

**DURSLEY TOWN COUNCIL**

MINUTES and REPORT of the MEETING of the POLICY AND FINANCE COMMITTEE of the Council held in the Methodist Church Rooms, Castle Street, Dursley at 7.50 p.m. on Tuesday, 16<sup>th</sup> February 2016 for presentation to the Council on the 1<sup>st</sup> March 2016.

**PRESENT**

Chairman: Councillor R Blackwell-Whitehead

Councillors: C Nelmes, S Creswick, M Laybourne, N Grecian, A Stennett and F Firth.

In Attendance: Councillor P Hayes; Deputy Town Clerk, L Wellings

**1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors L Patrick (work), B Marsh (personal) and M Nicholson (personal).

**2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

**3. REQUEST FOR DISPENSATIONS**

There were no requests for dispensations.

**4. REPRESENTATIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC**

There were no representations from the public.

**5. MINUTES**

The Minutes of the meeting held on the 15<sup>th</sup> December 2015 were approved and signed.

**6. QUOTATIONS FOR THE ENERGY SUPPLY FOR JACOB'S HOUSE**

The Deputy Town Clerk reported that the existing energy supply is tied into a fixed-term contract until 25/12/2018. Given this the quotations were not considered.

**7. QUOTATIONS FOR COUNCIL'S PLAYGROUND INSPECTIONS**

Members considered four quotations for the council's playground inspections (renewal due 27<sup>th</sup> February 2016), circulated with the agenda.

**IT WAS RESOLVED** to accept the quotation from the Play Inspection Company at a cost of £350 (+VAT). The price was considered very competitive and the sample reports good.

**8. REVIEW OF STANDING ORDERS FOR 2016/17**

Members reviewed the Council's Standing Orders.

Amendments were made to reflect recent changes in legislation (The Openness of Local Government Bodies Regulations 2014 and the Public Contracts Regulations 2015); the business of the annual meeting and taking out the requirement to stand when speaking.

Councillor Creswick offered to assist the Town Clerk with the correct wording of text relating to procurement.

**IT WAS RESOLVED** to recommend that the Council adopt the amended Standing Orders Document.

9. REVIEW OF FINANCIAL REGULATIONS AND ELECTRONIC BANKING REPORT

Members considered the Town Clerk's report on Electronic Banking – Approval of Payments.

It was noted that since the report a test carried out for the February salary payments had failed; the transaction completed with only one signatory online approval and not the two required.

**IT WAS RESOLVED** not to introduce electronic payments for regular payees at this point but to note the report and investigate the reasons for the failure with Lloyds Bank; tests could continue to try and resolve the problems; at least three signatories would be required to be set up after the elections to cope with holiday times and cover; it was suggested that the signatories are the Mayor, Deputy Mayor and the Chairman of each budgeted committee.

Members reviewed the Council's Financial Regulations

Amendments were made to reflect recent changes in legislation (The Accounts and Audit (England) Regulations 2015 and the Public Contracts Regulations 2015) and charge card arrangements.

Councillor Creswick offered to assist the Town Clerk with the correct wording of text relating to procurement.

**IT WAS RESOLVED** to recommend that the Council adopt the amended Financial Regulations Document.

10. ADVERTISEMENTS IN FUTURE EDITIONS OF DURSLEY MATTERS

Members considered permitting advertisements in future editions of Dursley Matters, possible fees for this and approving an advert request from Money Advice Service.

**IT WAS RESOLVED** not to allow commercial advertisements in Dursley Matters, non-commercial community information advertisements, including the Money Advice Service advert submitted, could be included once, free of charge if there is room.

11. SECOND REVENUE GRANT PAYMENT FOR THE COMMUNITY CENTRE

Councillor Nelmes gave members an update following the Community Centre meeting on 27<sup>th</sup> January 2016; the financial statement provided was reviewed.

It was noted that the Community Centre had been very proactive and undertaken a considerable amount of work recently to improve the centre and governance arrangements; successful grants and donations have funded new chairs, roof repairs, new lights, a new cooker and doors; a new Secretary and Treasurer have been appointed.

**IT WAS RESOLVED** to approve the second payment (£3000) of the 2015/16 revenue grant to the Community Centre.

12. DRAFT POLICIES REQUIRED FOR THE LOCAL COUNCIL AWARD SCHEME

Members considered the following draft policies required for the “Silver” award of the Local Council Award Scheme.

(i) Risk Management Policy

It was noted that the draft policy follows guidance; no amendments were suggested other than to include a review date.

**IT WAS RESOLVED** to recommend that Council adopt the draft Risk Management Policy.

(ii) Training and Development Policy

The policy was amended to include a sentence relating to the recovery of costs from Councillors and employees who fail to attend training without good reason.

(iii) **IT WAS RESOLVED** to recommend that Council adopt the amended draft Training and Development Policy.

(iv) Strategic Plan

It was noted that the draft plan is a good start but more work is required to create a plan with a positive vision and feel. It was commented that Bradley Stoke Town Council had developed a good Forward Plan document. Councillor Firth expressed an interest in helping to design the document.

**IT WAS RESOLVED** that the Town Clerk redraft the plan working with the Communications Group.

13. POLICIES/DOCUMENTS REQUIRED TO MEET THE LOCAL COUNCIL AWARD SCHEME “SILVER” AWARD CRITERIA

The Deputy Town Clerk gave members an update on the following documents required to meet the criteria for the Local Council Award Scheme “Silver” Award:

(i) Councillor profiles

It was noted that, to date, five have been submitted to the Town Clerk.

(ii) Community Engagement Policy

The Town Clerk had drafted a policy to go to the next Policy and Finance Committee meeting.

(iii) Annual report

It was noted that the Council’s Annual Report is not the Mayor’s Annual Report.

It was agreed that a scheme would bring together the different powers and duties delegated to the Town Clerk/RFO and Standing Committees, outlined in Standing Orders and Committee Terms of Reference, into one place.

(v) Addressed complaints received last year.

It was suggested that Council keep a register of complaints.

#### 14. UPDATE ON THE NEW TOWN WEBSITE

The Deputy Town Clerk gave an update on the new Town Council website.

It was noted that payment for the website is split between Council and the Neighbourhood Development Plan Locality grant; a meeting would be held with 2Commune to start the setup process; the Town Clerk had notified VisionICT of the decision to change website provider.

**IT WAS RESOLVED** to involve members of the Communications Working group and set up a meeting.

#### 15. REPORT ON CCTV

Members considered the recommendation in the Town Clerk's report on CCTV, to maintain the current setup with Stroud District Council and continue to contribute to the CCTV provision supplied by Stroud District Council.

It was noted that the Town Clerk is still waiting for a response from Stroud District Council regarding recent CCTV enquires.

**IT WAS RESOLVED** to defer the issue until Council receives all the necessary information relating to recent enquiries and the following questions/information:

- When is the contribution due to be paid?
- What happens to the CCTV if we decide to withdraw?
- Is it possible to upgrade the cameras for better quality images? (and costs)
- Is the system being updated?
- Have other options been explored fully?

#### 16. INTERNAL AUDIT REPORT – RECOMMENDATIONS

Members noted the recommendations of the Internal Audit Report and the Town Clerk's actions as follows:

- **Reconcile Business Account** – this has been done.
- **Document day to day financial control procedures** – discussions will take place to clarify the Auditor's recommendation.
- **Internal Controls member to sign bank reconciliation and bank statements as evidence of verification** – this will be introduced.

- **Review information on Asset Register in line with JPAG guidance** – this will be done.
- **Consider level of Fidelity Guarantee insurance cover** – Policy and Finance Committee will need to consider the level.
- **Review aged debtors** – this is in progress.

17. CHANGE OF SUPPLIER FOR THE LANDLINE TELEPHONES

Members noted the change of supplier for the landline telephones from BT to Onecom.

Concerns were raised regarding the contract, which is fixed for a period of 60 months, and a failure to follow Financial Regulations in relation to agreeing the contract.

It was noted that the contract had not been considered by Committee or Council before being agreed by the Town Clerk and Chairman of the Policy and Finance Committee via email.

**IT WAS RESOLVED** that the Deputy Town Clerk establish the cooling off period and attempt to cancel the contract if within the period. The issue would be investigated with the Town Clerk (RFO).

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 9:50 p.m.

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Chairman

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Date

16<sup>th</sup> February 2016

Policy and Finance