

POLICY & FINANCE COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF THE POLICY & FINANCE COMMITTEE HELD AT 6PM ON 13TH MARCH 2023 IN THE COMMITTEE ROOM OF THE TOWN COUNCIL'S OFFICES IN THE GUILDHALL, NORTHAMPTON

PRESENT: Councillors Marriott (Chair) Alwahabi, Birch, Connolly, Hallam, Holland-Delamere, Kilbride, Soan and Tarasiewicz

OFFICERS PRESENT: Mr S Carter (Town Clerk), Mrs C Maclellan and Miss F Barford (Democratic Services Officer)

46. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were submitted by Councillor Russell.

47. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interests were submitted.

48. TO AUTHORISE THE CHAIR TO SIGN THE MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING AND ASK QUESTIONS AS TO THE PROGRESS OF ANY ITEM

RESOLVED: The Chair was authorised to sign the minute of the previous meeting held on 16th January 2023 as a true and accurate record.

49. TO RECEIVE THE MINUTES OF THE ACCOUNTS SUB-COMMITTEE MEETINGS FOR INFORMATION:

In relation to the Accounts Sub-Committee minutes held on 13th February 2023 the Finance Officer explained in response to a question, Wave Utilities were the water supplier for allotments and therefore the payment related to water bills. In response to a question posed, the Finance Officer stated Stageright provided event consultancy and it would be difficult to be costed to the individual event budget codes as multiple events could be discussed during one meeting.

Regarding the Accounts Sub-Committee minutes held on 13th March 2023 the Finance Officer stated in response to a question, that some Councillor Community Fund applications had not been paid due to queries in relation to the organisations bank details.

Both sets of minutes were **NOTED**.

50. TO RECEIVE FOR INFORMATION ONLY THE MINUTES OF THE STAFFING SUB COMMITTEE MEETING HELD 7TH FEBRUARY 2023

The Chair explained that three members of the staffing sub-committee intend to review the applicants and shortlist for interviews to be held the following week.

The minutes were **NOTED**.

51. NOTES FROM THE CIVIC MATTERS WORKING GROUP

Circulated with the agenda were the latest notes from the Civic Matters Working Group meeting held on 7th February 2023.

The Town Clerk stated the invitation of representatives for the Twinning Association would be included on the Full Council agenda. The Chair added that the Town Council would aim to assist in recruiting members to the Twinning Association as their membership had declined.

The Town Clerk explained in response to a question, that the Heart of the Community Awards would require further discussion and decision to be made and would fall within the responsibility of the Community Services Committee.

NOTED

52. STUDY PROPOSAL

Professor Steven Griggs (University of Staffordshire) and Dr Steven Parker (Open University) addressed the Policy & Finance Committee via Zoom.

The Town Clerk explained he circulated the proposal report and it was posed you attend to answer any questions on the strategy and how it would work.

In response to a question Professor Griggs explained no other Councils at the moment had been contacted and wished to consult the Town Council due to the existing relationship developed during the Community Needs Analysis study completed however, if Northampton Town Council declined others would be contacted.

Professor Griggs explained as part of the study they would wish to work with Northampton Town Council, another Council with West Northamptonshire Council and then two Town or Parish Councils within North Northamptonshire Council as a comparison.

Professor Griggs stated funding to support the research project would be sourced from the Economic Research Council and could take up to 6 months to hear whether the bid was successful however, if unsuccessful there was another form of funding could be applied for in September 2023.

Professor Griggs explained that if Northampton Town Council wished to partake in the research study a letter of intent would have to be supplied by the Council, then an ethics agreement would have to be formulated between the researchers and Council. Professor Griggs added that if the Council wished to cease the relationship it could at any time.

RESOLVED: That the Town Council submit a letter of intent to partake in the research study to Professor Griggs.

53. ST GEORGE'S DAY, REQUEST FOR FURTHER FUNDING – REFERRED FROM COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMITTEE

Circulated with the agenda was a report detailing the request for further funding.

Councillor Soan stated the initial proposal presumed that graphic design and installation would be completed in-house however, this was not feasible as the Communications Officer post had not been filled. Councillor Soan continued that the largest cost was for the hire of an open space to host however, the Event and Project Office were due to have a meeting with All Saints Church regarding the hire of the portico.

RESOLVED: That a further £1,803 be allocated the St George's Day event from the General Events budget.

NOTED

54. REVIEW OF SYSTEMS OF INTERNAL CONTROL

The Town Clerk explained the report overviewed the internal controls and risk register that had been implemented. The Finance Officer explained a variety of internal control procedures and had engaged with Councillor so they could gain an understanding of the work done. The Chair added that a new internal control had been implemented of the Town Clerk completing a payroll check the process of one random Officer a month. The Finance Officer explained that quarterly invitations for Councillors to undertake internal controls would be sent so that each member of the Policy and Finance Committee would partake across the next two years.

RESOLVED: That review and assessment of the internal control assessment had taken place.

55. ACCOMMODATION UPDATE

Councillor Hallam made no contribution to this discussion.

The notes from the recent Accommodation Working Group were circulated to members with the agenda. It was highlighted that the priority was to stay at the Guildhall and that this was what was being prioritised. The links with the Mayoralty and the Guildhall were highlighted, as well as the prominent town centre location. It was also noted that NBC had intended that a long lease for the Guildhall be granted to the Town Council following its establishment.

The Chair stated that if any development arose he would call a meeting.

NOTED

56. ELECTORAL REVIEW OF WEST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE – CONSULTATION ON DRAFT PROPOSALS

The Town Clerk explained he had received a written correspondence about the electoral review of West Northamptonshire Council boundaries that would affect West Northamptonshire Council and the Town Council's and other parish council's wards.

It was noted that there was a plan to change the ward boundaries within the town council area.

RESOLVED: That an informal meeting of all interested councillors be called to consider the consultation.

57. INTERNAL AUDIT REPORT

The Town Clerk explained the internal auditor had completed a review and their findings had been outlined within the report. The Finance Officer explained that the auditor requested a trial balance of the bank reconciliation and time period of invoices and reviews them.

The report had showed no deficiencies and no areas of concern.

NOTED

58. REQUEST TO EARMARK UNSPENT GRANTS BUDGET AND EID BUDGET

The Town Clerk explained that it was discussed at the Grants Sub-Committee any unspent funds from the Councillor Community Fund be earmarked for the General Community Grants Scheme to benefit the community rather than be placed in general reserves. A Councillor stated there has been a high volume of demand and this year had to defer items for next financial years budget.

RESOLVED: That any unspent grant funding at the end of each Financial Year be earmarked and reallocated into a Grants Reserve.

Similarly, a request to earmark unspent Eid funding for the current year had been received to assist with their plans for the coming financial year.

RESOLVED: That any unspent funding from the Eid event budget 2022-23 be earmarked and carried forward into the next financial year 2023-24.

59. MARKETING AND BRANDING UPDATE

The Marketing and Branding report was tabled at the meeting.

The Assistant Town Clerk explained that a brief had been created for a new logo to be developed to be used on marketing and communication materials. In response to a question, the Assistant Town Clerk stated the brief had been provided to the initial three organisations that responded to the tender. In response to another question, the Assistant Town Clerk stated that branding guidelines was part of the tender.

RESOLVED: That the Branding Budget be earmarked and carried forward into the next financial year 2023-24.

60. INTERIM STRATEGY AND UPDATE ON LONG-TERM STRATEGY

The Town Clerk explained he received a report from James Corrigan that would assist the Council to continue to develop its long-term strategy and once reformatted it would be circulated to all Councillors.

The Clerk also confirmed that he had almost finalised the details of an interim strategy which would be reported shortly.

61. ITEMS FOR CONSIDERATION ON THE NEXT AGENDA

It was noted that these items would be added to future Policy and Finance Committee meetings:

- (a) Review of Standing Orders
- (b) Review of Financial Regulations
- (c) Civility and respect pledge
- (d) Paperless agendas
- (e) Budget Working Group

MEETING CONCLUDED AT 7:35PM.