

MINUTES of a MEETING of the FINANCE AND GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE held on MONDAY 24th SEPTEMBER 2018 in the Stable Block, Pondhu House, Penwinnick Road, St Austell, PL25 5DP at 6pm.

Present: Councillors: Brown, Cohen, French, King, Lanxon, Oxenham, Palmer (Chair), Rees, Styles and Walker.

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

F/18/20) Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Bishop and Jones.

F/18/21) Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

F/18/22) Dispensations

There were no requests for dispensations.

F/18/23) Minutes of meeting held on 2nd July 2018

It was **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting held on the 2nd July 2018 be approved and signed as a correct record.

Councillors Oxenham and French abstained from voting on this item

F/18/24) Matters to Note

The Clerk advised that all Town Councillors have been issued with instructions on how to set themselves up with a St Austell Town Council e-mail address and that a target date of 15th October has been set as the "go live" date. Councillor Styles and Walker have offered to help any Councillor who is having difficulty with the set up. The Clerk added that the outcome of a test case regarding whether or not there is a need to register individual Councillors as Data Controllers should be known next week.

F/18/25) Public participation

There were no members of the public present.

F/18/26) Members' Internal Audit

The Clerk advised that the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Committee carry out a number of spot checks on the Town Council's governance arrangements. In the absence of Councillor Palmer, Councillor Jones carried out the August six monthly checks which were found to be satisfactory. It was noted that the check list used by the Chairman and Vice-Chairman should be updated in due course to reflect the new IT systems in place.

Members noted the backup systems in place for Xero and asked if it would be possible to put an extra back up system in place.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Clerk should explore an additional backup system for Xero.

It was **FURTHER RESOLVED** to note the report.

Councillor Brown arrived during the next item

F/18/27) Internal Audit

The Clerk advised that the Town Council's Internal Auditor had recently completed his Interim Internal Audit Report for the year ended 31st March 2019 and that no issues or concerns had been raised. It was noted that the use of contractors should be carefully monitored to ensure that the cumulative costs of individuals are not excessive.

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

F/18/28) External Audit

The Clerk advised that the Accounting Statements for the 2017/18 financial year have been given a clean bill of health by the Town Council's External Auditor, PKF Littlejohn LLP, except for an incorrect date shown on Section 2 of the return. He further advised that the two Trusts (one for Poltair Park and one for Truro Road Park) have now been officially transferred over to the Town Council and that the Town Council, as Trustees, are now obliged to hold Annual Trust Meetings for both parks.

Members discussed the importance of having up to date financial information for the charities to show any potential grant funders in due course.

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

F/18/29) Budget Process and Timetable

The Clerk advised that a draft budget timetable had been drafted for developing the Town Council's budget for the 2019/20 financial year which included an informal meeting to give Members the opportunity to discuss the strategic direction in which they envisage the Town Council going in the short, medium and long term. He advised that there are a number of factors to consider, particularly the garden town project, which would undoubtedly have resource implications for the Town Council.

He advised that all being well, he would have a draft budget for the Finance and General Purposes Committee to consider on the 12th November 2018 which reflected the informal meeting discussions.

It was noted that the Mayor could not now make the proposed meeting on the 11th October and a new date might need to be arranged.

During discussion, Members raised the following issues:

- The need to set priorities
- The Council Tax impact of a second phase of devolution
- The management of the Town Council's reserves
- The potential for a community governance review and the implications thereof

It was **RESOLVED** to approve the proposed budget timetable, including the potential need to change the informal meeting date.

F/18/30) Asset Register

The Clerk explained that the Town Council's Internal Auditor had asked for more information to be provided on the Town Council's Asset Register and circulated a draft of a more detailed register. He advised that only tools and equipment with a value of over £500 would be recorded in future. Arising from questions he explained why donated assets are shown with a value of £1 in the register and the methodology behind the insurances for the play park equipment.

It was **RESOLVED** to approve the revised Asset Register.

F/18/31) Budget Monitoring Report

The Clerk advised that he is monitoring car park income carefully as it is currently lower than last year, probably due to Bodmin Road being closed during the early part of the year and the hot summer which naturally drives people to the coast. Overall, the Town Council remains within budget, April to August for the 2018/19 financial year.

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

F/18/32) St Austell Library

Members noted the Library Manager's report and expressed their gratitude for the continued enthusiasm and support of the staff, particularly with regard to this year's summer reading challenge. Members raised the following during discussion:

- The library opening hours
- The rationale behind the schools chosen to take part in the summer reading challenge
- The need to consider blinds or extra fans in the library during the summer months

F/18/33) To consider excluding the press and public

It was **RESOLVED** that under Section 1 (ii) of the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960, the public and press be excluded from the meeting for the remainder of the business of the meeting in view of the confidential contractual information to be discussed.

F/18/34) Ellis Whittam

The Clerk advised that Ellis Whittam, the Town Council's Health and Safety and Human Resources Adviser, has approached the Town Council with early renewal proposals for three or five years. He explained that since contracting with them in 2016, Ellis Whittam had provided sound advice, particularly for Health and Safety issues, and had helped the Operations Manager develop a number of health and safety policies and procedures as well as general office audits, including one for the library. Arising from a question, the Clerk advised that less use had been made of the Human Resources advice but that Ellis Whittam had been very helpful in providing a second opinion on one particularly sensitive staffing matter.

During discussion, it was felt that the staff were qualified to deal with a lot of Health and Safety and HR matters and that it might be a waste of money to lock in to a five year arrangement. The Clerk explained that it was generally good practice to have somebody outside of the organisation looking at the Health and Safety practices in particular as the fines imposed by the Health and Safety Executive for health and safety breaches are extremely high. It was noted that the Operations Manager still refers to them regularly for advice on operational issues and written documentation.

A proposal was put forward and seconded to renew the contract with Ellis Whittam on a one-year basis.

A second proposal was put forward and seconded to renew the contract with Ellis Whittam on a three-year basis.

It was **RESOLVED** to renew the contract with Ellis Whittam on a three-year basis as outlined in the confidential report by 6 votes to 5 with the casting vote given by the Chairman.

F/18/35) Dates of next meeting

It was noted that the next meetings of the Finance and General Purposes Committee are due to take place on Monday 12th November 2018 and 25th February 2019.

The meeting closed at 7.15pm.