

**Minutes of the Finance & Policy Committee meeting held on
Thursday 20th March 2014
in the Committee Room, Clayport Street, Alnwick at 7.00pm**

Present: Cllrs Symonds (Chairman), S Allcroft, P Allcroft, P Broom, C Goodfellow, B Grisdale, G Mavin, S Patience, R Roberts, M Swinbank.

In attendance: W Batey, Chief Officer and Town Clerk, J Pibworth, Administration Assistant.

FP 13/17 Apologies

None.

FP 13/18 Declarations of Interest

None.

FP 13/19 2013/14 Budget Update

The clerk circulated the committee budget as at the 20th March 2014. This was examined line by line and showed that expenditure was £68,294. The end of year prediction was expenditure of £74,228 which will be a slight underspend. There were no areas of concern.

The Town Clerk circulated an expenditure briefing paper, setting out the scope, nature and limit of expenditure for the Town Council under Section 137 of the Local Government Act 1972. He took councillors through the document and explained that the Town Council were well within the maximum expenditure allowed under s137. The maximum expenditure for the Town Council under s137 in 2013/14 was £6.98 x 6486 electors = £45,272.28. At present the spend was £13,177 although this was likely to hit £17,888.

RESOLVED: To receive the budget figures and update.

The Town Clerk explained that the £50k bond invested with Santander was reaching maturity and needed to be reinvested. On maturity the Bond would be worth £50,875. The clerk suggested reinvesting with Santander for 12 months at 1% and also looking for another investment for when the endowment is received from Northumberland County Council for Swansfield Park play area. Councillors asked the Town Clerk to check with NALC as to whether there is any guidance as to banks and building societies that are recommended for local councils.

RESOLVED: To reinvest the £50,875 bond with Santander for 12 months.

FP 13/20 Consultation on the Revised Parish Charter

The Councillors went through the 'Revised Northumberland Town and Parish Council Charter' document answering the Consultation Questions. The following comments were made:

2. Effective Joint Working

Consultation Question 1

Needs to better reflect the public being engaged in the democratic process
Add bullet: NCC and local councils should promote an active democracy

3. Communications

Consultation Question 2

Need to agree which senior managers from NCC can be made available to attend meetings with local councils.

Clarification needed on what the meetings with NCC are trying to achieve.

NCC website needs to be updated with agendas and minutes of all T & PC Liaison Working Group meetings. Add this to the last bullet: point.

4. Engagement

Consultation Question 3

NCC Bullet 1 - take out the word 'important'

NCC Bullet 3 - reword to include the phrases 'at an early stage' and 'on going'

NCC Bullet 4 - reword to include the phrases 'at an early stage' and 'on going'

NCC Bullet 5 - take out the word 'complex'

NCC Bullet 5 - take out the word 'contentious'

NCC Bullet 6 - take out the words 'where appropriate to do so'

T&PC Bullet 5 - take out the word 'contentious'

5. Finance

Consultation Question 4

NCC Bullet 1 - change word 'inform' to 'consult'

Add bullet: Reference to how referendums are dealt with

6. Communications

Consultation Question 5

NCC Bullet 1 - insert the wording ' where agreed with individual T&PCs'

T&PC Bullet 1 - insert the wording ' where agreed with individual T&PCs'

6. Communications

Consultation Question 7

We would ask that additional bullets be added to the Charter to reflect the following item:

The Charter needs to reflect how NCC plans to incorporate T&PCs Neighbourhood Plans.

RESOLVED: The Town Clerk to reflect the suggestions in a document to be circulated to all councillors for comment before submitting to NCC.

FP 13/21 Year End Procedures

a) Internal Audit Check List

The clerk circulated a checklist showing the internal audit checklist, the controls and the tests required.

RESOLVED: The Internal audit checklist was approved.

b) Appointment of Internal Auditor

The Town Clerk explained that David Grindle who has done the internal audit for a number of years has now retired. The Clerk then updated the councillors on the quotes he had received for undertaking the 2013/14 audit and the qualifications of the individuals.

RESOLVED: To appoint Norman Dunn as internal auditor for the 2013/14 audit.

c) Review of Effectiveness of Internal Audit

The clerk circulated a document covering Scope of Internal Audit, Independence of Internal Auditor, Competence of Internal Auditor, Relationships and Audit Planning and Reporting. The Councillors were happy that this reflected the needs of the Town Council.

RESOLVED: That the internal audit be accepted as effective.

d) Internal Controls

The clerk circulated a copy of the internal controls that are in existence. These covered payments, petty cash, wages, records, income, reporting, standing orders & financial regulations and insurance. Councillors were happy with the controls that were currently in place.

RESOLVED: That the current internal controls are satisfactory.

e) Consideration of Risk Management

The clerk circulated an assessment of risks document. This included Category, Risk, Control Factors and New Proposals for 2014/15 (if any). The risk categories included Financial, Legal, Operational and Business Continuity. Councillors discussed the document and asked that the following be added:

- that they review the non compliance with FOI requests by adding it to an agenda during the year
- that the word 'inexperienced' be taken out of the 2nd risk under Business Continuity.

RESOLVED: To accept the Assessment of Risks report and Action Plan with the amendments outlined above.

FP 13/22 Consideration of the need for an Economic and Training Advisory Group

Councillor G Mavin took councillors through the document he had circulated regarding the need for an Economic and Training Advisory Group. Councillors were in agreement with the overall issues but felt that more research was needed before this could be taken forward.

Councillors Roberts and Patience explained that a section on economic development is in the Alnwick and Denwick Neighbourhood Plan and although this was not quite ready to go out for consultation they felt the draft document could be circulated to councillors for comment.

RESOLVED: To raise the issue of Economic Development and Training at the meeting with NCC on March 31st and ask who is dealing with Alnwick issues.

REOLVED: To contact the Alnwick Chamber of Trade to see if a Town Council representative can attend their meetings.

FP 13/23 Any Other Urgent Business

None

Meeting closed at 9.25pm