



Town Hall | 61 Newland Street | Witham | CM8 2FE
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MINUTES

Meeting of: **Policy & Resources Committee**

Date: **Monday 14th June 2021**

Present: Councillors

M.	Lager	(Chairman)
R.	Williams	(Vice Chairman)
S.	Ager	
P.	Barlow	
J.	Goodman	
C.	Jay	
T.	Pleasance	
M.	Weeks	
J.	Sheehy	(Town Clerk)
N.	Smith	(Deputy Town Clerk)
G.	Kennedy	(Committee Clerk)

1. **APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor K. Atwill due to travel abroad.

RESOLVED That the apologies for absence be received and agreed.

2. **MINUTES**

RESOLVED That the Minutes of the Policy & Resources Committee held 24th February 2020 be confirmed as a true record and signed by the Chairman.

3. **INTERESTS**

No interests were received.

4. **QUESTIONS AND STATEMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC**

No member of the press or public were present

5. TOWN CLERK'S REPORT

The Town Clerk raised the mechanism for the Town Clerk's report to make it a productive item. He suggested that a precis of staff meetings could give insight into work currently being undertaken and proposed that a new format be provided to the Full Council going forwards. The suggestion was made that for Full Council Meetings details of correspondence received could be included along with progress of business.

The Town Clerk explained that in light of the Government's announcement not to ease covid restrictions, it would be necessary to consider how to hold the next Full Council Meeting.

A discussion took place considering options to hold the Meeting in the Council Chamber, elsewhere, video link or to go outside. Members were mindful that a risk assessment would be required if the Meeting was held in the Council Chamber and participants might need to be limited. The suggestion was made that live streaming Council Meetings on YouTube should be considered in the future.

RESOLVED That a face-to-face Full Town Council Meeting be held on 28th June 2021 in the Town Hall subject to a risk assessment to ensure compliance with covid restrictions.

6. MEMBERS' ATTENDANCE AT MEETINGS

Details of Members' attendance at Meetings were received.

RESOLVED That the details be received and noted.

7. COMPLAINTS POLICY SUMMARY RECOMMENDATIONS

The revised Public Complaints Procedure and review notes were received.

Members agreed that anonymous complaints would not be entertained and that a cross reference should be made to the Whistleblowing Policy which is a separate issue.

RESOLVED That the Public Complaints Procedure be received and adopted subject to anonymous complaints not being entertained and a reference to the Whistleblowing Policy being a separate issue.

8. PRESS AND MEDIA POLICY

The revised Press and Media Policy was received.

The suggestion was made that Chairmen should be more proactive and give the Town Clerk draft press releases on Town Council achievements/activities.

RESOLVED That the Press and Media Policy be received and agreed.

9. BODY WORN CAMERA POLICY

The Body Worn Camera Policy was received.

RESOLVED That the Body Worn Camera Policy be received and agreed.

10. DEATH OF A SENIOR NATIONAL FIGURE PROTOCOL

The protocol on the Death of a Senior National Figure was received.

RESOLVED That the protocol on the Death of a Senior National Figure be received and agreed.

11. WALDBRÖL VISIT

Members discussed the official visit to Waldbröl, noting that it was the 35th anniversary of the two towns twinning and financial arrangements.

Members agreed that the Town Mayor should attend the event, with transport and accommodation costs being met by Town Council. Suitable modest gifts relating to Witham should be provided and the Town Mayor be made aware that a speech would need to be given.

RESOLVED That the Town Mayor should make an official visit to Waldbröl with appropriate expenses defrayed by Town Council.

12. COVID 19 GRANT

Members were asked to discuss possible schemes to use the Government's Covid 19 Grant.

Members were unaware of the grant totalling £15,143.00 and were disappointed that the District Council had not made the Town Council aware of the grant sooner. The restart grant was to assist in covering lost income from the closure of the Information Centre and loss of hall hire. Members suggested that the grant should be for the community with part used for events and the remainder towards improvements in James Cooke Wood.

RESOLVED That £10,000 of the Government's Covid 19 Grant be used for James Cooke Wood improvements and the remainder go into the Events' budget.

13. FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

(a) BANK RECONCILIATION

The Bank Reconciliations to 30th April 2021 were received.

RESOLVED That the Bank Reconciliation to 30th April 2021 be received, agreed and signed by the Chairman.

(b) SCHEDULE OF RECEIPTS AND PAYMENTS

The Schedule of Receipts and Payments to 30th April 2021 were received.

RESOLVED That the Schedule of Receipts to 31st March 2021 totalling £11,259.71 and to 30th April 2021 totalling £371,205.89; and the Schedule of Payments to 31st March 2021 totalling £68,432.86 and to 30th April 2021 totalling £68,761.24 be received, agreed and signed by the Chairman.

(c) **BUDGET STATEMENTS AND EARMARKED RESERVES**

The Budget Statements for the year end 2020 – 2021 and to 30th April 2021, and the earmarked reserves were received.

Members discussed the earmarked reserves and whether it would be appropriate for some of the smaller budget lines to be removed. It was considered that the reserves for improvements to Whetmead would be better utilised for the James Cooke Wood project. The reserves for Puppet Festival and Community Day could be removed whilst it was important to build up funds for CCTV, Elections and Equipment Replacement.

RESOLVED That the Town Clerk investigates figures and projections for earmarked reserves to make a full proposal.

RESOLVED That the Budget Statements for the year end 2020 – 2021 and to 30th April 2021, and the earmarked reserves be received, agreed and signed by the Chairman.

14. **FINANCE REPORTING**

A report on finance reporting was received.

The Chairman suggested that it would be useful to be provided with a regular cash flow report detailing areas of underspend. It was considered that as the software was unable to provide such a report it would be time consuming to prepare. The suggestion was made that the Town Clerk's report could provide the requested information.

RESOLVED That the report be received and the Town Clerk's report be a vehicle for detailing projections.

15. **GENERAL RESERVE REVIEW**

Members were asked to review balances held against the Council's Treasury & Investment Policy and to consider any deposits or movements to be made.

It was recognised that the Town Council had a policy for secure investments which consequently had low returns. Members spoke about other ethical investments which could be investigated. The suggestion was also made that rather than specify that the current account balance should be maintained at approximately 50% of the annual precept, a range of 40 to 75% would give more flexibility.

RESOLVED That the Town Clerk be asked to investigate options in regard to balances and if necessary the Council's Treasury & Investment Policy be reviewed.

16. **QUALITY COUNCIL REVIEW**

A report was received and Members asked to consider applying for Quality Council at this time and Quality Gold next year after a three year business plan and corresponding financial forecast was prepared.

Members agreed that this was a good way forward.

RESOLVED That the Town Council applies for Quality Council at this time and for Quality Gold next year.

17. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

RESOLVED That under the Public Bodies (Admissions to Meetings) Act 1960, the press and public be excluded from the Meeting for the consideration of the remaining items of business on the grounds they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information falling within Schedule 12A (Section 3 and 5) of the Local Government Act 1972.

18. LAND ENQUIRY

A report was received.

RESOLVED That the report be received and noted.

There being no further business the Chairman closed the Meeting at 9.16 p.m.

Councillor M. Lager
Chairman

JS/GK/16.6.2021