

LEDBURY TOWN COUNCIL

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE FINANCE, POLICY & GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE

HELD ON 16 NOVEMBER 2023

PRESENT: Councillors Bradford, Furlonger, Harvey, Hughes (Chair), l'Anson and Newsham

ALSO PRESENT: Angela Price – Town Clerk
Julia Lawrence – Deputy Town Clerk
Sophie Jarvis – Minute Taker
1 member of the public – Emma Jackson

F77. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Eakin & Howells.

F78. DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

Councillor Hughes declared an interest in the Grant Application from Ledbury Places due to his personal friendship with the Treasurer. He informed members that he would remain in the meeting as Chair for this item but would not take part in the discussions or vote in respect of this application.

F79. NOLAN PRINCIPLES

The Chair reiterated the importance of the Nolan Principles Stating that it was his personal belief that as Councillors, they should all act as Councillors according to the Nolan Principles with all friends and neighbours, even though it may not always be considered to be council business. The public view is as councillors we should be seen to behave as Councillors at all times, as a corporate body and not to seek to undermine other Councillors.

Councillor Harvey pointed out that having had to tread this line quite finely at times, it is important to acknowledge that the Nolan Principles are a good framework for living and general behaviour in life, however it is an important principle that people who are Councillors are entitled to be private individuals, noting that it is not inappropriate to point out that you are happy to discuss matters, but at an appropriate time, when not being a private individual and with their friends and family.

Councillor Hughes clarified that he was referring more to interactions on social media than other scenarios.

RESOLVED:

That the Nolan Principles be received and noted.

F80. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Councillor Furlonger arrived at 7:07pm.

Emma Jackson informed members that she was attending the meeting to be informed on the outcome of the Ledbury Poetry grant application.

Councillor Bradford arrived at 7:09pm.

Councillor Harvey asked whether now would be a good time for her to make a proposal in respect of how to deal with the grant applications included on the agenda for consideration. She noted that there were a lot of grant applications included on the agenda, some for this year.

She proposed that agenda item 14 be dealt with at a separate meeting at which time Members should consider the provision for the next year's grant process, and a more strategic approach in respect of the grant application process. She informed members that the budget line for the grants could also be reviewed ahead of that meeting to ensure they are provided with the most up-to-date information in respect of what is available in the 2023/24 budget in respect of grants, noting that it would be helpful to have a covering report to advise of the current and future position of grant funding available.

After further discussion, Councillor Harvey clarified that whilst the grant applications should be discussed in a public meeting, it may be helpful to have a meeting of Councillors to discuss the budget and principles underlying the approach to public grants which can then inform that public meeting.

Councillor Furlonger queried what further information could be provided to Members ahead of this meeting. The Clerk advised that she would be able to provide detailed information on what grants have been paid in 2023/24 and whether they were paid as individual grants or from the "Unspecified Grants" budget line and information on the multi-year grants already agreed.

The Chair asked Emma Jackson if she would be happy with this approach being taken. Ms Jackson informed members that clearer guidelines would be extremely helpful and would aid the Poetry Festival to approach grant applications differently in line with prioritising their projects in which they need funding.

RESOLVED:

- 1. That a meeting of Councillors be arranged to discuss the budget and principles underlying the approach to public grants.**
- 2. That following the meeting of Councillors, an extraordinary meeting of the Finance, Policy & General Purposes Committee be scheduled to consider the grant applications received.**

F81. TO APPROVE AND SIGN AS A CORRECT RECORD THE MINUTES OF A MEETING OF FINANCE, POLICY & GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE HELD ON 21 SEPTEMBER 2023

Minute no. F58.1 should be amended to read 'What could be done to improve the "fleetness of foot" of the Working Party?.'

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of a meeting of the Finance, Policy and General Purposes Committee held on 21 September 2023 be approved and signed as a correct record subject to the following amendment:

"That Minute no. F58.1 be amended to read as follows:

"What could be done to improve the fleetness of foot" of the Working Party."

F82. TO REVIEW THE ACTION SHEET

The following points on the Action Sheet were discussed:

F532(2) – That a recommendation be put to Full Council that Ledbury Town Council put together a specification of the requirements for a website and invite tenders from companies that are used to working with Town and Parish Councils with a view to commissioning a new website.

The Clerk informed Members that officers are currently working with Advansys to re-design the Agendas and Minutes page on the Town Council website to make this much easier to navigate for all users.

Members noted that this was a step forward in improving the website and suggested that crawler software be investigated to ensure that there are no broken links on the website. The Clerk advised that the next page to be looked at needs to be the Finances page.

F46 – That the Clerk and Councillor Hughes work on the Risk register and provide an amended version to a future meeting of Committee.

The Chair informed members that he had met with the Clerk and have completed section 1 of the Risk Register, with plans to meet again in the future to consider the remaining sections.

F58.1 That the Committee Structure Working Party be asked to make an early recommendation regarding how to improve the operation and structure of all Working Parties and return their decision to Full Council as soon as possible.

The Chair advised that the next stage of work was now going out to the Standing Committee to look at their budgets planning for the year ahead.

RESOLVED:

1. That officers continue to review the website pages and work with the Website provider to create improved pages and enhanced navigation.
2. That officers investigate “crawler software” to be used on the council website.
3. That the action sheet be received and noted.

F83. a. INVOICES FOR PAYMENT

Councillor Bradford queried why a grant was being given to Malvern Hills AONB when they are based in Worcestershire and not Herefordshire. It was stated that this would be an item on the agenda for the meeting to discuss the grants process.

RESOLVED:

That the invoices for payment in the sum of £15,338.09 (plus VAT) be approved.

- b. **TO RECEIVE THE RECORD OF RECEIPTS AND PAYMENTS FOR AUGUST AND SEPTEMBER 2023**

RESOLVED:

That the receipts and payments for August and September 2023 be received and noted.

F84. TO RECEIVE THE BALANCE SHEET AND TRIAL BALANCE FOR MONTHS 5 AND 6

RESOLVED:

That the Balance Sheet and Trial Balance for months 5 and 6 be received and noted.

F85. BUDGET MONITORING REPORTS 1 APRIL – 30 SEPTEMBER 2023

Councillor Harvey suggested that the Clerk be given the opportunity to have the errors identified rectified, and that following this a budget monitoring meeting be held to consider the reports and that should any councillors identify any further errors within the documents they be brought to the Clerk’s attention to be rectified.

RESOLVED:

1. **That a Budget Monitoring meeting be held in December to review the Budget Monitoring Report and that in the meantime, should Councillors identify any further errors these be reported to the Clerk for amending**

accordingly.

2. That the Budget Monitoring Reports be deferred until such time as the amendments have been made.

F86. TO CONFIRM VERIFICATION OF BANK STATEMENTS AND RECONCILIATIONS FOR MARCH TO JUNE, JULY, AUGUST, AND SEPTEMBER 2023

RESOLVED:

That it be noted that the bank statements and reconciliations for June, July, August and September 2023 had been signed by the Chairman of the Finance, Policy & General Purposes Committee in accordance with the Council's Financial Regulations.

F87. TO RECEIVE OUTCOME OF 2022/23 EXTERNAL AUDIT REPORT

RESOLVED:

1. That Members note that the Notice of Conclusion of Audit was displayed with effect from 28 September 2023, in line with statutory requirements.
2. That Members note that the Notice of Conclusion of Audit and Certified AGAR (Sections 1,2 & 3) were published in council notice boards and on the website prior to 30 September 2023,
3. That copies of the AGAR be available for purchase by any person on payment of £2.00.
4. That Sections 1,2 and 3 of the 2022/23 published AGAR will remain available for public access for a period of not less than 5-years from the date of publication.
5. That members receive the outcome of 2022/23 External Audit Report, noting the error in respect of approval of Sections 1 and 2.
6. That it be noted that if necessary, an extraordinary meeting be held in future to receive the report and record that the Notice of Conclusion of Audit has been advertised in accordance with statutory requirements.

F88. ITEMS FOR CONSIDERATION FOR INCLUSION IN 2024/25 BUDGET

The Clerk advised that she had reviewed the budget sheets as included in the agenda pack and noted that a blanket increase had not been made, but where increases had been made, they had been increased by 6.7% (CPI), or to a level reflective of this years expenditure.

Councillor Harvey suggested that it would be helpful to have some comments added to the budget sheets indicating where increases have been made and why.

Members noted that Ledbury Town Council makes donations to Age UK Hereford Localities, Ledbury Foodbank, Ledbury Carnival, and other various local organisations and that this should be published in the Council's newsletter.

It was noted that reports are not being received from recipients of grants, as per the conditions and it was agreed that these should be requested.

Councillor Newsham noted that the suggested increase to the Telephone and Broadband services was insufficient for the coming year, noting that he was aware that the providers of these services are looking to increase their costs by RPI plus 3.9%.

Members were advised that the Clerk hoped to have reports from insurance brokers for consideration at Full Council on 23 November and advised that the figure within the 2023/24 budgets would be spent in December when the insurance is due.

Councillor Harvey asked why the utilities and various other costs were not included as part of the budget responsibility for this committee. The Clerk advised that historically these had always been included in the budget lines for buildings, which are managed via the Environment & Leisure Committee.

Councillor Harvey stated that she believes a charge should be made in respect of maintaining cemetery plots. Councillor Bradford advised that a request had been made at the recent Environment & Leisure Committee that cemetery fees and charges be reviewed and that costs be presented for a 3, 5 or 7 percentage increase.

Councillor Hughes raised two points that need to be considered:

1. How do we address the underselling of the resource and service being provided by Ledbury Town Council via its cemetery?
2. Clarification on whether there is an additional charge for non-residents of Ledbury.

The Clerk confirmed that there is an additional charge for non-residents of Ledbury and that this charge is double that of a resident of Ledbury.

Councillor Hughes advised that he was looking for a set of recommendations in respect of increasing the costs in relation to cemetery services, which are fully costed.

The Clerk advised that the Council's policy in respect of the Exclusive Right of Burial is currently for a period of 99 years. An Exclusive Right of Burial can only be sold, in law, for a period not exceeding 100 years. She advised that many councils have reduced the initial purchase time to 75, 50 or 25 years, and following this period the family is then offered the opportunity to purchase further years, not exceeding the total of 100 years.

RESOLVED:

- 1. That the budget monitoring sheets be noted.**
- 2. That the details of donations given to the local organisations from the council be published in the newsletter.**
- 3. That a comments column be added to the Budget sheets indicating where and why increases have been made.**
- 4. That organisations that have received grant funding be asked to provide a report on how the grant funds have been spent.**
- 5. That when reviewing the Terms of Reference of Standing Committees, consideration be given to where the council buildings should sit.**
- 6. The matter of cemetery fees and charges be referred back to the Environment & Leisure Committee, and the Clerk be asked to provide information to support a potential increase in cemetery costs for consideration in respect of the 2024/25 cemetery income for inclusion in the budget.**
- 7. That the list of items previously discussed at Standing Committees for inclusion in the 2024/25 budget be deferred at this time.**
- 8. That a Working Party be set up as soon as possible to consider the committee's work plan for the next year and how this will inform the budget setting process.**

F89. CONSIDERATION OF PRIORITY BUSINESS

Due to it being 8.55 pm the Chair asked the Clerk to identify what agenda items need to be considered as a priority, stating that he did not wish to extend the meeting beyond 9.00pm.

RESOLVED:

That agenda items 15 and 17 be dealt with at this meeting, with the remaining agenda items 13, 16, 18 and 21 being included in an extraordinary meeting agenda.

F90. TO RECEIVE NOTIFICATION OF CCTV REVENUE FUNDING 2024-2026

RESOLVED:

There was insufficient time to discuss this item, this will be put on the agenda for the next Finance, Policy and General Purposes Committee meeting.

F91. ANNUAL GRANT APPLICATION

As discussed during the public participation item, there will be a separate meeting set to go through the grant application process along with the budget to create a more strategic approach.

RESOLVED:

- 1. That a meeting of Councillors be arranged to discuss the budget and principles underlying the approach to public grants.**
- 2. That following the meeting of Councillors, an extraordinary meeting of the Finance, Policy & General Purposes Committee be scheduled to consider the grant applications received.**

F92. RECOMMENDATIONS FROM OTHER COMMITTEES

RESOLVED:

The following recommendations from other committees were approved:

- 1. Traffic Management Working Party – 25 October 2023**
 - a. Minute No. TMWP8 – That members of the Traffic Management Working Party recommend to Finance, Policy & General Purposes Committee that one mini-SID device and three poles be installed around Ledbury, along with the method for data collection, as listed above, and any additional extras deemed necessary be purchased from the 2023/24 Traffic Management budget line and Earmarked Reserves, subject to the agreement from Hereford Council that these can be sited in three positions previously used for SID's, noting that the cost to purchase the above would be circa £4,000.**
- 2. Environment & Leisure Committee – 2 November 2023**
 - a. Minute No. E57 (2) – That members agreed to make a recommendation to the Finance, Policy and General Purposes Committee to appoint Caroe & Partners to provide a feasibility study and quantity surveyors report in respect of a proposal to install a stairlift at the Market House at a cost circa £3,600 to be funded from the Listed Buildings Earmarked Reserve.**

b. Minute No. E61

- i. Members agreed to recommend to the Finance, Policy and General Purposes Committee that the Timber Climber be replaced as a matter of urgency and that the funds are taken from the 2023/24 budget. (110/4235).**
- ii. That members agreed to recommend to the Finance, Policy & General Purposes Committee that company number 7 is engaged to undertake the replacement of the Timber Climber at a cost of £9,500.**
- iii. That members agreed to recommend to Finance, Policy & General Purposes Committee to repair the inclusive roundabout using funds from the 2023/24 Play Equipment Budget (110/4236).**
- iv. That members recommend to the Finance, Policy and General Purposes Committee to appoint company to undertake the repairs to the inclusive roundabout at a cost of £1,550 (+VAT).**

F93. REQUEST FROM TALK COMMUNITY IN RESPECT OF WINTER OF WELLBEING EVENTS FUNDING

RESOLVED:

There was insufficient time to discuss this item, this will be put on the agenda for the next Finance, Policy and General Purposes Committee meeting.

F94. FIRE RISK ASSESSMENT REPORT

RESOLVED:

- 1. That the contents of the Fire Risk Assessment Report be received and noted and that it be acknowledged that officers are working with Chubb to review the outcomes and make improvements where necessary.**
- 2. That a work schedule be provided by officers in respect of the required improvement**

F95. RISK REGISTER

RESOLVED:

There was insufficient time to discuss this item, this will be put on the agenda for the next Finance, Policy and General Purposes Committee meeting.

F96. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

RESOLVED:

To note that the next meeting of the Finance, Policy & General Purposes Committee is scheduled to take place on 18 January 2023 at 7.00 pm, in the Committee Room, Council Offices, Church Lane, Ledbury.

F97. 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, the press and public be excluded from the remainder of the meeting.

F98. OUTCOME OF WARRANT OF CONTROL APPLICATION

RESOLVED:

There was insufficient time to discuss this item, this will be put on the agenda for the next Finance, Policy and General Purposes Committee meeting.

The meeting ended at 9:00pm.

Signed Date.....
(Chairman)