



## **BLYTH TOWN COUNCIL**

**Minutes of the Meeting of the Finance Committee** held in the Council Chamber at Arms Everytne House on Thursday 3 September 2015 at 6.30pm.

**Present:**

Councillors: K Ellis (Chair) J R Potts, O Potts, M A Parker

**Officers:**

S Rickitt, Town Clerk, Democratic Services  
Sean Robinson, Assets Officer  
Alison McCabe, Officer Manager  
Maureen Hawthorne, Committee Clerk

### **1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Councillors: A Gibbs-Barton (Vice Chair) K Nisbet, D Rutter, G Knox, B Elliott

### **2. DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS AND GRANT OF DISPENSATIONS**

None.

### **3. MINUTES OF THE FINANCE COMMITTEE HELD ON THURSDAY JULY 2015**

#### **Accounts for Partnership**

The Town Clerk (Democratic Services) advised the Committee that he has spoken to Terry Garnick who confirmed that the amount paid in installments to NCC should be £200,000, however, it is £250,000 at the moment. The Town Clerk (Democratic Services) suggested that the direct debit amount for the rest of the year is reduced to reflect an overall payment of £200,000 and has also asked Peter Kemp to look at this.

The Minutes of the Finance Committee held on 2 July 2015 were **AGREED** and signed by the Chair

#### **4. MATTERS ARISING**

##### **External Audit 2014/2015**

The Town Clerk (Democratic Services) commented that he is still awaiting formal sign off from the external auditor. The Auditor has raised a query regarding the title of the Assets Committee as it is felt this may cause confusion. The Town Clerk (Democratic Services) has provided an explanation about this together with a copy of the partnership agreement. He will consider the Auditor's suggestion and make a recommendation to the Council. The Town Clerk (Democratic Services) added that he will circulate a copy of the External Auditor's report to all Town Councillors once it has been received.

##### **5. ACCOUNTS 2015/2016**

The Town Clerk (Democratic Services) referred to the information circulated with the agenda and displayed on the smartboard. He added that should members prefer to receive this information on A3 they should request it. The Town Clerk (Democratic Services) advised that he has made some changes to the way information is recorded in the cash book in particular, salaries and National Insurance payments. More detailed information can, however, be made available to Councillors.

##### **Petty Cash**

The Town Clerk (Democratic Services), drew attention to the information at the bottom of page 2 and explained this was relating to a temporary loan of £100 from the allotments rent to purchase stamps. This has now been reimbursed.

##### **Investment Accounts**

Nothing arising.

##### **Bank Reconciliations**

The Town Clerk (Democratic Services) explained that he signs the reconciliations each month to confirm that they are correct.

### **Actuals against Budget**

The Town Clerk (Democratic Services) informed the Committee that the Council will receive the precept of £506,328 in October.

### **Budget Sheets**

The Town Clerk (Democratic Services) referred to the information under the Assets Committee (code 700) and explained that the £50,000 has been included in the payment. He added that clarification will be sought from NCC regarding what they have spent their £50,000 on and has advised NCC that the External Auditor is looking at the agreement (see also item 3 above).

### **Trade Union Facility Time**

The Committee noted information provided.

## **6. OUTTURN FORECASE FOR 31 MARCH 2016**

The Town Clerk (Democratic Services) advised that copies of the revised information will be circulated with the signed minutes. Discussion took place around the cash surplus and how it might be used. Peter Kemp has suggested a reserve figure of £250,000 and the Town Clerk (Democratic Services) suggested putting £50,000 into reserve for the Tall Ships in 2016. He asked Councillors to consider if they have projects which may benefit from financial support and that they submit suggestions by 10 September 2015 for consideration at Full Council on 17 September 2015. Councillor Potts stated that he was not confident that the report reflects the expenditure of the Council or that the figures have been looked at in enough details. £132,000 has been spent from the balance and if the same amount is spent in January without the cash being available then the Council's accounts will not balance and there is a risk that council tax will have to increase. It was noted that cash has already been spend from S0106.

The Town Clerk (Democratic Services) commented that he will discuss this further with Peter Kemp. He also stated that his plan is to ask for evidence that grants have been spent for the purpose requested.

## **7. PENSIONS**

(a copy of the report prepared by the Town Clerk (Democratic Services, will be circulated with the signed copy of the minutes).

The Town Clerk (Democratic Services) said that has nothing to add to the written reports. It is essential that comparisons are made between the two Pension Funds (NEST and LGPS) in order to make an informed decision and he will also take advice from the Trade Union. There is a massive difference between the two schemes in terms of costs to the Council. The Town Clerk (Democratic Services) will circulate a report in October which will allow the 28 day notice required if the Council were to decide to join LGPS.

## **8. IT UPDATE**

(a copy of the written reports will be circulated with the signed minutes)

### **Printers**

The Town Clerk (Democratic Services) explained that he is currently reviewing the contract for the MFD as there continues to be issues with repairs etc with the intention of terminating this as soon as possible. Councillor Potts asked if there is a need for minutes/agendas to be printed in colour and also if the costings were available in terms of printer usage as this could be used when considering a replacement contractor.

The Finance Committee **AGREED** to give the Town Clerk authority to terminate the contract and source more efficient models.

### **Laptops/Tablets**

Nothing arising.

### **Windows 10**

The Town Clerk (Democratic Services) recommended that the Council do not start using Windows 10 at present as he will be asking Peter Kemp to review all of the systems and make some recommendations. This will continue to be under review. He added that the for back-up is showing signs of wear and proposed a replacement is purchased if necessary.

Councillor Potts stated that it would be useful to carry out a test to make sure that back up is working and Committee agreed to this.

The Finance Committee **AGREED** to the purchase of the replacement part and a check of the back-up.

## **9. GRANT TO CREDIT UNION**

Councillor Ellis commented that this perhaps should become part of the Community Grants Committee and the Town Clerk (Democratic Services) noted that the Council need to review how this money is being spent. Councillor O Potts advised that she attended the AGM of the Credit Union and was satisfied that the money is being used appropriately.

The Finance Committee **AGREED** to the request for £7000 out of this year's budget.

## **10. MAYORS ALLOWANCE**

The Town Clerk (Democratic Services) said that this will go on on the agenda for the Full Council on 17 September as it was deferred at Full Council meeting in July 2015 and he will check the Standing Order.

## **11. ITEMS FOR INFORMATION AND URGENT MATTERS**

None.

## **12. DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The next Meeting of the Finance Committee is scheduled for the 5 November 2015 in the Council Chamber at 6.30pm.

### **MEMBERS OF THE FINANCE COMMITTEE:**

Councillor K Ellis (Chair)  
Councillor B W Elliott  
Councillor A Gibbs-Barton (Vice Chair)  
Councillor G T Knox  
Councillor K Nisbet  
Councillor J R Potts  
Councillor O Potts  
Councillor J Reid  
Councillor D Rutter