

BLANDFORD FORUM TOWN COUNCIL
Minutes of the Finance & Staffing Committee
held on Monday 14th September 2020 at 7:00pm online using Microsoft Teams

PRESENT

Cllr S Hitchings – Committee Chairman
Cllr L Lindsay – Chairman of Council
Cllr H White
Cllr R Carter
Cllr A Cross

Cllr P Osborne – Committee Vice Chairman
Cllr L Hitchings – Vice Chairman of Council
Cllr C Stevens
Cllr H Mieville

IN ATTENDANCE

Town Clerk
Sarah Rampton (In Jolly Good Company)

Responsible Financial Officer (RFO)

13. PUBLIC SESSION

Sarah Rampton spoke about her grant application for her work with the dementia friendly organisation, In Jolly Good Company, and plans to start a group at Woodhouse Gardens in March 2021 to include work on the sensory garden. This has worked well at Kingston Lacy allotments and Sarah also has experience from running the Memory Café in Blandford.

14. APOLOGIES

None

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

None

16. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 1ST JUNE 2020

It was PROPOSED by Cllr L Hitchings, SECONDED by Cllr Carter and AGREED unanimously that the Minutes be APPROVED and SIGNED. The minutes will be signed at the earliest opportunity.

The Chairman suggested bringing agenda item no. 12.1 forward, due to a member of the public being in attendance, and there were no objections from other members.

17. TO CONSIDER GRANT APPLICATIONS – (CURRENT AVAILABLE BALANCE IS £13,384.20 WHICH INCLUDES £3,384.20 FROM 2019/20 UNDERSPEND)

17.1 In Jolly Good Company - (Deferred from June meeting, but amended application for less amount and relocating to Woodhouse Gardens Pavilion)

The paper was noted (see Appendix I).

It was PROPOSED by Cllr White and SECONDED by Cllr Cross that a RECOMMENDATION is made to full Council that a grant of £1,470 is approved.

An AMENDMENT to the proposal was PROPOSED by Cllr L Hitchings, SECONDED by Cllr Mieville and it was AGREED (5 in favour, 4 against) that a **RECOMMENDATION is made to full Council that**

The grant of £1,470 is approved but the hire charge is dealt with separately as free hire to the value of £320.

ACTION: TOWN COUNCIL

18. TOWN CLERK'S REPORT & CORRESPONDENCE (see Appendix A)

- 18.1 Pay Awards – Agreement has now been reached on the national pay award applicable from 1st April 2020. The individual basic salaries of all officers within scope of the JNC for Chief Executives of Local Authorities should be increased by 2.75 per cent with effect from 1st April 2020. This pay agreement covers the period 1st April 2020 to 31st March 2021 and the Town Council has budgeted for this. The pay award discussions also included an outcome for Annual Leave with the NJC agreeing that from 1st April 2020, minimum annual leave will increase from 21 to 22 days for employees with less than five years' service. The National Agreement Part 2 Para 7.2 will therefore, with effect from 1st April 2020, be amended to read as follows:

7.2 Annual Leave

The minimum paid annual leave entitlement is twenty-two days with a further three days after five years of continuous service. The entitlement as expressed applies to five day working patterns. For alternative working patterns an equivalent leave entitlement should be calculated.

As the Town Council already has this minimum in place, and this is aimed at councils not providing ample leave up to this point, no further changes will be made to annual leave allowances. This has been checked with Ellis Whittam who have confirmed that: *the Council's terms adhere to the Agreement that you cited as you offer 22 days + 8 normal bank holidays. As you say, you actually offer more generous terms as the Council provide an additional 5 days' holiday after 5 years' of service (whereas the agreement only requires an additional 3 days).*

- 18.2 Office Cover – September to December – The guidance remains that people should be working from home but we are slightly different in that we are a public facing office so a rota was put in place to ensure the office is covered every day during the opening hours and we all need to print, etc. in order to do our jobs. One group is going in Monday, Wednesday and Friday the other Tuesday and Thursday, which alternates each week. The phone remains diverted to the office mobile, but the working hours are reinstated on the voicemail. We have been monitoring out of hours calls and they are no longer from vulnerable people.
- 18.3 Updated Practitioners' Guide – The Practitioners' Guide is issued by the Joint Panel on Accountability and Governance (JPAG) to support the preparation by smaller authorities in England of statutory annual accounting and governance statements found in the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR). The Practitioners Guide has been updated and the RFO has checked the documents on the DAPTC website and no changes are required to the Town Council's documents, although it is recommended that a council has a General Reserves policy. The RFO will prepare this for consideration at the December committee meeting.
- 18.4 Discretionary Business Grant – The Town Council has been awarded £5,547.17 following an application made by the RFO to the Dorset Council.
- 18.5 Langton St Leonards Vacancy – Councillor Doro Russell has resigned from the Town Council, due to relocation abroad, and said 'it has been an honour to serve this community'. Cllr Russell joined the Council in May 2019 and played an active role from the start, introducing the tree photography competition, consulting residents on trees in their areas and she also supported many residents during the pandemic carrying out daily visits and shopping. She will be greatly missed. A vacancy now exists in the office of Councillor for the Town Council. If within 14 days (i.e. no later than 2 October 2020), a request for an election to fill the vacancy is received by the Returning Officer, either by email, elections@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk, or by post, to South Walks House, South Walks Road, Dorchester, Dorset, DT1 1UZ by TEN electors who are registered in the Town Ward where the vacancy has arisen, an election will be held to fill the vacancy, otherwise the vacancy will be filled by co-option. If an election is called, a poll will be scheduled for 6 May 2021 as a result of the Local Government and Police and Crime Commissioner (Coronavirus) (Postponement of Elections and Referendums) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020 and the Coronavirus Act 2020. The notice can be viewed at: <https://blandfordforum-tc.gov.uk/town-council/vacancies>.

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

19.1 Administration Budget for the year to 14th August 2020

The paper was noted (see Appendix B).

19.2 Overall Revenue Budget for the year to 14th August 2020

The paper was noted (see Appendix C).

19.3 Reserve Accounts as at 19th August 2020

The paper was noted (see Appendix D).

20. REVIEW OF FINANCE DOCUMENTATION

20.1 To receive and retrospectively approve the list of cheque payments 011118 – 011119 (sheets 866-867) totalling £2,172.34

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

The list of cheque payments 011118 – 011119 (sheets 866-867) totalling £2,172.34 are received and retrospectively approved.

20.2 To receive and retrospectively approve direct debit payments for the period 1st May 2020 to 31st July 2020 (sheets 172-174) totalling £88,194.82

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

The direct debit payments for the period 1st May 2020 to 31st July 2020 (sheets 172-174) totalling £88,194.82 are received and retrospectively approved.

20.3 To receive and retrospectively approve BACS payments BACS 265 to BACS 275 totalling £44,643.12

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

BACS payments BACS 265 to BACS 275 totalling £44,643.12 are received and retrospectively approved.

20.4 To receive and retrospectively approve Online Faster Payments FP007 to FP016 comprising of 29 individual payments totalling £75,104.79. Online Faster Payments have replaced cheque payments due to the lockdown and working from home because of the COVID-19 Pandemic.

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

Online Faster Payments FP007 to FP016 comprising of 29 individual payments totalling £75,104.79 are approved retrospectively.

20.5 Retrospective approval of the Investment Account for the period 20th May to 20th August 2020

The paper was noted (see Appendix D).

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

The Investment Account for the period 20th May to 20th August 2020 is approved retrospectively.

20.6 Report by Chairman on Bank Reconciliation and Petty Cash check

Cllr S Hitchings carried out a petty cash check on Monday 14th September 2020 and confirmed that the monthly bank reconciliation had been undertaken during the period and everything was found to be in order.

20.7 Bank Reconciliation to 31st July 2020

The paper was noted (see Appendix E).

21. **REVIEW OF CURRENT BANKING PROCESS**

The paper was noted (see Appendix F).

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

- **The authorisation by Councillors for BACS Payments – Commercial Online Banking is to be done remotely with the confirmation email attached to the payment analysis form and financial regulations updated.**
- **The authorisation of BACS Payments and online banking faster payments are to be done remotely with the confirmation email attached to each payment analysis form. The email is to include the payment reference and the batch total amount for each payment. The Financial Regulations are to be amended accordingly.**
- **Cllr L Hitchings requested that ‘Vice Chairman’ is included, to provide additional cover, and that it is explicit that two family members are not to be involved in the same transaction. The amended wording is highlighted within the text, as follows:**

“5.3 A schedule of payment of money shall be prepared by the RFO and together with the relevant supporting invoices and list of payments made via BACS / Faster payments must be checked by the two members to ensure that the Town Clerk’s initials or, in his/her absence, those of the Chairman / Vice Chairman of Council are noted on the invoices as “Payment Authorised”. If the “Payment Authorised” has the signature of the Chairman/Vice Chairman of Council, then he/she cannot sign the relevant cheque/payment. The Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Finance & Staffing Committee should not sign cheques/make payments as they will be responsible for checking the full list of payments which shall include cheques, BACS payments, online banking faster payments, direct debits, standing orders and telepay and which will be submitted to the quarterly Finance & Staffing Committee for retrospective approval and minuted accordingly. Regarding Faster Payments on business online banking, two members of the same family must not be allowed to be an ‘authorising user’.

- **Barnes will now be paid via online banking by faster payment.**
- **Direct Debits remain the same so that Councillors can have sight of the invoices as there are too many to scan over and the salaries payment requires two signatures.**
- **Payments are made via online business banking with a transfer to Blandford Forum Town Council. If a payment needs to be made to a supplier, then a faster payment can be made.**

ACTION: TOWN COUNCIL

22. **REVIEW OF FINANCIAL POSITION AS AT 31ST AUGUST 2020**

The paper was noted (see Appendix G).

23. **TO RECEIVE AN UPDATE ON THE CCLA FUND AND CONSIDER HOW TO PROCEED**

The paper was noted (see Appendix H).

24. **REVIEW OF ASSET REGISTER**

The paper was noted (see Appendix H).

25. TO RECEIVE AN UPDATE ON THE YOUTH CENTRE SLA GRANT AND CONSIDER HOW TO PROCEED

The paper was noted (see Appendix J).

It was PROPOSED by Cllr S Hitchings, SECONDED by Cllr White and AGREED unanimously that a **RECOMMENDATION is made to full Council that the Town Council**

- **Continues with the current SLA for 2020/21 and waits to receive all the reports/signed accounts required for the 2020/21 grant monies before it can be released; and**
- **Transfers the £15,000 in accruals from the 219/20 financial year to Reserves budget line 1006 Youth Services and continues to wait for the signed annual accounts before releasing the 2019/20 grant monies.**

ACTION: TOWN COUNCIL

26. TO RECEIVE A REPORT ON MARK JAMES BANKRUPTCY AND INSOLVENCY

The paper was noted (see Appendix K).

It was PROPOSED by Cllr Carter, SECONDED by Cllr Cross and AGREED unanimously that a **RECOMMENDATION is made to full Council that**

The sum of £51.90 is written off to bad debts and the VAT of £10.38 reclaimed.

ACTION: TOWN COUNCIL

It was noted that Mr James has been welcomed back to the Corn Exchange as a hirer w/c 7th September 2020.

27. CONFIDENTIAL

It was PROPOSED by Cllr Carter, SECONDED by Cllr Osborne 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.

27.1 Town Clerk's Report

Nothing to report.

27.2 To note the Town Clerk's Appraisal (in accordance with Standing Orders)

This was carried out online using Microsoft Teams on Wednesday 20th May 2020 with Cllrs Lindsay and S Hitchings.

27.3 To receive a report regarding the Town Council's salaries budget and current workload and consider suggestions for the 2021/2022 budget

There were no requests for the Committee to consider. It was noted that there is an underspend in the Salaries budget 2020/21 due to budgeted funds for two requests for additional hours that have either been withdrawn or not been approved.

The Meeting closed at 8:49pm.

SIGNED:

DATED: