

## **MINUTES OF THE FINANCE AND GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE HELD ON 27TH NOVEMBER, 2018**

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

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

*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 30<sup>TH</sup> OCTOBER, 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 8 – NOVEMBER 2018/19**

#### **a) Expenditure – November 2018**

RECOMMENDED:

- (i) that all payments in Paysheet Number 8 – 2018/19 be approved, it being noted that the direct debits, Bacs, Online and Debit Card payments including Imprest expenditure amount to £120,040.96 being the total sum authorised under this Paysheet;

A Member questioned whether the Town Council receives a discount from Arco. The Finance Officer stated that she would clarify this at the next meeting although she felt that the Town Council did receive a discount. Another Member stated that the Town Council should be receiving discounts from all suppliers and this should be investigated.

- (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 £346.04 for Civic Expenditure and authority be granted for this to be signed by the Chairman and Responsible Financial Officer.

**b) Income – November 2018**

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

**c) Bank Balances – November 2018**

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

**4. APPLICATIONS FOR GRANTS**

**a) Alzheimer's Society – Christmas Gift**

A Member noted that this was a national charity rather than a local charity and if the donation was to be paid to the Seaham branch then he would have gladly agreed to pay the donation, however the Town Council have always turned down national societies. There should be an assurance that any money donated should only be spent in Seaham and this should be added to the proforma.

A Member questioned whether there was any money left in the budget as this had all gone to one application. Another Member stated that there was nothing specifically for this but the Council have a discretion and once the new policy is in place hopefully the grants budget will not be exceeded in the future.

RECOMMENDED that a grant donation is not paid to the Alzheimer's Society.

**5. MAYORAL EXPENDITURE POLICY**

It was noted that three Members had met and agreed the content of the policy. The policy confirms the policies which Seaham Town Council have followed for many years. There is a specific request for the Mayor to record expenditure and to keep receipts.

A Member stated that a meeting of the Mayors Advisory Sub-Committee had recently taken place and the Mayor and Deputy Mayor were made Chair and Vice-Chair of the meeting. The Member stated that the Mayor has never taken the position of Chair in the past. Another Member stated that the purpose of the Sub-Committee is for the Members to advise the Mayor and this takes the onus away from the Mayor. The Mayor should not be advising herself.

A Member stated that she felt the Town Council had a policy that the Mayor could not Chair any meeting other than Full Council. Another Member stated that the

Council adopted this policy 35 years ago but there is no law to say the Mayor cannot Chair a meeting. The roles of the Mayor and Deputy Mayor are non-political so have never been a Chair or Vice-Chair to keep neutrality. There is nothing statute to stop the Mayor and Deputy Mayor from being Chairs but this is the Town Council's own policy.

A Member stated that the Sub-Committee was set up many years ago to offer advice to the Mayor on potentially sensitive issues and for the Mayor to seek advice from other Members. The Member noted that this issue may need to be revisited at a future meeting.

A Member questioned that the Sub-Committee is there to provide a level of scrutiny how can the Mayor and Deputy Mayor scrutinise themselves. Another Member stated that the Mayor and Deputy Mayor are supposed to be independent and from a scrutiny point of view they should have removed themselves from this and they shouldn't Chair or Vice-Chair on meetings that are advising them. This item should be considered and produced in the new Standing Orders and could also be added to the Mayoral Expenditure Policy.

RECOMMENDED that the Town Clerk refers to this issue in the new Standing Orders.

**6. RESOLUTION TO EXCLUDE THE PRESS AND PUBLIC**

RECOMMENDED that 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 1960.

**7. TOWN HALL CATERING CONTRACT**

The Chair reminded Members of the need to declare any interest prejudicial or personal due to the nature of this item.

Councillor Miss L Willis declared an interest and left the room.

A Chair stated the Members had been furnished with detailed reports which contained the interviews held with both tenderers. The Working Party took an extensive review of both tenderers and Members agreed that Ramside Event Catering offered the Town Council the best value.

It was noted that there was set criteria for both tenderers regarding their financial records. A Member stated that when the Town Council looked for an interim contractor earlier this year the Town Council had required the contractor to be able to give 5 years of trading accounts to prove their financial viability. The same question was raised again to both tenderers to see if they could provide financial accounts. Divine Catering had only been trading for 18 months and there was only a limited amount of net profit. Another Member stated that one Member of the Working Party had voted against Ramside Event Catering and he didn't understand this as Divine Catering did not meet the criteria.

A Member stated that the Working Party would have preferred a Seaham based contractor but unfortunately they did not meet the criteria set and the representative from Divine Catering repeatedly stated in their interview that the company was just starting off.

RECOMMENDED that the Town Hall Catering contract be awarded to Ramside Event Catering.

**8. SEAHAM TOWN HALL BOOKINGS – UPDATE**

Members were given a schedule of Town Hall bookings which have taken place since January 2018. The Deputy Town Clerk stated that this was to show Members how well the Town Hall has been booked over the last 11 months and that the Town Hall staff have done well to keep things going.

It was noted that there had been a substantial increase in bookings in the last few weeks and the Town Hall is often busy during the day and it was hoped that the bookings will keep increasing over the coming months.

RECOMMENDED that Members note the information.

**9. PRESS OPPORTUNITIES**

RECOMMENDED that there are no press opportunities from this meeting.