

THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE
FINANCE AND GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE
HELD IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER, SHOTTON HALL, PETERLEE
ON MONDAY 2ND MARCH 2015

PRESENT: COUN C BATY (CHAIR)

Mesdames:- K Hawley, M A Cartwright, K Liddell, L
Wood, S Simpson & V Watson

Messrs:- S Miles, C Watkins, R Kyle, J Alvey, D Milsom,
C J Metcalfe, D Sillito, L Cook & A Watson

MEMBERS WERE REMINDED OF THE NEED TO DISCLOSE ANY INTEREST PREJUDICIAL OR PERSONAL IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE CODE OF CONDUCT.

The Chairman advised Members of the committee that part of the meeting may be recorded by both audio and video, and it may be that photographs were taken.

115. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies had been previously submitted and accepted from Councillor C Robbins on the grounds of ill health. The Deputy Town Clerk reported that Councillor Robbins had visited the offices recently to give an update on his health and she had passed on the Council's best wishes to him for a full recovery back to full health.

RECOMMENDED the Council approve the reasons submitted for absence received from Councillors C Robbins on the grounds given above, and his apologies for absence be recorded.

116. THE MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING a copy of which had been previously circulated, were approved.

117. THE REPORT OF THE FINANCE SUB COMMITTEE MEETING OF THE 19TH FEBRUARY 2015 a copy of which had been circulated to each Member, was approved. It was asked if there was any progress with paying accounts by BACS. The Deputy Town Clerk reported that there was still a supply of unused cheques and that wherever was appropriate payments were made by direct debit and then reported to Members.

RECOMMENDED the information given be noted.

118. AUDIT FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2014

Members were circulated with a copy of the annual return recently received from the Town Council's auditors. Members were advised of the comments and feedback from the Town Council's internal auditor on the points and issues raised and an outline was given on how the issues raised were to be addressed fully. It was noted that the covering letter, dated 17 February 2015, asked that the annual return and notice of conclusion of the audit should be displayed in a conspicuous place for 14 days as soon as practicably possible, and before 30th September 2014. This was obviously not possible, however arrangements had been made for the notice to be displayed as instructed.

The other issues included rounding up, a minor issue, the minutes, all copies are signed at each meeting, follow up actions are taken following internal auditors reports with appropriate action plans being followed; actions have either been implemented during the year or satisfactory progress is being made where follow up audits will be carried out in the next financial year. The risk assessment should be reviewed, (see Minute Number 122); the annual return had been submitted to the appropriate committee and would be submitted to Council also; policy and procedures – standing orders and financial regulations had been reviewed along with the adoption of a sickness

policy. Establishing a governance sub committee/working group also demonstrated that policies were in the process of being reviewed.

RECOMMENDED the Annual Return be approved and accepted. FURTHER RECOMMENDED that it be recorded the issues raised in the report would be addressed as indicated by the Deputy Town Clerk.

119. BUDGET 2015/16

Members were circulated with a copy of the agreed budget for their reference. The Deputy Town Clerk reported receipt of an expression of thanks from Castle Eden Dene NNR following the grant of £8,000 being agreed towards the running costs of the facility.

RECOMMENDED the information given, be noted.

120. NALC NEWSLETTERS

Members were circulated with copies of the weekly newsletters from NALC with items of interest to Members.

RECOMMENDED the information given, be noted.

121. COUNTY DURHAM ASSOCIATION OF LOCAL COUNCILS – VARIOUS ITEMS

Members were circulated with copies of the following for their information:-

- (i) February Newsletter
- (ii) The Biodiversity Guidance
- (iii) Operation Stop it, Fly Tipping Cameras
- (iv) Parish Council Meetings & 21st century technology
- (v) Election Cost Guidance
- (vi) Super Councils Network
- (vii) East Durham Association of Parish & Town Council, Meeting Tuesday 10th March 2015, 1.30pm, Seaton Holme, Easington
- (viii) NALC Larger Council Committee session 20 January 2015

Members were asked to note that at £1.50 per elector, (15,365 electors), the possible May election costs in 2017, if all wards were contested, could be estimated at £23,047.50.

RECOMMENDED this amount be set aside or make a reserved estimate in the 2016/17 budget of at least £23,047.50.

FURTHER RECOMMENDED the remainder of the information given, be noted.

122. CORPORATE RISK MANAGEMENT STRATEGY – ANNUAL REVIEW

Considered during this review, comments made by the external & internal Auditor in relation to the level of fidelity guarantee insurance. The internal auditor had recommended this be judged in the context of the risk to the council and whether the council thinks this is high or low risk. He commented that he had audited the Town Councils internal control systems regarding the possible loss of money and he considered the Town Council had strong internal controls and he considered the risk was low. Members accepted this advice.

RECOMMENDED the annual review be accepted and no further action be taken with regard to increasing the current level fidelity guarantee insurance.

123. STRATEGIC RISK MANAGEMENT SUPPORT

Members were circulated with details of a service that had been offered previously to the Town Council to develop a new risk management strategy, conduct a risk management workshop with the management Team, resulting in the development of a new Strategic Risk Register and then finally to deliver a risk management workshop for elected Members. At a total cost of £3,900.00

RECOMMENDED that the support offered by Zurich Municipal with regard to Strategic Risk management Support, be accepted at the cost as outlined.

124. RESOLUTION TO EXCLUDE THE PRESS AND PUBLIC
IN VIEW OF THE CONFIDENTIAL NATURE OF THE FOLLOWING ITEMS TO BE DISCUSSED, THE COMMITTEE IS ASKED TO PASS THE FORMAL RESOLUTION TO EXCLUDE THE PRESS AND PUBLIC FROM THE MEETING, PURSUANT TO THE PUBLIC BODIES (ADMISSIONS TO MEETINGS) ACT, 1960 & THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985.

125. STOCK REPORTS PERIOD ENDING 24TH FEBRUARY 2015

It was reported that the reports had not been received; they would be submitted to Committee when they were.

RECOMMENDED the stock report be awaited.

126. INTERNAL AUDIT REPORT 2014/15 & AUDIT WORK ANNUAL PLAN

Members were circulated with a copy of the Internal Auditors Annual report for 2014/15 offering substantial assurance to the Town Council. He was satisfied that there were sufficient and robust action plans in place to rectify any weaknesses that had been identified and was confident the Finance & General Purposes Committee would support his actions to ensure that those plans were implemented and agreed.

Members were also circulated with a programme of work for the Internal Auditor for 2015/16. There was a current rolling annual contract for this work. The Internal Auditor also had his own 3 year audit plans of work for Peterlee which he updated every year, where annual audit work was selected.

RECOMMENDED:-

- (i) The Internal Audit Annual Report for 2014/15 be accepted;**
- (ii) The timetable for areas of audit work for 2015/16, be agreed at a total cost of £2,880.**

127. POLICE REPORT – FEBRUARY 2015

Members were circulated with a copy of the Police report as discussed at the Council Meeting. Members asked that thanks be conveyed to the Officer for supplying the report as requested.

RECOMMENDED the information given be noted and the Police be thanked for supplying the report.

128. PETERLEE SHOW – FUN FAIR RENTAL

Further to discussions at the Show Meeting Members were given an update with this item.

RECOMMENDED the rental not be increased this year, and the offer of supplying fencing in the fairground be accepted, it being agreed that an increase in the rental would be applied for the 2016 Show of at least the rate of inflation.