

**Minutes of the Finance & Policy Committee meeting held on  
Thursday 1<sup>st</sup> July 2021  
at the St James's Church Centre, Pottergate, Alnwick at 6.30pm**

**Present:** Councillors G Watson, S Allcroft, M Harrington, J Humphries, J Parker, M Swinbank, A Symmonds and L Wood-Mitchell.

**In attendance:** P Hately, Town Clerk; J Pibworth, Assistant to the Town Clerk; T Kirton Project & Funding Officer.

**FP 21/01 Apologies**  
Councillors Lyford and Wearn.

**FP 21/02 Declarations of Interest**  
None.

**FP 21/03 Minutes of the last meeting**  
The minutes of the last meeting on 25<sup>th</sup> March 2021 were tabled for approval.

**RESOLVED: The minutes of the Finance & Policy Meeting held on 25<sup>th</sup> March 2021 were agreed as a true copy.**

**FP 21/04 Minutes of the last meeting - matters arising not on the agenda**  
FP20/36 Grant Applications (St Michael's Church) Councillor Swinbank asked if there was any update. The Town Clerk advised that he had not been able to get a definitive answer but would recommend that the Town Council did not offer any funding.

FP20/40 Insurance Councillor Watson asked if the Tow Clerk had an update on insurance. The Town Clerk advised that he had reviewed the insurance and gone with the current insurer, Zurich.

**FP 21/05 Budget Update 2021/22**  
The Assistant to the Town Clerk took councillors through the budget report produced from the new accounting software. She advised that the total net Expenditure to date (June 30<sup>th</sup> 2021) was £33,438.73 and the total Income £161,435.62.

The Assistant to the Town Clerk highlighted the main budget lines where there had been expenditure this financial year:

Administration - £13458.76 (2 months salaries plus all staff pension payments)

Insurance - £5,818.29 (annual insurance)

Alnwick Partnership - £541.62 (dog bag dispensers)

Audit fee - £650 (internal audit fee for 2020/21)

Subscriptions - £1,468.58 (NALC annual subscription)

Office costs - £485.08 (3 months phone, stamps, 1 months copying charges)

Office Accommodation – £5,400 (2 qtrs rent paid)

Project & Funding Officer - £25,335.19 (11 months' salary)

CCTV - £588.75 (2 call outs)

Bank charges - £49.26 (2 months charges)

INCOME - The Assistant to the Town Clerk explained the income figure was made up of Loyalty Payments - £13.34; Mechanics Institute recharge 2020/21 - £2,514.28; Precept £158,908.00.

Councillor Wood-Mitchell asked what the Environmental Grants were for. The Town Clerk advised that these were for organisations who wanted to undertake tree planting and other environmental projects.

Councillor Wood-Mitchell felt the Town Council should offer financial support for the businesses who had been unable to take advantage of the Northumberland Estates funding made available through the Chamber of Trade for shop front improvements.

The Town Clerk advised that the Town Council had a more holistic approach to supporting the town centre rather than individual businesses.

Councillor Wood-Mitchell felt the Town Council should do something to support the businesses in the town.

Councillor Allcroft felt it would not be appropriate to give to individual businesses.

The Town Clerk advised that something on a more generic basis could be looked at.

Councillor Watson explained that the Town Council needed to be careful as it was public money. He added that Alnwick District Council used to have a Shop Front refurbishment scheme.

Councillor Harrington advised that loans of £50k were available to businesses with 0% interest for 1 year.

Councillor Symmonds said he was sympathetic but felt that some landlords, who were not bothered about the state of their buildings, could use it to replace their own spend. He thought that NCC could be asked, through our County Councillors, what support might be in place.

Councillor Swinbank advised that there was support from central government which some businesses had not claimed.

Councillor Harrington felt it was important to ask more shops to open on Sundays.

Councillor Wood-Mitchell advised that more food establishments opened on Sundays.

**RESOLVED: To note the 2021/22 budget update.**

**FP 21/06 CCTV Funding Request**

Councillor Watson gave councillors a summary of report produced by the Project & Funding Officer following discussions with the police.

The Project & Funding Officer advised that Arriva are upgrading their CCTV cameras and that the Town Council could request that these are linked to the town system.

Councillor Watson said he was a supporter of CCTV but was disappointed that the police were unable to access CCTV footage for Town Council asset issues (e.g planters being hit).

Councillor Humphries felt that CCTV was important but that data on arrests and crime relating to the current CCTV system should be available. He also felt that a demonstration of the system would be helpful.

Councillor Allcroft felt that, as the Town Council were being asked to fund the improvements to the system, they needed to have some power as to what they need from the system.

Councillor Parker asked if the Town Council had asked why the police were unable to help the Town Council with asset issues. Councillor Watson advised that it was because the system was not monitored and would take staff resource to do this.

Councillor Parker felt that the Town Council should take a stand on the matter.

Councillor Allcroft felt that a representative of the police, at least Inspector level, should attend a Full Council meeting.

Councillor Harrington asked how the Town Council got the CCTV system to manage. The Assistant to the Town Clerk advised that the system used to be managed by NCC but that they had decided several years ago that they would no longer maintain CCTV systems in towns so if Alnwick wanted a CCTV system the Town Council would have to provide this.

Councillor Wood-Mitchell felt that the system could be monitored in the Town Councils office. Councillor Parker advised that there were complex laws about what who can see CCTV footage and what can and can't be viewed.

The Project & Funding Officer advised that the Town Council's office was not manned outside Monday to Friday and that the police do use the recordings to action crimes.

Councillor Symmonds felt that although the Town Council had approved the installation of the existing CCTV system a vote was needed on any further funding allocation. He added that as the point of CCTV is to prevent crime, he was supportive of funding being allocated for some new cameras.

Councillor Harrington felt that Alnwick was not getting value for money as far as police on the beat in town.

Councillor Watson felt that the Town Council write to the police advising that, whilst the Town Council support the CCTV system, they request someone attends to discuss improvements in detail.

**RESOLVED: To ask the police to attend a Full Council meeting to discuss policing issues and their request for further CCTV funding.**

#### **FP 21/07**

#### **Council Premises**

The Town Clerk explained that the Town Council might have to leave Greenwell Lane Office by the end of the calendar year. He advised that a Town Centre presence might not be necessary additional storage and workshop facilities were a high priority.

Councillor Symmonds advised that Councillor Broom had suggested that the Town Council purchase a property and felt that the Town Clerk be asked to undertake a feasibility study on current and future requirements. He felt that would enable rents to be amalgamated and could offer storage facilities for community use.

Councillor Wood-Mitchell asked if the Town Clerk had a property in mind. The Town Clerk advised that he didn't.

Councillor Swinbank asked if the idea was to roll the location or would it be possible to have a small town centre premises.

The Town Clerk advised that a loan would be needed, and this could be problematic.

Councillor Harrington thought that a suitable property could cost around £500k.

**RESOLVED: To ask the Town Clerk to undertake a feasibility study on the Town Council's current and future premises needs.**

#### **FP 21/08**

#### **Human Resources**

Councillor Watson explained that this item was about pensions and salaries.

Councillor Symmonds explained that some time ago legislation meant that the Town Council needed to offer pensions for all employees. He advised that when this was done the intention was to review this in the future and felt now was the right time to ensure that the Town Council are paying the right level of pension for future needs.

Councillor Allcroft asked how this review should be done.

Councillor Watson advised that this would be done by a Staffing Committee.

Councillor Symmonds suggested this committee was the Chair and 2 other councillors.

Councillor Harrington explained that the Local Government Pension Scheme was available to all employees, but employees could say no to being enrolled. He added that a pension contribution needed to be above 5% to be useful.

The Assistant to the Town Clerk advised that four employees were enrolled with the NEST Pension scheme, one did not want to be included in any pension scheme and one was already had a pension scheme which the Town Council paid into.

Councillor Wood-Mitchell suggested that external advice might be helpful.

Councillor Watson advised that this could be decided as part of the review.

**RESOLVED: To set up a Staffing sub-committee made up of the Chair, Vice Chair of Finance & Policy and Councillor Symmonds to review pensions and salaries.**

**FP 21/09 Internal Audit Report**

The Town Clerk explained that the Internal Audit Report for 2020/21 had been received and briefed councillors on its content.

He advised that the audit was satisfactory and that no recommendations needed to be brought to their attention. There were minor matters which he noted:

Income – Cemetery income regarding non-residents is not clear on all paperwork.

Income – input error had overstated Bank Interest income by £1,000 (corrected)

Bank Reconciliation – needs to be taken to Full Council on more occasions.

**RESOLVED: To approve the Internal Audit report.**

<b>FP 21/10</b>	<p><b>Alnwick Town Council Policies - Update</b></p> <p>The Town Clerk issued a list of current Town Council policies and explained that there were some gaps especially with regard to HR, which could be done in one policy. He suggested that the policies were reviewed by the relevant committees and brought to Finance &amp; Policy committee over the next 12 months. He also recommended that the process of co-option was reviewed in the Constitution.</p> <p>Councillor Symmonds reminded councillors that the staff appraisal system was important and that the Town Clerk reviewed all other staff and that he was reviewed by the Mayor.</p> <p>Councillor Parker felt the Town Council could use NALC polices as templates.</p> <p>Councillor Symmonds explained that appraisals were used to identify strengths and weaknesses along with training needs.</p> <p>Councillor Wood-Mitchell advised she hadn't seen any policies since becoming a councillor.</p> <p>Councillor Harrington felt it was important to have a whistle blowing policy.</p> <p><b>RESOLVED: To review all Town Council policies over the next 12 months.</b></p>
<b>FP 21/11</b>	<p><b>Any Other Urgent Business</b></p> <p>Councillor Allcroft asked if the meeting times could be reviewed and this committee changed to 6.30pm.</p> <p>Meeting closed at 8.34pm</p>