

**Minutes of the Meeting of the Finance and Administration Committee
held in the Town Hall on Wednesday 12 October 2016**

Present Councillor P Anstey (Chairman)
Councillors S Abbott, J Fraser, Mrs R Hopkinson, M Jackson, D Jarman,
P Pearson

In Attendance Mrs M Jones (Head of Finance and Administration)
D Martin (Chief Executive)

F&A 18/16 Apologies

Apologies were received from Councillor D Jones and R Taylor.

F&A 19/16 Public Question Time and Petitions

There were none.

F&A 20/16 Declarations of Interest

To receive any Declaration(s) of Interest under Corsham Town Council's Code of Conduct issued in accordance with the Localism Act 2011.

There were no Declarations of Interest.

**F&A 21/16 Matters Arising from the Minutes of the Finance and Administration
Committee Meeting held on 10 August 2016**

There were no matters arising.

F&A 22/16 Review of Grants Policy (*Minute F&A 06/16 and others*)

At the Committee meeting on 29 June 2016, Councillor Jarman volunteered to look through past grant awards to help establish the nature of any proposed changes and make proposals. This work had been carried out and observations included: the vast bulk of requests were one-offs, not regular; only three organisations applied almost every year; and the amount of money sought was pretty close to the money awarded in each year. The research was primarily into the general grants rather than those covered by Service Level Agreements. Suggestions were made on changing the way records were collected in order to provide data about how that budget is used and to enable easier comparison between years. This may lead to ways of identifying how effective the grant awards had been, although the methodology was still being considered.

After a discussion, it was suggested that the way organisations benefitted from Town Council grants should be better evaluated.

Suggested evaluation criteria included:

- Requesting photographs showing how grants were spent;
- Requesting an explanation of how organisations had benefitted from the grants, for use in press releases;
- Asking for clarification about how grants had impacted on the organisations and whether they had made a difference.

Resolved

- i) That an annual report of grants awarded be presented to the Finance and Administration Committee at the beginning of each financial year.
- ii) That Councillor Jarman reviews the Grant Evaluation Report Form and makes suggestions on how it could be amended to provide improved evaluation criteria, for consideration at a future Committee meeting.

F&A 23/16 Grant Applications (Fourth Round)

Two grant applications were considered.

Resolved

- i) That the following grant be awarded:

Revitalise – £354.00 towards providing a one-week respite break for a disabled person and their carer from Corsham at a UK centre.

- ii) That the following grant application be refused:

Neston 60 Plus Club – towards the Club's Christmas party.

F&A 24/16 Detailed Income and Expenditure of Accounts (including the Town Hall)

The report on the detailed Income and Expenditure of Accounts was noted. The Chief Executive and Head of Finance and Administration would review how the salary related budgets were being split.

F&A 25/16 Internal Audit Report 2016/17 (First Interim)

A copy of the report from the first interim visit is attached, along with the draft response to the two recommendations.

Resolved

That the draft response to the Internal Audit Report 2016/17 (First Interim) be endorsed.

F&A 26/16 Appointment of Internal Auditors 2017/18

Formal note of an appointment of internal auditors is required. Auditing Solutions Ltd has provided a satisfactory service since being appointed over 14 years ago.

Resolved

That Auditing Solutions Ltd be appointed as the Council's Internal Auditors for 2017/18.

F&A 27/16 The 2017/18 Local Government Finance Settlement, Technical Consultation Paper (DCLG)

The Committee considered the Government consultation on the possibility of introducing Council Tax Referendum Principles from 2017/18. The proposals were summarised as follows:

- i) The referendum threshold for council tax increases was proposed at two per cent for all local authorities, as in 2016/17. However, shire districts would be allowed increases of up to and including £5, or up to two per cent, whichever was higher.
- ii) There would also continue to be an additional adult social care precept of two per cent for authorities with responsibility for social care services.
- iii) For the first time, referendum principles would apply to town and parish councils for which the Band D charge is higher than £75.46 and the total precept is over £500,000.
- iv) However, those town and parish councils where a service had been transferred from a local authority would not be subject to the referendum principle, providing certain conditions were satisfied.
- v) The government was also prepared to consider extending the referendum principles to all town and parish councils.

The Town Council would be affected by the above principles as it had a Band D equivalent in excess of £75.46 and a precept of over £500,000 per year.

There was a great deal of concern from local councils, NALC, SLCC and Wiltshire Council, whose plans for devolved services would be restricted. Details of the concerns raised by these organisations were explained to the Committee.

Concerns raised by the Chief Executive included: the impact on plans for asset transfer and service delegation (there was no information about how point iv) above would be addressed); the effect of the Community Governance Review would reduce the number of Band D equivalent properties, thereby increasing the rate; the unnecessary restriction the regulations would place on local decision-making; the cost of a referendum, and the ability to raise necessary funds for large capital projects, such as the new cemetery.

Resolved

That the Town Council responds to the consultation, supporting the objections raised by the Chief Executive and the various bodies in the local council sector.

F&A 28/16 Equality and Diversity Policy

The Town Council's Equality and Diversity Policy had been updated. The updated policy was based on the model provided by Peninsula, the Town Council's HR Advisors.

Resolved

That the Town Council's updated Equality and Diversity Policy be adopted.

F&A 29/16 Strategic Plan Monitoring and Evaluation (*Minute F&A 17/16 and others*)

The Monitoring and Evaluation sheet which provided details of all the actions within the Strategic Plan themes covered by the Finance and Administration Committee, along with related actions which are monitored by other Committees/Council was noted.

F&A 30/16 Annual Insurance Review (*Minute F&A 25/15*)

The Chief Executive had completed the Annual Insurance Review and no issues or concerns had been identified. The insurance cover had been comprehensively reviewed and re-tendered earlier in the year resulting in significant savings on the premium as well as additional cover in certain areas.

The Chief Executive informed the Committee that there was a pending insurance claim relating to Meriton Recreation Ground. The Council's insurers and their solicitors were supporting the Town Council over the matter.

The meeting commenced at 7.30pm and closed at 8.33pm. There were no members of the public present.

CHAIRMAN

DATE