

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE  
FINANCE, POLICY AND GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE  
HELD ON 28 JANUARY 2021  
VIA VIRTUAL MEANS**

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

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

**F255 APOLOGIES**

Apologies were received from Councillors Harvey and Whattler

**F256 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Councillor Howells declared a non-pecuniary interest on agenda item 13 (i) 'Grants under £500', due to fact that he attends the Traders Association meetings; he signed a declaration of interest form accordingly.

**F257 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

None received.

**F258 TO APPROVE AND SIGN AS A CORRECT RECORD THE MINUTES OF THE FINANCE, POLICY AND GENREAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE**

Members were asked to approve the minutes of the meeting of the Finance, Policy and General Purposes Committee held on 26 November 2020 and the reconvened meeting held on 8 December 2020.

**RESOLVED: That the minutes of a meeting of the Finance, Policy & General Purposes Committee held on 26 November & 8 December 2020 be approved and signed as a correct record.**

**F259 TO RECEIVE AND NOTE PAYMENTS**

Members were asked to receive and note the invoices for payment made in November, December 2020, and January 2021.

**RESOLVED: That the invoices for payments made in November, December 2020 and January 2021 be received and noted.**

**F260 TO APPROVE INVOICES FOR PAYMENT**

Members were asked to approve invoices for payment made in January 2021.

**RESOLVED: That the invoices for payment in January 2021 be approved as a correct record.**

**F261 TO RECEIVE THE RECORD OF RECEIPTS AND PAYMENTS**

Members were asked to receive and note the record of receipts and payments for November and December 2020

Councillor Eakin advised members that he had visited the Council offices to reviewed and sign the documentation in respect of receipts and payments and proposed that the Committee receive and note them.

**RESOLVED: That the record of receipts and payments for November and December 2020 are received and noted.**

**F262 TO RECEIVE THE BALANCE SHEET AND TRIAL BALANCE**

Members were asked to receive and note the balance sheet and trial balance for month 8 and 9.

**RESOLVED:**

**That the Balance Sheet and Trial Balance for month 8 and 9.**

**F263 TO CONFIRM VERIFICATION OF BANK STATEMENTS AND RECONCILIATIONS DURING COVID**

Councillor Eakin confirmed that he had visited the Council offices to inspect and sign the bank statements and reconciliations for November to December 2020. He confirmed that these had all been order.

**RESOLVED: That it be noted that the Bank Statements and Reconciliations had been signed by the Chairman of Finance, Policy and General Purposes.**

**F264 2020/21 BUDGET UPDATE**

Members had been provided with a set of budget papers with the agenda and following a meeting of Councillors on 26 January 2021 to go through the budget papers, they had been issued with

a further set of papers. They had also been provided with a report on the anticipated movements to and from Reserves at the end of the 2020/21 financial year for consideration.

The additional budget papers provided by the Clerk provided a draft budget precept request of £581,081 which equated to an increase of 12.45% (£1.61 per month per Band D equivalent household). This figure had been reached following work by Councillor Harvey to identify a number of underspends within the 2020/21 financial year, which it had been agreed could be used to fund the 2021/22 Special Projects and other projects that may come to fruition in 2021/22, which would reduce the increase in the expenditure budget.

At the budget meeting held on 26 January 2021, the Clerk had been asked to identify how much the Council would need to reduce the percentage increase to circa 5%. The Clerk had provided information to members on this

The new set of papers provided detail of the savings that would need to be identified to decrease the expenditure budget and therefore the draft proposed precept figure. However, the Clerk advised that she had been through the budget figures in an attempt to identify where further decreases in the expenditure budget could be made, but as many of the budget lines had already been reduced for the forthcoming year it was difficult to identify any further decreases.

However, the Clerk advised that there was potential for a further saving of £10,000 from the expenditure budget from within the Economic Development & Planning Budget. She suggested that Members may wish to consider removing the £10,000 additional funding for the NDP from the expenditure budget and providing a guarantee that should this additional funding be required it would be made available from the general reserve.

As a result of this further £10,000 reduction, as agreed by Members of the Finance, Policy & General Purposes Committee, the draft precept request figure was reduced to £571,081 and increase of 10.51% (£1.36 per month increase on all Band D equivalent properties).

Councillor Eakin thanked Councillor Harvey for her efforts prior to the budget meeting on 26 January, which had identified underspends within the 2020/21 budget of circa £165,000, which could be used to fund the special projects and other projects in the 2021/22 financial year.

Members were advised that the increase in the precept request was partly due to the Council's hopes to recruit two new members

of staff, and also the 25% increase in working age council tax reduction claimants, which reflects part of the economic impact of Covid-19 and only a fraction of new homes coming online this year.

Councillor Howells proposed that the £10,000 is withdrawn from the NDP budget line as suggested by the Clerk.

**RECOMMENDATION:**

1. **That Members of the Finance, Policy & General Purposes Committee recommend the approval of the draft 2021/22 budget, and that a request be sent to Herefordshire Council for a precept of £571,081, an annual increase of £16.30, which equates to 10.51% (£1.36 per month per Band D equivalent property).**
2. **That Council agree the movements to/from reserves at the end of the 2020/21 financial year, as detailed in the additional information, subject to any changes prior to the year end.**
3. **That it be noted that should the additional £10,000 be required by the NDP Working Party, that this will be made available from within the council's general reserve.**

**F265**

**EXTERNAL AND INTERNAL AUDIT**

Members were provided with correspondence from PKF Littlejohn in relation to the completion of the limited assurance review for the Year ended 31 March 2020.

The Clerk advised that the Council had received a qualified audit for 2019/20 and provided an explanation as to the reasons for this.

The Clerk advised that the Conclusion of Audit 2019/20 report had been published on the Town Councils website accordingly.

**RESOLVED:**

1. **That the correspondence received from PKF Littlejohn be received and noted.**
2. **That the Conclusion of Audit 2019/20 report be submitted to the meeting of Full Council scheduled for 4 February 2021.**

**F266**

**SUBSCRIPTIONS**

Members were provided with an application to join Hereford Green network at a cost of £50 per annum.

**RESOLVED:**

**That the Council become a member of Hereford Green Network at a cost of £50 per annum.**

**F267**

**GRANT APPLICATIONS**

**The Clerk provided members with copies of grant applications received from the following organisations:**

**£500 or Less**

**1. Ledbury Traders Association**

*Councillor Howells left the room as he had declared a Pecuniary Interest in this item.*

Whilst members appreciated the work that the Traders Association do, they felt that the grant would not benefit all Ledbury traders; it was also felt that the work being undertaken by the Economy & Tourism Working Party on various promotional projects would, eventually, help promote the traders within the town going forward.

**2. Cobalt**

*Councillor Howells re-joined the meeting.*

Councillor Knight felt that the Council should be backing charities such as this in the current Covid-19 Pandemic climate.

Members recognised the importance of the work that Cobalt provide and agreed to grant £500.

**Over £500**

**3. Ledbury Community Hall**

Whilst members understood the need for accessibility at the Community Hall, it was noted that grants were only awarded to organisations or charities in need of extra money. Councillor Howells proposed that the Council offer a grant of £250 as opposed to £2,000 as a show of goodwill for allowing the COVID-19 vaccinations to take part.

Councillor Knight considered that the access and egress of the hall was proving sufficient and therefore did not feel it appropriate to provide a grant on this occasion.

Members noted that the Community Hall was currently being used for the Covid-19 vaccinations. It was suggested that the Community Hall Association may wish to contact Herefordshire Council in respect of funding the for the works to widen the path and ramp for disability access.

Members agreed to decline the grant application from Ledbury Community hall.

4. **Multi-Year Application**

**Community Action Ledbury**

Members recognised the importance of the work that the Community Action ledbury provide and agreed to the multi-Year grant.

**RESOLVED:**

1. **That Members of the Finance, Policy and General Purposes Committee decline the grant application of £500 or less to the traders Association.**
2. **That Members of the Finance, Policy and General Purposes Committee agree to the grant of £500 to Cobalt.**
3. **That Members of the Finance, Policy and General Purposes Committee decline the grant application of £2,000 to the Ledbury Community Hall**
4. **That Members of the Finance, Policy and General Purposes Committee agree the multi-year grant application to Community Action Ledbury in the sum of £10,000 per annum, with the first payment being made in the 2021/22 financial year.**

**F268**

**2019/20 GRANT FEEDBACK**

Members were provided with feedback from recipients of grants awarded in 2019/20.

Members were asked to consider whether the Council would delay the three-year grant awarded to LYAS in 2019/20 until such time the group recommence their operations.

**RESOLVED:**

1. **That the update on the 2019/2020 awarded grants be received and noted.**

2. **That members of the Finance, Policy and General Purposes Committee agree to delay the three-year grant awarded to LYAS in 2019/20 until such time the group recommence their operations.**

**F269**

## **RECOMMENDATIONS FROM OTHER COMMITTEES**

### **Councillor Remuneration**

Members were asked to consider the introduction of remuneration or payment for out-of-pocket expenses to Town Councillors.

The Clerk advised that Councillor Harvey had provided a copy of Herefordshire Councils Remuneration Policy and suggested that Members consider a change in the wording in respect of 4C to that of 6.1.2 of Herefordshire Council's "Councillor Allowance Scheme".

### **RECOMMENDED:**

1. **That members of the Finance, Policy and General Purposes Committee recommend the 'Payment of Out-of-Pocket Expenses' to a meeting of Full Council for approval.**
2. **That members of the Finance, Policy and General Purposes Committee recommend the adoption of the draft Councillor Remuneration Policy, subject an amendment at point 4C.**
3. **That members of the Finance, Policy and General Purposes Committee recommend that the Financial Regulations being amended to include detail on the reimbursement of expenses to Councillors.**

**F270**

## **CORRESPONDENCE RECEIVED IN RELATION TO LEDBURY COUNCIL BUSINESS RATES**

Members were provided with correspondence from Dunlop Heywood advising that there may a potential error made by Herefordshire Council in relation to Ledbury Town Council overpaying business rates on the Cemetery in New Street.

The Clerk explained that if the Council agree to go ahead with the company's proposal, it would be a no win no fee claim. However, she is unsure on their costs she the claim be proven.

**RESOLVED: That the Town Clerk be instructed to obtain the costs for Dunlop Heywood to investigate whether the Council have been overpaying on business rates, should the claim be proven.**

**F271 RISK REGISTER**

Members were asked to receive and note section 6 of the Risk Register 'Contractual'.

Members raised concerns that the Residual Risk of "Failure to maintain privacy of CIC Information" was higher than the Actual Risk. Following discussion, it was agreed to add the following and thus reduce the Residual Risk

**Failure to maintain privacy of CIC information** – That Staff and councillors are trained regularly to remind them of Data protection responsibilities.

**RESOLVED:**

1. **That the following be included in the "Failure to maintain privacy of CIC Information" :**

**"That Staff and councillors receive regular training in respect of Data protection requirements."**

**F272 POLICIES**

Members were provided with the following draft policies:

- I. Document Retention Policy
- II. Special leave Policy

**RECEOMMEDED: That Council approve the adoption of the Draft Document Retention and Special Leave polices.**

**F273 COUNCIL WEBSITE**

The Town Clerk advised members an email received from the website designer asking for an update on the status of the new website. The Clerk advised that she had provided Members of the ICT Working Party with a link to the website some time ago but some of the Members of the Working Party had not yet provided their feedback.

The Clerk suggested that it may now be time to go live with the website and make amendments once it was live.

Councillor Eakin asked if there would any delay with transferring documents to the new website. The Clerk advised that she would check this matter and update members accordingly.



It was agreed that Councillors Knight and Eakin would join the ICT Working Party to ensure it being quorate for a meeting with the website designer.

**RESOLVED:**

1. **That the Clerk arrange a meeting between members of the ICT working party and Bradley from Advansys.**
2. **That Councillors Knight and Eakin join the ICT Working Party membership to ensure a quorate meeting with the website designer to enable the new website to progress.**

**F274**

**DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

**RESOLVED:**

**To note that the next meeting of Finance, Policy and General Purposes Committee is scheduled for 25 March 2021.**

Meeting closed at 9:00pm

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