

## Minutes of the Finance and Human Resources committee 01.09.16

### MINUTES OF THE FINANCE AND HUMAN RESOURCES COMMITTEE MEETING HELD IN BANSONS ON THURSDAY 1<sup>ST</sup> SEPTEMBER 2016 AT 8.00pm

Present: D. Birch (chair) J. Bicknell P. Bolden  
J. Browning J. Devonald J. Reynolds

\*Non committee members

Officers: A. Middlehurst (Clerk)  
J. Farr (Deputy Clerk)

Public: Two members of the public

#### **34/16 Apologies for absence**

Apologies were received from Cllrs Feetham (prior engagement) and Freeman (annual leave).

Action

#### **35/16 Declarations of personal and or prejudicial interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

#### **36/16 Public participation session with respect to items on the agenda**

No members of the public wished to address the committee.

#### **37/16 To agree the minutes of the Finance and Human Resources meeting held on 30 June 2016**

The minutes were agreed as a true record and signed by the Chairman.

#### **38/16 Clerk's Report**

##### **Information on the Nationwide account**

The funds were reinvested for a further year. The interest accrued for 15 July 2015 to 17 July 2016 was £388.17.

##### **Mini bus**

Repairs to the gear box cost £532.45.

##### **Planning Training**

This session has been arranged by the Planning, Environment and Public Relations committee Clerk for 6<sup>th</sup> October.

##### **Risk assessments**

On the advice of the internal auditor the Council has purchased a database to assist officers with the preparation of risk assessments.

##### **Alzheimer's Society**

It was reported that the Alzheimer's Society had made a regular monthly booking to hold at Banson's.

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### **39/16 Finance Reporting**

i) To note the bank reconciliations for July 2016  
Councillors noted the bank reconciliations.

ii) To note the payments over £100 for July 2016  
Councillors noted the payments over £100.

### **40/16 Mini Bus**

i) To receive the budget as at 31 July 2016  
Councillors noted the mini bus budget.

ii) To consider arrangements for hirers whose drivers are over 70 years of age and make a recommendation to Full Council  
The Council had been approached by regular hirers who asked if the minibus driver's minimum age limit could increase. Their drivers were either approaching 70 years of age or over.

Cllr Browning proposed that the committee recommended to Full Council that drivers over 70 years of age would pay the difference in excess. This was seconded by Cllr Bicknell and unanimously agreed.

### **41/16 Internal audit**

To receive an update on the action points recommended in the report by the Council's internal auditor  
A copy of the Audit Report and a report on the action points were provided for Councillor's information.

Councillors noted the report and the progress to date.

### **42/16 Annual Insurance review**

To note the report from the Council's Insurance company and agree any actions necessary  
The Council's insurers undertook an annual insurance review and a written report was provided for Councillor's consideration. The Insurers suggested that the Council investigate the possibility of using a bank night safe for amounts over £2,000.00.

### **43/16 Finance Risk Assessment**

To review the document and make a recommendation to Full Council  
A draft document was provided for Councillors consideration.

Cllr Browning proposed that the committee recommended to Full Council to adopt the draft Finance Risk Assessment. This was seconded by Cllr Reynolds and unanimously agreed.

### **44/16 Comments, compliments and complaints policy**

To review the adopted policy, make any changes necessary and make a recommendation to Full Council  
A copy of the adopted policy was provided for Councillor's consideration as well as examples from other local councils and the NALC Legal Topic Note on handling complaints.

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Cllr Browning proposed that the committee recommended to Full Council to adopt a policy similar to that of Loughton Town Council with changes to reflect the particulars of Ongar Town Council. This was seconded by Cllr Bicknell and unanimously agreed.

### **45/16 Councillor Remuneration Scheme 2017/18**

To consider if the Council wishes to make changes to its existing Councillor Remuneration scheme

A copy of the Council's existing scheme and information from EFDC was provided for Councillors information.

Cllr Browning proposed that the committee recommended to Full Council to adopt the Councillor Remuneration Scheme. This was seconded by Cllr Devonald and unanimously agreed.

The deadline for responses to EFDC was 16 September but the Clerk would inform the officer that this recommendation would need to be ratified by Full Council at the meeting scheduled for 29 September.

### **46/16 Chapel**

i) To receive the results of the public consultation regarding future use of the Chapel and agree any action necessary

The Council received three ideas for possible future uses for the Chapel including –

- Local museum (2)
- Visitors centre

The Ongar Millennium History Society expressed an interest in using the Chapel as a potential museum.

This information was noted by Councillors.

ii) To receive update on the possible deconsecration of the Chapel

Rev Taylor asked that the Council pursue the deconsecration of the building as the current condition was disrespectful to its purpose as a holy place. The Pastoral Secretary advised that it would be possible to use the provision under the Care of Churches and Ecclesiastical Jurisdiction Measure 1991 to remove the legal effects of consecration. Rev Taylor could request that the Bishop instruct the Diocesan Registry to begin this process. It was not thought that there would be a cost to the Council for this application. Proof of the Council's title of the Chapel would need to be provided to the Registry to assist the process.

It was reported that Cllr Bicknell had met with Rev Taylor and a reporter from BBC Radio Essex to discuss the future of the building. Cllr Bicknell had ideas for possible sources of funding. It was agreed that Cllr Bicknell and the Deputy Clerk explore possible funding.

Cllr Browning proposed that the Council proceed with the deconsecration of the Chapel. This was seconded by Cllr Reynolds and unanimously agreed.

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### **47/16 Love Lane**

To consider repairs to the lane surface.

Councillors deferred any decision on this item for 6 months from 24 March 2016.

An extract of the minutes of 24 March –

### **80/15 Love Lane**

- *To consider and agree to carry out repairs to Love Lane*

*The Council has received complaints regarding the poor condition of Love Lane. Essex County Council (ECC) advised the Council that –*

*ECC is responsible for maintaining the route to a standard suitable for pedestrian traffic only and repairing any damage caused by pedestrians exercising their right of access. Use of the route by any traffic other than pedestrians is classed as a private right and the responsibility for maintain the route to a standard for vehicles and repairing the damage caused by vehicles is the responsibility of the landowner or those with private access rights.*

*It was reported that the pot holes had been repaired by a member of the public. Councillors were concerned that once the Council had taken responsibility for any repairs then this would have to continue even if the whole lane needed to be resurfaced.*

*Cllr Reynolds proposed that this item be deferred for six months and this was seconded by Cllr Kaye.*

*Vote –*

*For – 5*

### **AGREED**

- *To defer this item for six months.*

Cllr Browning was concerned that the Council should not bear the whole of the cost of repairs as use of the lane was shared with residents, Scouts, visitors to the cemetery and Jubilee Park as well as the footpath portion maintained by Essex County Council.

Cllr Browning proposed that this matter be deferred until the new charity to manage Jubilee Park had been set up. This was seconded by Cllr Bolden and unanimously agreed.

### **48/16 Business Continuity Plan**

To agree on the membership of the working group to develop the Business Continuity Plan

The purpose of the Plan was to make arrangements, as far as possible, for any circumstances which may arise (e.g. fire or flood) which would result a break in normal Council services and how the Council would cope in this situation.

Cllr Birch stated that it was necessary for the Council to have such a plan.

Cllrs Bicknell, Browning and Reynolds volunteered for the working group.

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### **49/16 Health and Safety**

To receive an update on the action points for Council activities (not including Jubilee Park)

The Council's Health and Safety consultants, Ellis Whittam, provided the Council with a list of action points to be completed.

An updated list was provided for Councillor's information which was noted.

### **50/16 Standards of Practice**

To receive an update on the Council's Standards of Practice status

The Council was awarded Quality Status in 2006. The new Standards of Practice Scheme consists of three levels of the Standards – Foundation, Quality and Gold. The Council achieved Foundation Status in January 2015 and this award would be valid for four years.

Council staff had completed as many of the necessary documents as possible to enable an application for Quality status. However, the Council did not meet the basic requirement to have 10 out of 15 Councillors elected and not co-opted.

This information was noted by Councillors.

### **51/16 To receive recommendations from Planning, Environment and Public Relations committee**

i) To consider the draft Communications and Engagement Strategy, make any changes necessary and make a recommendation to Full Council

At the Planning, Environment and Public Relations committee meeting on 30 June 2016 it was agreed to recommend to the Finance and Human Resources committee to adopt the draft Communication Strategy

The committee was asked to review the document, make any changes necessary and make a recommendation to Full Council.

Cllr Browning suggested that changes were made to the last paragraph on page 2 to read

"All press releases to be reviewed by the chairman or vice chairman of the Council and the committee chair or vice chair if the issue concerns a particular committee before publication"

Cllr Birch proposed that this change was incorporated into the policy. This was seconded by Cllr Browning and unanimously agreed.

Cllr Devonald proposed that the committee recommended to Full Council to adopt the draft policy. This was seconded by Cllr Bicknell and unanimously agreed.

ii) To consider the draft Social Media Policy, make any changes necessary and make a recommendation to Full Council

At the Public Relations committee meeting on 11 February 2016 it was agreed to recommend to Finance and Human Resources committee to adopt the draft policy

The committee was asked to review the document, make any changes necessary and make a recommendation to Full Council.

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Cllr Bicknell proposed that the committee recommended to Full Council to adopt the draft policy. This was seconded by Cllr Bolden and unanimously agreed.

### **52/16 Recording of meetings by public**

To review the adopted policy, make any changes necessary and make a recommendation to Full Council.

Cllr Reynolds asked that this policy be reviewed. A copy of the adopted policy was provided for Councillor's consideration. The committee was asked to review the document, make any changes necessary and make a recommendation to Full Council.

An extract of the Finance and Human Resources committee minutes from the meeting held on 19 May 2016 –

### **15/16 Recording of meetings**

- *To receive a draft policy on members of the press and public recording Council meetings and make a recommendation to Full Council*

*A draft policy was provided for Councillors consideration. It was recommended that a statement be added to the website to inform the public and press of this policy. Suggested wording is as follows –*

***Please note that following the publication of the Openness of Local Government Regulations 2014, members of the public can record and publish audio and video records of this meeting. If you wish to attend the meeting, but do not wish to be recorded doing so, please contact the clerk for guidance.***

*Cllr Reynolds proposed that the draft policy be recommended to Full Council and this was seconded by Cllr Freeman.*

*Vote –  
For – 7*

### **AGREED**

- *The draft policy be recommended to Full Council*

An extract of the minutes from the Full Council meeting held on 2 June 2016 –

### *Draft policy on members of the press and public recording Council meetings*

*Cllr A Wingfield proposed that the Council adopt the policy. Seconded Chairman, Cllr J Browning.*

*Vote –  
For –*

*Cllrs Browning, Devonald, Fletcher, Freeman, Birch, Reynolds, Wingfield (7)*

*Abstain –*

*Cllrs Feetham, Bolden, Bicknell (3)*

Following some discussion Cllr Browning proposed that the chair of the meeting included a statement regarding recordings in the housekeeping announcements at the start of each meeting and that written statements were placed on the chairs in the public gallery. This was seconded by Cllr Devonald and unanimously agreed.

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### 53/16 Open Forum

To review the Council's decision to remove the Open Forum portion of meetings to allow members of the public the opportunity to comment on decisions that have been taken during meetings and make a recommendation to Full Council.

A member of the public asked that the Council reconsiders the decision not to hold an Open Forum at the end of every committee meeting.

Extract of the minutes from the Human Resources committee meeting held on 10 March 2016 –

*ii) To consider removing the Open Forum part of standard agendas and replacing with a Public Participation Session that is not restricted to agenda items only and make a recommendation to Full Council*

*This item was recommended to Full Council by Human Resources committee on 24 September 2015. The Full Council meeting on 19 November 2015 rejected the recommendation and referred the item back to Human Resources committee.*

*Cllr Freeman proposed that the Public Participation item on agendas be expanded to include questions and statements from the public on any matter and not just those on the agenda. This was seconded by Cllr D. Roberts.*

Vote –

For – 7

### **AGREED**

- *To recommend to Full Council to expand the Public Participation item on agendas to include questions and statements from the public on any matter.*

Extract of minutes from the Full Council meeting held on 14 April 2016 –

*It was **PROPOSED** by Cllr Browning and seconded by Cllr Reynolds to expand the Public Participation item on agendas to include questions and statements from members of the public on any matter. The Open Forum portion of the meeting to be obsolete.*

Vote –

*For – 9 (Cllrs Browning, Bicknell, Feetham, Birch, Fletcher, Freeman, Reynolds, Bolden and Devonald)*

*Abstention – 2 (Cllrs Wingfield and Gode)*

Following some discussion Cllr Bicknell proposed that the committee recommended to Full Council that no changes were made to the format of the meetings. This was seconded by Cllr Reynolds and unanimously agreed.

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### **54/16 Violence and Bullying at Work staff consultation**

To consider a method to review the results of the consultation.

Cllr Browning proposed that a working group be set up to review the staff consultation results and report back to the committee with any recommendations. This was seconded by Cllr Bicknell and unanimously agreed.

Cllrs Browning, Bolden and Bicknell volunteered for the working group.

### **61/16 The Council is asked to resolve to permit the press and public to return to the meeting under the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960**

Cllr Browning proposed that the committee permitted the press and public to return to the meeting. This was seconded by Cllr Reynolds and unanimously agreed.

The meeting closed at 10.20 pm

Date

Signed

Chairman