



FLEET TOWN COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE POLICY AND FINANCE COMMITTEE

**Wednesday 15th February 2023 at 7pm
At The Harlington**

PRESENT

Councillors: P. Einchcomb, S. Engström, L. Holt (Chairman), R. Richmond, R. Robinson, B. Schofield, S. Tilley and G. Woods

Also Present: Rochelle Halliday – Executive Officer
Alex Robins – Harlington General Manager
Leanne Walmsley - Carnival Committee Chairman
Charlotte Tickner and 1 other member of Fleet Phoenix

PF February 2023 ITEM 1 APOLOGIES

Cllr Fang was absent from the meeting. All other Committee Members were present.

PF February 2023 ITEM 2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

PF February 2023 ITEM 3 QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

There were no questions from the public.

PF February 2023 ITEM 4 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the Policy and Finance Committee held on Wednesday 19th October 2022 were approved and signed by the Chairman.

It was agreed that Item 6 would be considered next.

PF February 2023 ITEM 5 QUARTERLY FINANCIAL MONITORING REPORT

This item was considered after Item 7.

Members considered the financial reports for the period ending 31st December 2022, together with the reports below:

- a) Quarterly Report
- b) Harlington Monthly Performance Totals
- c) 2022/23 Year to Date and Budget Projections report
- d) Balance sheet as at 31st December 2022
- e) Statutory Income & Expenditure

- f) Bank & Investments Reconciliation
- g) List of Purchase Ledger Payments
- h) List of Debtors

The following matters were raised and discussed:

- A small surplus is currently being projected for the year end, which is subject to change. A likely variance may come from the recharge of staff time for working on The Harlington development being considerably lower than budgeted.
- An up-turn in ticket sales is likely due to a wider brochure distribution – The General Manager to look at the statistics and bring to the next RLA meeting.
- That customer data would be useful to understand customer profiles for future projections.
- To check if there are any outstanding maintenance costs eligible for recharge to Hart District Council.
- To check is the energy recharge for the Library is based on a percentage of the bill received (addendum: confirmed that the amount recharged is 35% of total bill for water, sewerage and gas).
- To bring an up to date balance sheet to the next council meeting.

Members noted that Councillor Robinson confirmed that the bank reconciliation and payments for December 2022 have been checked.

RESOLVED

A. To receive and accept for the quarter ending 31st December 2022:

- a) Quarterly Report
- b) Harlington Monthly Performance Totals
- c) 2022/23 Year to Date and Budget Projections report
- d) Balance sheet as at 31st December 2022
- e) Statutory Income & Expenditure
- f) Bank & Investments Reconciliation
- g) List of Purchase Ledger Payments
- h) List of Debtors

B. To accept the statement from Councillor Robinson that the bank reconciliation and list of payments for December 2022 have been verified and signed.

PF February 2023 ITEM 6

COUNCIL BUDGET 2023/24

Members discussed the approach to managing next financial year's budget deficit and use of reserves. It was agreed at the Council meeting in January that the 2023/24 budget deficit would be funded from reserves and prudent financial management.

Members discussed whether to amend the budget to remove specific projects, however, it was agreed that the budget should be managed as agreed by the Council.

Members discussed the use of grants where possible and also to explore if the Council is eligible for hospitality and leisure Business Rates relief for 2023/24 and 2024/25. **Action: Executive Officer** to investigate.

RESOLVED

- a) To continue as agreed by Council - the expenditure of all amounts up to the budgeted limits, with prudent financial management to reduce the deficit where possible.
- b) To investigate any hospitality/leisure business rates relief for 2023/24 & 2024/25

Members received the record of the 2022-2023 grants awarded to date.

7a) Fleet Carnival (requesting £1,000) - it was noted that:

- The Carnival Committee hold £6,000 in reserves as a contingency and that the requested grant is to go towards the overall running of the event, although it could fund the traditional fete games area.
- The Carnival plans to promote sponsors on the front page of the website, on social media and in the carnival programme.
- Other Council's have been approached for grants.
- The Carnival is on 1st July 2023.

Leanne Walmsley left the meeting at 7.30pm.

7b) Mustard Seed Autism Trust (requesting £200)

Members discussed and agreed that more information was required on the relationship between the Trust and Fleet and how many families are supported from the local area. The relationship with Autism Friendly Fleet was also queried.

The Trust has very healthy reserves.

7c) Fleet Phoenix (requesting £1,200 rent waiver) - it was noted that:

- Fleet Phoenix hold 3 months of running costs in reserve due to the employment of staff and to enable applying for grants.
- They are £6,000 down on budget predictions next financial year.
- Attendees stand at 1126 young people – due to the impact of covid and more daytime 1-1 support referrals which are often complex.
- They would ensure that FTC features in their newsletter and on social media.

Members thanked Fleet Phoenix for their good work.

Charlotte Tickner and the other representative from Fleet Phoenix left the meeting at 7.47pm.

7d) Royal British Legion (requesting £120)

Members discussed funds held by the RBL and that a grant towards lamppost poppies would only be granted on this occasion.

It was noted that the Council will continue supporting the Royal British Legion through the Remembrance Sunday activities, as normal.

RESOLVED

- a) To approve the grant of £1,000 to the Carnival Committee towards the cost of running the event, to be paid from this financial year's budget.
- b) To refuse a grant of £200 to the Mustard Seed Autism Trust due to the organisation having sufficient reserves to cover their renovation project.
- c) To approve a £1,200 rent waiver for use of the office and storage space to Fleet Phoenix for the next financial year.
- d) To approve a one-off grant of £120 to the Royal British Legion for the replacement of the damaged lamp-post poppies.

Members noted the record of the 2022-2023 grants awarded to date.

Item 5 was considered next.

PF February 2023 ITEM 8

COUNCIL FEES AND CHARGES FOR 2023/24

Members received and reviewed The Harlington and FTC fees for implementation with effect from 1st April 2023.

It was discussed that:

- The Harlington fees are in the top tier of room/hire charges in the area and that an increase would not be desirable to stay competitive. Increases could however be applied to service elements and extras.
- The Ancells Farm Community Centre rates have been increased as on average charges are small. A 5% increase on regular users and 10% on the casual rate have been proposed.
- Evidence should be sought on how expensive FTC venues are compared to other community halls.
- Usage for Ancells Farm Community Centre and ways to improve utilisation should be investigated.

Members noted that only the fees shown in red on the fee proposal document have been increased.

RESOLVED

- a) Members approved the proposed revised Fleet Town Council fees to take effect from 1st April 2023.
- b) That a hall hire comparison exercise is completed with other local venues.
- c) That usage for Ancells Farm Community Centre and ways to improve utilisation is investigated.

PF February 2023 ITEM 9

ASSET REGISTER

Members received the Asset Register as at 31st January 2023. Following discussion it was requested that the following be brought to the next meeting:

Page 1 – Edenbrook: the list of equipment was transferred from the developer and not from Hart District Council.

Page 6 – Confirmation from the Internal Auditor whether the Edenbrook play equipment should be noted on the Asset Register as £1, since the equipment was not gifted from the Local Authority.

Page 4 –

- Confirmation whether the £225k figure for Calthorpe Park includes installation labour costs and if that can be included. If a change is required as a result, should the asset register value on last year's Annual Governance and Accountability Return be restated.
- Confirmation whether any other equipment includes the installation labour cost.
- Confirmation whether the cherry trees should be included on the register.

RESOLVED

To defer this item to the next meeting until the information requested above has been reviewed.

PF February 2023 ITEM 10

INVESTMENT REPORT

Members considered the quarterly investment report.

£800k has been transferred from the Nationwide Instant Saver account to the Nationwide Business Fixed 18 month saver account. This will provide a higher rate of interest. Unfortunately, the new Nationwide account does not accept new transfers in, so the £100k in the Cambridge Building Society account was rejected.

Members enquired what other bank accounts may be suitable for £100k with a relatively short notice period for withdrawal.

RESOLVED

- a) Members noted the balances held in the Fleet Town Council Accounts.
- b) To look into what short withdrawal notice accounts may be suitable for a £100k deposit.

PF February 2023 ITEM 11 CREDIT CARD LIMITS

Members considered a temporary adjustment of credit card limits.

RESOLVED

To approve the temporary adjustment of credit card limits as follows:

- Bar and Catering Supervisor – decreased from £2,000 to £500.
- The Harlington General Manager – increased from £1,000 to £2,500.

It was noted that the original credit card limits will resume once the staffing situation returns to normal.

PF February 2023 ITEM 12 POLICIES

Members received and discussed the following policies:

12a) Asbestos Management Plan

It was noted:

- That warning stickers are part of the legal requirement and are as discreet as possible.
- That staff members, new and existing contractors are made aware of the Asbestos Plan immediately.

12b) Control and Management of Contractors Policy

It was noted that the following amendments need to be made:

- Any references to 'Town Clerk' should be replaced with 'Executive Officer'.
- In section 5 'Management of Contractors Checklist' be amended to 'Contractor Management checklist'.
- In section 3, the final line before the bullet list be amended to 'These will cover areas of high risk including but not limited to'.

12c) Contractor Management Checklist

It was questioned whether commercial hirers are given a similar document or risk assessment.

Action: Executive Officer to determine the process.

RESOLVED

- a) To approve the Asbestos Management Plan.
- b) To approve the Control and Management of Contractors Policy subject to the amendments listed above.

- c) To approve the Contractor Management Checklist.

PF February 2023 ITEM 13

EXECUTIVE OFFICER'S REPORT

Members noted the report of the Executive Officer.

Health and Safety Consultancy

It was noted that:

- the operational contract is due for review in March.
- That extensive systems and work have been put in to support the Council's health and safety processes and that Council should now be able to manage this in house.

Rialtas Business Solutions Asset Inventory Software

It was noted that:

- The Executive Officer recommends subscribing to the Omega Asset Inventory system as part of the Council's existing financial management software.
- The first year cost is approximately £550, including setting up the asset register onto the system, the software, annual support and maintenance and training, to be funded from the Central Administration budget

RESOLVED

- a) It was agreed that as of 31st March 2023 the Health and Safety Consultancy be revised to an ad hoc advice service, paid on an hourly basis, and two health and safety audits per year.
- b) To approve the subscription to the Omega Asset Inventory software.

PF February 2023 ITEM 14

DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the Policy and Finance Committee will be held on Wednesday 17th May 2023 at 7pm in the Harlington.

There being no further business the meeting closed at 9.20pm.

Signed: **Date**.....

Chairman