

Main issues covered: Town Council reserves; Civic Hall hire rates; Payment schedules; Bank reconciliations; NALC media release

MINUTES OF THE FINANCE & GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE MEETING HELD AT 8.00PM ON MONDAY 22ND SEPTEMBER 2014 IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER, CIVIC HALL, POYNTON.

PRESENT

Chairman: Cllr M Beanland

Cllrs. L A Clarke, Mrs J Saunders and G Smith

Attending under SO 54: Cllr P Hoyland substituting for Cllr H Murray, and Cllr R West substituting for Cllr G Bartos

Attending under SO 56: Cllr Ms R Horsman

8. Apologies for absence

Cllrs. G Bartos, C Gorst, H Murray, and A Smith

9. Absent

Cllr B Lewis

10. Declarations of Disclosable Pecuniary or Other Interests

Councillors declared a general interest in agenda item 13 on room hire rates for the Civic Hall, since they are also hirers.

11. Previous meeting minutes

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the Finance and General Purposes Committee meeting held on 16th June 2014 are approved as an accurate record and signed by the Chairman (4 – 2abs)

12. Update on the Town Council's Reserves

The Clerk provided an overview of his written report on the Town Council's Reserves following the recent Town Council meeting where the increased budget on the Civic Hall/Library project was approved. This was to provide Committee members with a better understanding of the reserves position.

Cllr Clarke asked about the position of the minimum three months reserve the Town Council is required to retain. The Clerk confirmed that this is not at risk and will be retained.

Cllr G Smith asked if the Town Council would be retaining the funds set aside for any overruns on the project, adding that that money should only be used if an overrun is identified, otherwise it will go into the provisional sums and become part of the budget.

The Clerk explained that there will be a contract between CE and the main contractor, and a separate contract between CE and the Town Council. The arrangement with CE will be that regardless of whatever payments they make to the contractors, the Town Council will be presented with three or four equalised invoices. Also any retention monies will only be handed over when CE and the Town Council are satisfied with the work. The Clerk added that as part of Cllr A Smith's brief that he presented to the Town Council, he stated that the money will be monitored very carefully and there would be very clear governance for authorising any unforeseen expenditure as a charge to contingency. There will also be a time lag in the payments made to Cheshire East.

Cllr West asked who is specifically mandated to release the money, is it a Committee or the Town Council? The Clerk explained the process as he understood it. This would first be considered by the Civic Hall/Library Integration Working Group, who will make recommendations to F&GP. This would then be presented to the Town Council, as part of the regular update process in place.

Members debated fully the monitoring, accountability and transparency of managing funds for the project. The Clerk also reminded Members of the wording of the Standing Order on payment of accounts. Cllr Mrs Saunders noted that this is a public Committee whose decisions are completely transparent and fully debated. In her view it is now for F&GP to control the budget as they have been mandated to do so. Cllr Clarke clarified that if there is any risk of going over budget then this has to go back to the Town Council. While there is monitoring within the budget the authority is delegated to the F&GP Committee. The Chairman clarified that there is a procedure in Standing Orders and Cllr A Smith will provide regular updates as a standing agenda item at FIED Committee meetings, and to the full Town Council.

RESOLVED: That the written report by the Clerk is received; that it is noted that the Town Council reserves will not fall below the three month minimum; that for the duration of the scheme involving the Civic Hall and Library it will also be a standing agenda item on this Committee for updates on the financial performance of the scheme (NC)

13. Civic Hall Room Hire Rates

The Clerk's written brief on the Civic Hall room hire rates was considered by members. The Clerk explained that the purpose was to simplify the room hire

structure in line with other venues in Poynton, and have a simple hourly rate. The only variation is whether to apply an uplift for hirers from outside Poynton and commercial organisations, and also whether a discount on block booking is offered for ten or more per year.

Cllr Beanland asked if there would be a considerable uplift on room rates. The Clerk said this had yet to be calculated, and he would present recommended rates to this Committee in due course. The Clerk does have a spreadsheet of all the comparative rates across Poynton and it be would necessary to ensure that the rates are pitched at a reasonably competitive rate. There is also a requirement to include VAT at 20% from April 2015.

Cllr Clarke said that some incentivisation of rates may be needed to bring hirers back to the Civic Hall after the inevitable disruption caused by the Civic Hall/Library project, and he argued for the Clerk to be given some discretion regarding this, to which there was no dissent.

RESOLVED: That the written brief from the Clerk is received and that Option 2 is approved with Option 3 available at the discretion of the Clerk for regular hirers (NC)

14. Payment Schedules for June, July and August 2014

RESOLVED: That the Payment Schedules for June, July and August 2014 are received (NC)

15. Bank Reconciliations for May 2014 through August 2014

RESOLVED: That the Bank Reconciliations for May 2014 through August 2014, as verified by the Chairman, Cllr Gorst, are noted (NC)

16. NALC Media Release

RESOLVED: That the NALC media release of 1st September 2014 concerning the Government's recent decision not to share a percentage of business rates with for town and parish councils is noted (NC)

The meeting concluded at 8.45pm