

LEIGHTON-LINSLADE TOWN COUNCIL
MINUTES OF POLICY & FINANCE COMMITTEE

MONDAY, 20 JULY 2020 AT 7.30 PM

Present: Councillors S Jones (Chair)
 C Palmer
 R Berry
 A Dodwell
 J M Freeman
 D Bowater
 S Owen
 T Morris
 G Perham
 R Goodchild
 D Scott

Also in attendance: M Saccoccio, Town Clerk
 C Cummins, Finance Officer
 S Sandiford, Head of Democratic and Central
 Services
 M Jahn, Committee Officer
 I Haynes, Head of Grounds and Environmental
 Services
 S Wilbur, Microshade Business Consultants Ltd
 – left at 20:10
 Cllr K Cursons – left at 20:32
 Cllr V Harvey
 Cllr P Snelling
 Cllr C Hegley, Central Bedfordshire Council

Members of the public: 0

119/PF APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

No apologies for absence had been received.

120/PF DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Members were asked to declare any interests, including the nature of those interests, which they had in any of the items under consideration at this meeting.

Councillor C Palmer declared a personal interest as a member of Friends of Leighton-Linslade in Bloom and Friends of Linslade Woods.

Councillor M Freeman declared a personal interest as a member of the Leighton-Linslade Music Centre Trust and Carnival Committee.

Councillor K Cursons declared a personal interest as a member of the Carnival Committee.

121/PF **QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC (3 minutes per person; maximum 15 minutes)**

There were no questions from the public.

122/PF **MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

The Committee received the minutes of the Policy and Finance Committee meeting held on 24 February 2020 for consideration.

Minute ref 105/PF Minutes of the Previous Meeting: a question was raised regarding whether a copy of the presentation made by Anglian Water had been received and forwarded to Councillors. It was confirmed it had been made available to Councillors in February.

Minutes ref 105/PF Minutes of the Previous Meeting: Community Governance Review. Members agreed the Eastern Development and boundary review was a very important issue and the Town Council would focus on the boundary review element in the first instance in collaboration with Central Bedfordshire Council. The Council was also due a presentation regarding S106 developer monies arising from housing growth.

Minute ref 106/PF Inspiring Music 'Time Machine' Cross Generational Project. Due to COVID-19 it was anticipated this project would progress in September 2020 when schools returned, although the format and scope might differ from the original brief to protect the safety of those involved.

Minute ref 108/PF Young People's Projects: it was confirmed that this project would be progressed in the Autumn term with further consultations taking place with young people to gather a greater number of views.

Minute ref 113/PF Draft Volunteer Policy: this had been deferred due to COVID-19 and resources available but would come back to committee in the Autumn 2020.

Minute reference 114/.PF Customer Service Strategy: this had been deferred with closure of the Town Council offices due to COVID-19. The timescale for further work would depend upon timescales for return to the office and for a greater return to "normality", possibly in Spring 2021.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Policy and Finance Committee meeting held on 24 February 2020 be approved as a correct record and were signed accordingly.

123/PF **MARCH, APRIL, MAY AND JUNE PAYMENTS 2020**

The Committee received schedules of payments for March, April, May and June 2020, which had previously been approved for payment by the Town Clerk and countersigned by two signatories. There were no anomalies or matters of concern to draw to the attention of the Committee. Some specific queries had been asked in advance of the meeting and were answered.

The schedule for March 2020 dated 9 April 2020 included BACS payments amounting to £134,287.41 (page numbers 2729-2737) including White House petty cash amounting to £53.75 and TACTIC £36.69.

The monthly salaries listing for March 2020 amounting to £92,790.49 gross was received. A cash book report for March 2020, including details of all direct debit payments, was also received.

The schedule for April 2020 dated 14 May 2020 included BACS payments amounting to £133,057.80 (page numbers 2739-2745).

The monthly salaries listing for April 2020 amounting to £99,233.32 gross was received. A cash book report for April 2020, including details of all direct debit payments, was also received.

The schedule for May 2020 dated 28 May 2020 included BACS payments amounting to £91,990.27 (page numbers 2746-2759).

The monthly salaries listing for May 2020 amounting to £97,547.00 gross was received. A cash book report for May 2020, including details of all direct debit payments, was also received.

The schedule for June 2020 dated 9 July 2020 included BACS payments amounting to £151,070.97 (page numbers 2769-2777).

The monthly salaries listing for June 2020 amounting to £96,048.94 gross was received. A cash book report for June 2020, including details of all direct debit payments, was also received.

Due to the four-month office closure arising from the COVID-19 pandemic, there were no cheque payments or petty cash transactions to report.

RESOLVED to note the reports.

124/PF **QUARTERLY BUDGET MONITORING REPORT**

The Committee received a quarterly budget monitoring report for the period 1 April – 30 June 2020.

The realities of COVID-19 would be starting to show with some budgets untouched and others being overextended. Members agreed that the impact would become clear as the year progressed and information would be relayed to Councillors as early as possible regarding budgets.

RESOLVED to note the report.

125/PF INTERNAL AUDIT REPORT

The Committee received the final internal audit report for 2019-2020 and noted that no issues had been identified, with a robust and thorough report. Thanks were given to officers for this excellent audit report.

RESOLVED to note the report.

126/PF ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT

The Committee received and considered a report regarding governance. This outlined the review of key documents including Standing Orders, Financial Regulations and the Risk Management and Internal Control Statement. A number of minor amendments were proposed for consideration by Committee.

A question was raised regarding the Councillors section and how the role of the Councillor could be reviewed to increase role satisfaction. It was agreed that a survey could be undertaken with elected Members to seek their feedback.

RESOLVED to:

- (i) note the report.**
- (ii) endorse minor amendments to the Council's Risk Management and Internal Control Statement.**

RECOMMENDED to Council to approve two minor amendments to Standing Orders, as last adopted on 29 April 2019, as recommended by NALC and as set out below:

17 d ii – currently:

As soon as practicable after the financial year end at 31 March, the RFO shall provide to the Council the accounting statements for the year in the form of Section 1 of the annual governance and accountability return, as required by proper practices, for consideration and approval.

Recommended to Replace “Section 1” with “Section 2”

18 e – currently:

A public contract regulated by the Public Contracts Regulations 2015 with an estimated value in excess of £25,000 but less than the relevant thresholds in standing order 18(h) is subject to Regulations 109-114 of the Public Contracts Regulations 2015 which include a requirement on the council to advertise the contract opportunity on the Contracts Finder website regardless of what other means it uses to advertise the opportunity.

Recommended to add at the end: “unless it proposes to use an existing list of

preferred suppliers (“framework agreement”).

RECOMMENDED to Council that proposed amendments to Financial Regulations be approved as set out in the attached Appendix.

The Committee was asked to consider recommending to Council approval of Section 1 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return, the annual governance statement.

RECOMMENDED to Council to approve Section 1 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Statement for 2019-2020.

127/PF **STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS**

The Committee received the Statement of Accounts for 2019-2020 and noted the creation of a COVID Support Fund earmarked reserve, derived from revenue budget underspend, savings and income, such as the reduction in business rates.

RESOLVED to receive the final accounts for the year ended 31 March 2020.

The Committee was asked to consider recommending approval to Council of the accounting statements for the year ended 31 March 2020 (Section 2 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return).

RECOMMENDED to Council to approve the accounting statements for the year ended 31 March 2020 (Section 2 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return).

128/PF **FINANCIAL BANKING ARRANGEMENTS**

The Committee received and considered a report regarding operational arrangements for day to day banking.

RESOLVED:

- (a) To transfer the annual precept (which is paid in two instalments, first in April 2020 and second in September 2020) from the NatWest Business Reserve Account to the existing Nationwide Instant Access Saver Account currently paying 0.05%.**
- (b) To endorse that funds be drawn down from the Nationwide Instant Access Saver Account and transferred to the NatWest Business Reserve Account to fund the Monthly expenditure, as and when required throughout the year.**
- (c) That the arrangements above be reviewed upon receipt of the first tranche of the precept for 2021/22.**

129/PF **ANNUAL REPORT**

The Committee received the draft Town Council Annual Report 2019-2020. The report followed the more abbreviated format introduced in 2018-2019 and contained key highlights from the year.

A number of comments were made including some minor grammatical errors and the suggestion of additional content in the report. Members agreed the report should be deferred until such time as amendments could be made. COVID related content would be included in the annual report for 2020-21.

RESOLVED to defer this item until amendments could be made to the draft Annual Report for 2019-20.

130/PF **BUDGET SETTING TIMELINE 2021-22**

The Committee received and considered a report with a proposed timescale for the 2021-2022 budget setting process.

A question was raised whether project budgets should be more detailed with more formal estimates submitted to Committees. Project spend was provided for within the Council's approved five year financial plan, with more detailed project information and proposed expenditure approved by the standing committees at the appropriate time.

RESOLVED to note the proposed timetable for the 2021-2022 budget setting process.

131/PF **SUB COMMITTEE MINUTES**

The Committee received the draft minutes of the Personnel Sub-Committee held on the 6 July 2020

Minute ref 34/PR Compassionate and Special Leave Procedure –

RECOMMENDED to Council approval of the revised section 7 of the Compassionate and Special Leave Procedure (attached).

Minute ref 35/PR Recruitment Policy –

RECOMMENDED to Council approval of the Recruitment Policy (attached).

Minute ref 38/PR – Staffing Matters: the brief nature of minutes for items raised under exclusion of the public was raised, but it was noted that it was not possible to create additional confidential minutes.

RESOLVED to receive the draft minutes of the Personnel Sub-Committee held on 6 July 2020.

The Committee received the draft minutes of the Community Safety Sub Committee held on 13 July 2020.

RESOLVED to receive the draft minutes of the Community Safety Sub Committee held on the 13 July 2020.

132/PF COMMITTEE DECISIONS AND WORK PLAN

- (a) The Committee received and noted the decisions made by the Policy and Finance Committee between 20 March – 30 June 2020 in accordance with the decision-making process agreed by Council on 20 March 2020.

RESOLVED to note the information.

- (b) The Committee received and considered the Committee Work Plan for 2020-21 including amendments as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic

RESOLVED to note the report.

133/PF EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC

RESOLVED that, under the Public Bodies (Admissions to Meetings) Act 1960, the public be excluded on the grounds of the confidential nature of the business about to be transacted which involves the likely disclosure of exempt information. The public and press to withdraw from the meeting during consideration of detailed discussion regarding redeployable CCTV cameras.

134/PF REDEPLOYABLE CCTV CAMERAS

The Committee received and considered a report to seek member endorsement in respects of CCTV airtime, repair and warranty renewal.

A point was made regarding the headings on the table included in the report. The third column to be amended to 'costs per device per tariff'.

RESOLVED to renew the air-time contract for 4 years at a cost of £4,600 which is to be met from Community Safety Budget.

The meeting closed at 2050 hours.

I HEREBY CONFIRM THAT THE FOREGOING IS A CORRECT AND ACCURATE RECORD OF THE MEETING HELD ON MONDAY, 20 JULY 2020.

Chair

21 SEPTEMBER 2020