

Minutes of the meeting of the POLICY AND FINANCE COMMITTEE held on-line (Zoom) on Wednesday 21st October 2020 at 7.30pm

Present - Cllr C Collier (Chair of Committee), Cllr C Cheta, Cllr J Harris, Cllr A Milliner, Cllr A Goble, Cllr S Griffiths, Cllr D Seabrook, Cllr I Sharkey, Cllr C Gallagher.
Town Clerk T Allen, Finance Officer Z Malone, Sen. Projects Officer Michelle Edser.
One member of the public was also present.

PF537 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting.

PF538 PUBLIC QUESTIONS

There were no public questions.

PF539 TO CONSIDER APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE & SUBSTITUTIONS

Cllr L Duhigg (Vice-Chair of Committee); noted that Cllr Duhigg had stepped down from the Committee.

PF540 TO RECEIVE DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS FROM COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Cllr Griffiths re. Item PF551, as a friend of one of the contractors concerned.

PF541 TO ADOPT THE MINUTES OF 22nd SEPTEMBER 2020

It was resolved to adopt the minutes as a true record.

PF542 TO REVIEW THE 2020/21 FINANCIAL POSITION OF THE COUNCIL YEAR TO-DATE: -

1. Finance Officer's report

Received and noted.

2. Bank account summary

Received and noted.

3. Bank Reconciliation statements (for signing)

Received and resolved to sign.

4. Income & Expenditure report

The Chairman reported that he and the Finance Officer had been working on defining the loss of Council income, particularly in relation to Community House.

It was noted that, at the end of Q2, it was possible to establish patterns of expenditure and for daily 'savings' figures to be calculated. The Chairman gave a detailed breakdown of some of these figures, noting that a comparison with the last six months of the previous financial year had been carried out, in order to identify any one-off/large payments that may become due later in the current financial year.

The Chairman thanked the Finance Officer for her assistance and hard work in achieving a more balanced picture of the Council's finances, noting the financial performance in Q3 will be crucial.

5. Balance Sheet

Received and noted.

6. CIL report

Received and noted.

7. List of payments (for approval)

It was resolved to approve the September 2020 payments amounting to £67,350.55 as scheduled in the meeting papers.

8. Apportioning income from filming etc. companies

It was resolved that the budget code for income from filming should sit under the CCE budget heading and not under general admin. Heading. Noted that any monies remaining at the end of the financial year will pass into general reserves.

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PF543 TO DEVELOP THE 2021/22 BUDGET & PRECEPT REQUIREMENT

The Finance Officer's report was noted and discussed.

It was resolved to adopt the approach and methodology as proposed.

The Chairman stated that Committees needed to establish work programmes for 2021/22 and look at the remainder of the current financial year, particularly with regard to the possible capitalization of some projects.

PF544 TO RECEIVE A REPORT FROM THE CIL WORKING PARTY AND TO AGREE ACTIONS

The ongoing role of the WP was discussed, and it was noted that its usefulness was mainly in relation to large CIL/S.106 bids/projects.

The Clerk noted that, with the Senior Projects Officer Finance Officer leading in these matters, and working with the Finance Officer, Parks Officer & Councillors, CIL/S.106 monitoring and expenditure was now under control.

It was resolved that the CIL/S.106 WP will be convened at each round of the LDC CIL bidding invitations, and additionally as required for other larger projects.

1. To approve CIL funding for a pathway from Flint Way to Centenary Park

The Clerk's report was noted and discussed.

It was resolved that the council's CIL fund will be used to finance this new pathway and that the Finance Officer will see if this can be recovered from s.106 monies.

PF545 TO APPROVE ADDITIONAL EQUIPMENT NEEDS RELATING TO WORKING FROM HOME

The Clerk's report was noted and discussed.

The Clerk referred to a circulated revised specification for the laptops and related items, plus other equipment identified. It was noted that demand for laptops was outstripping supply and specifications varied with availability. The laptops now available were of a higher specification than those in the original specification but were better in performance, more future proof and very competitively priced for the level of quality.

It was noted that, in this case, three quotes had not been obtained. The Clerk noted that this was due to the fact that the Council must operate with equipment approved and supported by its IT contractor, NorthStar IT, and the limited availability of these items.

It was resolved to purchase the laptops and related items, plus other equipment identified, as specified at a cost of £4,052.98.

The Chairman thanked Officers for their forbearance in this matter.

PF546 TO APPROVE THE COUNCIL'S FINANCIAL RISK ASSESSMENT

The Clerk's report was noted and discussed.

Clerk to investigate the set up for the offsite backups of financial and other data.

It was resolved to adopt the Financial Risk Assessment.

PF547 TO APPROVE THE 2021/22 ESCC GRASS CUTTING CONTRACT

The Clerk's report was noted and discussed.

Clerk to investigate the position with the current contract with ESCC in view of Covid-19 measures it has in place.

Clerk to refer his paper to the Planning & Highways Committee for further discussion and agreement.

[The member of the public left the meeting].

NOTE: In accordance with Standing Order No. 3(d) and the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960, Section 1, in view of the confidential nature of the following business to be transacted, the public and press were excluded from the rest of the meeting.

PF548 AGED DEBT ANALYSIS

The Finance Officer's report was noted and discussed.

The Chairman reported that the Council's exposure to debt had reduced over the last year or so from around 10% to 2.46%.

The Finance Officer reported that, as hirers were returning, past debt was being settled.

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PF549 TO DISCUSS THE CURRENT PAYMENT OF UTILITY COSTS BY PTC FOR LEASED FACILITIES

The Clerk's report was noted and discussed in detail.

It was noted that the Council is able to accurately identify the charges involved.

It was resolved to hold individual meetings with the hirers concerned to discuss and agree the way forward in this matter.

PF550 TO REVIEW LESSEES/HIRERS STATEMENT OF CREDITS/DEBITS & ONGOING SUPPORT

The Clerk's and the Finance Officer's reports were noted and discussed.

It was resolved to hold individual meetings with the hirers concerned to discuss and agree the way forward relating to additional Council support.

[Cllr Griffiths left the meeting].

PF551 TO DISCUSS & REVIEW COUNCIL'S EMPLOYMENT OF SUB-CONTRACTORS

The Clerk's report was noted and discussed.

It was resolved to extend the Council's contractor's contract until the end of March 2021.

PF552 DATE OF NEXT MEETING – TUESDAY 17th November 2020 at 7.30pm

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 20:37.

