

**MINUTES OF THE FINANCE STRATEGY AND MANAGEMENT
COMMITTEE MEETING, BIDDULPH TOWN COUNCIL
TUESDAY 25 APRIL 2023, 5.30PM
HELD AT BIDDULPH TOWN HALL, HIGH STREET, BIDDULPH ST8 6AR**

PRESENT:

- | | |
|-------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| • The Mayor: | • Councillor A H Hart |
| Councillor J Garvey | • Councillor K J Jackson |
| • Deputy Mayor: | • Councillor J T Jones |
| Councillor C R Perkin | • Councillor A J McLoughlin |
| • Councillor D A Hall (Chair) | • Councillor W Rogers |
| • Councillor J Davies | • Councillor N R Yates |
| • Councillor D J Hawley | |

IN ATTENDANCE:

- Mrs Sarah M Haydon – Chief Officer (Minute Taker)
- Ms Jodie Hancock – Events and Partnerships Officer
- Ms Elizabeth Norton – Finance Officer
- Mrs Angela Williams – Administration Officer
- Mrs Margaret Warman – Compliance and Governance Officer
- Councillor A Lawton

111. APOLOGIES

- Councillor C Brady
- Councillor J Salt
- Councillor K Harper

112. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

- i. Disclosable Pecuniary Interests: The Chief Officer noted that she and the Town Council team would leave the meeting at the point of discussing staff appraisals.
- ii. Other Interests: Councillor Perkin had an involvement with BASC (swimming club) and also Children First Learning Partnership.

113. MINUTES

- a) The Minutes of the Finance Strategy and Management Committee meeting held on 28 March (approved at the Town Council meeting on 11

April 2023) were **confirmed**. Moved by Jones, Seconded by Councillor Perkin.

- b) The Asset Management Working Group Notes from the meeting held on 11 April 2023 were **received**.

114. BANK MATTERS

- a) To **approve** the bank reconciliations for March 2023- all accounts (to follow); all accounts were **approved**.
- b) To **receive** the draft income and expenditure figures for 2022-23-year end (to follow), including an update on electricity provision within the Town Hall.

The Chief Officer explained that the overspend is due to the increase in energy bills. Councillor Yates expressed the requirement of sustainable energy.

Received.

115. AUDIT

To receive a verbal update following the 20 April 2023 internal control visit by Councillors Perkin and Hawley. Please note, this is the final visit for 2022-23.

Councillor Hawley tabled the report and stated that the new accounting system, Scribe, has made the accounting processes simpler to use for both transparency and accuracy. He explained that there was a recommended change relating to the Reserves Policy.

Councillor Hawley gave thanks to Mrs Warman for updating the 'How to' processes. **Received.**

- 116.** To **receive** a report in relation to pension provision (attached).
Received.

- 117.** To **receive** an update in relation to the Shared Prosperity Funding.

The Chief Officer stated that there was no update as she was still awaiting feedback. Councillor Jackson was concerned that funding bids would not be successful. **Received.**

- 118.** To **receive** an update on additional spend in relation to the Biddulph Works Together project.

The Chief Officer reported that the funding granted by the Town Council has been given to those who have requested it: Biddulph Library, Oasis Church, the Methodist Church and the Town Hall projects will continue. The Chief Officer stated that the budget had not yet been spent, but so far has enabled those who wish to carry on doing so.

The Chief Officer stated that the Biddulph Works Together group has agreed to create a brochure which includes all of the community activities that take place around the town.

It was also reported that the 93 bus will continue with its current prices and timetable.

Councillor Yates explained that his County Council fund will be supporting other community groups within the town.

119. To **receive** an update on the 2022-23 action plan (attached).
Proposed by Councillor Perkin, seconded by Councillor Yates. **Received.**

120. To **consider** applying for a RoSPA Health and Safety Award, with associated costs: <https://www.rospace.com/awards>

The Chief Officer explained that the District Council Health and Safety Manager, David Owen, has suggested that the Town Council should apply for the RoSPA Health and Safety award; the cost is £571.

Councillor Perkin questioned whether the award affects the insurance cost. Councillor Hawley questioned how long the award is held. The Chief Officer explained that the award is ongoing.

Councillor Jackson proposed that the work can be done in preparation then allow the new council to make the decision on whether to apply.

Proposed by Jackson, seconded by Councillor Jones.

The Chief Officer explained that the deadline to apply is 8 June; this would give reassurances to customers that facilities were well managed.

121. POLICIES (attached)

a) To **approve** the reviewed Complaints Procedure

Proposed by Councillor Jones, seconded by Councillor Hart. Agreed.

- b)** To **approve** the reviewed Councillor email and IT Use Guidance
Proposed by Councillor Jones, seconded by Councillor Hart. Agreed.
- c)** To **approve** the reviewed Guidance on Recording in Public Meetings
Proposed by Councillor Perkin, seconded by Councillor Hart. Agreed.
- d)** To **approve** the reviewed Pay Policy
Proposed by Councillor Perkin, seconded by Councillor Jones. Agreed.
- e)** To **approve** the reviewed Public Participation in Council Meetings
Proposed by Councillor Jones, seconded by Councillor Hart. Agreed.
- f)** To **approve** the reviewed Mayoral Handbook
Proposed by Councillor Perkin, seconded by Councillor Hart. Agreed.
- g)** To **approve** the reviewed Councillors' Handbook
Councillor Jones suggested a section that signposts to the code of conduct and standing orders for additional reading. Councillor Hawley suggested this be added on Page 22 in section 2.2. Councillor Hart agreed.
It was discussed to amend section 5.2 to 'Appropriate clothing to be worn'.
Proposed by Councillor Hawley, seconded by Councillor Jackson. Councillor Garvey voted against the amendment.
- Proposed by Councillor Jones, seconded by Councillor Hart. Agreed.
- h)** To **approve** the reviewed Tree Strategy
Proposed by Councillor Hart, seconded by Councillor Jones. Agreed.
- i)** To **approve** the revised Grants Policy (with the inclusion of cost-of-living considerations) and associated application forms.
Proposed by Councillor Jones, seconded by Councillor Hart. Agreed.

STANDING AGENDA ITEMS

122.

- a)** To **consider** disposal of any assets, in line with the Asset Management Policy and Financial Regulations
None.
- b)** To **confirm** approved suppliers as part of the Procurement Policy

The Chief Officer explained the amendment made to the process when approving contractors and stated that there will be an advert on social media to attract more local businesses.

In accordance with the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960, s1, the Council is to determine which items, if any, should be taken with the public excluded.

CONFIDENTIAL ITEMS

123. QUOTATIONS (to be tabled))

- a) To **receive** an update in relation to the provider for sanitary bins across the Town Council buildings

Following the last meeting, the Chief Officer had discovered that the PHS contract cannot be terminated for a further 18 months. This will be considered again.

Councillor Jackson questioned whether NORSE has been contacted to provide services, the Chief Officer explained that the response was that they were unable to work with the Town Council assets.

Received.

- b) To **approve** a quotation for remedial emergency lighting work

The Chief Officer tabled associated costs. It was Proposed by Councillor Hart, seconded by Councillor Jones to instruct Moorlec. **Agreed.**

- c) To **approve** a provider for lift maintenance and repair

The Chief Officer tabled three quotes from providers. Proposed by Councillor Hart, seconded by Councillor Hawley and **agreed** to use Concept Elevators.

124. To confirm that all current tenants have confirmed that they wish to continue with tenancies in 2023-24.

Councillor Yates questioned whether the energy cost are outlined in the agreements. The Chief Officer reported that no costs have been increased. Councillor McLoughlin questioned the meter arrangements at the Visitor Centre.

Councillor Hawley questioned whether there is a notice period for the tenancies. The Chief Officer explained that the larger tenants have a longer period; those renting rooms only need to give one-months notice. It was **confirmed**.

125. To **confirm** an approach to signatories on the Town Council bank account at the beginning of May 2023

The Chief Officer explained that due to the delay with Ms Norton being a signatory on the account, and with upcoming elections, the approved signatories may become an issue.

Councillor Rogers proposed that the current signatories remain until the councillors are in place; seconded by Councillor McLoughlin. **Agreed**.

126. To **agree** a tolerance in relation to 'write-offs' in relation to debt and an approach to bank errors; to be included in the Financial Regulations, which are due to be reviewed in May 2023.

The Chief Officer tabled a document, which stated: 'Where the reconciliation discrepancy is less than £5, it may not be of benefit to spend time rectifying or chasing the issue.' Also, 'where there may be discrepancies with an amount authorised and the actual figure, this may be acceptable if the sum varies by 20% or less, and no greater than £500'.

Councillor Perkin suggested it maybe necessary to write a process for 'bad debts'.

Proposed by Councillor Hart, seconded by Councillor Hawley. **Agreed**.

127. STAFFING ISSUES

To **confirm** that appraisals have been completed, and to **agree** recommendations.

Recommendations made by the Chief Officer were accepted in relation to the Town Council team.

Recommendations made by Councillors Perkin and Hall in relation to the Chief Officer's appraisal were accepted.

The meeting ended at 7.32pm.

Signed..... Date.....