



MINUTES OF THE FINANCE & GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE
MEETING TUESDAY 15TH JUNE 2021 AT THE OFFICES OF
BIGGLESWADE TOWN COUNCIL, THE OLD COURT HOUSE, 4
SAFFRON ROAD, BIGGLESWADE COMMENCING AT 7:00PM



PRESENT:

Cllr R Pullinger (Chair)
Cllr D Albone
Cllr G Fage
Cllr M Knight
Cllr D Strachan

Cllr F Foster (Non-Committee Member)

Mr P Tarrant – Town Clerk & Chief Executive, Biggleswade Town Council
Mr P Truppin – Assistant Town Clerk, Biggleswade Town Council
Mrs A Dennis – Meeting Administrator, Biggleswade Town Council
Miss Helen Calvert – Deputy Administration & HR Manager

Members of Public - 1

Meeting Formalities:

Following a reminder to meeting attendees, both panel and public, that this is a formal meeting, the Chairman advised that Members of the public will be given an opportunity to speak during public open session but not at other times. The meeting is being filmed and by being present attendees are deemed to have agreed to be filmed and to the use of those images and sound recordings. The Chairman advised that attendees should not disclose any personal information of individuals as this would infringe the Data Protection Rights of the individual. The Chairman asked everyone to mute their microphones when not speaking.

The Chairman reminded the non-Committee Member in attendance at this meeting that he is not able to submit proposals or vote on any matters, nor will he be able to comment without being invited to do so by the Chairman in accordance with meeting governance rules.

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Cllr M North, Cllr H Ramsay, Cllr M Russell.

ABSENT WITHOUT APOLOGIES

Cllr I Bond.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

a. Disclosable Pecuniary interests in any agenda item

None.

b. Non-Pecuniary interests in any agenda item

Item 11b - Cllr Albone.

Item 11b - Cllr G Fage.

3. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman advised Members that, in agreement with the Town Clerk & Chief Executive and to align with the 3-month cadence of Committee meetings agreed at the Annual Statutory Meeting, the future dates of this Committee will be:

- 7th September 2021
- 7th December 2021
- 15th March 2022

4. PUBLIC OPEN SESSION

The Chairman advised members of the public wishing to speak to use the "raise hand" function on screen.

None.

5. MINUTES AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF MEETINGS

Members received and **APPROVED** the Minutes of the Finance & General Purpose Meeting held on **Tuesday 19th January 2021**.

6. MATTERS ARISING

From the Minutes of Tuesday 19th January 2021

Page 72 Item 6a, Members requested an update on the Asset Register. The Town Clerk and Chief Executive confirmed that it is 95% complete and will be circulated shortly.

Page 3 Item 6d, Members requested an update on the Grants and Sponsorship policy. The Assistant Town Clerk advised it would be presented in July with a progress report. The Town Clerk & Chief Executive wants it ready for the meeting in September so that there is time to submit applications for grants. The deadline for applications is 31st December 2021.

Page 4, Members requested an update on the Allotment Association's grant application. The Town Clerk & Chief Executive has had discussions with the Allotment Association and will update Members at the next meeting.

7. ITEMS FOR CONSIDERATION

a. Credit and Debit Report

The Assistant Town Clerk gave a report on the proposed rules for the use of Credit and Debit Cards.

Members asked who the point of contact would be if the Town Clerk & Chief Executive is unavailable and a card is lost or stolen. The Town Clerk & Chief Executive would be the person to notify plus a second tier appointed person in management.

It was **RESOLVED** to recommend the adoption of the proposed rules with the following amendments:

Paragraph 2.6 - Individual transaction limits and overall credit limits will be set by the F&GP Committee in accordance with the financial regulations, on advice from The Town Clerk & Chief Executive.

Paragraph 2.9 - When using an internet purchasing site, the user must not store the credit card details on completion of every transaction.

Paragraph 2.12 - If a card is lost or stolen, the card holder must contact the bank as soon as possible to notify them of the loss or theft. They must also notify the Town Clerk & Chief Executive as soon as possible and in any event within 2 days of contacting the bank.

It was **RESOLVED** to propose a change in Financial Regulation 6.18 at the next review to delete the reference to "prepaid debit cards" and to permit the issue of credit cards only to staff and to make the consequential amendments to Financial Regulation 6.19. Only the Town Clerk & Chief Executive will be permitted to be issued with a Debit Card.

b. **Financial Request - Biggleswade Community News**

Members were asked to consider the financial request from Biggleswade Community News.

Members were concerned about awarding this grant without more information, including the amount being requested. The Town Clerk & Chief Executive advised that the grants policy should be the point of reference, and enough foresight given to make a decision outside of the parameters. There was an underspend on the grant budget for this current financial year.

It was **RESOLVED** to refer this request to Council for further consideration.

c. **Website Update**

The Deputy Administration & HR Manager introduced the Website Support package. The support package would provide six months' design work, which will include the creation of calendars and online payment options.

The Town Clerk & Chief Executive informed the meeting that he had received positive feedback about the new look website.

It was **RESOLVED** to approve the Website Support Package for 6 months at a cost of £558 per month.

8. **ITEMS FOR INFORMATION**

a. **Grants 2021/22**

Members received a thank you letter from Carers in Bedfordshire for the grant awarded for 2021/22.

This was **NOTED**.

b. **Asset Register**

Members received an oral update from the Town Clerk & Chief Executive who thanked staff in creating this and assured Members that the asset register will be ready shortly. The asset register is a record of every piece of equipment that is owned and managed by the Town Council and all these items have been barcoded.

c. **Contracts Database**

Members received an oral update from the Town Clerk & Chief Executive who explained that at present there is no Approved Suppliers register but that a standard contract will be offered to existing and new suppliers.

d. **Financial Risk Assessment**

Members received an oral update from the Town Clerk & Chief Executive. The revised templates are still to be considered.

Cllr Fage said there had been fundamental changes in financial procedures and was in favour of deferring the review of the current template and Cllr Pullinger also stated the context has changed.

Members were of the opinion that the review of the process of financial risk assessment should be deferred.

e. **Grants and Sponsorship**

Members received an oral update from the Town Clerk & Chief Executive.

9. **PUBLIC OPEN SESSION**

To adjourn for a period of up to 15 minutes to allow members of the public to put questions or to address the Committee, through the Chairman, in respect of any other business of the Town Council.

None.

10. **EXEMPT ITEMS**

Pursuant to section 1(2) of the public bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960 Council **resolved** to exclude the public and press by reason of the confidential nature of the business about to be transacted.

(11a. Utilities Contract)
(11b. Finance Review)
(11c. Staffing Matter)

The following resolution was **moved** that is advisable in the public interest that the public and press are excluded whilst the following exempt item issue is discussed.

11. **EXEMPT ITEMS**

a. **Utilities Contract**

Mr John Pitts, independent utilities broker from UtiliTrack, was invited to join the meeting to present to Members a series of options for prices for electricity when existing contracts will be due for renewal. He advised that the usage figures given were based on full meter readings.

It was **RESOLVED** to enter into a 24-month contract for supply of electricity with Opus Energy when current contracts expire.

b. **Finance Review**

Members considered the Finance Review report and the recommendations contained therein. It was **RESOLVED** to accept all the recommendations in the Action Plan appended to the report with the exception of R16, wherein the reference to elimination of use of cash should be deleted, and that these recommendations be attached as an appendix to the minutes.

c. **Staffing Matter**

The Chairman introduced an additional item relating to Public Realm staffing.

It was **RESOLVED** to recommend to Council that the recruitment of two additional Public Realm positions can proceed.

EXEMPT