

PEACEHAVEN TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of the **POLICY AND FINANCE COMMITTEE** held in the Anzac Room, Community House, Meridian Centre, Peacehaven on **Tuesday 28th May 2019 at 7.30pm**

Committee Members - Cllr C Cheta (Chair of Council), Cllr J Harris (Vice Chair of the Council), Cllr C Collier (Chair of Committee), Cllr L Duhigg, Cllr C Gallagher, Cllr A Goble, Cllr S Griffiths, Cllr A Seabrook, Cllr I Sharkey, Cllr B Walters

Present - Cllr C Cheta (Chair of Council), Cllr C Collier (Chair of Committee), Cllr L Duhigg, Cllr C Gallagher, Cllr A Goble, Cllr S Griffiths, Cllr A Seabrook, Cllr I Sharkey, Cllr B Walters

In attendance – Andy Beams (Locum RFO), 2 members of the public

PF356 CHAIR ANNOUNCEMENTS

Cllr Collier welcomed the committee members and members of the public to the meeting.

PF 357 PUBLIC QUESTIONS

A member of the public stated that he had previously received minutes and agendas of meetings directly via email, although this practice had stopped four months ago. He asked for it to be reinstated, or an explanation as to why it was no longer happening and provided his email address.

He also asked for clarity regarding the council's position in respect of the rumoured plans of the Co-op to make changes to the Meridian Centre. Cllr Griffiths confirmed that the council had been contacted by the Co-op some time ago, but there had been no recent correspondence. Cllr Gallagher confirmed that in her role as Chairman of the Neighbourhood Plan Group, she had spoken with the Co-op and established what rights they had in respect of the different parts of the building. It was agreed that the Acting Town Clerk will provide a written response to the member of the public regarding the council's position.

PF 358 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE & SUBSTITUTIONS

Apologies were received from Acting Town Clerk Tony Allen (prior engagement) and Victoria Onis (annual leave).

PF 359 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

PF 360 TO ELECT A VICE-CHAIRMAN OF THE COMMITTEE

Cllr Duhigg was proposed by Cllr Collier, seconded by Cllr Griffiths and agreed unanimously.

PF 361 TO APPROVE & SIGN THE NON-CONFIDENTIAL MINUTES OF 27TH NOVEMBER 2018

The minutes were proposed by Cllr Griffiths, seconded by Cllr Cheta and agreed unanimously. They were subsequently signed by Cllr Collier as a true record of the meeting.

PF 362 MATTERS ARISING FROM THESE MINUTES (not elsewhere on the agenda)

None.

PF 363 GENERAL DATA PROTECTION REGULATIONS (GDPR) UPDATE

This item had been raised in response to questions asked at the Full Council meeting. The Locum RFO informed members that there was evidence of some work completed, but there were still some issues which needed addressing. Cllr Cheta suggested arranging training for all members. A 'Guidance for Members' document produced by the Local Government Association (LGA) was provided by Cllr Seabrook, and the Locum RFO agreed to circulate to all members.

PF 364 DEVELOPMENT OF A BUSINESS PLAN

The Locum RFO explained the absence of a business plan for the council, and the associated absence of a coherent three year financial plan, as required by Financial Regulations. Cllr Griffiths stated that she had been involved in an initial brainstorming session for a business plan previously, and would find the list of ideas that had previously been discussed.

The formation of a working party was proposed by Cllr Cheta, seconded by Cllr Duhigg and agreed unanimously. The membership of the working party was agreed as Cllrs Collier, Duhigg, Gallagher and Sharkey, with the option to add other members (not necessarily councillors) in the future.

PF 365 REPAIRS TO THE HUB

The Locum RFO drew attention to the one quote which had been received to date. Cllr Collier pointed out that there were a range of other works under consideration, and it was agreed that if additional quotes were received in time, the item be added to the Full Council agenda for discussion and agreement.

PF 366 REVIEW OF COMPLAINTS POLICY

Cllr Seabrook had reviewed the document and felt there were items missing, including clarity over the purpose of the policy, definitive timescales and an appeals process. As this is an area of expertise for Cllr Seabrook, he agreed to make amendments to the proposed policy and resubmit for consideration to the next committee meeting.

PF 367 REVIEW OF FREEDOM OF INFORMATION POLICY

Members had reviewed the policy and agreed the information was correct, although the content with regard to how information was distributed needed updating (such as newsletter). The policy was proposed by Cllr Gallagher, seconded by Cllr Duhigg and agreed for adoption, with the changes as outlined. Members also agreed that future amendments could include a requirement for contractors to adhere to the council's scheme.

PF 368 REVIEW OF DATA PROTECTION POLICY

Members reviewed the policy, which has been based on a neighbouring Town Council's version. The Locum RFO pointed out the need to clarify the DPO role as per 5.1, as the job title listed did not exist at Peacehaven Town Council. Cllr Seabrook suggested the policy needs reviewing against the council's Document Retention Policy, as the two were closely connected.

It was proposed by Cllr Collier, seconded by Cllr Duhigg and agreed unanimously to adopt the policy, subject to clarification over the job title in 5.1.

The Locum RFO agreed to obtain and circulate to all members the GDPR consent statement made available to councillors during correspondence with parishioners.

PF 369 REVIEW OF MEDIA AND COMMUNICATIONS POLICY

Members discussed the policy, with emphasis on the requirement for councillors contacting the media in a personal capacity not using the 'Cllr' prefix. After debate, adoption of the policy as worded was proposed by Cllr Gallagher, seconded by Cllr Seabrook and agreed unanimously.

PF 370 REVIEW OF COUNCILLOR CO-OPTION POLICY

Members reviewed the policy and agreed the following changes:

- Removal of last two sentences from the second paragraph of point 2
- Removal of the requirement for candidates to be proposed and seconded on the evening (second paragraph, point 7)
- Removal of wording '*50% + 1 of the votes available at the meeting*' (third paragraph, point 7)

After revision, the adoption of the policy was proposed by Cllr Seabrook, seconded by Cllr Griffiths and agreed unanimously.

PF 371 REVIEW OF ASSET REGISTER TO INCLUDE THE HUB

Cllr Griffiths pointed out that the asset register put before the last Full Council meeting excluded the Hub. The Locum RFO agreed to amend the register.

PF 372 MONITORING OF THE CHAIRMAN'S ALLOWANCE

Cllr Cheta confirmed he had set up a system to monitor both his activity as Mayor, and his financial expenditure. Members agreed that the financial information should be submitted to the committee half way through the year, before the second half of the expenses were paid.

PF 373 AGED DEBT ANALYSIS RECOMMENDATION

Due to the nature of this item, it was agreed to defer to discuss after exclusion of the press and public at the end of the meeting.

PF 374 REVIEW/UPGRADE OF OFFICE IT AND COMMUNICATIONS

The Locum RFO reported that the Acting Town Clerk was currently reviewing the requirements of the office and had begun obtaining quotes for new/upgraded systems. Once these had been received, they would come before the committee for consideration and agreement.

Cllr Cheta stated that the council had previously agreed to 'go paperless' and provide councillors with electronic tablets, if required. Cllr Gallagher expressed her concerns regarding the council going paperless, noting that this is difficult for some residents who are unable to access information electronically. Cllr Griffiths stated that a financial assessment had been prepared previously when the matter was being considered, and she would provide a copy of this to the Acting Town Clerk.

Members generally agreed that the matter of going paperless needed further consideration.

PF 375 ANNUAL REVIEWS OF GROUND LEASES AND RENTS

The Locum RFO pointed out that a requirement of the Financial Regulations was that all leases and rents were reviewed annually. This could be done by officers, or by setting up a councillor working party. Members agreed that the task was more suitable for officers, and the Locum RFO agreed to prepare information for assessment before budget setting, including a comparison with other local councils.

PF 376 TO NOTE REPORT OF INTERNAL AUDITOR AND CONSIDER ACTIONS

The report had been circulated in advance of the meeting, and members noted the content including the actions taken to comply with the auditors findings at the interim visit. It was agreed that the financial risk assessment would be added to the next committee agenda for review, along with the financial procedures once completed.

PF 377 TO NOTE YEAR-END ANNUAL RETURN FIGURES

Members noted the figures as presented. Cllr Duhigg asked for thanks to be recorded to the Locum RFO for his work in addressing the issues previously identified, acknowledging the improvement in the management and reporting of the councils financial position.

In view of the confidential nature of the following item, the press and public were excluded under the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960.

PF 373 AGED DEBT ANALYSIS RECOMMENDATION

The Locum RFO reminded members of the work undertaken over recent months in considerably reducing the council's outstanding debtors, and provided the circumstances of the debts which were under consideration of write off.

Members reluctantly agreed that due to previous inaction, there was little choice but to agree to write off the amounts. This was proposed by Cllr Gallagher, seconded by Cllr Walters and unanimously agreed.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next scheduled meeting was for Tuesday 17th September. Members agreed that this was too large a gap between meetings, and after reviewing the meeting schedule agreed to hold the next committee meeting on Tuesday 16th July 2019.

The meeting closed at 9.40 pm.