

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE  
FINANCE, POLICY AND GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE  
HELD ON 23 JULY 2020  
IN THE TOWN COUNCIL OFFICES, LEDBURY**

---

**PRESENT:** Councillors: Eakin (Chair) , Bannister, Harvey, Knight

**IN ATTENDANCE:** The Town Clerk – Angela Price

**F195 APOLOGIES**

Apologies were received from Councillors Whattler and Howells

**F196 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

None received

**F197 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

**A resident of Ledbury submitted questions in relation to the cost of the Bloor Homes appeal.**

**Councillor Bannister was pleased that residents of Ledbury were asking the above questions and was happy to answer the below questions.**

**How much more money is to be spent?**

He advised that current costs have come in at £78,000 however there is a further anticipated cost of £21,000. He believed that the total cost would be £100,000.

**How much a day is it costing Ledbury?**

If you calculate that the cost from when the Council took up Rule 6 Status in March 2020 until the anticipated conclusion of the Inquiry in September, the total cost per day to the Council is circa £500.

**There is no guarantee that the Council will win the case**

Whilst Councillor Bannister believed that Ledbury Town Council have a strong case, there is no guarantee that they will win.

**Will LTC Have to pay costs if the appeal is lost?**

Councillor Bannister advised that to gain costs Bloor Homes would have to prove to the inspector that Ledbury Town Council had behaved unreasonably, since the start of the appeal process.

Councillor Harvey advised that Bloor Homes have asked the inspector to award costs against Ledbury Council and Herefordshire Council.

**Will Councillor Bannister pay everything back?**

Councillor Bannister reminded members that although he proposed that Ledbury Town Council apply for a Rule 6 Status, it was agreed unanimously by Members in the Council.

Councillor Harvey wanted to reassure members of the public that the council are doing everything they can to reduce costs that the council are likely to incur.

**Is money being taken from Ledbury Town Council Reserves?**

Councillor Bannister advised that there are some costs being taken from the reserves, however he wanted to reassure residents of Ledbury the Council do not want to waste resident's money. He advised that with over 400 letters of objection to the single access being submitted to the local authority and a Parish Poll being held by Ledbury Town Council, the outcome of which was 97% against the single access to the site, Ledbury Town Council considered that as Hereford Council had decided not to defend the appeal, they should seek to obtain Rule 6 Status.

F198

**TERMS OF REFERENCE**

**RESOLVED:**

**That the Terms of Reference be deferred to the next Finance, Policy and General Purposes Meeting, subject to consideration of the Corporate Plan.**

F199

**TO APPROVE AND SIGN AS A CORRECT RECORD THE MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE FINANCE, POLICY AND GENREAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE HELD ON 18 JUNE 2020**

**RESOLVED:**

- 1. That the minutes of a meeting of the Finance, Policy & General Purposes Committee held on 18 June 2020 be approved and signed as a correct record.**

**F200 TO APPROVE INVOICES FOR PAYMENT**

The Town Clerk advised that items 6-9 were missing due to shortage of staff. However, she could still produce the payments as 'invoices as paid' if members agreed for her to do so.

**RESOLVED:**

**That the invoices for payment be deferred to the next Finance, Policy and General Purposes Committee.**

**That the Town Clerk produce payments as 'invoices as paid'**

**F201 TO RECEIVE THE RECORDS OF RECEIPTS AND PAYMENTS**

**RESOLVED:**

**Due to staffing shortage the above agenda item be deferred to the next Finance, Policy and General Purposes Meeting.**

**F203 TO RECEIVE THE BALANCE SHEET AND TRIAL BALANCE**

**RESOLVED:**

**Due to staffing shortage the above agenda item be deferred to the next Finance, Policy and General Purposes Meeting.**

**F204 TO CONSIDER HOW TO VERIFY BANK STATEMENTS AND BANK RECONCILIATIONS DURING COVID-19**

**RESOLVED:**

Due to staffing shortage the above agenda item will be deferred to the next Finance Policy and General Purposes Meeting

**F205 TO RECEIVE YEAR END REPORTS TO 31 MARCH 2020, TO INCLUDE THE ANNUAL RETURN**

Members were provided with the report of the independent internal Auditor for the year ended 31 March 2020.

The Clerk advised that the audit deadline had been extended to 1<sup>st</sup> September 2020 due to Covid-19.

Members queried the questions and answers on the following pages and asked whether the Town Clerk could investigate and report back to the next Finance, Policy and General Purposes Meeting.

**Page 832**

**4b-** Has a member of the Committee been appointed internal auditor?

**4c-** Does she have a specific programme, and does he report to meetings?

**Page 833**

**10d -** Are movements in Treasury Deposits accurately record?

**11b -** Are there any unexplained balancing entries in any reconciliation?

**15a -** Any evidence of fraudulent activity should be brought to the attention of the Chairman?

Councillor Harvey asked whether there was a degree of percentage difference in figures at which comments would be required to explain variances to the External Auditor.

Members provided answers to the Annual Governance Statement 2019/2020 on page 845 and subsequently agreed to the accounting statements, with the exception of question 2, subject to responses from the Internal Auditor in respect of the above questions.

Councillor Harvey reminded members that the Special Audit previously agreed was still outstanding, due to the auditors appointed to carry this out being unable to continue, and the emergence of Covid-19. She advised that the Clerk was aware of the need to complete this.

Councillor Harvey advised that it may be worth alerting the External Auditor of the Rule 6 costs spanning over two financial years.

**RESOLVED:**

1. **That members receive and note the year end reports to 31 March 2020.**
2. **That the Town Clerk clarify whether the below answers were correct and report back to the next Finance, Policy and General Purposes Meeting**
- 3.

**That the Clerk establish whether there was a degree of percentage difference in figures at which comments would be required to explain variances to the External Auditor.**

**Page 832**

**4b - Has a member of the Committee been appointed internal auditor?**

**4c - Does she have a specific programme, and does he report to meetings?**

**Page 833**

**10d - Are movements in Treasury Deposits accurately record?**

**11b - Are there any unexplained balancing entries in any reconciliation?**

**3. 15a - Any evidence of fraudulent activity should be brought to the attention of the Chairman?**

**That the Annual Governance Statement be agreed, noting that question 2 be deferred to the next Finance Policy and General purposes Meeting.**

**F206**

**EXTERNAL AND INTERNAL AUDIT**

**RESOLVED:**

**None.**

**F207**

**VIADUCT INQUIRY COSTS**

Members were provided with an update on anticipated costs associated with the Viaduct Inquiry, following the adjournment of the inquiry until week commencing 22 September 2020.

Members were requested to consider whether the threshold of £90,000 should be raised to take into consideration the cost of the inquiry as of 17 July 2020 is £77,988, leaving a sum of £12,012 for any additional costs as part of the reconvened meeting.

The Clerk advised that in addition to the anticipated costs provided, it was likely there may be additional costs for the Barrister and that they should consider this if raising the ceiling in respect of the costs.

Councillor Eakin proposed that the Council allow for an additional £15,000 to be taken from the general reserves to go towards the inquiry.

**RESOLVED:**

1. **That a RECOMMENDATION be forwarded to the next meeting of Council the threshold for the costs in respect of the Inquiry be increased by £15,000 from the general reserves, making provision of a total of £105,000 ceiling.**

**F208**

**SUBSCRIPTIONS**

**RESOLVED:**

**None received**

**F209**

**WORKING PARTIES**

Nominations were requested for Members to sit on the following working parties.

**ICT**

Councillors Eakin, Harvey and Bannister.

**GDPR**

Councillor Harvey proposed that the members re-visit the GDPR Working party in the future.

Councillor Eakin proposed that the below working parties be added to the list.

**Grants Consideration**

Councillors Bannister and Eakin.

**Budget Monitoring Working Party**

Councillors Eakin and Harvey.

**RESOLVED:**

1. **That the Membership of the Council's Working Party's for the 2020/21 Municipal Year be as above.**
2. **That members revisit the GDPR Working Party in the future.**

**F210**

### **RISK MANAGEMENT: SECTION 3 – OTHER LIABILITIES**

Members of the Finance, Policy and General Purposes were asked to receive and note the Risk Management.

Councillor Harvey suggested that the Clerk consider the provision of refresher courses for chairs, in particular Finance training. **She also asked whether the Town Clerk could add a section to the risk assessment to deal with finance and the judicial review.**

Councillors considered a number of amendments and additions to the risk Assessment in relation to the Employers section.

#### **RESOLVED:**

- 1. That the Risk Assessment be received and noted with the below amendments:**
- 2. Employers liabilities .pg2 – To add the existence of the media and ICT policy into the mitigation of “Slander and/or libel by a member of staff” and give staff the necessary training.**

**F211**

### **POLICIES**

Members were asked to adopt the following policies

- Draft information, communication & ICT Policy
- Draft Event Cash Handling Policy
- Draft Sickness Absence Policy

Councillor Harvey proposed that the Draft Sickness Policy be deferred to the next meeting of Finance, Policy and General Purposes to allow members more time to read through the document.

Councillor Harvey requested that it was noted that personal emails are subject to Freedom of Information in the ICT policy.

#### **RESOLVED:**

- 1. That the Draft Sickness Policy be deferred to the next meeting of Finance, Policy and General Purposes.**
- 2. That the draft information, communication, and ICT Policy be adopted with the below amendment:**
  - I. That the Clerk check that the policy recognises personal emails are subject to freedom of information.**
- 3. That the Draft Event Cash Handling Policy be adopted.**

**F212 TO RECEIVE AN UPDATE ON PROGRESS ON ICT MANAGED SYSTEM (WEBSITE)**

Councillor Bannister requested that the agenda item name be changed to WEBSITE.

**RESOLVED:**

That the Agenda Item 17 be amended to read "WEBSITE".

**F213 GDPR**

**RESOLVED:**

None received

**F214 PROVISION OF TABLETS FOR COUNCILLORS**

Members were asked to consider the purchase of electric tablets for Councillors in order to join virtual meetings.

Councillor Harvey suggested purchasing laptops as opposed to tablets as she felt that they would be easier to work with when looking through reports and agendas.

Members agreed to defer the agenda item to the ICT working party in consultation with the Town Clerk.

**RESOLVED:**

That the request to purchase tablets/laptops for councillors be deferred to the ICT Working Party.

**F215 DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

**RESOLVED:**

To note that the next meeting of Finance, Policy and General Purposes Committee is scheduled for 30 September 2020.

**F216 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC**

**RESOLVED:** that in accordance with section 1(2) of the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960, in view of the confidential nature of the business about to be transacted, in the public interest the press and public were excluded from the remainder of the meeting.

**F217 BANKING MATTERS**



The Clerk advised Members of the Committee of concerns in relation to the Council’s current financial procedures.

As a result of the information Councillors asked the Clerk to seek advice on whether the answers they had given in respect of the Annual Governance Review – Section 1, earlier in the meeting would need to be reviewed in light of the information provided by the Clerk.

Councillor Harvey suggested contacting the Internal Auditor to ask whether they would be willing to review the current policies and procedures in relation to the council’s financial business and provide updated and robust policies going forward.

The Clerk advised that she had reviewed some of the procedures and implemented more robust methods in some areas, and would continue to do so, in line with the Council’s Financial Regulations.

**RESOLVED:**

1. **That the Clerk seek advice on whether the answers given to in respect of the Annual Governance Review – Section 1 need to be reviewed in light of the information provided by the Clerk.**
2. **That the Clerk contact the Internal Audit to ask whether they would be willing to visit the town council offices and review the current policies and procedures in relation to the Council’s financial business and provide updated and robust policies going forward.**
3. **That the Clerk continue to review the Council’s financial procedures and implement more robust methods in line with the Council’s Financial Regulations.**

Meeting closed at pm.

Signed..... Dated .....