BLYTH TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of the Meeting of the Policy Working Group held at Arms Evertyne House on Tuesday 20 June 2017 at 6.30 pm

Present:

Councillors: J R Potts (Chair), D Carr, A Cartie, K Ellis, R Parker, O Potts, K Nisbet, M Richardson, L Rickerby, S Stanger, W Taylor, D Walls, G Webb

J Hughes	Town Clerk
M Hawthorne	Committee Clerk

1.	**APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE** Councillors: E Anderson-Smith, J Reid, G Thompson
2.	**DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS & THE GRANT OF ANY DISPENSATIONS** None.
3.	**MINUTES FROM THE POLICY WORKING GROUP HELD ON THURSDAY 7 MARCH 2017** Committee agreed to **ADOPT** the minutes.
3.1	**MATTERS ARISING** **Minute No 5** Should read Councillor Parker **Minute No 7**

	The Town Clerk distributed the NALC training programme to new Councillors. Anyone wishing to attend a particular course should contact an Officer who will make the arrangements on their behalf.
4	**COMMITTEE STRUCTURE** The Town Clerk referred to his report which outlines a proposal to review the Committee structure in order to demonstrate good practice. He added that alongside the review and revision of the number of Committees, it would be timely to include the overall objectives of the Council in association with partnerships to ensure the Council can get the best for the residents of Blyth. The Town Clerk suggested that Mr Peter Kemp is used for this piece of work as he has previously carried out work around Committee structures as well as the staff and financial structure. Mr Kemp has indicated that he would be prepared to work with the Council. The Town Clerk added that he envisages the Council would need 5 days of Mr Kemp's time. It was noted that there is a Strategic Plan in existence which the Committee Clerk will circulate. The group discussed the proposal and agreed that the Council need a clear vision of what they hope to achieve moving forward. It acknowledged that in doing so the Council should be mindful of what hasn't worked in the past and what they would like to see change. Councillor Parker proposed establishing a small working group of 5 Councillors to gather ideas and feedback to the PWG. This was seconded by Councillor Ellis. However it was the view of some Councillors that everyone should be involved in this process. The proposal was put to a vote with the outcome: For – 6 Against – 5 Abstentions – 2 Therefore the motion for a small working group was carried.

	It was agreed that Mr Kemp will be invited to the next Full Council on July 2017 to give an overview. Following this the working group will liaise with the Town Clerk, Deputy Town Clerk and Mr Kemp in order to produce a report for consideration by all Councillors.
5	**OFFICE ACCOMMODATION** The Town Clerk said that following the previous PWG he, along with the then Mayor Councillor M Parker, and Councillors R Parker and K Ellis met with Mr Reay, the landlord to discuss the 10 year lease and the potential for invoking the break clause (this must be done by October 2017 and whether there was any flexibility around this. Mr Reay indicated that he would need to seek legal advice. To date the Town Clerk has not received any feedback. The cost of rental and rates for the current accommodation was raised and a suggestion made that it would be more cost effective to purchase a building, with a mortgage, as this would be an investment for the Council. Discussion also took place about the accessibility of the current accommodation and whether it was central enough for the public. It was noted that if a building was identified in the centre of the town then parking could be an issue. The Chair advised prior to moving into the existing accommodation the Council considered carefully what was required in terms of parking facilities as well as disabled access. Following a lengthy discussion the PWG agreed that the Town Clerk should engage an Estate Agent with a view to identifying what is available in terms of lower cost office accommodation, with the same amount of space as the existing accommodation. He will also make contact with NCC to explore whether they have any suitable space available.
6	**ANY OTHER BUSINESS OR ITEMS FOR URGENT ATTENTION** Councillor Walls said, in light of the recent tower block fire in London, should the Council perhaps check to see what strategies are in place for Blyth. The Chair clarified that this is an NCC issue and a disaster plan is in place to cover all eventualities.

	It was agreed the Town Clerk will contact NCC to get a copy of the plan and clarify what measures are in place with a view to possibly inviting someone to a future meeting.
7	**DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING** The next Meeting of the Policy Working Group will be held on Thursday, 2 November 2017 at 6.30 pm in the Council Chamber.

MEMBERS OF THE POLICY WORKING GROUP

All Councillors

Officers:

J Hughes, Town Clerk
M Hawthorne, Committee Clerk

ACTIONS FROM COMMITTEE

Date of Committee /Minute No	Action	Responsible Officer	Comments	Date Action Completed
7/3/17 **3.1**	Clarify position with regard to VAT	Town Clerk	There continues to be a delay with HMRC	
7/3/17 **4**	Confirm that a full test of the IT back out system has been carried out	Town Clerk	Mr Bradley carried out a test which demonstrated the back up system worked.	**Completed**
7/3/17 **5**	Clarify the position of the break clause with the Landlord of BTC premises.	Town Clerk	Ongoing	
7/3/17 **8**	Set up an on-line Blyth Museum which is interactive and has search facilities/option for members of the public to view an individual item by appointment.	Deputy Town Clerk	The software has been purchased.	**Completed**

	Explore displaying the artefacts in the 3 libraries Consider purchasing additional display cabinets for the office Consider an annual open day for members of the public to view the artefacts.		Ongoing	