

**Minutes of the Finance & Policy Committee meeting held on  
Thursday 30th July 2015  
at the Mechanics Institute, Percy Street, Alnwick at 7.00pm**

**Present:** Cllrs S Allcroft, P Allcroft, B Gridsale, G Mavin, S Mavin, S Patience and A Symmonds.

**In attendance:** W Batey, Chief Officer and Town Clerk, J Pibworth, Assistant to the Town Clerk.

**FP 15/08 Apologies**

Councillors G Castle, D Farrar and R Roberts.

**FP 15/09 Declarations of Interest**

None.

**FP 15/10 Budget update 2015/16**

The Town Clerk circulated the committee budget as at 28th July 2015. This showed expenditure at £20,195 and includes the payments approved at the July Full Council meeting. This was reviewed line by line with the following highlighted by the Town Clerk:

ADMINISTRATION - currently at £9,505. Figure don on budget as only showing one month for admin support.

RENT - no rent recorded as not invoiced yet.

NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN - 1st quarter fee for 2015/16.

TOWN TWINNING - Cost of French exchange get together at Bailiffgate Museum.

OFFICE ACCOMMODATION - Rent figure is for a six month period to November 2015.

Councillor G Mavin asked what the budget for Town Team was. The Town Clerk explained that this was a small contribution that the Town Council made to the Town Team to add value. Councillor G Mavin then asked that the committee received feedback from the Town Team meetings. The Town Clerk advised that he would add this to future agendas.

Councillor G Mavin asked if the housing survey was included in the figure for Neighbourhood Plan/Community Action Plan Delivery. The Town Clerk advised that this was included along with other ADNP and CAP actions. Councillor S Allcroft asked what the Income figure shown in March 2015 was for. The Town Clerk explained that this was the proportion of the insurance figure paid by the Mechanics Institute.

**RESOLVED: To receive the budget update.**

**FP 15/11 Updates**

a) Internal Auditor 2015/16 - The Town Clerk advised the committee that the only action recommended in the Internal Auditor's report was for a risk assessment to be carried out on all Town Council investments.

He also advised that Norman Dunn, who had done previous audits, would be unable to do the audit for 2015/16. Councillor S Allcroft asked if the auditor was usually someone local. The Town Clerk advised that it was usually someone from within Northumberland. The Town Clerk also advised that he would get quotes to present at the September committee meeting.

The Town Clerk also advised that the External Audit report was due at the end of September. He also advised that this would cost more than the previous year as the Town Council's expenditure was up on 2014/15.

Councillor S Allcroft asked if it was compulsory to have internal and external audits. The Town Clerk advised that both were a legal requirement.

b) Project and Funding Officer Post - The Town Clerk advised the committee of the proposed recruitment timetable for the post:

Advertising August 23rd to September 16th 2015. The advert will be put together by Councillor Roberts and the Town Clerk.

Interviews September 23rd 2015.

Councillor Patience asked who would be on the interview panel. The Town Clerk advised that it would be a selection panel of three people for short listing and interviewing made Councillor Symmonds (as Finance & Policy chair), Councillor S Allcroft and G Mavin. Councillor Castle and Roberts were reserves.

c) Community Governance Review - The Town Clerk advised that the Town Council had formally requested NCC to carry out a Community Governance Review. No feedback has yet been received. He advised that NCC may write to all businesses and properties in the proposed area and that this would be a couple of properties and Covance.

Councillor Symmonds advised that the main reason for asking for Community Governance Review was to maintain the high level of amenities in the extended area.

d) Investment Working Group - The Town Clerk advised that a meeting had been held and a further meeting had been recommended. An Investment Strategy would be bought to Finance & Policy Committee then to Full Council for approval. This strategy needed to include the % or amount of money to be put into Reserves, Investments (bonds, markets etc).

He also advised that there was potentially another £15,000 that could be invested.

Councillor S Allcroft felt that the key point was to spread the money across several investment types.

Councillor G Mavin asked if any investment managers had been identified. Councillor P Allcroft advised that this had been talked about but no fixed list had been produced.

Councillor Symmonds said that there had been a very good discussion at the last meeting. He also advised that the next meeting was on August 2nd.

### **FP 15/12 Grant Process 2015/16**

The Town Clerk issued a revised Grant Application Criteria sheet which he summarised. He felt that the process could be started earlier in the year to give people more time to submit their application and for these to be considered by the Committee.

Councillor S Allcroft asked how people were notified of the grant process. The Town Clerk advised that an advert was put in the press and on the Town Council's website. He added that some organisations contact him to enquire about the process.

Councillor Grisdale asked of the Gazette could run a series using three case studies of previous grant recipients.

Councillor G Mavin asked if a grant application could be considered from a new organisation who had not historical financial information. The Town Clerk advised that they would be considered. Councillor Symmonds added that all organisations should have a budget / financial model which they could submit with the grant application. He asked to include this on the criteria sheet and the Grant Application form. The Town Clerk added that people could also be asked to phone if they had any queries.

Councillor G Mavin asked if the press release could include details of the maximum grant that

could be considered. The Town Clerk felt that examples could be given in the press release. Councillor S Allcroft asked how much work was involved in accessing the grant applications. The Town Clerk advised that the process usually took a few days and December 1st could be given as the cut off date.

**RESOLVED: The Town Clerk to circulate the grant documents to councillors who should return comments to him by August 31st.**

**FP 15/13 Any Other Urgent Business**

None.

Meeting closed at 7.45pm