

LEIGHTON-LINSLADE TOWN COUNCIL
MINUTES OF POLICY & FINANCE COMMITTEE

MONDAY, 21 JUNE 2021 AT 7.30 PM

Present: Councillors S Jones (Chair)
 A Dodwell (Vice-Chair)
 C Palmer
 R Berry
 T Morris
 G Perham
 D Scott
 M Freeman
 R Goodchild
 F Kharawala
 P Snelling (substituting for S Owen)

Also in attendance: I Haynes, Head of Grounds and Environmental Services
 M Saccoccio, Town Clerk
 S Sandiford, Head of Democratic and Central Services
 M Jahn, Committee Officer
 Cllr V Harvey

Members of the public: 0

235/PF APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence had been received from Councillor Owen (substituted by Councillor P Snelling).

236/PF DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Palmer declared a personal interest as a member of Friends of Leighton-Linslade in Bloom (referenced in the payments and budget monitoring reports).

No pecuniary interests were declared and no dispensations were requested.

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

There were no questions from the public.

238/PF MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

(a) The Committee received the minutes of the Policy & Finance Committee Meeting held 19 April 2021.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Policy & Finance Committee held on the 19 April 2021 be approved as a correct record and were signed accordingly.

(b) Any updates needed would be covered in the meeting.

239/PF APRIL & MAY PAYMENTS 2021

The Committee received schedules of payments for April 2021 and May 2021 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.

The schedule for April 2021 dated 26 April 2021 included BACS payments amounting to £223,405.92 (page numbers 2878-2894) including petty cash payments to TACTIC of £85.10 and The Whitehouse of £124.28. The monthly salaries listing for April 2021 amounting to £93,387.62 gross was received. A cash book report for April 2021, including details of all direct debit payments, was also received.

The schedule for May 2021 dated 26 May 2021 included BACS payments amounting to £141,302.57 (page numbers 2896-2907). The monthly salaries listing for May 2021 amounting to £94,021.51 gross was received. A cash book report for May 2021, including details of all direct debit payments, was also received.

RESOLVED to receive the schedules of payments for April and May 2021, which had been approved for payment by the Town Clerk and two councillor signatories.

240/PF TWELVE MONTH BUDGET MONITORING REPORT

The Committee received the twelve-month budget monitoring report for the period April 2020 – 31 March 2021. No queries were raised by Committee. Thanks were given to colleagues for their consistent support to the Town Council during a difficult period. Members were informed the Council was in a reasonably strong position going forward and expenditure had been reduced to counteract the fall in income during 2020-21 as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic.

A question was raised whether any refunds or discounts had been given when services were not required due to closures during the pandemic lockdown. Some contracts had continued (e.g. cleaning of public conveniences) but others had been paused or delayed to effect savings during closure periods (e.g. pavilions cleaning, confidential shredding).

RESOLVED to note the report.

241/PF COMMITTEE OBJECTIVES AND WORK PLAN

(a) The Committee received the Committee work plan and objectives for 2021-22.

RESOLVED to note the committee work plan and objectives for 2020-21.

A question was raised regarding the Winter Salt policy due to be discussed at the September meeting and whether the Town Council was liaising with Central Bedfordshire Council on this matter. This work had not yet been started but contact would be made before the September meeting.

(b) The Committee received a request to move Tendering & Procurement to the September 2021 meeting, due to officers receiving SLCC training in July 2021. It was suggested in its place to bring forward the mid term updates to the Five Year Plan & Objectives at the July 2021 meeting.

RESOLVED to move Tendering & Procurement to the September 2021 meeting and replace with the mid-term update of the Five-Year Plan & Objectives in July 2021.

242/PF SUB COMMITTEE TERMS OF REFERENCE

The Committee received and considered whether changes were required to the Sub-Committee Terms of Reference. A minor change was made to the Grants & Awards Sub Committee, to replace Honorary Burgess award with Community Volunteer Award.

RESOLVED to replace the wording in the Grants & Awards Sub Committee from Honorary Burgess award to Community Volunteer Award.

243/PF MAKING MEETINGS ACCESSIBLE POLICY

The Committee received the new Making Meetings Accessible Policy and considered whether to recommend to Council to be endorsed. Some minor amendments were suggested one to the Meeting details section regarding choice of seats and the other for wording in the Hearing impairment section.

RECOMMENDED to Council to endorse the Town Council's Making Meetings Accessible Policy once minor amendments had been made.

244/PF INTERNAL AUDIT REPORT: FINAL UPDATE 2020-2021

The Committee received the final internal audit report for 2020-21 and noted that no issues had been identified. It was recognised that the Council was continuing to operate a sound, pro-active approach to risk management and corporate governance issues, together with the development and management of effective internal controls and procedural documentation.

The Committee expressed thanks to officers for another excellent report.

RESOLVED to note the internal audit report: final update 2020-2021.

245/PF ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT & STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS 2020-2021

(a) The Committee received a report regarding the outturn at the end of the financial year 2020-2021. Despite the impact of the pandemic on income, savings had also been made on expenditure, leaving the Council in a strong position at the end of the financial year. It was proposed that funds be moved into a new earmarked reserve for the purpose of facilities improvements to accommodate changes in working practices, Council meeting practices and to work towards changes resulting from the Equalities and Environmental ambitions adopted by the Council.

RESOLVED to note the report.

RECOMMENDED to Council:

(i) **to endorse the creation of a Facilities Improvements Earmarked Reserve of £137,754 for the purposes of making town council facilities more resilient in the wake of the pandemic and where considered appropriate to consider introducing measures to meet the town council's environmental ambitions.**

(ii) **To agree to the draw down of a maximum of £3,000 from the Facilities Improvements Earmarked Reserve to enable any Covid compliant changes to be made when considered appropriate and necessary to do so.**

(b) The Committee received and considered Section 1 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return which had been presented as part of the annual governance review to Committee on 19 April 2021.

RECOMMENDED to Council that Section 1 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (the Annual Governance Statement) for the year ended 31 March 2021 be approved and signed.

(c) The Committee received Section 2 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return for the year ended 31 March 2021 and recommended to Council for approval.

RECOMMENDED to Council that Section 2 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (the Annual Governance Statement) for the year ended 31 March 2021 be approved and signed.

246/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: Planning Consultant Report.

247/PF PLANNING CONSULTANT REPORT

The Committee received and considered a report commissioned in respect of developing a planning led policy and discussed what next steps should be taken following the report. Members agreed more time was needed to consider the information contained in the report and the implications for whichever course of action was determined.

It was agreed to make available additional funding for further work to inform a detailed report to the September meeting of the Committee on the advantages and disadvantages, plus the resourcing implications and costs of the recommended course of action. It was anticipated that at the September meeting, further discussion would result in recommendation/s to the September Council meeting.

RESOLVED to approve expenditure of up to £2,500 from the Professional Fees earmarked reserve 9035/920 for the purpose of sourcing additional planning consultancy work.

RESOLVED to request a more detailed report in respect of developing a planning led policy be brought to the September meeting of the Policy and Finance Committee.

The meeting closed at 8.26 pm.

I HEREBY CONFIRM THAT THE FOREGOING IS A CORRECT AND ACCURATE RECORD OF THE MEETING HELD ON MONDAY, 21 JUNE 2021.

Chair

26 JULY 2021