

MINUTES of a MEETING of the FINANCE AND GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE held on MONDAY 24th JUNE 2024 in The Stable Block, Pondhu House, Penwinnick Road, St Austell, Cornwall, PL25 5DP at 6pm.

Present: Councillors: Brown, Clemo, French, Gray, Lanxon, Pearce and Rowse.

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

F/24/01) Election of Chair

It was **RESOLVED** that Councillor French be elected as Chair of the Finance and General Purposes Committee for the 2024/25 civic year.

Councillors Brown and Rowse arrived during the next item

F/24/02) Election of Vice-Chair

It was **RESOLVED** that Councillor Pearce be elected as Vice-Chair of the Finance and General Purposes Committee for the 2024/25 civic year.

F/24/03) Apologies for absence

Apologies of absence were received from Councillors Bull and Young.

Councillor Lanxon arrived during the next item

F/24/04) Declarations of Interest

None.

F/24/05) Dispensations

None.

F/24/06) Minutes of meeting held on 2nd April 2024

It was noted that on page 4 "busses" should read "buses".

It was **RESOLVED** that subject to the above amendment, the minutes of the meeting held on the 2nd April 2024 be approved and signed as a correct record.

Arising from a question, the Clerk advised that he had recently met the banner suppliers and that some concept designs should be drafted shortly. The Deputy Clerk advised that the concept designs should inform how many photographs will be needed for the new banner. Once this information is known, a number of photographs will be displayed and a public vote organised to determine the public's choice of photographs to go onto the banner.

F/24/07) Matters to Note

The Clerk advised that the External Auditor report was considered by full Council on the 15th May 2024 and that the Pay 2 Park method of payment in Priory Car Park is in the process of being re-branded to "Buzz Pay".

He added that the grant funding for the Poundland Banner Project has been received in the Town Council's Bank Account.

F/24/08) Public participation

There were no members of the public present.

F/24/09) Budget Monitoring Report

The Clerk updated Members on the income and expenditure to the end of May 2024 and highlighted the following:

Income

- **Interest** – More interest income received than anticipated
- **Other grants and contributions** – grants received for the rooftop garden and CIL neighbourhood levy

Expenditure

- **Contract payments** – below budget due to invoice delays
- **Electricity** – increase in costs following the ending of a long-term agreement for the streetlights plus an annual recharge for CCTV
- **Grounds Maintenance Supplies** – seasonal purchase of plants
- **IT/Communications** – expenditure for the annual line rental for CCTV and software licences
- **Miscellaneous expenses** – Rooftop Garden project and credit card transaction charges
- **Miscellaneous grants** – funding for security personnel
- **Play equipment** – no major refurbishments or replacements during this period
- **Salaries/Wages** – pay award pending

It was **RESOLVED** to note the budget monitoring report.

F/24/10) Communications Protocol

The Deputy Town Clerk advised that a revised communications protocol has been drafted following concerns expressed at the last Council meeting that the Town Council is not good at championing the excellent services that it runs. The Deputy Clerk highlighted the suggested additions and highlighted the potential for Members to produce short video clips to promote the Town Council and its work. She added that since drafting the document, she felt that an additional paragraph should be inserted within the paragraph **Communications with Press and Public** to reflect that agendas will be sent to Councillors, press and public utilising notice boards, websites and Facebook.

During discussion, Members raised the following:

- The need for more resource for the Town Council to carry out PR activities;
- The need to reach younger people, possibly through TikTok;
- The potential for making "Reels"
- The value of regular press releases for the local newspapers
- The potential for producing a regular newsletter with contributing items from other organisations such as the CAB

Councillor Brown suggested the following amendments to the document as drafted:

C Communications with Press and Public

- (ii) The Mayor in agreement with the Clerk may issue press releases on behalf of the Council **or, where appropriate, the Chair of the relevant Committee.**
- (x) During purdah, the Town Council will endeavour not to deal with controversial issues or report views, proposals or recommendations in a way that identified them with individual members or groups of members. This is to make sure that no individual or political party gains an unfair advantage by appearing in corporate publicity. **If necessary, dates of scheduled meetings will be changed.**

D Social Media

- (ii) **Councillors wishing to utilise social media in their capacity as a Councillor should at all times observe the requirements of the "General Principles of Public Life" and the "Code of Conduct".**

It was **RECOMMENDED** that:

- i. Subject to the above amendments the document as drafted be approved;
- ii. Consideration be given during the next budget round for public relation resource.

F/24/11) Clerks' Robes

The Clerk advised that the Clerks' robes are approximately 40 years old and nearing their end of life and that replacement with a similar robe would cost in the region of £2,000 to £2,100.

During discussion, Members views were split on the value of the robes to the community, and it was felt that a decision could not be made until they have been professionally assessed to ascertain if they can be repaired and, if so, the cost of the repair.

It was **RESOLVED** to defer this item until further information is available with regard to the potential to repair the Robes and the costs involved.

F/24/12) Financial Regulations

The Clerk advised that he had taken the opportunity to review the Town Council's Financial Regulations utilising a new NALC standard model.

He added that they had been refined in places to reflect other policy and procedures of the Town Council.

The Clerk advised that he had spotted an error in paragraph 6.6 (iv) and that it should read:

- iv. Fund transfers within the Council's banking arrangements up to the sum of **£100,000** provided that a list of such payments shall be submitted to the next appropriate meeting of the Council or Finance Committee.

It was **RECOMMENDED** that subject to the above amendment, the Financial Regulations as drafted be approved.

F/24/13) Standing Orders

The Clerk explained that he had reviewed the Town Council's Standing Orders utilising the NALC standard model. He advised that virtual meetings are no longer legal, so reference to this has been deleted from the Standing Orders and the latest Terms of Reference for each committee has been inserted.

During discussion, a proposal to change "Chairman" to "Chair" throughout the document was lost 3 votes for, 4 votes against.

Councillor Brown advised that he had the following suggested amendments:

Rules of debate at meetings

Paragraph a. First word, replace "motions" with "items".

Meetings generally

Paragraph w. **Normally** a meeting shall not exceed a period of 2 ½ hours

Extraordinary meetings of the Council and Committees and Sub Committees

Paragraph c. The Chairman of a committee (or sub-committee) may convene an extraordinary **formal or informal meeting** of the committee (or the subcommittee) at any time **subject to the rules for calling meetings**.

Code of Conduct, Complaints and Dispensations

Paragraph i. Where a non-registerable interest arises from membership of an outside body as defined in 3.5a of the Council's code of conduct **for which no dispensation has been issued**, a Councillor may remain in the room to address the meeting, provide a short statement and answer questions for no more than three (3) minutes before leaving the room at the request of the Chairman.

Proper Officer

Paragraph v. Facilitate inspection of the minute book by local government electors **and other residents**.

Throughout the document

Change "his" to "their"

It was **RECOMMENDED** that subject to the above amendments, the Standing Orders as drafted be approved.

Councillor Rowse left the meeting

F/24/14) St Austell Library

The Deputy Town Clerk advised that all being well the Library Manager will return to work on Monday 8th July 2024. The staff have managed well in her absence with additional resource only used to cover non planned staff absences and large events.

During May, the library had 10.800 issues, 107 new borrowers and the public computers were used 302 times. The summer reading challenge has started and volunteers will be used during the summer to assist with the initiative.

Regular groups and activities at the library include:

- Sing and Shake
- Story Time
- Lego Club
- Knit and Stitch
- Writing Group

In August a Police dog event and a Ukulele Group session are planned.

Cornwall Council has been chased for a date when the ceiling repairs in the performing arts section of the library will be carried out.

It was **RESOLVED** to note the update.

F/24/15) Dates of next meeting

It was noted that the next meeting of the Finance and General Purposes Committee is due to take place on 16th September 2024.

The meeting closed at 7.43pm.