

## **MINUTES OF THE FINANCE AND GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE HELD ON 12th JANUARY, 2021**

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

Apologies: S P Colborn, K Shaw.

Officers: Paul Fletcher (Deputy Town Clerk)  
Mrs J Knight (Finance Officer),  
Miss A Rountree (Minute Taker).

*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.*

### **F01/21 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. Such interests must be submitted to the Town Clerk prior to the meeting.

### **F02/21 ACCEPTANCE OF AMENDMENT**

RECOMMENDED that Members accept the amendment to the standing orders to incorporate the new regulations from the Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meetings (England and Wales) Regulations 2020, to conduct virtual Council meetings.

### **F03/21 PAYSHEET NUMBER 9 – DECEMBER 2020**

RECOMMENDED that:

- (i) Paysheet 9-December 20 the expenditure being £94,017.44 was noted and Members endorsed the action taken.
- (ii) Members note the income received into the Councils bank account.
- (iii) Members note the information provided regarding the bank balances held by the Council at the month end.

### **F04/21 THE PRECEPT**

Pursuant to the Budget Sub-Committee meetings held in November and December Members felt that it was not appropriate to increase the precept for next years budget due to the current pandemic.

RECOMMENDED that Members approve a 0% precept increase.

**F05/21**      **BUDGET SUB-COMMITTEE MINUTES**

RECOMMENDED that Members note the information provided.

**F06/21**      **REVISED BUDGET AND PROPOSED BUDGET FOR 2021/22**

RECOMMENDED that Members approve the revised budget and the 2021/22 budget.

**F07/21**      **CAFÉ AGREEMENT – UPDATE**

The Deputy Town Clerk noted that the lease for the café had been signed by the tenant, however this was not finished until the side letter which was sent to the tenant to agree utilities is returned from the tenant. The Deputy Town Clerk noted that the Town Councils Solicitor and himself had both been unable to contact the tenant since before Christmas. Members discussed the situation and requested that a further letter is sent from the Town Council's Solicitor requesting a response from the tenant.

RECOMMENDED that:

- (i) The Deputy Town Clerk liaises with the Town Councils Solicitor to write directly to the tenant regarding the utilities.
- (ii) This item is brought back to a future closed meeting to update Members on the current situation.

**F08/21**      **UTILITIES CONSUMPTION DURING COVID**

The Finance Officer stated that staff have been round the Town Hall and the Cemetery Depot buildings to reduce the temperature of radiators to try and make a saving on the utility bills. The heating must be left on as staff are still working in the buildings when they are unable to work from home and this will also prevent any burst pipes during the winter months.

RECOMMENDED that Members note the information provided.

**F09/21**      **POLICE CRIME & VICTIM COMMISSIONERS (PCVC) PROPOSED 2021/22 PRECEPT INCREASE**

Members discussed the proposed new central custody suite at Sedgefield at a cost of £21m and noted the concern that this would tie Police Officers up who had to travel between Seaham and Sedgefield Custody Suite. Members agreed that they would like an update from the Police on this matter and the Deputy Town Clerk should write to the Police Crime Commissioner for further information and possibly invite them to attend a zoom meeting to update Members.

RECOMMENDED that:

- (i) The Deputy Town Clerk writes to the Police Crime Commissioner requesting an update regarding the proposed new custody suite at Sedgefield.
- (ii) The Deputy Town Clerk invites the Police Crime Commissioner to attend a Seaham Town Council zoom meeting to update Members.

**F10/21**      **SEAHAM FOODBANKS**

The Deputy Town Clerk requested if Members would consider approving further funding for the foodbanks if the Finance Officer could allocate some further funds. The Deputy Town Clerk stated that he had been in a meeting with Seaham Youth Centre Foodbank last week and they had noted that they were in need of further funding. Members agreed that Officers should contact all the foodbanks to discuss this matter then bring it back to Members.

RECOMMENDED that:

- (i) The Finance Officer identifies if there is any further funding available within the Councils budget.
- (ii) Officers to contact the local foodbanks for an update on their current situation.

**F11/21**      **TABLETS FOR SCHOOLS**

A Member had suggested that the Town Council could offer support to local schools for children who are home schooling due to the current pandemic and in need of digital equipment to continue their studies.

Members discussed this item and agreed that Officers should contact the local schools to see what the requirements of each school are.

RECOMMENDED that Officers contact each school to identify the need for digital equipment.

**F12/21**      **VACCINATION CENTRE**

A Member questioned whether Members would consider the Town Hall as a possible vaccination centre if the need arises. Members agreed that the Deputy Town Clerk should contact the relevant people to offer the Town Hall if it was deemed suitable.

RECOMMENDED that the Deputy Town Clerk contacts the relevant people to offer the Town Hall as a possible vaccination centre.

**F13/21**

**PRESS OPPORTUNITIES**

RECOMMENDED that there were no press opportunities arising from this meeting.