



POLICY, FINANCE & PERSONNEL COMMITTEE

Minutes of a Committee meeting held on Thursday 8 August 2019 at 10.30am in the Town Hall

Present: Cllr James Buczkowski (in the chair) and Cllrs: Kerry Baldwin and Gordon Guest

Judy Morris: Clerk

- 1. APOLOGIES:** Cllrs: Eileen Andrews (health) and Lloyd Knight (work).
- 2. CHAIRMAN:** Clerk reported that the Chairman has recently resigned from the Council and the Committee will need to elect a new Chairman in order to proceed with the meeting.

RESOLVED: That Cllr James Buczkowski is elected Chairman for the meeting. Proposed Cllr Kerry Baldwin, seconded Cllr Gordon Guest.

NOTE: Mr Thompson requested a point of order as the Council's Standing Orders require that the Committee Chairman is appointed by the full council. It was explained that Cllr Buczkowski had been elected as an interim measure, for this meeting only.

- 3. DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS:** None.

4. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION:

- (i) **Yousuf Quayum** stated that he has received correspondence from the Clerk which he considered to be inappropriate and has no idea why a particular comment had any relevance to his planning application.

The Clerk apologised as it was not her intention to cause offence.

RESOLVED: That the Chairman will liaise with the Clerk and review the letter that was sent.

He then explained that he has a track record of transforming old buildings and since 2012 has done everything he can to provide good quality development in Cullompton. He asked about the Council's policy with regard to planning policy and how the Town Council reconciles the decisions it makes. He felt it was difficult for Councillors to make decisions about planning matters if they don't understand all the planning policies and regulations. He requested clarification of the policy the Council is working to.

The Chairman thanked Mr Quayum for making the Committee aware of his concerns.

- (ii) **Cales Briddick** asked the Committee how the Council deals with the situation of criminal activity reported on Facebook. She reported that there has been a lot of negative comments on Facebook and suggested some form of compromise.
- (iii) **Mike Thompson:** Reported a complaint he has made to the External Auditor and felt that this matter should be discussed in the main section of the meeting and not in Part 2 so that the public can be made aware of his complaint which alleges possible criminal activities. He considered that the Clerk should make the Police aware of these allegations.

RESOLVED: That Agenda Item 14(ii) is brought forward and dealt with as the next item. Proposed Cllr James Buczkowski, seconded Cllr Kerry Baldwin.

5. **COMPLAINTS: External audit: To receive details of complaint made to the external auditor:** The complaint was considered, it was felt that the accounts had been subject to audit by both an internal and external auditor and no causes for concern had been found. The Council has also recently changed its internal auditor who felt that there was no problem with the accounts.

The complainant was asked if they were willing to share any evidence of misdoing as no evidence has yet been provided.

The complainant stated that he has reported this matter to the Council before and his complaints had fallen on 'deaf ears'. He suggested that he may take out a private prosecution.

RESOLVED: That the Council arranges for an independent internal audit of fuels costs/van usage to be carried out. Compare fuel costs for the past 4-5 years and van mileage (log-book) against fuel purchased. Proposed Cllr James Buczkowski, seconded Cllr Kerry Baldwin.

6. **MINUTES:** The Minutes of the previous meeting held on 11 July 2019 were approved and signed as a correct record. Proposed Cllr Kerry Baldwin, seconded Cllr Gordon Guest.

7. **RESOLUTIONS: Noted.**

RESOLVED: That the Clerk purchases a filing cabinet for her office at a cost of no more than £200. Proposed Cllr James Buczkowski, seconded Cllr Kerry Baldwin.

8. **COMMENTS, COMPLAINTS AND FREEDOM OF INFORMATION REQUESTS:**

- (i) **To receive details of any comments and complaints for July 2019:** Noted
- (ii) **To receive details of Freedom of Information requests for July 2019:** Noted
- (iii) **To receive request for an internal review of Freedom of Information decision:** The Clerk's decision not to release the information was reviewed. The Clerk explained that she made the decision not to release the information because the Council does not hold the information.

RESOLVED: That, as the Committee is satisfied that the information doesn't exist then it can't be provided. However, the concern raised about the lack of a policy will be considered by the Council. Proposed Cllr James Buczkowski, seconded Cllr Kerry Baldwin.

- (iv) **To receive details of any Subject Access Requests for July 2019:** Noted.

9. FINANCE

(i) Financial Reports: To receive Financial Reports for July 2019.

(a) **Bank Reconciliation:** Noted

NOTE: Clerk explained the bank reconciliation did not balance as a receipt of £70 was added after the month had been closed down. She provided members with a bank reconciliation and balance sheet to show that this error has now been corrected.

(b) **Balance Sheet:** Noted.

(c) **Income & Expenditure Report:** Noted.

(d) **July 2019 Payments:** Noted.

(e) **June 2019 Credit card payments:** Noted.

(f) **July 2019 Credit card payments:** Noted.

(ii) **Devon Pension Fund Employer Briefing – 2019 Actuarial Valuation:** Noted.

10. STAFFING AND TRAINING MATTERS:

(i) **Retirement of Town Clerk: To receive formal notice that the Town Clerk intends to retire on 31 March 2020:** Noted.

(ii) **Setting up a working group: To agree way forward.**

RESOLVED: That, as Cllr Gordon Guest was involved in the two previous Town Clerk appointments, he is appointed as Chairman of a Staffing Working Group. In the initial stages the working group will focus solely on the appointment of a replacement Town Clerk. All Council members to be offered the opportunity join the group. Proposed Cllr James Buczkowski, seconded Cllr Kerry Baldwin.

NOTE: Member of the public stated that as there is public interest in council activities that the public should have some input.

(iii) **To review any training needs:** Clerk reported that she had attended a very comprehensive and worthwhile Emergency at Work First Aid training course the previous day along with two other staff members and three councillors.

11. **WEBSITE AND IT: To consider any IT or website related matters:** Discussion about improving the website to take account of social media.

RESOLVED: That an IT Review item is included on the agenda for a future meeting.

12. **POLICY: To receive Minutes of Policy Review Working Group meeting held on 31 July 2019:** Noted, recommendations to be referred to the full council for decision.

13. **CORRESPONDENCE: Any correspondence received after the date of this agenda:** None

RESOLVED that due to the sensitive/commercial nature of the business to be discussed, the following items are dealt with as Part 2 business and, in accord with the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960 and the Local Government Act 1972 the press and public are requested to leave at this point and the next section of the meeting is conducted in private. Proposed Cllr Kerry Baldwin, seconded Cllr Gordon Guest.

14. STAFFING: Staffing report: To receive update report

(i) **Complaint to the External Auditor:**

RESOLVED: That a response is sent to the complainant, with a copy to the External Auditor, as follows:

- The Council is satisfied that the Clerk has only used the Council's solicitor for Council business.
- The mobile phone contract was approved by the PFP Committee at a meeting on 19 June 2018 and will be reviewed when the contract comes up for renewal.
- The Committee regularly reviews staff overtime and will continue to do so.
- The Committee has instructed the Clerk to arrange for an independent audit of fuel usage.

(ii) **Contacting staff in an emergency.** Report of an incident on a Saturday afternoon which was dealt with promptly by staff. Discussion about the most effective means of ensuring that there is emergency out of hours cover. To be considered further at the next meeting.

(iii) **Training request:** Request from Deputy Clerk for one afternoon's study leave whilst she is studying for her CiLCA. This was agreed.

(iv) **Employing an additional member of the Outdoor Team:** Job Description and Person Specification reviewed at the previous meeting.

RESOLVED: That, subject to a review of the Job Description, the Clerk starts the process of advertising for an additional member of staff to join the Outdoor Team. Proposed Cllr James Buczkowski, seconded Cllr Kerry Baldwin.

RESOLVED: That the as the time is 12.30pm that the meeting continues for a further 15 minutes to complete the business on the agenda.

15. ASSETS AND INSURANCE: To review asset register and consider insurance estimates (to be sent under separate cover). The asset list was reviewed, it was noted that recently purchased items such as new laptops have not yet been added.

RESOLVED: That the Council re-insures with Zurich for a period of three years at a cost of £3849.66 per year (subject to change if additional items are added or removed). Proposed Cllr James Buczkowski, seconded Cllr Kerry Baldwin

NOTE: Cllr Kerry Baldwin will meet with the Town Clerk to review the asset register in detail.

16. COMPLAINTS:

(i) **Head Weir Road: To agree way forward with regard to complaint relating to Head Weir Road play area**

RESOLVED: That the Council accepts the advice of its solicitor i.e. *"that if it's not your responsibility in the lease to maintain the boundary then there is no legal obligation to do so"* and the Council's solicitor is requested to relay this decision to the complainant's solicitor stating that the Council will not be making a contribution towards the cost of a new fence and that, if they would like to pursue Mid Devon District Council's offer to make a contribution then they should

contact Mid Devon District Council direct. Proposed Cllr James Buczkowski, seconded Cllr Gordon Guest.

(ii) **External audit: To receive details of complaint made to the external auditor:** Dealt with at Item 5 and Item 12.

17. OUTSTANDING INVOICES AND PAYMENTS

(i) **To receive report (to be sent under separate cover):** Noted.

18. DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING: Thursday 12 September at 10.30am

The meeting closed at 12.45pm

SIGNED: _____

DATE: _____

DRAFT