

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

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**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.

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**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.**

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**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.

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**Page 832**

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

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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?

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

3. 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.

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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.

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:**
  1. **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.**

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**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 .....

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**FINANCE, POLICY & GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE**  
23-May-19

Minute No.	Action	To be Actioned by	Date Actioned	Comments	Status
F14	That the TC provide a list of all subscriptions the Council are paying for and that this be made available at the meeting of the FP&GP Committee in	TC	20.02.2020	Request made to DTC for list of current subscriptions and expiry dates	In Progress

23.01.2020

Minute No.	Action	To be Actioned by	Date Actioned	Comments	Status
F133	That the TC be authorised to continue to identify Auditing Companies that would be interested in providing a quote for the work and that quotes be submitted to a future meeting of the FP& GP or Council, whichever is the earliest	TC/DTC		Clerk to investigate more audit companies	In progress

27.02.2020

Minute No.	Action	To be Actioned by	Date Actioned	Comments	Status
F172	That the update from the Town Clerk is received and noted, noting that the Council will be required to provide an Accessibility Statement on their website with effect from September 2020.	TC		Clerk to speak to website provider about accessibility statement - website provider has actioned their end - awaiting statement from Clerk	Completed
F173	That the Draft Media Policy be approved.	TC	27.02.2020	To be sent to all councillors and staff	Completed

18.06.2020

Minute No.	Action	To be Actioned by	Date Actioned	Comments	Status
F178(2)	That the NDP WP consider contacting the Gloucester Canal Trust to discuss the future plans in respect of the canal	NDP WP		NDP Working Party to be re-established following lockdown	Pending

F1



F182	That the Chair of FP & GP Committee be given delegated powers, in consultation with the Clerk, to receive electronic copies of the bank statements and reconciliations prior to meetings of the FP & GP Committee during Covid19.	Chair & Clerk	Prior to all FP & GP Meetings	On-going
F184(2)	That the Town Clerk contact the Internal Auditor to discuss an interim audit in each financial year going forward.	Clerk	27.07.2020	Completed
F186(1)	That a letter be sent to Mr Wiggin MP, thanking him for his assistance and support in relation to the Viaduct Inquiry.	Clerk	22.06.2020	Completed
F186(2)	That the threshold for the costs in respect of the Inquiry be increased from the previously agreed £40,000 to £90,000, to take into account the additional work being undertaken by the expert witnesses.	Clerk		Completed
F186(3)	That LTC investigate whether they should apply to the Planning Inspectorate to seek recovery of costs, should they win the Inquiry.	Viaduct Working Party	02.07.2020	Completed
F187	That the Council make a payment of £26 per month to Council staff working from home during the Coronavirus outbreak with effect from 25 March 2020.	DTC		completed
F188(1)	That Members of the FP & GP committee receive and note the actions of the Chair and Vice Chair of the E & L Committee and the Chair of the FP & GP Committee, in consultation with the Clerk, in respect of the additional repairs and expenditure in relation to the war memorial refurbishment.	DTC		Completed

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F188(2)	That the Council make provision for the additional works to the War Memorial from the Council's reserves in the sum of £7,250, but that this be reviewed in the 3rd quarter budget review to establish whether it is possible to identify monies from an underspend within the 2020/21 budget.	Clerk/DTC		To be noted and managed via accounts management - war memorial due to be completed by 31.07.2020	Completed
F189(1)	Employers liabilities - that "protection of office-based staff from visitors" be amended to read "To provide safe and secure workplace for staff"	Clerk	17.07.2020		Completed
F189(2)	That the Council's Policies and Procedures are added to the mitigation under the heading "Council Fails to comply with employment law."	Clerk	17.07.2020		Completed
F189(3)	That the Council fully support the DTC in her studies to become CILCA qualified under the heading "Long term unavailability of the Clerk or loss of the Clerk without a period of notice".	Clerk	17.07.2020		Superseded
F189(4)	That the TC investigates whether the Health and Safety Policy considers home working for staff	Clerk			Pending
F192	That the Town Clerk respond to the consultation in respect of question 11, item 1.30 and confirm that Ledbury Town Council agree with the statement "The government does not propose any change to the PWLB lending arrangements for smaller LAs (parishes, town and community councils, and drainage board) as there is no evidence that they are engaging in debt-for-yield activity." (page 15, question 11, item 1.30).	Clerk	24.06.2020	Response sent via consultation website	Completed
F193	<b>RECOMMENDATION</b> - That a recommendation be submitted to a meeting of Full Council Committee that the Council adopt the Equal Opportunities Policy as provided by the Clerk.	FC	30.07.2020	To be approved at Full Council in July	Completed

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23.07.2020

Minute No.	Action	To be Actioned by	Date Actioned	Comments	Status
F198	That the Terms of Reference be deferred to the next TC Finance, Policy and General Purposes Meeting, subject to consideration of the Corporate Plan.				Pending



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F205(2)	That the Town Clerk clarify whether the below answers in relation to the report produced by the independent Internal Auditor were correct and report back to the next Finance, Policy and General Purposes Meeting 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?	TC	29/07/2020	Clerk Contacted Internal Auditor 27.09.20 awaiting amended report - Clarification sought on question 2 in relation to responses - to be considered at full council on 30/07/2020, subject to receipt of report from auditor - report received from auditor and provided to meeting of full council - audit responses agreed and all documentation now with external auditors	Completed
F200	That the invoices for payment be deferred to the next Finance, Policy and General Purposes Committee and that That the Town Clerk produce payments as 'invoices as Paid'	TC		Invoices to be available for consideration at full council meeting on 30.07.2020	Complete
F201	Due to staffing shortage the Records of receipts and payments be deferred to the next Finance, Policy and General Purposes Meeting.	TC		To be considered at FP & GP meeting on 24/09/2020	On agenda
F203	Due to staffing shortage the balance sheet and trial balance be deferred to the next Finance, Policy and General Purposes Meeting.	TC		To be considered at FP & GP meeting on 24/09/2020	On agenda
F204	Due to staffing shortage the how to verify bank statements and bank reconciliations be deferred to the next Finance, Policy and General Purposes Meeting.	TC	30.07.2020	To be considered at FP & GP meeting on 24/09/2020	On agenda
F205(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.	TC	30.07.2020	To be presented at Full Council subject to receipt of internal audit report.	Completed

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F207	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.	TC	30.07.2020	to be considered at Full Council meeting on 30.07.2020	Completed
F209(2)	That members revisit the setting up of the GDPR Working Party in the future.	TC		Deferred	Deferred
F210(2)	Risk Assessment - 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.	TC			Pending
F211(1)	That the Draft Sickness Policy be deferred to the next meeting of Finance, Policy and General Purposes.	TC		Deferred	On agenda
F211(2)	That the draft information, communication, and ICT Policy be adopted with the below amendment: That the Clerk check that the policy recognises personal emails are subject to freedom of information, subject to approval at full council	TC	30.09.2020	Clerk reviewed policy and can confirm that this is included in the policy - to be considered at full council on 30.07.2020	Completed
F211(3)	That the Draft Event Cash Handling Policy be adopted, subject to approval at Full Council	TC	30.07.2020	To be considered at Full Council meeting on 30.07.2020	Completed
F214	That the request to purchase tablets/laptops for councillors be deferred to the ICT Working Party.	TC / ICT Working Party		Deferred to first meeting of the ICT Working Party	Pending