheduled to take place at Eastlea Community Centre on Friday 19th February from 10am until 2pm, the details of which had been previously circulated.

RECOMMENDED the Council note the information.

12. **PRESS OPPORTUNITIES**

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