

POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

WEDNESDAY 2ND MARCH 2022

Minutes of the meeting of the **POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE** held in the Council Chamber, Council Offices, School Aycliffe Lane, Newton Aycliffe on Wednesday 2nd March 2022 at 7.15pm.

PRESENT

Councillor Arun M. Chandran (Chairman)

Councillors Tony Armstrong, Martin Ashcroft, Lindsey Aston, Jim Atkinson, Peter Bergg, Dorothy Bowman, John Clark, Neil Collinson, Bob Fleming, George Gray, Ian Gray, Brian Haigh, Mrs. Sandra Haigh, Phil Hawkins, Andy Hill, Jed Hillary, Kate Hopper, John Moore, Carl Robinson, Ken Robson, and Michael Stead.

OFFICERS

Mr. D. Austin (Town Clerk)
Mrs. T. Woodhead (Finance Manager)
Mr. S. Cooper (Works and Environment Officer)
Miss. A. Donald (Corporate and Policy Officer)
Mrs. S. Stretch (Senior Administrative Officer)

125. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors Eddy Adam, Wendy Hillary and Andrea Miller.

126. MEMBERS' DISPENSATIONS

There had been no applications for dispensations.

127. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Jed Hillary declared a non-pecuniary interest in Agenda Item 11.

128. GUEST SPEAKER – NEWTON AYCLIFFE NEIGHBOURHOOD POLICING

Inspector Sarah Honeyman and PC Mike Welch from Newton Aycliffe Neighbourhood Policing Team gave an update on policing in the Great Aycliffe area and the anti-social behaviour issues being experienced in the town.

They gave information about new initiatives which were being implemented and gave a presentation demonstrating the new Rapid Deployment CCTV Camera Project that is currently being developed in partnership with the Newton Aycliffe County Councillors, GAMP and Livin.

Following a question-and-answer session, several Councillors thanked the police for attending the meeting and agreed that the Rapid Deployment CCTV Camera Project was a very worthy partnership initiative that would help act as a deterrent to crime and anti-social behaviour, provide reassurance to the public and council staff, and help the police to gather evidence.

The Chairman proposed that Agenda Item 13 regarding the Anti-Social Behaviour Update and Rapid Deployment CCTV Camera Project be brought forward for discussion while the police were still in attendance.

129. ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR AND RAPID DEPLOYMENT CCTV PROJECT

The Town Clerk and Works and Environment Manager had submitted a report setting out an update on anti-social behaviour issues in Council parks and facilities and highlighting details of a request from Newton Aycliffe Neighbourhood Policing Team asking the Town Council to consider buying into a Rapid Deployment CCTV Camera Project.

Following a debate, it was proposed by Councillor Martin Ashcroft, and seconded by Councillor Jim Atkinson that the Town Council buys into the Rapid Deployment CCTV Project via the purchase of two additional cameras and, subject to the success of the project, may consider requests for the funding of further CCTV cameras in the future.

A vote was then taken, and the proposal was passed unanimously:

RESOLVED – that it be recommended:

- i) that the report be received
- ii) that the Town Council buys into the Rapid Deployment CCTV Project via the purchase of two additional cameras as detailed in the report at a capital cost of £18,700 and then £1,100 each year thereafter and a revenue cost of approximately £500 per year for electricity and insurance costs.
- iii) that the Town Council may consider requests for the funding of further CCTV cameras in the future, subject to the success of the project.

Following this Agenda Item, the meeting was adjourned for 10 minutes.

Councillor Kate Hopper left the meeting at this point.

130. PUBLIC QUESTIONS

There were no questions from the public

131. MINUTES

It was proposed by Councillor Ken Robson, seconded by Councillor Carl Robinson and

RESOLVED – that the minutes of the meeting of the Policy and Resources Committee, held on the 19th January 2022 be confirmed as a correct record, and signed by the Chairman.

132. ASSET MANAGEMENT MEMBER WORKING GROUP NOTES

The notes and following recommendations from the meeting of the Asset Management Member Working Group held on the 1st February 2022 were submitted for approval:-

- i) Officers proceed with arranging a feasibility study, to include an inspection of the building's drains, generally based on ideas for future usage put forward by members.
- ii) The feasibility study to be funded from the consultancy budget and from the Great Aycliffe and Middridge Partnership's Small Grants Fund, if available.
- iii) The budget currently identified in the Medium-Term Financial Plan for any required roof repair to the pavilion be retained.

It was proposed by Councillor George Gray, seconded by Councillor Sandra Haigh, and

RESOLVED – that the notes of the meeting held on 1st February 2022 be confirmed as a correct record and the recommendations of the meeting be agreed.

133. PERSONNEL SUB COMMITTEE MINUTES

It was proposed by Councillor Carl Robinson, seconded by Councillor Andy Hill, and

RESOLVED – that the minutes of the meeting of the Personnel Sub Committee held on the 2nd February 2022 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

134. PRE SCHOOL SUB COMMITTEE MINUTES

It was proposed by Councillor Martin Ashcroft, seconded by Councillor Bob Fleming, and

RESOLVED – that the minutes of the meeting of the Pre-School Sub Committee held on the 9th February 2022 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

135. ACCOUNT CONTROL SHEETS

Account Control Sheets for the period 10th January to 28th January 2022 and the General Bank Accounts for January 2022 were submitted for approval and

RESOLVED – that it be recommended that the Account Control Sheets for the period 10th January to 28th January 2022 and the General Bank Accounts for January 2022 be received.

136. GRANTS AND DONATIONS

Councillor Jed Hillary declared a non-pecuniary interest in this item and remained in the chamber.

The Town Clerk submitted a report setting out the Grants and Donations requests which had been received since the last meeting.

It was reported that a total of £591 is currently available in the 2021/22 Small Grants and Donations Budget, £2,000 in the Youth Council Grants Budget, £9,368 in the COVID Recovery Community Grants Fund and £5,109 in the Community Benefit Fund.

One donation request had been received since the last meeting.

i) **Live Edge Woodwork CIC**

An email request had been received from the Live Edge Woodwork CIC based at the IES Centre in Newton Aycliffe, for a £1,000 donation towards the cost of providing support to veterans and their families and low-income families.

Councillor Neil Collinson commented that Live Edge Woodwork CIC were a relatively new organisation having only been set-up in late 2021 with no accounts in place.

Councillor Arun Chandran commented that where possible officers should discuss grant and donation requests with the Chairman and Vice Chairman prior to the agendas going out.

It was proposed by Councillor Arun Chandran, seconded by Councillor Martin Ashcroft and

RESOLVED – that it be recommended that no donation be awarded to Live Edge Woodwork CIC at this time.

ii) A post - grant questionnaire has been received from The Friendship Club.

RESOLVED – that the information be received.

137. DOUBLE TAXATION UPDATE

The Town Clerk submitted a report to provide Members with an update in relation to the issue of double taxation, including the latest information received from the County Durham Association of Local Councils (CDALC) which incorporates the formal Durham County Council response to the issue.

CDALC had requested that the Council consider the issues raised in the DCC response and report back its views

A lengthy discussion took place with many councillors agreeing that there was nothing to be gained in pursuing the issue further due to the financial risks and substantial officer workload that would be involved.

Councillor Michael Stead stated that he believed that the report was negative leaning and contradictory and felt the Town Council should commit to pursuing the issue and providing DCC the figures that they require in order to implement a Special Expenses Scheme and therefore save taxpayers money.

The Chairman defended the report and asserted that the Town Council would be no better off and that every town and parish council in County Durham would need to sign up to and take part in the process, which many do not have the time nor resources to commit to. The Chairman also quoted the written response from DCC as laid out in the report linking the issue of double taxation to the Local Council Tax Support Scheme funding.

Councillor Jim Atkinson stated that in the Medium-Term Financial Plan, the Town Council have always factored in the risk of losing the Local Council Tax Support Scheme funding.

It was proposed by Councillor Bob Fleming and seconded by Councillor Martin Ashcroft that the Council does not pursue the issue of double taxation any further and notifies CDALC accordingly.

Councillor Michael Stead requested a named vote.

The result of the vote was as follows:

For:

Tony Armstrong, Martin Ashcroft, Jim Atkinson, Peter Bergg, Dorothy Bowman, Arun M. Chandran, John Clark, Neil Collinson, Bob Fleming, George Gray, Ian Gray, Brian Haigh, Mrs. Sandra Haigh, Phillip Hawkins, Andy Hill, Jed Hillary, John Moore, Carl Robinson and Ken Robson.

Against:

Michael Stead and Lindsey Aston

RESOLVED – that it be recommended that:-

- i) the Council does not pursue the issue of double taxation any further and notifies CDALC accordingly.

138. ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR IN COUNCIL PARKS AND ADDITIONAL PROTECTION FOR PARKS BASED OPERATIVES

The Works and Environment Manager gave a report in relation to progress addressing the anti-social behaviour issues around the Council's parks and consideration of any other feasible measures available to protect parks-based staff.

It was proposed by Councillor John Clark, and seconded by Councillor Jed Hillary, and

RESOLVED – that it be recommended:

- i) that members receive the report
- ii) that the additional equipment referenced in the report to safeguard parks staff and assist in evidence gathering to reduce anti-social behaviour is purchased.

139. COUNCIL OFFICES FLAT ROOF REPLACEMENT

The Works and Environment Manager submitted a report to consider the various options regarding the replacement of the flat roof on the Council Offices.

Following a lengthy debate and a number of questions from members, it was proposed by Councillor Martin Ashcroft, and seconded by Councillor Jim Atkinson, and

RESOLVED – that it be recommended:

- i) that the report be received
- ii) that members agree in principle to the quote for an EPDM bonded rubber sheet covering with additional insulation £57,560 on the condition that officers obtain like-for-like quotes from the other two companies to include repairs to the existing damaged roof.
- iii) that the lowest quote received following this process is accepted and the works proceed.

140. STRATEGIC TARGETS - END OF YEAR OUTTURN REPORT 2021/22

A report on the end of year outturn summary on the Town Council Service Delivery Plan strategic targets for the 2021/22 financial year was given.

It was proposed by Councillor Jim Atkinson, and seconded by Councillor Carl Robinson, and

RESOLVED – that it be recommended:

- i) that the report be received.
- ii) that the end of year outturn on the Town Council Service Delivery Plan targets for the 2021/22 financial year be agreed.

141. DRAFT STRATEGIC AIMS AND TARGETS FOR 2022/23

The Corporate Management Team submitted the Draft Strategic Aims and Targets for the Town Council Service Delivery Plan for the 2022/23 financial year.

Councillor Jed Hillary recommended that items 16 and 19 should remain on the Draft Aims and Targets for 2022/23.

It was proposed by Councillor Jim Atkinson, and seconded by Councillor Carl Robinson, and

RESOLVED – that it be recommended:

- i) that the report be received.
- ii) that the draft Strategic Aims and Targets for 2022/23 be approved and implemented subject to Items 16 and 19 being retained.

Councillors Michael Stead and Lindsey Aston left the meeting at this point.

142. HEALTH AND SAFETY ANNUAL REPORT

The Town Clerk submitted a report to provide an annual report to the Policy and Resources Committee, which provides a list of accidents, including any reportable accidents under the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 1995 (RIDDOR) for the 2021 year, as well as any reports from the Health and Safety Executive.

It was proposed by Councillor Jim Atkinson, and seconded by Councillor -Carl Robinson, and

RESOLVED – that it be recommended:

- i) that the report be received.

143. ANNUAL REVIEW OF INTERNAL AUDIT SERVICE

A report was submitted by the Corporate Management Team providing information to enable the Policy and Resources Committee to undertake the annual review of the effectiveness of the Council's Internal Audit Service for the 2021/22 financial year, in accordance with non-statutory best practice.

RESOLVED – that it be recommended:

- i) that the Policy and Resources Committee receives the information set out in the report and supports the conclusion of the Corporate Management Team that the Council's Internal Audit Service is effective;
- ii) that the outcome of the Policy and Resources Committee's review of the effectiveness of the Internal Audit Service is taken into account in the consideration of the annual review of the effectiveness of the Council's system of internal control and the approval of the Annual Governance Statement later in the year

144. EXEMPT BUSINESS

It was proposed by Councillor George Gray, seconded by Councillor Martin Ashcroft and

RESOLVED – that in view of the confidential nature of the business about to be transacted it was, in the opinion of the Council, advisable that the public and press be excluded from the meeting.

145. ITEM FROM CHAIRMAN OF POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

To consider the Town Clerk's annual salary increment review and consider and agree the future arrangements for the Town Clerk's annual appraisal.

Councillors recommended that the Town Clerk's salary increment be agreed for the 2022/23 financial year and that a full review of the Town Clerk's appraisal process is carried out during 2022 ahead of the Town Clerk's first appraisal.

This review is to include researching the arrangements that other large town councils have in place, seeking advice from the Society of Local Council Clerks and CDALC and identifying relevant training for those councillors undertaking the appraisal.

It was proposed by Councillor Arun Chandran, and seconded by Councillor Martin Ashcroft, and

RESOLVED – that it be recommended:

- i) that the Town Clerk's salary increment be agreed for the 2022/23 financial year.
- ii) that the Town Clerk undertakes research via CDALC, SLCC and other large town councils in order to facilitate a review of the Town Clerk's appraisal process during 2022.
- iii) that relevant training is identified for those councillors undertaking the appraisal.

146. RE-ADMISSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

It was proposed by Councillor Arun Chandran, seconded by Councillor Martin Ashcroft, and

RESOLVED – that the press and public be re-admitted to the meeting.

CHAIRMAN.