

**MINUTES OF THE FINANCE STRATEGY AND MANAGEMENT
COMMITTEE MEETING, BIDDULPH TOWN COUNCIL
TUESDAY 28 MARCH 2023, 5.30PM
HELD AT BIDDULPH TOWN HALL, HIGH STREET, BIDDULPH ST8 6AR**

PRESENT:

- **The Mayor:**
- Councillor J Garvey
- Councillor J Davies
- Councillor D A Hall (Chair)
- Councillor D J Hawley
- Councillor K Harper
- Councillor J T Jones
- Councillor W Rogers
- Councillor J Salt

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
- Mr James Connolly – Biddulph Chronicle

97. APOLOGIES

- Councillor C Brady
- Councillor A H Hart (Absent)
- Councillor K J Jackson (Absent)
- Councillor A J McLoughlin
- Councillor C Perkin
- Councillor N R Yates

98. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

- i. Disclosable Pecuniary Interests: Councillor Salt Item 108.
- ii. Other Interests: None.

99. MINUTES

To the Minutes of the Finance Strategy and Management Committee meeting held on 24 January (approved at the Town Council meeting on 14 February 2023) were **confirmed**. Proposed by Councillor Hawley; seconded by Councillor Harper.

100. BANK MATTERS

- a) To **approve** the bank reconciliations for January 2023 and February 2023- all accounts

Proposed by Councillor Hawley; seconded by Councillor Harper and agreed.

- b) To **receive** an update on existing direct debit arrangements

The Chief Officer tabled a report of the direct debits currently being paid. Councillor Hawley requested a list of direct debits and who is paid by month.

Councillor Rogers questioned whether the Town Council receives a discount from Business Rates.

Councillor Jones questioned the cost of the electricity for the Visitor centre and toilets, the Chief Officer stated that she has requested a smart meter.

Councillor Davies questioned how the VAT is recorded. The Chief Officer explained that the VAT is separated within Scribe, which is the accounting software.

Proposed by Councillor Harper, seconded by Councillor Salt and agreed.

101. BUDGET

- a) To **receive** income and expenditure information to-date

The Chief Officer tabled the report. Proposed by Councillor Harper; seconded by councillor Salt and agreed.

- a) To **receive** an update on anticipated income before year-end.

The Chief Officer noted in relation to the report above that the Town Council is anticipating approximately £140k from Staffordshire Moorlands District Council (SMDC) regarding the maintenance of the Town Hall and Bus Hub, and service charge funding from partners. Proposed by Councillor Harper; seconded by Councillor Salt and agreed. This would make the figures much more acceptable.

102. AUDIT

- a) To **receive** a report following the 9 March 2023 internal control visit by Councillor Perkin

The Chief Officer noted that there were no concerns. A final visit for 2022-23 would be completed in April.

Proposed by Councillor Salt; seconded by Councillor Harper and agreed.

- b) To **consider** significant events that have occurred during 2022-23 and the Town Council's response to them

The Chief Officer tabled a word cloud of items that had impacted the spend in this financial year, the largest being the cost of living and energy bills. It was useful to reflect on the decisions that were taken throughout the year.

Councillor Hawley questioned whether we should consider those things that were not budgeted for rather than what we did know about.

Councillor Harper questioned how the anti-social behaviour has affected the financial year, the Chief Officer explained that this considered the repairs made, staff time and toilets being locked.

Proposed by Councillor Harper; seconded by Councillor Salt.

- c) To **confirm** that recommendation from the 2021-22 audit have been completed.

The Chief Officer confirmed that recommendations had been completed and reminded Councillors of the documents.

Proposed by Councillor Garvey; seconded by Councillor Davies.

103. To receive an update on funding for Coronation activities

The Chief Officer stated that applications have been sent to SMDC - £1k and Awards For All fund - £6.5k. This funding will support the activities throughout the town with costs and to provide extra resources for the events to enable

most to be free for the community to attend. Confirmation had not been received for either yet.

The Chief Officer expressed the need to support the volunteers in some way and is considering a volunteers event, which will be discussed at a later date. The Chief Officer stated that the Town and Communities Committee have discussed gifting the young people, up to year 4, a coronation badge as a keep sake.

Councillor Salt questioned why the badges are only aimed at year 4 and below. The Chief Officer expressed that this decision was made due to the expense for all children in Biddulph. She stated that a surplus will be ordered, therefore families can purchase.

Councillor Harper agreed that an event to thank the volunteers of the town is important. The Chief Officer stated that she will be working on both a recruitment of volunteers and a thank you event.

104. To **note** that a report will be provided to the April Finance Strategy and Management Committee in relation to pension provision.

It was **noted**.

105. ASSET MANAGEMENT

The reviewed and amended Asset Management Policy was adopted in July 2022. Following migration of information to Scribe, Assets have now been recorded on Scribe and linked to purchases.

Councillors to **receive** a presentation of this, and the approach to managing assets, both as part of the audit process and through an inventory of all items purchased.

The Asset Register to be **approved**.

The Chief Officer gave a brief report of the above and explained that the accounting system, Scribe, has a feature whereby as you purchase an item it adds it to the asset list, which keeps it up to date. The current document was presented for discussion. The Chief Officer reported that this process has been added into the 'How To' document.

Councillor Davies questioned whether there is a depreciation calculated into the asset register and noted that some items have not got a value where some have.

The Chief Officer explained that depreciation is not included within these items and stated that the items without a value have been donated and not brought, therefore their value is unknown.

106. POLICIES (attached)

a) To **approve** the reviewed Reserves Policy.

The Chief Officer talked through the considerations regarding projects for 2023-24 onwards. Proposed by Councillor Salt; seconded by Councillor Jones. It was **approved**.

b) To **approve** the reviewed Protocol to Mark the Death of a Local Holder of Office Policy

Proposed by Councillor Salt; seconded by Councillor Garvey. It was **approved**.

c) To **approve** the reviewed Flag Flying Protocol

Proposed by Councillor Salt; seconded by Councillor Jones. It was **approved**.

d) To **approve** the reviewed Sickness, Absence & Well-being Policy

Proposed by Councillor Jones; seconded by Councillor Salt. It was **approved**.

e) To **approve** the reviewed Annual Leave & Special Leave Policy

Proposed by Councillor Garvey; seconded by Councillor Salt. It was **approved**.

f) To **approve** the reviewed Drug & Alcohol Policy

Proposed by Councillor Salt; seconded by Councillor Hawley. It was **approved**.

g) To **approve** the reviewed Harassment & Bullying Policy

Proposed by Councillor Harper; seconded by Councillor Jones. It was **approved**.

h) To **approve** the reviewed Carers Policy

Proposed by Councillor Garvey; seconded by Councillor Harper. It was **approved**.

STANDING AGENDA ITEMS

107.

- a) To **consider** disposal of any assets, in line with the Asset Management Policy and Financial Regulations
Two vacuum cleaners to be disposed of following a noise assessment.

The Chief Officer reported that during the latest Health and Safety inspection two of the vacuum cleaners did not pass the noise assessment and would need to be replaced.

Councillor Hawley questioned were there are other noisy items. The Chief Officer reported that all other equipment had been tested and passed.

Proposed by Councillor Salt; seconded by Councillor Jones. All **agreed**.

- b) To **confirm** approved suppliers as part of the Procurement Policy

The Chief Officer stated that there was no further update at this time.

Councillor Rogers gave thanks to Councillor Hall for his years chairing a Finance Committee at Biddulph Town Council.

Mr James Connolly left the meeting at 7.40pm

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

108. QUOTATIONS (to be tabled)

a) To **approve** a provider for sanitary bins across the Town Council buildings

The Chief Officer tabled relevant figures and would like to give notice to current provider, which is 3 months.

b) To **consider** photocopier provision

It was agreed that all paperwork would be sent electronically, however those who require a paper copy can request from the office, with the aspiration for becoming paperless in the future.

c) To **approve** a quotation for mental health training. Level 1 training would be provided initially.

d) To confirm imminent maintenance activities within the Town Hall.

Boiler repairs were proposed by Councillor Davies; seconded by Councillor Garvey. All **agreed**.

109. TO CONFIRM THAT A NEW TENANT WILL TAKE ON A LEASE FOR ROOM C IN THE TOWN HALL

Proposed by Councillor Harper, seconded by Councillor Davies. All **agreed**.

110. STAFFING ISSUES

a) To receive an update on the role of the Compliance and Governance Officer and to **agree** continuation of this role.

Proposed by Councillor Harper, seconded by Councillor Jones and agreed.

b) To note that staff appraisals will commence in April 2023.

This was noted.

The meeting ended at 7.44pm.

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