

MINUTES of a MEETING of the FINANCE AND GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE held on MONDAY 20th FEBRUARY 2023 in The Registrar's Office, Carlyon Road, St Austell, Cornwall, PL25 4LD at 6pm.

Present: Councillors: Brown, French (Chair), George, Lanxon, Nott, Pearce and Young.

In attendance: David Pooley (Town Clerk) and Sara Gwilliams (Deputy Town Clerk).

F/22/45) Apologies for absence

Apologies of absence were received from Councillors Bull, Clemo and Rowse.

F/22/46) Declarations of Interest

None.

F/22/47) Dispensations

None.

F/22/48) Minutes of meeting held on 7th November 2022

It was **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting held on the 7th November 2022 be approved and signed as a correct record.

F/22/49) Matters to Note

The Town Clerk advised that further to minute F/22/43 the BID had been re-elected for another 5 year term which was extremely good news for the town.

F/22/50) Public participation

There were no members of the public present.

F/22/51) Budget Monitoring Report

The Clerk explained the larger variances in the budget monitoring report for the financial year to the 31st January 2023 and predicted that the overall year-end position would be within budget. Arising from questions, the Clerk confirmed that the cost of energy and grounds maintenance supplies have both increased significantly.

It was **RESOLVED** that the report be noted.

F/22/52) Bethel Park Improvement Project

The Clerk explained that an offer of a grant of £78,000 had been received from Cornwall Council (from its Community Infrastructure Levy strategic pot) towards a major improvement project for Bethel Park costing in the region of £143,000. He circulated images of the proposed improvements which had been developed after consultation and advised Councillors of the quotations received from play equipment

providers. The Deputy Clerk read out an e-mail from Councillor Rowse supporting the recommendations.

Members stressed the need to communicate the proposals with local residents and discussed the importance of no dog fouling notices and accessible play equipment.

It was **RESOLVED** to

- Authorise the Town Clerk to accept the grant from Cornwall Council;
- Agree the allocation of £75,000 from earmarked reserves (£70,723.88 from the playground equipment replacement reserve and £4,276.12 from the Projects Reserve) for improvements to Bethel Park;
- Delegate approval of the final design to the Operations Manager in consultation with the Bethel ward members;
- Waive financial regulations and contract standing orders to allow the Town Clerk to let a contract(s) to the preferred suppliers subject to quotations and quality assessments rather than formal tenders.

F/22/53) Insurance

The Town Clerk circulated details of the quotations received for general insurance cover.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Clerk should accept the quotation received from Zurich Municipal for a three year term.

F/22/54) Priory Car Park

The Town Clerk advised that the town centre improvement plan includes some recommended layout changes to Priory Car Park and the BID had submitted some ideas for changes to car park charges for Priory Car Park. He suggested that a small working group of councillors should be formed to consider these matters and report back to the Committee.

It was **RESOLVED** that a working group comprising of Councillors George, Pearce, Nott and Young be formed to review car park operations and charges.

F/22/55) Health and Safety Audit

The Town Clerk advised that an in-depth independent audit of the Council's Health and Safety practices had been undertaken and a detailed report received. He explained that the report was excellent with praise for the measures put in place by managers. Only four minor matters were reported which would largely be addressed before the next inspection.

It was **RESOLVED** to thank the Operations Manager for his excellent work with regard to Health and Safety and to note the report.

F/22/56) Risk Management

The Town Clerk advised that it was a requirement as part of the Council's governance arrangements to produce a risk management register and to consider risks and risk management processes at least once a year. He added that the risk register had been amended to reflect the changing risk of pandemics, the greater uncertainty regarding offices, depot and meeting space, economic uncertainty and the risks relating to the delivery of the town centre improvement plan. Arising from a question, the Clerk confirmed that he would investigate Risk Management training for Members.

It was **RECOMMENDED** that the updated Risk Management Strategy and Strategic Risk Register be approved.

*** Councillor Brown arrived to the meeting and apologised for his lateness due to unforeseen circumstances ***

F/22/57) Treasury Management Strategy

Members considered a breakdown of the Council's Treasury Management activity and a draft Treasury Management Strategy for the 2023/24 financial year.

It was **RECOMMENDED** that the report be noted and the Treasury Management Strategy be approved subject to replacement of the phrase "Disability Discrimination Act 1995" with "Equality Act 2010".

F/22/58) Procurement Policy

The Town Clerk advised that it is good practice to have an approved procurement policy in place, particularly for grant funding purposes.

It was **RECOMMENDED** that the draft procurement policy be approved.

F/22/59) Equal Opportunities Policy

Members considered a draft Equal Opportunities Policy and suggested that councillors and volunteers should be included and that the layout of the policy could be improved.

It was **RESOLVED** that a revised version should be reported to the next Council meeting incorporating the comments of councillors.

F/22/60) St Austell Library

The Deputy Town Clerk introduced a report on the Library and provided an update on the Home Library Service, a recent recruitment exercise and proposals for a King's Coronation Event at the Library. She expanded on proposals for a Literary Festival and in response to a question explained the arrangements locally for warm banks.

It was **RESOLVED** to note the report and thank the Library Manager and staff for their excellent work.

F/22/61) Dates of next meeting

It was noted that the next meeting of the Finance and General Purposes Committee is due to take place on 3rd April 2023.

The meeting closed at 7.18pm