

MINUTES OF THE FINANCE AND GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE HELD ON 7th FEBRUARY, 2017

Present: Councillor S Cudlip (Chair) and Councillors Mrs B E Allen, E Bell, Mrs J A Bell, Mrs G Bleasdale, Mrs S Forster, R Meir, Miss S Morrison, C Snowball, B Taylor, R Whitehead, K Younger

Apologies: Councillors B Allen, Mrs H J Cahill, I Paul, K Shaw

Observer: Councillor R Arthur

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 JANUARY, 2017

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 - 2016/17

a) Expenditure

RECOMMENDED:

- (i) that all payments in Paysheet Number 10 – 2016/17 be approved, it being noted that the direct debits, BACS and cheque payments including Imprest expenditure amount to £93,408.00 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 £749.63 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. SEAHAM TOWN HALL – BOOKINGS

The Committee considered the schedule of bookings for the Town Hall for January, 2017.

RECOMMENDED the Council note the bookings made at Seaham Town Hall for January, 2017.

6. QUARTERLY BUDGETARY REVIEW FOR QUARTER ENDED 31ST DECEMBER, 2016

RECOMMENDED that the Council accept the quarterly budgetary review for quarter ended 31st December, 2016.

7. AUDIT ISSUES

a) Internal Audit Report – Accounts Payable

RECOMMENDED that the Council accept the report.

b) Internal Audit Report – Payroll Audit

RECOMMENDED that the Council accept the report.

c) Internal Audit Report – Oldfields

It was noted that this is a new contract and the level of assurance has increased since the last audit report as improvements are being made constantly.

RECOMMENDED that the Council accept the report.

d) Internal Audit Report – Risk Management

RECOMMENDED that the Council accept the report.

8. APPLICATIONS FOR GRANTS

a) Letter of Thanks

RECOMMENDED that the Council accept the information.

9. FEES AND CHARGES

Members were requested to consider the proposed fees and charges for 2017/18.

It was noted that the Allotment and Garages rents were increased by 5% in 2016/17 and the rents are only reviewed every third year. As the rents were reviewed last year there would be no review for 2017/18.

It was proposed that a 3% increase be made to cemetery fees and charges.

No review was held with regards to the sports fees and charges as the fees were agreed at the Special meeting of the Clerk's Advisory Sub-Committee which was held in February 2016. The decision made was to increase the sports fees by 5% per year for the following 6 years, this being the 2nd year. A Member stated that it looks like a high increase but the sports fees were very low to start with in comparison to other areas and this was reviewed last year to bring charges up to a comparative level on a phased increase.

Photocopying charges, the hire of the function suite and meeting room facilities and the sale of Civic items are unchanged.

RECOMMENDED that the Council approve the increase in fees.

10. RISK MANAGEMENT STRATEGY AND GUIDANCE

It was noted that the Internal Auditor had been consulted with regards to the revised and updated strategy and agreed the content. Members were requested to approve the document.

RECOMMENDED that the Council approve the Risk Management Strategy and Guidance.

11. BIG SCREEN QUOTATIONS

The Deputy Town Clerk shared three quotations from ADI, Big TV and Bigscreen Media for the hire of the big screen for the Carnival weekend in July and the Pirates Festival in August.

RECOMMENDED that the Council approve ADI as being the best quotation at a cost of £11,436 for both events.

12. NEW EVENTS

The Deputy Town Clerk shared responses from Durham County Council and East

Durham Creates with regards to both organisations being unable to provide funding or staff support for the Town Councils new events. However, the Deputy Town Clerk has been actively seeking new partners and has been in contact with Ms Michelle Harland from Creative Youth Opportunities who will assist with applying for a £10,000 Awards for All Grant. It is also proposed that the Town Council will work in partnership with Creative Youth Opportunities to deliver Easter Events.

Discussion took place around East Durham Creates and it was felt that other towns were benefiting more from East Durham Creates services. It was suggested that East Durham Creates be invited to the Arts and Information Committee to discuss this matter further.

RECOMMENDED:

- (i) that the Council approve working in partnership with Creative Youth Opportunities to deliver Easter Events and also that the Deputy Town Clerk applies for the Awards for All grant of £10,000.
- (ii) that the Deputy Town Clerk invites East Durham Creates to a future Arts and Information Committee to discuss the allocation of resources for possible future events in Seaham.

13. PRESS OPPORTUNITIES

RECOMMENDED that the excellent reports from the auditor be publicised demonstrating that Seaham Town Council is thriving.

14. RESOLUTION TO EXCLUDE THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

RECOMMENDED in view of the confidential nature of the item to be discussed, 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.

15. DAWDON PARK PROJECT POTENTIAL CONTRACT – ARCHITECTS FEES

RECOMMENDED that the Council approve the payment for the first instalment of the Architects fees.

16. INSURANCE RENEWAL

The Committee was advised of proposals which had been received from the Council's Insurance Company, namely Zurich Municipal, representing a proposed saving of 23.9% for renewal of the existing policy from July, 2017 for a new five year long term agreement. In discussion, the past excellent service and support provided by Zurich to the Town Council was acknowledged. It was also noted that

even with an increased claims history in recent years, the quoted premium demonstrated a significant reduction to the current premium. The proposal from Zurich in relation to the new five year long term agreement was therefore considered to be good value for money for the Council and tax payers.

RECOMMENDED the Council agree to enter into a new five year long term agreement with Zurich Municipal from the renewal date in July, 2017 on the terms now reported and that standing orders be waived accordingly.