



## BLYTH TOWN COUNCIL

**Minutes of the Finance Committee** held in the Council Chamber, Arms Everytne House, Quay Road, Blyth NE24 2AS on Thursday 12<sup>th</sup> September 2013 at 6.30pm.

**Present:**

**Councillors:**

K Ellis (Chair), J R Potts (Vice-Chair) and O Potts.

**Officers:**

Sue Noddings – Town Clerk (Corporate Services)  
Sean Robinson – Assets Officer  
Liam Forsyth - Committee Clerk

**022/13/01: APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received Councillors R Parker (Mayor), G T Knox, K Nisbet and A Gibbs-Barton.

**023/13/02: DISCLOSURES OF INTEREST AND GRANTS OF DISPENSATION**

None.

**24/13/3: MINUTES OF THE FINANCE COMMITTEE 11<sup>th</sup> JULY 2013**

The Minutes of the Finance Committee held on the 11<sup>th</sup> July 2013 were **AGREED** as a true record having already been adopted by the Full Council, and were signed by the Chair.

## **25/13/4: UPDATE ON THE FINANCIAL REPORTS**

### 4.1 Update on the Investment Accounts

The Town Clerk (Corporate Services) informed the Committee that she had been in discussions with John Harrison from the Co-operative Bank. Issues such as the Banks reported loss were discussed and a statement was provided. Mr J Harrison assured the Council that it would not affect the Bank's grading and that the losses were relative to 7% core equity capital after adjustments.

The Chair, Councillor K Ellis asked that all Councillors be circulated with the update. **Action: SN/LF**

Councillor J R Potts enquired as what figure we are covered for. The Town Clerk (Corporate Services) commented that she believe the initial figures is £500,000 however this is to be investigated.

The Town Clerk (Corporate Services) provided an update on the investment accounts and informed the Committee of the discussions held with the Co-operative Bank. It was noted that two questions were posed first regarding the bank providing statements and regarding interest rates.

The Town Clerk (Corporate Services) noted that regarding collating the accounts that Mr J Harrison's recommendation was to keep the current arrangement of a fixed rate and a 95 day accounts.

The Committee was also informed that the August statement from 95 day account had not yet been received and thus a clearer picture could not yet be generated. It was however noted that the balances can be asked for directly at the bank.

Councillor J R Potts commented that the current statement arrangement is not suitable for Councils/Meetings in general, as we need to know what interest is being earned.

A further discussion was held about the potential to transfer funds elsewhere following the trial period.

It was **AGREED** that potential avenues are to be explored by the Town Clerk (Corporate Services) in order to best develop the investments of the Town Council.

It was also **AGREED** that the Town Clerk (Corporate Services) is to chase up the figure for interest earned. **Action: SN**

## 4.2 Update on Management Control Reports

The Town Clerk (Corporate Services) informed the Committee that the income will dramatically increase with the second payment of the precept being imminent.

Councillor J R Potts commented that the sub-group is to meet in order to sort out the incoming funds and make sure that it is placed within an appropriate account. **Action: LF**

Employee costs were outlined and then discussed by the Committee.

Regarding office costs, Councillor J R Potts outlined that the total for cleaning may come in at slightly more than expected. The Town Clerk (Corporate Services) noted that it was an annualised contract and that the contract is developing well and a good service is being provided.

The Town Clerk (Corporate Services) sought clarification regarding costs to be used from the budget of the Planning and Development Committee for a Town Planner. Councillor J R Potts noted that there is a need for a Town Planner to conduct an audit in order to get the ball rolling for the neighbourhood plan.

A discussion was also held regarding civic events. It was noted that the Council had provided a donation on behalf of the Mayor to the Royal Northumberland Yacht Club.

The Assets Officer provided an update on the Allotments, noting that he had received a quote for providing water for the sites at Laverock Place and Delaval Gardens. It was also noted that at present the invoice has not been received for the water at the Bolam Avenue site.

Councillors J R Potts enquired as to whether there were any updates regarding the contract with Northumberland County Council. The Town Clerk (Corporate Services) informed the Committee that she had held a meeting with Dave Bamford and Steve Bucknall from Northumberland County Council. It was noted that VAT would not be charged and that the provision would include a basic service and planned maintenance.

It was noted that some of the services had been paid for already as the contract has rolled over from the previous year.

## 4.3 Committee Spending Review

Following on from the last Meeting of the Finance Committee, a brief update was provided.

It was noted that the Events Committee was operating slightly under budget at present and that the deadline for the Community Grants Committee is 30<sup>th</sup> September 2013.

#### 4.4 Budgetary updates and revisions

This item was discussed following on from a request from Councillor J R Potts. It was noted that there is a great importance in displaying such items clearly within individual Committee/ Working Group Minutes.

It was also noted that it is important to document when the spending comes from the Town Council's balances.

A discussion was held regarding how best to display such findings and expenditure within the accounts. It was commented that advice from the internal auditor is to be sought and how best to note business expenditure.

### **26/13/05 UPDATE REGARDING EBOR HOUSE**

An update was provided by the Town Clerk (Corporate Services) on the current situation regarding Ebor House. It was commented that following on from discussions with the landlady, Blyth Town Council had paid for internal maintenance work.

It was commented that the work conducted was significantly under the cost suggested by the landlady.

The Town Clerk (Corporate Services) commented that following on from this that she had written and asked for confirmation that the work was completed to standard. It was noted that no response had been received.

Councillor J R Potts commented that a final letter needed to be sent in order to bring proceedings to a close. This was **AGREED. Action: SN**

Councillor K Ellis wished to thank the Town Clerk (Corporate Services) for her work on this item.

### **27/13/06: UPDATE ON THE OFFICE MOVE**

The Town Clerk (Corporate Services) noted that the plans had been implemented and that work was ongoing to improve facilities within the kitchen.

The Committee was informed that two further tables are required for the Council Chamber. **Action: SN**

Councillor J R Potts enquired as to whether a TV licence had been purchased. The Committee Clerk responded that a TV licence had not been purchased as no TV signal was received by the TV and that at present it is believed its sole function will be to display Agenda's and planning applications.

### **28/13/07 UPDATE ON THE CONTRACTUAL AGREEMENTS WITH NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY COUNCIL**

It was noted that this had been discussed under item 4.2 and no further comment was made.

### **29/13/08: UPDATE ON THE IT EQUIPMENT**

#### 8.1 Tablet Devices

The Committee Clerk provided an outline of his recommendation. It was recommended that at present, that tablet computers would not enhance or support the work of the Council.

This recommendation was supported by the Committee.

#### 8.2 Investigations regarding the provision of cloud facilities and potential IT support retainership.

It was commented that this was very much at the early investigation stage and that it was to be chased up by the Committee Clerk. **Action: LF**

Councillor J R Potts again reiterated the need to test back up facilities in order to be guard against any potential failings.

The Committee discussed a potential IT retainer, however no decision was made.

### **30/13/09 UPDATE ON TOWN COUNCIL INSURANCE COVERAGE**

The Town Clerk (Corporate Services) outlined for the Committee the insurance arrangements. It was noted that a documenting the relevant figures is to be circulated to all Councillors. **Action: SN**

Councillor K Ellis commented this represented a very good deal for the Council.

Councillor J R Potts commented as to how and whether Councillors were covered if they provided poor advice to a member of the Public. The Town Clerk (Corporate Services) commented that following on from conversations it was noted that Councillors tend not to give advice in the manner of a consultant and that this type of generic advice was covered.

J R Potts also enquired as to whether bus shelters were insured. Discussion was held on this topic and it was commented by the Town Clerk (Corporate Services) that Public Liability covered related issues however the Committee noted that this would not cover a knocked down bus shelter.

It was further noted that the insurance company is to be given 14 days notice of any fireworks display.

### **31/13/10 ANY OTHER BUSINESS AND ITEMS FOR URGENT ATTENTION**

The Town Clerk (Corporate Services) informed the Committee that contact has been received from Major D Fairbairn seeking a contribution to the Territorial Army for the curry lunch and Remembrance Day Services.

The Committee **AGREED** that a cheque is to be provided for presentation.

### **32/13/11 DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting of the Finance Committee is to be held on Thursday 7<sup>th</sup> November 2013 at 6.30pm in the Council Chamber at Arms Everytyne House.

### **MEETING CLOSED AT 7.50pm**

Confirmed as a true record

And signed by the Chair .....

Date.....

## **MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE**

### **Councillors:**

K Ellis (Chair)  
J R Potts (Vice-Chair)  
B Elliott  
A Gibbs-Barton  
G T Knox  
K Nisbet  
R Parker (Mayor)  
O Potts  
J Reid