

**MINUTES OF THE FINANCE AND GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE HELD ON 2<sup>ND</sup> OCTOBER, 2018**

Present: Councillors S Cudlip (Chair) and E Bell, Mrs J A Bell, Mrs G Bleasdale, Mrs K Brace, S P Colborn, Mrs S Forster, Ms R M Gratton, G N Hepworth, Mrs L Kennedy, D McKenna, K Shaw, T Shepherd, B Taylor, R Whitehead, Miss L Willis.

Apologies: Councillors Mrs B E Allen, R Arthur, D Cummings, Mrs V Cummings, Mrs S Pratt.

*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 4<sup>th</sup> SEPTEMBER, 2018**

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 – SEPTEMBER 2018/19**

**a) Expenditure – September 2018**

RECOMMENDED:

- (i) that all payments in Paysheet Number 6 – 2018/19 be approved, it being noted that the direct debits, Bacs, Online and Debit Card payments including Imprest expenditure amount to £85,139.69 being the total sum authorised under this Paysheet;

A Member questioned a payment of £509.00 for the repair to lights at the Town Hall. The Acting Town Clerk stated that he would report back to the Member the breakdown of the costs. The Member also raised a query about a payment of £44.00 for Weightman LLP. The Finance Officer noted that this was a VAT element which would be claimed back.

- (ii) that the BACS authorisation sheet be signed by three Members and the credit transfers be actioned immediately; an

- (iii) that the Clerk's Imprest Account be reimbursed the sum of £295.00 for Civic Expenditure and authority be granted for this to be signed by the Chairman and Responsible Financial Officer.

**b) Income – September 2018**

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

**c) Bank Balances – September 2018**

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

**4. AUDIT REPORTS**

**a) Internal Audit Report – Members/Officers Allowances – Full Assurance**

RECOMMENDED the report of the Internal Auditor be approved.

**b) Audit Report – Events – Full Assurance**

RECOMMENDED the report of the Internal Auditor be approved.

**c) Mayor's Policy**

Following discussions with the Internal Auditor he did not feel that it was necessary to meet at this stage as it was a decision for Members to decide if they wish to have a Mayors Policy. The Chair informed Members that work was being carried out on a Policy by Officers and when this is complete the group can meet to discuss this matter further.

RECOMMENDED Members to report back once the Policy has been completed.

**d) Internal Auditors Schedule of Audits**

Members received a schedule of the Internal Auditors planned work programme for the next few months. It was noted that the Internal Auditors schedule of audits is rotated over a 3 year cycle.

RECOMMENDED that Members note the information.

**5. MAYORS CIVIC BALL COSTS**

The former Mayor stated that she had requested a list of spend which included the dress allowance at the beginning of her term of office right up until the end when she purchased thank you gifts. The total spend for her term in office totalled £6,900. She noted that she had raised £14,200 for local charities. It was then asked how she could have spent £20k on the ball. A Member noted that the £20k

mentioned in the leaflets was not just for the ball it was about all Mayoral and Members expenses. A Member asked why this item was being raised again. A Member stated that it was stated at the last meeting that an explanation was required from the Seaham Community Party to be brought back to this meeting.

A Member asked if they could see a copy of the leaflet. A Member stated that the leaflet does not state that £20k was spent on the Civic Ball it was a collective of other items which totalled to £20k. Members have read the leaflet incorrectly.

A Member stated that Members must have a copy of the leaflet if they know what is on it. A Member asked whether this was the leaflet which says the Town Council are spending £1m on the Green Drive. A Member stated that the spend is nearly £1m. A reply was made to say is £500,000 nearly a million.

The Chair asked for a copy of the leaflet so others could see it. A Member stated that they would find a copy of the leaflet which had been distributed and have it copied and shared with all Members. The Chair stated that all Councillors are bound under the Code of Conduct to report correct facts and the issue with the leaflets is they contain misinformation.

A Member from Seaham Community Party asked if Labour Members could put forward who stated one of the Community Party Members had committed benefit fraud. The Chair stated he didn't know anything about this.

A Member stated that the leaflet was put out in August and a Member had already admitted to delivering it. All Members here make decisions in Committees and some facts on the leaflet are incorrect and those Members who distributed the leaflet make other Members look like they are telling lies. The leaflet states the Seaham Community Party will not put a 2% increase on the Council Tax but the party agreed to do this.

A Member stated that it is misinformation from Councillors who do not serve on the ward where they were delivering leaflets to.

A Member stated that he was a member of Dawdon Working Party when the tendering process for work at the Green Drive was taking place. Previously on Facebook Members had stated that if Seaham Community Party were elected they would stop any works from being carried out there. The Member noted that he has been on board with the works at Green Drive and has played a part in pushing forward the agenda along with the Labour Party. The Member wanted to know if Members agreed that these things said were not appropriate.

A Member stated that this was pre-election material that the Seaham Community Party were delivering and had only delivered this in the last few weeks. This is not an old issue as the leaflets had been handed out to his constituents in August and he had a right to ask for the information to ensure it was complying with the Code of Conduct. Again a copy of the leaflet was requested so this could be distributed to all Members.

A Member stated that he is a Town Councillor and wants to do the best by Seaham and all Members need to be as harmonious as they can to achieve this.

A Member noted that all Members have a duty to ensure that information is correct or all Members can be brought into disrepute.

RECOMMENDED that a copy of the Seaham Community Party leaflet is copied and distributed to all Members.

**6. QUARTERLY BUDGETARY REVIEW – SEPTEMBER 2018**

RECOMMENDED that Members note the quarterly budgetary review statement.

**7. STREET LIGHTING AGREEMENT – GEORGE ELMY LIFEBOAT WAY**

Members discussed Durham County Council's request for Seaham Town Council to pay the £35k up front for the street lighting at George Elmy Lifeboat Way. Members were led to believe that this amount was to be paid over a 10 year period and noted that Seaham Town Council could not afford to pay this amount in one payment as it had not been budgeted for.

County Councillor Kevin Shaw stated that he would go back to Durham County Council and hold further discussions with them on this matter.

RECOMMENDED that County Councillor Kevin Shaw would report this matter back once he had sought clarification.

**8. 1338 (SEAHAM) SQUADRON – NEW DRIVE PLAYING FIELDS**

The Acting Town Clerk stated that he had received a request from 1338 (Seaham) Squadron requesting to use the New Drive playing fields free of charge so the squadron can extend their sporting activities.

A Member stated that other sports users pay for the use of the playing fields and it wouldn't necessarily be appropriate to let other people use it free of charge.

A Member requested that Officers produce a report for Members outlining the possible charges along with the full usage request from the Squadron and copies of their risk assessments and how the required usage would fit in with teams already using the playing field. The report should be produced and discussed at the next meeting.

RECOMMENDED that Officers produce a report for Members as mentioned above for further discussion at the next meeting.

**9. PRESS OPPORTUNITIES**

RECOMMENDED that there are no press opportunities from this meeting.