



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

Meeting of: **Policy and Resources Committee**

Date: **Tuesday, 19th March 2024**

Place: **Town Hall, Newland Street, Witham, CM8 2FE**

Present: Councillors

P.	Barlow	(Chairman)
P.	Heath	(Vice Chairman)
J.M.	Coleman	
B.	Fleet	
T.	Hewitt	
J.	Martin	
R.	Playle	
R.	Ramage	
B.	Taylor	

Also in attendance: Cllr

J.C.	Coleman	
N.	Smith	(Town Clerk)
G.	Kennedy	(Committee Clerk)
J.	Reeves	(Finance Assistant)

And one member of the public.

40. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor L. Barlow.

RESOLVED That the apologies be received and approved.

41. **MINUTES**

RESOLVED That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Policy and Resources Committee held 12th December 2023 be confirmed as a true record and signed by the Chairman.

42. **INTERESTS**

No interests were declared at this time but at Minute 49(b) – Schedule of Receipts and Payments, Councillor Martin declared a non-pecuniary interest as she had given a donation to the Town Mayor's charity.

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

The member of the public explained that he had been a resident in Witham since 2009 and wanted to ask about his recent council tax bill. He said that the Town Council element had risen by 15.2%. He referred to the budget which had increased by 6.8% and the need to bring the reserves back up to their recent level. He was concerned about the added pressure that was being put on residents at this time of economic crisis.

Members noted his concerns and stated that it had been a struggle to set the budget as earmarked reserves needed to be replenished. It was legally necessary to have reserves and they would have been earning interest if they had not been used.

The Chairman thanked the member of the public for attending the Meeting and suggested that he might like to attend the Annual Town Meeting on 8th April 2024 at the Royal British Legion Hall at 7 p.m.

Councillor Taylor was absent from the Council Chamber for a few minutes whilst this item was discussed.

Councillor Heath left the Council Chamber at this point.

44. **TOWN CLERK'S REPORT**

The Town Clerk's report on matters was received.

RESOLVED That the report be received and noted.

45. **TOWN COUNCIL POLICIES**

Members were asked to review the following policies –

(a) **Anonymous Communications**

The Anonymous Communications Policy was received.

RESOLVED That the Anonymous Communications Policy be agreed.

(b) **Data and Document Retention**

The Data and Document Retention Policy was received.

The Town Clerk explained that CCTV footage was kept for 30 days and the police were aware of the time limit. Unsuccessful job applications would be kept for six months.

RESOLVED That the Data and Document Retention Policy be agreed.

(c) **Equality Policy**

The Equality Policy was received.

The Town Clerk explained that she had changed the wording in parts and it would be reviewed in two years.

RESOLVED That the amended Equality Policy be agreed.

(d) Extended Procurement Process Policy

The Extended Procurement Process Policy was received.

RESOLVED That the Extended Procurement Process Policy be agreed.

(e) Freedom of Information

The Freedom of Information Policy was received.

RESOLVED That the Freedom of Information Policy be agreed.

(f) Press and Media Policy

The amended Press and Media Policy was received.

It was agreed that Members should be ‘advised’ to contact the Town Clerk if contacted for a comment. Members agreed that they should not make inappropriate remarks and should be mindful not to bring the Council or other Members into disrepute.

RESOLVED That the amendments be agreed with the addition in paragraph 3.5 ‘...by the media for comment were advised to first contact the Town Clerk.’

(g) General Privacy Notice

The General Privacy Notice was received.

RESOLVED That the General Privacy Notice be agreed.

(h) Public Complaints Procedure

The Public Complaints Procedure was received.

The Town Clerk explained that as there was now a Vexatious Complaints Procedure, this section had been removed but with a reference made to the new policy.

RESOLVED That the amended Public Complaints Procedure be agreed.

(i) Publication Scheme

The amended Publication Scheme was received.

The Town Clerk explained that as the Town Council no longer had a policy statement relating to the Race Relations (Amendment) Act this sentence had been removed as this issue was covered by the Equalities Act. Members discussed whether there should be such a statement but agreed to accept the amendment.

RESOLVED That the amended Publication Scheme be agreed.

(j) **Registration of Gifts and Hospitality Policy**

The Registration of Gifts and Hospitality Policy was received.

RESOLVED That the Registration of Gifts and Hospitality Policy be agreed.

(k) **Training Policy**

The amended Training Policy was received.

The Town Clerk explained that she had named the course that new clerks take.

RESOLVED That the amended Training Policy be agreed.

46. **FIXED ASSET AND ASSET VALUATION POLICY**

The Fixed Asset and Asset Valuation Policy was received.

The Town Clerk explained that this was a new policy which needed to be put in place.

RESOLVED That the Fixed Asset and Asset Valuation Policy be agreed and reviewed annually.

47. **INCREASE IN CREDIT CARD LIMIT**

A report to increase the credit card limit to £6,000 was received.

Members agreed that due to increased costs that the credit card limit should be increased to £6,000.

RESOLVED That the credit card limit should rise to £6,000.

48. **PAYMENTS REQUIRING THREE SIGNATURES**

A report regarding the suggestion to increase the sum requiring three signatures to £5,000 was received.

Members agreed to increase the sum requiring three signatures.

RESOLVED That the sum requiring three signatures be increased to £5,000.

49. **FINANCIAL STATEMENTS**

(a) **BANK RECONCILIATION**

The Bank Reconciliations to 31st January 2024 were received.

RESOLVED That the Bank Reconciliations to 31st January 2024 were received, approved and signed by the Chairman.

(b) **SCHEDULE OF RECEIPTS AND PAYMENTS**

The Schedule of Receipts and Payments to 31st January 2024 were received.

Councillor Martin declared a non-pecuniary interest as she had given a donation to the Town Mayor's Charity.

RESOLVED That the Schedule of Receipts for the period from 1st November 2023 to 31st January 2024 from the 95 Day Account totalling £192,172.74, from the Lloyds Bank Account totalling £194,790.00, from the Unity Trust Account totalling £562,986.70, from the Unity Trust Instant Access totalling £3,334.85 and from Petty Cash totalling £200.00; and the Schedule of Payments for the period from 1st November 2023 to 31st January 2024 from the 95 Day Notice Account totalling £380,000.00, from the Lloyds Bank Account totalling £5,515.07, from the Unity Trust Instant Account totalling £340,000.00, from the Unity Trust Account totalling £504,767.11 and from Petty Cash totalling £76.99 be received, approved and signed by the Chairman.

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

The Budget Statements and Earmarked Reserves to 31st January 2024 were received.

RESOLVED That the Budget Statements and Earmarked Reserves to 31st January 2024 be received, approved and signed by the Chairman.

There being no further business the Chairman closed the Meeting at 8.34 p.m.

Councillor P. Barlow
Chairman

NS/GK/25.3.2023