



NORTHAMPTON TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of the Policy and Finance Committee Meeting held Monday 25th April 2022 at 18:00 in the Town Council Committee Room.

IN ATTENDANCE: Cllrs Marriott (Chair), Alwahabi, Birch, Hibbert, Holland-Delamere, Kilbride, Russell, Tarasiewicz

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE: S Carter (Town Clerk), C Maclellan (Finance Officer) and, F Barford (Democratic Services Officer).

60. Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Cllrs Purser, Connolly, Brown, T Eales and G Eales

61. Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were submitted.

62. 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 minutes from 28th February and 16th March 2022.

63. To receive the notes of the Civic Matters Working Group, held 4th April 2022, for consideration

The committee received and considered the notes of the Civic Matters Working Group.

One recommendation had been made to the committee. A new process for paying the retained portion of the Mayoral Allowance was highlighted and a recommendation had been made to adopt this process.

The proposed new process was as follows:

- a. Expense Request Form to be completed by Mayor, processed by Civic Officer
- b. Approved by Clerk
- c. Purchase made
- d. Receipt handed to Mayor's Office
- e. Expenses added to expense form
- f. Expenses form and receipt discussed at monthly Accounts Sub-Committee
- g. Once authorised, expenses paid by Finance Officer

It was also proposed that the following items could not be expensed as these items could be purchased using the allowance paid via PAYE directly to the Mayor. These included:

- Clothing – this can be purchased from paid allowance
- Charity related items – *it is against the finance policy to purchase items that directly support the Mayor’s charity or fundraising for the Mayor’s charity

Proposed examples of items that are permitted to be purchased using the Civic Office Budget

- Refreshments for Parlour guests – including buffet lunches, cakes, tea’s and coffee’s
- Mayoral stationary such as thank you cards, conquerer paper and envelopes
- Christmas cards and postage
- Flags for flag raisings
- Replenishment of NTC Mayoral bags, bottles and mayor bears
- £1000 for the production of the Mayor’s Gala
- Mayoral Regalia, new jabot, gloves and accessories for each new Mayor
- Mayoral Photography and any re prints
- Events tickets (Mayoral related)
- Equipment – legacy
- Flowers (e.g visiting dignitaries)

RESOLVED: That the Mayor’s allowance process be adopted as detailed above be adopted.

64. To receive the minutes of the Accounts Sub-Committee meetings for information, held 12th April 2022

The minutes of the meeting as attached at appendix A were **NOTED**.

65. Annual Accounts 2021/22

Tabled at the meeting were the annual accounts for the 2021/22 Financial Year. The Clerk explained that these had just been done and would need to go to full council as part of the Annual Governance Annual Return Process.

The Finance Officer explained that the report was created at the end of the financial year.

In response to a question it was confirmed that any unspent councillor grants funding had been put into earmarked reserves marked against the individual councillor. In general, any funds not earmarked that went unspent would go into general reserves.

In response to a question about diversifying the council’s investments, the Clerk explained that a call with the CCLA about their cash deposit fund had been set up for the 3rd May. Once that was sorted longer term investments could be prioritised. The Clerk added that the Council would need a strategy and policy document for long term for investments.

With regards to the asset register the Clerk and confirmed deprivation was not accounted for. The Clerk also confirmed that the muniments would hopefully be formally transferred from WNC shortly.

NOTED

66. Internal Controls Checklist – adoption of checklist

Circulated with the agenda was a report that explained that as part of the audit process it had been

recommended that the Council adopt an Internal Controls checklist. It was noted that the intention was to invite an individual member from the committee to complete the checklist on a monthly basis. It was commented that the invitation should be open to all councillors on an alphabetical cycle.

RESOLVED: That the internal controls checklist be adopted and that all councillors be invited individually to undertake the check on a monthly basis in alphabetical order (A-Z).

67. Approval for a Town Council Credit Card

Circulated with the agenda was a report and credit card policy for consideration.

The Town Clerk explained that at present the Council did not have a debit or credit card. The Council had been unable to get one due to not having one year's worth of accounting history. Staff had bought sundry items when required on an as and when basis and expensed it back. The Council held no petty cash as a matter of policy. Now the Council was a year old, it was anticipated that it would be permitted to have a debit/credit card.

It was explained that the card would be used only as a last resort and with the agreement of the Town Clerk. The Finance Officer explained that the policy would demonstrate the use in best practice through a spreadsheet with VAT receipts to be claimed back and coded correctly. This would then be reviewed by the Accounts Sub-Committee

Members agreed that a credit/debit card was required. However, they suggested that the Council officers also look at alternatives, not just a card from Unity Bank (the Council's bank). It was suggested that that maximum spend should be £2,000.

RESOLVED: That the council get a debit/credit card that is under the management of the Clerk with a recommended £2,000 limit.

RESOLVED: That the credit/debit card policy as attached at appendix B be adopted.

68. Approval to open a Mayor's Charity Bank Account

It was explained that for transparency and security, a Mayor's Charity Bank Account was recommended. Money relating to the Mayor's Charity would be deposited into this account and then handed out at the end of the Mayoral year. At present, any monies raised either went through the Council's account or was paid directly to the charity. This meant that it was difficult to say for sure how much the Mayor had raised in their year. Unity Trust Bank (the Council's bank) had stated that they could open an account, but that there would be a £5 monthly charge. It was agreed that other options should be looked at.

RESOLVED: That approval be given for the Clerk to open a Mayor's Charity Bank Account.

RESOLVED: That the signatories be the members of the Accounts Sub-Committee (Presently Cllrs Birch, Marriott, Hibbert and Purser).

69. Discussion on usage of Town Council rooms

It was noted that Council rooms were increasingly being used by councillors and community groups

and that this presented a few logistical issues in terms of managing the rooms and also in terms of knowing who was present in the building.

Members agreed that rooms should be made available to councillors and community groups but that it had to be linked to a councillor who should in turn be responsible for booking and managing the attendees. Officers would not be responsible for sorting refreshments etc. It was suggested that a visitor's book with tear off passes would be ideal to ensure there was a record of who was present in the building.

It was agreed that officers investigate a signing in book and a system for booking rooms.

NOTED

There being no further business the meeting concluded at 18:50.