

BARNSTAPLE TOWN COUNCIL

MINUTES of FINANCE & GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE MEETING held on MONDAY 16TH OCTOBER 2017 at 7.00pm in the GUILDHALL, BUTCHERS ROW, BARNSTAPLE.

Present: Cllr S Upcott (Chairman)
Cllrs: Mrs V Monk, A Windsor, I Roome (Deputy Mayor ex officio), Mrs J Hunt (Mayor ex officio), J Phillips, J Carter, Ms N Haywood, I Williams, G Langford, Mrs L York, and J Williams.

Also present: W Austin (Town Clerk).

FG29 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE.

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs Mrs V Elkins, F Vernon, Mrs S Haywood, Mrs J Wilsher, and M Kennaugh.

FG30 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND DISPENSATIONS RECEIVED.

Cllrs I Roome and Mrs J Hunt, as members of North Devon District Council, have dispensation to discuss and vote on all items on the agenda unless the item refers to a financial or legal agreement or dispute between the two authorities.

FG31 MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 4TH SEPTEMBER 2017.

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 4th September 2017 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.
(9, 3abs)

FG32 FINANCIAL STATEMENTS AND BUDGET MONITORING REPORT

The financial statements and budget monitoring reports were circulated prior to the meeting.

a) Budget Variance Report and Analysis of Budget Variances

RESOLVED: That the Budget Variance Report and the Analysis of Budget Variances be received and approved.
(NC)

b) Bank Transactions

RESOLVED: That the Bank Transactions report be received and approved.
(NC)

- c) Direct Reserve Account and Petty Cash Account for Barum House

RESOLVED: That the Direct Reserve Account and petty cash account for Barum House be received and approved.

(NC)

- d) Aged Debtors and Aged Creditors Analyses, and Nominal Balances

RESOLVED: That the Aged Debtors Analysis, Aged Creditors Analysis and Nominal Balances reports be received and approved.

(NC)

- e) Direct Debit and Credit Card Reports

RESOLVED: That the Direct Debit and Credit Card Reports be received and approved.

(NC)

FG33 CORPORATE GOVERNANCE WORKING PARTY

The Town Clerk gave a verbal summary of the meeting held on 16th October 2017, the notes of which are shown at Appendix 1 to these minutes. The meeting had considered possible changes to the Council's Standing Orders, but as there had not been sufficient time to review the entire document, no recommendations had been agreed. Instead, the review of Standing Orders would continue at the next Working Party meeting.

RESOLVED: That the report of the Corporate Governance Working Party meeting held on 16th October 2017 be received and noted.

(NC)

FG34 ANNUAL RETURN – REPORT OF THE EXTERNAL AUDITOR

The Clerk presented the Annual Return including the report of the External Auditor. The report had not highlighted any matters of concern.

RESOLVED: That the report of the External Auditor be received and approved, and that the fee for the audit be approved for payment.

(NC)

FG35 NALC LARGER COUNCILS CONFERENCE 2017

RESOLVED: That Cllrs S Upcott and Mrs J Hunt, and the Town Clerk should attend the NALC Larger Councils Conference on 13th December 2017.

(NC)

Members considered three requests for funding assistance:

Go North Devon. This request was for annual funding to be included as a standing grant in the Council's budget, possibly on a rolling three-year basis, to give greater certainty of funding than is given by the Council's annual community grants scheme.

Members discussed the need for certainty for this valued organisation, and the possibility that such an approach might set a precedent for other organisations. A proposal by Cllr Windsor to approve the request was withdrawn.

RESOLVED: That the Council:

- (i) write to Go North Devon to reassure them that the request is approved in principle, subject to further discussion when the Council sets its budget for 2018-2019; and
- (ii) write to all current recipients of standing grants requiring them to complete the Council's annual grants form as a pre-requisite for continued funding.

(11, 1 abs)

Forches Cross Primary and Nursery School. This request was for a contribution towards a funding shortfall of £1,150 for safeguarding work consisting of an upgrade to the CCTV system.

Members considered that this expense should be mainstream funding by Devon County Council as education authority, and whether cuts in this funding had led to the shortfall. It was also suggested that specific grants for safeguarding matters might be available. Councillors Phillips and Carter advised that they would contribute from their ward budgets.

RESOLVED: That the funding request from Forches Cross Primary and Nursery School be declined, as this expense should be budgeted for as core school funding, or separately funded from grants available for safeguarding matters. The Council recommends, however, that town councillors consider whether they can contribute to the cost from their ward grants.

(NC)

Cllr Ms N Haywood left the meeting at this point and did not return

Pannier Market Traders Committee. This request was for agreement in principle to contribute towards the capital cost of refurbishment of the Market Street toilets, subject to the provision of a business plan.

RESOLVED: That the Pannier Market Traders Committee be referred to the Town Council's community grants scheme.

(NC)

FG37 CHRISTMAS LIGHTS 2017

The Town Clerk summarised a report circulated prior to the meeting, which asked members to consider the incorporation of a decorative star and star-themed lighting on the town Christmas tree, in support of the Light Up A Life campaign run by North Devon Hospice and South West Children's Hospice. The report also asked that members consider lighting of the Albert Clock.

RESOLVED: That the lighting of the town Christmas tree incorporate a decorative star at the top and star-themed string lighting, subject to funding being available for this.

(NC)

RESOLVED: That no Christmas lighting be added to the Albert Clock.

(NC)

Meeting closed at 8.05pm.

Chairman.

Signed

Dated

Notes of Corporate Governance Working Party held on 16th October 2017 at 6.00pm in the Guildhall, Butchers Row, Barnstaple.

Present: Cllrs A Windsor (Chairman), I Roome, and J Phillips.

Also in attendance: W Austin, Town Clerk, Cllr I Williams (not a member of the Working Party but attended as an observer).

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs Mrs V Elkins, Mrs S Haywood and M Kennaugh.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Cllr I Roome, as a member of North Devon District Council, has dispensation under S.O. 66 to discuss and vote on all items on the agenda except where the item is a matter of financial or legal agreement or dispute between the two authorities.

NOTES OF MEETING HELD ON 17TH JULY 2017

RESOLVED: That the notes of the meeting held on 17th July 2017 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

(2, 1 abs)

REVIEW OF INTERNAL CONTROL

The Clerk reminded members that at their previous meeting they had agreed that the annual review of Standing Orders be deferred to a future meeting, following consultation between the Clerk and Cllr Kennaugh. They had met in the interim and a revised draft had been circulated with the agenda for consideration.

The Clerk advised the Working Party that, if there was insufficient time to discuss the document in full, members should consider not agreeing individual changes at this meeting. This would avoid the possibility of agreeing conflicting changes at a future meeting.

The revised draft was considered, up to Standing Order 62. Changes under discussion included:

- An introductory passage explaining the purpose of the Standing Orders;
- An extended interpretation with additional definitions and the arrangements for rulings by the Chairman;
- Suggestions for wording changes to improve readability and clarity;
- The removal of a section enabling a matter of urgency to be brought forward, as this was considered to be potentially unlawful;
- A reduction of the quorum for committees from one-half to one-third of the membership; and
- Consideration of limiting the size of committees.

The discussion supportive of the changes discussed, except for a reduction in committee sizes. However, as there was insufficient time to complete the review, no recommendations were agreed. The Clerk advised that he would bring the matter forward for continued consideration at the next meeting.

Meeting closed at 6.53pm.

Chairman.

Signed.....

Dated.....