

BLANDFORD FORUM TOWN COUNCIL
Minutes of the Finance & Staffing Committee
held on Monday 16th March 2020 at 7:00pm in the Corn Exchange

DRAFT
Subject to confirmation

PRESENT

Cllr S Hitchings – Committee Chairman
Cllr P Osborne – Committee Vice Chairman
Cllr H White
Cllr R Carter
Cllr A Cross

Cllr L Lindsay – Chairman of Council
Cllr L Hitchings – Vice Chairman of Council
Cllr C Stevens
Cllr H Mieville

IN ATTENDANCE

Town Clerk

Operations Manager

42. PUBLIC SESSION

There were no members of the public in attendance.

43. APOLOGIES

None

44. TO RECEIVE ANY DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND REQUESTS FOR DISPENSATIONS

None had been submitted, however Cllr S Hitchings confirmed that he personally knows the applicant for the St John Ambulance grant and Cllr L Hitchings declared a personal interest as the applicant is his mother-in-law and he is involved in the organisation.

45. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 9TH DECEMBER 2019

It was PROPOSED by Cllr L Hitchings, SECONDED by Cllr Stevens and AGREED (8 in favour, 1 abstention) that the Minutes be APPROVED and SIGNED subject to changing ‘Cllr Cross’ to ‘Cllr Stevens’ as the Seconder at Minute No. 29.

46. TOWN CLERK'S REPORT & CORRESPONDENCE

- 46.1 Loans – The Government has abolished the Public Works Loan Board (‘PWLB’), the body that had legal responsibility for providing most loan finance to local authorities including parish, town and community councils. However, the PWLB had for many years delegated its statutory functions such as considering loan applications to Treasury officials and this will continue although the officials’ titles will change. The interest rate will also continue to be set by the Treasury.
- 46.2 Pension Scheme – There are no changes to the Local Government Pension Scheme so it is not an agenda item this time but usually is in March.
- 46.3 Project Co-ordinator – The postholder’s contract has been extended from 31st March to 31st May 2020 to cover the referendum period. However, it has been confirmed today that this has been cancelled.
- 46.4 Impact of the Coronavirus
- The Neighbourhood Plan referendum has been cancelled by the Dorset Council.
 - The Community Expo and Mayor’s Bingo night have been cancelled in order to protect those involved.
 - The Tea Dance did not take place today.
 - The Vintage Fair is going to confirm tomorrow if they will be cancelling their event.
 - The Lions Easter Fair has cancelled and requested a refund.

46. TOWN CLERK'S REPORT & CORRESPONDENCE (cont)

- All cancellations are being offered a refund due to the unprecedented circumstances and we do not want to be penalising people for taking sensible or recommended precautions.
- The Georgian Fayre has cancelled the VE Day event and a number of linked events have also been cancelled. The VE Exhibition and the Legion events have also been cancelled. I have contacted the piper to find out if we can record a premature playing and speech in anticipation that we will not be able to do this on 8th May and am awaiting a response.
- The Forum Focus has allowed me to make changes to the two-page spread on the VE Day weekend and I have taken the opportunity to reach out to the community and offer the Town Council's support, where required. Yesterday I directly contacted all the vulnerable/elderly people I am aware of and offered the Town Council's support and today Rach and Claire have extended that to others they have thought of. We have checked with the grounds staff and they are all happy to switch to community support instead of their normal duties, so we are prepared to shift our resources. Councillors will be aware that a North Dorset Coronavirus support group has been set up on Facebook and volunteer, Laura Rosam, called me about this earlier today as her and her husband have taken on the administration/management of the group that Tim Beer set up. They are going to set another one up that is just for those who have said they will help so they can coordinate this easier. I had a conference call this morning with Matt Prosser. He advised that DC is responsible for social care and they will shift resources as required. They cannot accept the volunteer offers due to safeguarding issues, which I have told Laura, but she is going to ask me to join the group once they have set it up in case I need any help for coordinating the Town Council's efforts.
- The Town Museum has closed until further notice, encouraging social distancing, and the Fashion Museum has confirmed that they will remain open but are not sure how long for. The Town Museum has asked if it might be possible for a one-time boost to their agreements.

47. ANALYTICAL REVIEW OF EXPENDITURE AGAINST BUDGET FOR THE FOLLOWING:

47.1 Administration Budget for the year to 21st February 2020

The paper was noted (see Appendix A).

47.2 Overall Revenue Budget for the year to 21st February 2020

The paper was noted (see Appendix B).

Councillors asked if any other wording could be used in place of 'overbudget' when it refers to income.

Post Meeting Note: The RFO was asked to amend the wording and confirmed that this is standard accounting terminology.

47.3 General Reserves

The paper was noted (see Appendix C).

48. REVIEW OF FINANCE DOCUMENTATION

48.1 To receive and retrospectively approve the list of cheque payments 011027 – 011099 (Sheets 848-861) totalling £215,245.68

It was PROPOSED by Cllr S Hitchings, SECONDED by Cllr Osborne and AGREED unanimously that

The list of cheque payments 011027 – 011099 (Sheets 848 - 861) totalling £215,245.68 are received and retrospectively approved.

48.2 To receive and retrospectively approve direct debit payments for the period 1st November 2019 to 31st January 2020 (sheets 166-168) totalling £95,286.52

It was PROPOSED by Cllr S Hitchings, SECONDED by Cllr Osborne and AGREED unanimously that

48. REVIEW OF FINANCE DOCUMENTATION (CONT)

The direct debit payments for the period 1st November 2019 to 31st January 2020 (sheets 166 - 168) totalling £95,286.52 are received and retrospectively approved.

48.3 To receive and retrospectively approve BACS payments BACS 248 to BACS 256 totalling £57,965.20
It was PROPOSED by Cllr S Hitchings, SECONDED by Cllr Osborne and AGREED unanimously that

BACS payments BACS 248 to BACS 256 totalling £57,965.20 are received and retrospectively approved.

48.4 To receive and retrospectively approve CHAPS payments
There were no CHAPS payments to retrospectively approve.

48.5 Retrospective approval of the Investment Account for the period 26th November 2019 to 23rd January 2020

The paper was noted (see Appendix D).

It was PROPOSED by Cllr L Hitchings, SECONDED by Cllr Carter and AGREED unanimously that

The Investment Account for the period 26th November 2019 to 23rd January 2020 is approved retrospectively.

48.6 Report by Chairman on Bank Reconciliation and Petty Cash check

Cllr S Hitchings carried out a petty cash check and confirmed that the monthly bank reconciliation had been undertaken during the period and everything was found to be in order.

48.7 Bank Reconciliation to 31st January 2020

The paper was noted (see Appendix E).

49. REVIEW OF VARIABLE DIRECT DEBITS

The paper was noted (see Appendix F).

50. TO RECEIVE THE INTERNAL AUDITOR'S REPORT

The paper was noted (see Appendix G).

51. INSURANCE RISK ASSESMENT RELATING TO THE TOWN COUNCIL'S INSURANCE COVER AND APPROVAL OF INSURANCE PREMIUMS FOR 2020/21

The paper was noted (see Appendix H).

It was PROPOSED by Cllr Carter, SECONDED by Cllr Mieville and AGREED unanimously that a RECOMMENDATION is made to full council that

The Committee confirms that there are no other aspects of insurance that they wish to amend and agrees the insurance premium for 2020/21 of £14,055.84 (Expenditure Authority: General Power of Competence, Localism Act 2011, S1-8).

ACTION: TOWN COUNCIL

52. **REVIEW OF THE RISK ASSESMENT MANAGEMENT POLICY (INCLUDING FINANCIAL) ARRANGEMENTS FOR 2020/21**

The paper was noted (see Appendix I).

It was PROPOSED by Cllr L Hitchings, SECONDED by Cllr Carter and AGREED (6 in favour, 3 abstentions as they had not seen the email with the attachment) that

The Committee approves the risk management policy (including financial) arrangement for 2020/21.

ACTION: TOWN CLERK

53. **REVIEW OF ASSET REGISTER**

The paper was noted (see Appendix J).

54. **TO REVIEW THE FINANCE & STAFFING COMMITTEE REMIT AND THE FINANCIAL REGULATIONS**

It was PROPOSED by Cllr White, SECONDED by Cllr L Hitchings and AGREED unanimously that the following statement is included in the Financial Regulations due to the current situation:

"In exceptional and unprecedented circumstances (e.g. a pandemic), which lead to it not being possible to convene a meeting of the council in a reasonable time, the Clerk shall have delegated authority to make decisions on behalf of the council where such decision cannot reasonably be deferred and must be made in order to comply with a commercial or statutory deadline. This will be carried out where possible by consultation with members by electronic means or telephone. The clerk will further consult with the chairman and vice chairman of council and the chairman and vice chairman of the finance & staffing committee for guidance as necessary. The delegation does not extend to matters expressly reserved to the council in legislation or in its Standing Orders or these Financial Regulations. Any decisions made under this delegation must be recorded in writing and must be published in accordance with the relevant regulations. This delegated authority ceases when normal business and council meetings are resumed".

In light of actions already carried out by the Town Clerk, with the support of the Chairman and Vice Chairman of the Finance & Staffing Committee, it was PROPOSED by Councillor L Hitchings, SECONDED by Cllr Carter and AGREED unanimously that STANDING ORDERS are SUSPENDED.

It was then PROPOSED by Cllr White, SECONDED by Cllr L Hitchings and AGREED unanimously that

Hirers who cancel bookings will not be penalised and will receive a refund, which is not in keeping with the Town Council's booking conditions. In addition, the Service Level Agreements will continue to be paid even if they are unable to open to the public as a result of the virus.

As a direct result of the advice from central government received this evening strongly advising against gatherings, Councillors requested the cancellation of future meetings. The Town Clerk expressed her preference for a resolution due to there being no precedence for this action and it was therefore PROPOSED by Cllr White, SECONDED by Cllr Lindsay and AGREED unanimously that

The Finance & Staffing Committee instructs the Town Clerk to postpone council meetings until further notice.

ACTION: TOWN COUNCIL

It was noted that the Dorset Council is seeking legislation from the government so that virtual meetings could take place. The Town Clerk will update Councillors once more information is received.

54. TO REVIEW THE FINANCE & STAFFING COMMITTEE REMIT AND THE FINANCIAL REGULATIONS (CONT)

It was PROPOSED by Cllr L Hitchings, SECONDED by Cllr Carter and AGREED unanimously to RESINSTATE STANDING ORDERS.

55. UPDATE ON CCLA REPORT

The paper was noted (see Appendix K).

It was PROPOSED by Cllr White, SECONDED by Cllr Mieville and AGREED unanimously that

The Committee wishes to keep all the units and does not wish to sell them. The Committee wishes to review the fund at September's Committee Meeting.

ACTION: TOWN CLERK

56. TO CONSIDER GRANT APPLICATIONS (CURRENT AVAILABLE BALANCE IS £9,252.32, WHICH INCLUDES £1,825 FROM 2018/19 UNDERSPEND)

It was PROPOSED by Cllr L Hitchings, SECONDED by Cllr S Hitchings and AGREED unanimously that, due to the unprecedented situation we are faced with and to avoid delay, the grant applications are considered at this Committee meeting without being able to recommend them to full council. Councillors asked that the resolutions are therefore shared with other Councillors for their information (not votes) and the grants will then be paid one week after the email is sent. NALC has advised town and parish councils to retrospectively approve all decisions taken at the next available council meeting.

8:28pm – Cllr Lindsay left the meeting.

56.1 Blandford Police

The paper was noted (see Appendix L).

It was PROPOSED by Cllr L Hitchings, SECONDED by Cllr Stevens and AGREED (7 in favour, 1 against) that a RECOMMENDATION is made to full council that

A grant of £500 is approved.

ACTION: TOWN COUNCIL

56.2 Blandford Scout Group

The paper was noted (see Appendix M).

8:35pm – Cllr L Hitchings left the meeting.

8:39pm – Cllr L Hitchings returned to the meeting.

Cllr Mieville proposed a grant of £1,500, which was seconded by Cllr White but NOT AGREED (3 in favour, 5 against).

It was PROPOSED by Cllr L Hitchings, SECONDED by Cllr Carter and AGREED (5 in favour, 3 against) that that a RECOMMENDATION is made to full council that

A grant of £3,000 is approved.

ACTION: TOWN COUNCIL

56.3 St John Ambulance (£1,000 awarded in 2015-16 for purchase of defibrillator)

The paper was noted (see Appendix N).

56. TO CONSIDER GRANT APPLICATIONS (CURRENT AVAILABLE BALANCE IS £9,252.32, WHICH INCLUDES £1,825 FROM 2018/19 UNDERSPEND) (CONT)

8:44pm – Cllr L Hitchings left the meeting.

It was PROPOSED by Cllr White, SECONDED by Cllr Cross and AGREED (7 in favour, 1 non-vote) that a RECOMMENDATION is made to full council that

A grant of £820 is approved.

ACTION: TOWN COUNCIL

8:46pm – Cllr L Hitchings returned to the meeting.

56.4 In Jolly Good Company

The paper was noted (see Appendix O).

Councillors asked the Town Clerk for further information as to why The Alzheimer’s Society is removing funding and their current meeting location.

ACTION: TOWN CLERK

56.5 Oh No It Isn’t

The paper was noted (see Appendix P).

It was PROPOSED by Cllr L Hitchings, SECONDED by Cllr Carter and AGREED (5 in favour, 3 against) that a RECOMMENDATION is made to full council that

60% of the current reserved venue hire costs is approved as free venue hire, in accordance with the free venue hire criteria, hence there will be no cancellation of paid hirers.

ACTION: TOWN COUNCIL

56.6 Free venue hire update

The paper was noted (see Appendix Q).

9:15pm – Cllr White left the meeting.

57. TO RECEIVE A REPORT REGARDING VIREMENT FROM GENERAL RESERVES TO COVER EXPENDITURE IN 2019/20

The paper was noted (see Appendix R).

It was PROPOSED by Cllr L Hitchings, SECONDED by Cllr Stevens and AGREED unanimously that a RECOMMENDATION is made to full council that

To vire £4,120 from the Interest Earnt on Earmarked Investments budget line (Code 1001), £1,321 from the Interest Earnt on Capital investments budget line (Code 1010) and £284 from Interest Earnt on the Property Fund budget line (Code 1002) to General Reserves (Code 1500) and keeping the cost of £5,381 from the expenditure to the General Reserve to review in December 2020.

ACTION: TOWN COUNCIL

58. TO RECEIVE A REPORT REGARDING COMMITTING FUNDS FROM UNDERSPEND OF PROJECT MANAGER BUDGET

The paper was noted (see Appendix S).

58. TO RECEIVE A REPORT REGARDING COMMITTING FUNDS FROM UNDERSPEND OF PROJECT MANAGER BUDGET (CONT)

It was PROPOSED by Cllr Carter, SECONDED by Cllr Mieville and AGREED unanimously that a RECOMMENDATION is made to full council that

To vire underspend from the Project Manager Fee budget (Code 4400) to General Reserves (Code 1500) to assist with flexible working / Project Manager Fees, and to vire the underspend of the Payroll budget line (Code 4400) to General Reserves (Code 1500).

ACTION: TOWN COUNCIL

59. TO RECEIVE A REPORT REGARDING FUNDS FROM UNDERSPEND OF CORN EXCHANGE MAINTENANCE BUDGET AND GRANTS BUDGET

The paper was noted (see Appendix T).

It was PROPOSED by Cllr Carter, SECONDED by Cllr Stevens and AGREED unanimously that a RECOMMENDATION is made to full council that

To vire underspend from the Corn Exchange Maintenance Budget (Code 5206) to Corn Exchange Regeneration Reserves (Code 1105) to assist with refurbishment costs, and to vire the underspend of the Grants budget line (Code 5505) to General Reserves (Code 1500) and to commit for Grants 2020/21.

ACTION: TOWN COUNCIL

60. CONFIDENTIAL

It was PROPOSED by Cllr L Hitchings, SECONDED by Cllr Mieville and AGREED unanimously that

The public and press may be excluded from the meeting on the grounds that publicity might be prejudicial to the public interest as per the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960.

60.1 Town Clerk's Report

Nothing to report.

60.2 To receive an update on the SLA with the Youth & Community Centre

It was PROPOSED by Cllr L Hitchings, SECONDED by Cllr Mieville and AGREED unanimously that

The payments for 2019/20 service level agreement are not released to the Youth Centre without receipt of the accounts and associated documents in accordance with the terms of the agreement. However, the funds are committed to the existing reserves committed to youth services going forward into the 2020/2021 financial year and will be paid upon receipt of the information required.

ACTION: TOWN CLERK

The Meeting closed at 9:27pm.

SIGNED: DATED: