



POLICY, FINANCE & PERSONNEL COMMITTEE

Minutes of a Committee meeting held on Wednesday 30 January 2019 at 10am at the Town Hall

Present: Cllr Iain Emmett (in the chair) and Cllrs: Eileen Andrews, Kerry Baldwin, Iain Findlay, Lloyd Knight and Mike Thompson.

Judy Morris: Clerk

Also in attendance: Two members of the public

1. **APOLOGIES:** Gordon Guest (unwell).
2. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST:** None at this stage of the meeting.
3. **PUBLIC QUESTION TIME: To receive questions from members of the public present at the meeting.**
 - (a) **James Buczkowski** asked what the Council's policy was with regard to answering public questions during the Public Question Time section of a meeting.

Discussion ensued about who decides whether a question is answered there and then or a response is sent at a later date. It was felt that, at times, there is a lack of consistency and that straightforward questions with a simple answer should be answered immediately by the Town Clerk or a Councillor with the relevant knowledge but there will be times when complicated questions will need to be deferred and a response sent at a later date.

NOTE: It was suggested that the Council reviews its policy with regard to answering questions during the Public Question Time section of a meeting.

4. **MINUTES:** The Minutes of the previous meeting held on 15 January 2019 were approved and signed as a correct record. Proposed Cllr Mike Thompson, seconded Cllr Lloyd Knight.
5. **RESOLUTIONS:** Noted

Note: Clerk to contact website management company to ask about an ftp facility.

RESOLVED: that due to the sensitive nature of the business to be discussed, the following item is 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 Mike Thompson, seconded Cllr Kerry Baldwin.

NOTE: The two members of the public present left the meeting at this point.

ITEMS DEFERRED FROM PREVIOUS MEETING (15 January 2019)

6. STAFFING

(i) To receive staffing report: Clerk asked the Committee to consider having an independent job evaluation carried out for all staff roles and salaries, primarily because, when it comes to advertising for a replacement Town Clerk, or other member of staff, it can be ensured that the salary being offered attracts people that have the competency to take over the role.

RESOLVED: That the Clerk obtains quotes for an independent job evaluation of all staff roles, to be considered further at the next meeting.

(ii) To review staff overtime report: Cllr Mike Thompson raised concern about the amount of overtime carried out by maintenance staff. It was explained that this was due, in part, to the Sunday Remembrance Service and Saturday Christmas Lights event which were both held in November. Also there are times when staff are required to stay late in the cemetery to complete a burial e.g. backfill and tidy a grave.

It was suggested that there should be more flexibility in staff working hours and better management of time.

RESOLVED: That an item is included on the agenda for the next meeting to consider keeping a record of supervisory visits.

7. OUTSTANDING INVOICES AND PAYMENTS: To receive report: Noted

8. COMPLAINTS: To review recent complaints and agree way forward: Noted

NOTE: Cllr Mike Thompson declared a personal interest in respect of the following item as he is mentioned in the email.

9. VEXATIOUS COMPLAINANTS: To receive email relating to concerns about dealing with vexatious complainants and agree way forward. Discussion about the impact on staff moral.

RESOLVED: That this is not a matter that the Council has the ability to do anything about. Suggest that the complainant refers their concerns to the Monitoring Officer.

RESOLVED: That the Committee goes into open session.

The two members of the public re-entered the room.

10. PUBLIC QUESTIONS: To receive and respond to further questions from a member of the public

The meeting was closed to enable the member of the public to address the Committee in order to explain, in more detail, his concerns with regard to questions posed as listed below.

Town Team

You have previously provided me with a copy of the Town Team's constitution (These are not terms of reference in the Council sense, indeed they were not approved along with other “terms of reference” and membership), I was looking for confirmation that the Town Team was an external unincorporated association as the constitution suggests. As you have not confirmed that it is a sub group of the Council and it does not have any terms of reference, I will assume that it is.

The background to how the Town Team came into being was explained by Cllr Mike Thompson, it is accepted that the Town Team is not a sub group of the Town Council and that, in order to be transparent, the Council should either hold the Town Team money in a separate account or the Town Team open its own bank account.

Town Team / Crier Accounts

As the Town Team is external and the Council holds its funds on Trust, a journal entry is an inappropriate way of dealing with this transaction and there should have been a payment made to the Town Team and shown as an expense.

In order to be transparent it would be prudent to invoice the Town Team for expenses rather than create a journal entry.

Budget Setting Process

I apologise for not fully explaining my concern with the budget process, the lack of a three year plan is only one of the issues.

That I, along with all tax payers, have a reasonable expectation that Cullompton Town Council will follow their own published procedures and regulations along with statutory regulations. It is also a reasonable expectation that all members of Cullompton Town Council will act with diligence and care.

- 1) The Town Council's own financial regulations quite clearly state that the budget should have been drawn up after reference to the Council's three-year financial plan, no reference has been made to this three-year plan in Clerks Report, The Finance Committee meeting or the Full Council meeting which approved the budget, nor has it been published.

This is reinforced by there being no record of Committees discussing or approving a three-year financial plan for their areas of responsibility or a record of The Full Council (or Policy, Finance and Personnel Committee) reviewing these before approving the budget.

Concern about the budget setting process and the lack of a three year financial plan. Committee Chairman and the Responsible Finance Officer should be mindful that this is a requirement of the Council's Financial Regulations.

- 2) A budget has two sides, while detailed information was given and reviewed for the forecasted expenditure, a detailed and comprehensive review of the forecasted income for 2019-2020 was not undertaken, nor was detailed information provided; an arbitrary figure (£50,750) was presented by the Clerk with no breakdown or supporting notes as to how the £50,750 was derived; on this point alone it would have been impossible for members to correctly assess the budget for reasonableness.
- 3) The Budget does not include all expenditure that the Council expects to incur.

St. Andrews car park for example, this has nil expenditure, but it is quite foreseeable and states quite clearly in the notes that the Clerk expects there to be expenditure on the car park. To say that this expenditure should not be included in the budget as it will be "offset" by income is quite wrong and *inconsistent* (you are not, for example, excluding cemetery costs as they will be offset by burial charges).

Consistency and reasonableness is key here, it is reasonable to expect that there would be a budget for St. Andrews car park expenditure and the effect of this on the overall budget would be countered by a budget for St. Andrews car park income (There may very well be a budget for St. Andrews car park income, but pursuant to point 2 it is impossible to tell, if there is, it raises the question of the income being accounted for twice).

There is also the issue of spending authority. If expenditure has not been set in the approved budget, then authority must be explicitly given by Full Council. Continuing the example of St. Andrews Car park, as there has been no budget set for 2019-2020, it is reasonable to expect any expenditure to be explicitly approved (by way of a tabled motion) by fully council before the expenditure is committed to.

Clerk explained that the budget approved by the Council is the precept budget and that the Committee will review the Council budget as soon as it has all the information it needs e.g. cost of setting up the new parking charges regime in St Andrews car park, the Council's share of the income from charges for St Andrews car park and also other items such as the cost of running the public toilet for this financial year etc.

- 4) There is also the concern of the Budget amendments not being approved by full council (£1,000 loan? From one heading to another, or perhaps even an external organisation).
This has been answered
- 5) The "Carry Forward" on the budget does not add up and is inconsistent, what exactly is being carried forward for the specified project OR is being returned to general funds.

11. WEBSITE: To consider setting up an IT Committee (Cllr Mike Thompson)

RESOLVED: That due to lack of time this item is deferred until the next meeting.

12. DATE OF NEXT MEETING: Tuesday 19 February at 10am at the Hayridge

The meeting closed at 12;20pm.

SIGNED: _____

DATE: _____