

**MINUTES OF THE FINANCE COMMITTEE MEETING HELD IN BANSONS ON
THURSDAY 24TH MARCH 2016 AT 8.00pm**

Present: C. Feetham (Chair) J. Devonald B. Freeman*
A. Kaye J. Reynolds J. Rushton

*Non committee members

Officers: J. Farr (Deputy Town Clerk)
A. Laws (Assistant)

Also present: EFDC Cllr B. Surtees

Public: Two members of the public

Other: Two members of the press

67/15 Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Cllrs P. Bolden (work commitments) and J. Browning (family commitments).

Action

68/15 Declarations of personal and or prejudicial interest

Cllr J. Reynolds declared an interest in item 78/15 as he was an allotment holder.

69/15 Public participation session with respect to items on the agenda

No members of the public wished to address the committee.

70/15 To agree the minutes of the meeting held on 14 January 2016

With the correction of one typing error the minutes of the meeting held on 14 January 2016 were agreed and signed by the Chairman.

71/15 Clerk's Report

Internal Audit report recommendations

R1 - A process had been put in place whereby all Journal Transfers were checked and authorised by the Clerk or Deputy Clerk

R3 – A full list of payments would be reported to each Finance meeting commencing with this meeting.

R11 – Cash purchases were made from the till at the beginning of the Jubilee Park operation. A petty cash system had been set up and was used.

R13 – Cash and cheques were banked more frequently since the auditor's visit.

R14 – A full Asset and Inventory Register was being developed in accordance with "The Practitioners Guide"

Ongar in Bloom

The Open Spaces committee had given permission for OIB to use Bansons free of charge for the first year for committee meetings and the Judge's Reception.

The Open Spaces committee had accepted a donation from OIB of planters on railings outside Budworth Hall and Library. The Council's Insurance schedule would be updated accordingly.

Tennis Court and Croquet Lawn Lease

The Council had put £500 on account with the Council's solicitor and the lease was being drafted.

DCK Beavers

Council staff had received finance training including advice on VAT from Mr Kemp of DCK Beavers. Cllrs Reynolds and Roberts had also spoken at length to Mr Kemp.

Mr Kemp is the finance advisor to NALC.

72/15 Finance Reporting

- To note the bank reconciliations for January and February
- To note all payments for January and February

Documents detailing the bank reconciliations and payments for January and February 2016 were provided for Councillors attention. Following advice from the Council's internal auditor a list of all payments made on the No 1 account, Jubilee Park account and Alto Cards was attached for Councillors information.

Cllr Reynolds stated that in his opinion the Council's reserves would be approximately £47,000 by the end of this financial year.

Council staff had received some training on the accounts package which would enable financial reports to be presented to Councillors in a slightly different format in future.

73/15 Recommendations from Human Resources committee

- To agree to adopt the draft Mini Bus Risk Assessment

Cllr Reynolds proposed that the Council adopt the draft Mini Bus Risk Assessment and this was seconded by Cllr Devonald.

Vote –
For – 5

AGREED

- To adopt the draft Mini Bus Risk Assessment
- To agree to adopt the draft Financial Regulations to reflect the changes under the Public Contracts Regulations 2015
- To agree to adopt the changes to the Standing Orders to reflect the changes under the Public Contracts Regulations 2015

Cllr Kaye proposed that the Council adopts the draft Financial Regulations and Standing Orders to reflect changes to the Public Contracts Regulations 2015. This was seconded by Cllr Rushton.

Vote –
For – 5

AGREED

- To adopt the draft Financial Regulations and Standing Orders to reflect changes to the Public Contracts Regulations 2015.

74/15 Mini Bus

- To receive the budget as at 29 February 2016

Budget information on the mini bus was attached for Councillors information. Councillors noted the budget.

- To receive information on the profit/loss of the mini bus for the previous 3 years
Councillors noted this information.

Information on the profit/loss of the mini bus for the previous 3 years was attached for Councillors attention.

- To review the fees

Cllr Kaye proposed that the fees be increased to £1.10 per mile, £10 booking fee and £15 per day for bookings over 3 days. This was seconded by Cllr Rushton.

Vote –

For – 5

AGREED

- The fees to be increased to £1.10 per mile, £10 booking fee and £15 per day for bookings over 3 days.

- To review the Conditions of Use

Cllr Kaye proposed to retain the existing Conditions of Use and this was seconded by Cllr Rushton.

Vote –

For – 5

AGREED

- To retain the existing Conditions of Use

- To consider the sale of the mini bus

At the Full Council meeting on 28 January Cllr Bolden suggested that the Council considered selling the mini bus.

Cllr Kaye proposed that the Council retains the mini bus and increases the fees. This was seconded by Cllr Reynolds.

Vote –

For – 5

AGREED

- That the Council does not sell the mini bus.

75/15 Internal Audit

- To receive the report from the internal auditor and to consider any necessary action

Cllr Reynolds stated that this was an interim report only and not the final version.

- To agree training for the Clerk and Finance Assistant on RBS software (R2)

Cllr Reynolds proposed that the staff receive the recommended training and this was seconded by Cllr Kaye.

Vote –

For – 5

AGREED

- Council staff to receive training on the RBS accounts system

- To agree to develop and implement an official ordering system (R4)

Cllr Reynolds proposed that an official ordering system be implemented and this was seconded by Cllr Kaye.

Vote –

For – 5

AGREED

- That an official ordering system be implemented

- To consider appointing an independent advisor to undertake a full review of all income streams to identify all of VAT (R5)

It was reported that following the training received from DCK Beavers this was no longer necessary.

- To agree to increase the amount of insurance cover for cash in transit (R6)

It was reported that at present the level of cover was for £3,000 cash. Councillors instructed the Deputy Clerk to ascertain if there would be any additional insurance premium to increase this cover. This item to be added to the next Finance meeting agenda.

- To consider and agree that the Council should confirm with the Insurers that the safes at Jubilee Park are adequate (R7)

Cllr Reynolds proposed that the Council does not raise this issue with the Council's insurers and this was seconded by Cllr Kaye.

Vote –

For – 4

Abstain – 1

AGREED

- The Council would not raise this issue with the Council's insurers.

Cllr Reynolds proposed that the next three items be referred to Jubilee Park Working Group. This was seconded by Cllr Kaye.

Vote –
For – 5

AGREED

- The following three items be referred to Jubilee Park Working Group.
- To consider and agree to commission an independent review of all factors relating to the operation at Jubilee Park (R8)
- To consider and agree to set up a system for recording cash takings at Jubilee Park (R9)
- To consider and agree to commission periodic stock checks at Jubilee Park café (R10)
- To consider and agree to obtain professional advice regarding the variable position of the mini bus income (R12)

It was reported that following the training received from DCK Beavers this was no longer necessary.

- To consider and agree the level at which expenditure is regarded as a fixed asset (e.g. £500, £100 or £1000)

Cllr Feetham proposed that the level be set at £500 and this was seconded by Cllr Reynolds.

Vote –
For – 5

AGREED

- That the level at which expenditure is regarded as a fixed asset is set at £500.

76/15 Bank signatories

- To consider and agree named Councillors to be authorised to sign banking documents

Following the resignation of Cllr Jackman there were only four councillors who were authorised to sign payments (Cllrs Bolden, Roberts, Browning and Reynolds). It was suggested that additional councillors be authorised as signatories to ensure availability as required.

As there were so few members present it was agreed to refer this item to Full Council.

77/15 Financial Regulations

- To consider the recommendation from Human Resources committee to amend the Financial Regulations

This had already been resolved in item 73/15.

78/15 Fees and charges

- To consider and agree the increase in allotment fees from 1st November 2017

At the Open Spaces meeting on 3 March 2016 it was agreed to increase the allotment fees by 5%.

Cllr Kaye proposed that the suggested fee increase be accepted and this was seconded by Cllr Rushton.

Vote –

For – 4

Abstain – 1 (Cllr Reynolds)

AGREED

- To adopt the 5% allotment fee increase.

79/15 Open Spaces committee

- To receive recommendations from Open Spaces committee –
 - To accept the draft lease for Castle St allotments
 - To accept the draft lease for Greensted Rd play area

At the Open Spaces committee meeting on 4 February Councillors agreed to recommend the draft leases to Finance committee.

Cllr Kaye proposed that the Council accepts both draft leases and this was seconded by Cllr Devonald.

Vote –

For – 5

AGREED

- To accept the draft leases for both Castle St Allotments and Greensted Rd

79/15 Chapel

- To note that there have been no responses to the public consultation received to date

At the Finance meeting on 14 January 2016 it was agreed that the Council conduct a public consultation for two months regarding the future use of the Chapel. No responses had been received to date and Councillors agreed to extend this consultation period until after the Annual Town Meeting on 28 April 2016.

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.

81/15 Council buildings

- To consider commissioning Stace to carry out surveys for all Council owned buildings
- To agree the level of detail required for the surveys

The Property Inspection Report (PIR) detailed the status of the building and recommended work to be carried out to ensure the condition of the building and to comply with Health and Safety.

Alternatively the Building Maintenance Survey (BMS) was a more detailed report and recommended work to be carried out in 1 year, 2 years and 3 years. The report also included information on the approximate cost to rectify any faults.

Cllr Reynolds stated that these reports were not necessary and Cllr Kaye felt that most defects would be obvious.

Cllr Feetham proposed that this item be deferred for one year and this was seconded by Cllr Kaye.

Vote –
For – 5

AGREED

- To defer a decision on property inspections for one year.

82/15 Scout hut lease

To receive an update on the Scout Hut lease renewal

It was reported that the Council had approached representative of the Scouts to invite them to provide further details and reasons regarding the length of the requested lease. No response had been received to date.

It was agreed to add this item to the next Finance committee agenda.

The meeting closed at 9.35 pm

Signed

Chair

Date