

**MINUTES OF THE FINANCE AND HUMAN RESOURCES COMMITTEE MEETING  
HELD ON 5 JANUARY 2017 AT BANSONS**

Present: C. Feetham (chair) J. Battersby\* J. Browning  
M.Dadd\* B. Freeman L. Mendoza\*  
B. Vaz\* J. Reynolds

\*Non committee members

Officers: A Middlehurst (Town Clerk), M Letch (Contract Clerk), E Gough  
(Administrative Assistant)

Public: Two members of the public

Press: None

**89/16 Apologies for absence**

Apologies were received from Cllrs Bicknell, Birch, Bolden and Devonald

**90/16 Declaration of Interests**

None received.

**91/16 Public participation session with respect to items previously notified to the Clerk.**

No members of the public wished to address the committee.

**92/16 To agree the minutes of the Finance and Human Resources committee meetings held on 3 November 2016 and 10 November 2016**

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

**93/16 Clerk's Report  
Bansons (OTC Offices)**

An approach has been made to EFDC with regard to the freehold of the building.

**Chapel**

The Statutory Declaration is being prepared to be sent off to the Diocese of Chelmsford.

**Low Claims Rebate**

The Council has received a refund of £241.01 from Aviva.

**94/16 Finance Reporting**

i) To note the bank reconciliations for October and November 2016

Bank reconciliations for October and November were provided for Councillors attention.

ii) To note the payments over £100 for October and November 2016

A list of payments made during October and November was provided for Councillors attention.

### **95/16 Reserves**

- To note level of reserves (Cllr Reynolds requested at the meeting with Clerk 1st Dec)  
The attached report was circulated.

Cllr J Reynolds referred to the Council's Reserves and Virement Policy which states that the Council will maintain a working reserve of between 40% and 60% of the precept with a preference to keep it at 50%.

The Clerk reported that her concerns over the major issues regarding Jubilee Park finance had been raised with both the Chair, Vice Chairman and JPSC Chairman for some time. The Clerk asked the Committee to consider guidance for the Jubilee Park Steering Committee.

Cllr J Reynolds proposed that the Jubilee Park Steering Committee analyse the figures for the remaining three months to the end of the financial year. Seconded Cllr B Freeman.

Vote –  
For 3  
Abstention - 1

### **96/16 Mini Bus**

- To receive the budget as at 30<sup>th</sup> November 2016  
The budget was noted.

- To note the number of bookings for the previous 5 years (As requested at F & HR 03.11.16)

The number of bookings were noted. The Clerk reported that bookings had dropped due to some community groups disbanding and others not being able to secure a driver within the age limit required by the Council's insurance policy.

Cllr J Reynolds reported that staff time was not included in the Mini Bus budget. He questioned if the Council should consider selling the Mini Bus which the Clerk advised would need to be added to the next Finance and HR agenda.

### **97/16 Love Lane Office**

- To note that the water heater has been replaced  
The final cost was £1255 + VAT

Cllr J Reynolds questioned if the work had been inspected. The Clerk reported that due to the festive break, it had not.

- To consider the quotations for redecoration of the interior and exterior of the building  
Quotes have been received:-

Cllr B Freeman proposed that the Council market the building for rent and either the proposed tenant is given a period of time rent free or monies are vired from reserves once an income has been established. Seconded Cllr J Browning.

Unanimously **AGREED**.

A report to be taken to the next Committee meeting.

**98/16 Remote Access and Data Sharing**

- To consider an exchange email account for Councillors
- To consider an online data access system for Councillors to review Council
- To consider a budget bid of £1250 to install these systems

Cllr J Browning stated that Cllrs could easily set up a separate personal email account for council business which would be cost free to the Council. The Clerk reported that this was simply an option for the committee to consider not a recommendation.

Cllr M Dadd suggested that as a new website provider was being considered within a further agenda item, it may be prudent not to commit the Council as an alternative option may be available.

Following discussion, Cllr J Browning proposed that a budget bid of up to £1200 be recommended to provide remote access and data sharing facilities. Seconded Cllr J Reynolds.

Unanimously **AGREED**.

**99/16 Virement of funds from salaries to Jubilee Park Professional Fees**

- To consider a virement of funds to the Jubilee Park Professional Fees budget to offset costs for the locum clerk

Cllr J Reynolds reported that not all the fees for the Locum Clerk should be allocated to Jubilee Park as other projects had been undertaken during the period from April 2016. He suggested that the fees be met from the Staffing budget. The Clerk advised that this was not appropriate as the Annual Return requires that staffing costs are reported as separate item.

The Clerk suggested that the invoices be reviewed and the costs allocated accordingly but that none of the current budgets could absorb this amount and it would have to be met from general reserves.

Cllr J Reynolds proposed that professional fees relating to the Jubilee Park are allocated to Jubilee Park and those relating to Town Council functions are allocated to a budget. All paid for from general reserves. Seconded Cllr J Browning.

Vote –  
For 3  
Abstention - 1

**100/16 The Council RESOLVED to exclude the press and public for this meeting under the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960 as the following items contain confidential information relating to contractual matters.**

Cllr Browning proposed to exclude the press and public for this meeting. Seconded Cllr Freeman.

Unanimously **AGREED**.

**102/16 The Council RESOLVED to permit the press and public to return to the meeting under the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960**

Cllr Browning proposed to permit the press and public to return to the meeting. Seconded Cllr Reynolds.

Unanimously **AGREED**.

**103/16 Report from the Jubilee Park Steering Committee**

- To receive a report regarding the current status of the charitable trust and the transfer of the facility

Mr Letch reported that the trustees had had an initial meeting and were due to meet again on 17<sup>th</sup> January. The trustees had intimated that they wanted time to create a plan for the facility and were not keen on a transfer date of 1<sup>st</sup> April 2017, therefore, the facility would remain in council control for the foreseeable future.

**104/16 Local Council Tax Support Grant**

- To note the reduction for 2017/18 to £10,770 and 2018/19 to £5,385

The Committee noted the reduction.

**105/16 Public Relations**

To consider Cllr Browning's requests to include the following items in the 2017/18 P, E and PR budget:-

- Reinstatement of the Town Council newsletter and consider communication with the public

Cllr J Browning stated that he wish the Committee to consider reinstating the newsletter as the Council relies heavily on social media to communicate with residents which not all residents can access.

Cllr J Reynolds reported that he was strongly against the reinstatement as he had campaigned to stop the production and save costs. He also reported that members of the public had complained to him about the newsletter. The Council was meeting its obligation of the Quality Status by submitting articles in the Ongar News.

Cllr Battersby stated that the Ongar News was not delivered to household and not all residents could obtain a copy. She asked to record that although she is not a committee member she would fully support the reinstatement.

The Clerk reported that following the decision to discontinue the newsletter in 2015 and the recent decision not to use the Everything Epping Forest media service the Council's ability to communicate with the residents has been dramatically reduced. With the Local Plan at the forefront of local news, a newsletter would be the ideal way to communicate to all residents. It is also a good way to meet and interact with members of the public.

The Council has to produce an Annual Report which is delivered to every household in Ongar but it could also consider producing a two pager to reduce costs. The cost for a two pager would be £1,000.

Cllr Browning proposed that the Committee recommend a budget of £2,000 to produce two x two pagers during the financial year. Seconded Cllr C Feetham.

Vote –  
For 2  
Against – 2

Cllr C Feetham as Chair of the Committee had the casting vote.

**AGREED.**

- Replace the current website and with a recommended product with ongoing support.
- The current website provider does not provide support for this product as it is now obsolete

The P, E and PR committee resolved on 17<sup>th</sup> November to:-

**160/16 OTC website**

*Cllr Reynold's request to review the layout of the current website was considered and it was **AGREED** that this item be deferred until funds have been reviewed and a working party set up.*

The Clerk reported that it was strongly recommended that a budget bid is agreed by the Committee. The current website is now cumbersome and difficult to update. It is not supported with telephone support by the supplier as this edition is now obsolete. The administrative time saved with the new upgraded website will offset the cost involved.

Loughton Town Council have highly recommended their contractor. The contractor had advised that to create a new site and transfer all the information to a new site would cost £1500.

Cllr J Browning proposed that the Committee recommend £1500 be allocated in the budget for the new website. Seconded J Reynolds.

Unanimously **AGREED.**

Cllrs Freeman, Dadd and Battersby left the meeting at 10pm.

Cllr Browning proposed to suspend Standing Orders to allow the meeting to continue past the two hour limit. Seconded J Reynolds.

Unanimously **AGREED.**

**106/16 Budget 2017/18**

- To consider the draft budget for 2017/18 and make recommendation to Full Council
- To consider the precept figure for 2017/18 and make recommendation to Full Council

The Clerk reminded Cllrs that the precept figure had to be submitted to EFDC by 31<sup>st</sup> January 2017.

Recommendations had been received from the Open Spaces committee, Planning & Environment and Public Relations committee and the Clerk regarding revenue budgets for 2017 – 18.

A review of the draft budget took place. The Clerk reported that a budget had been allocated for Election expenses either for use during the 2017/18 financial year or as an ear marked fund towards the elections in 2019. Also £20,000 in grant monies had been allocated to the Jubilee Park but no other monies were included as the Jubilee Park Steering Committee had not made any recommendation.

The Open Spaces Committee had also made budget bids for capital projects:

Open Spaces committee

- Repaint St Martin's railings £5,000
- Replace Castle sign £1,000
- Concrete raft for cemetery £2,000

In addition, the Clerk had suggested creating an ear marked fund to start a replacement van budget. A figure of £1500 had been allocated.

The Clerk had reviewed the concrete raft project with the Burial's Clerk and recommended that this was a necessary project. It was possible that the repaint cost of the St Martin's railings could be sourced from an ECC Community Initiatives Fund grant and this could, therefore, be removed and if unsuccessful reinstated for 2018/19.

Open Spaces had also requested three new dog waste bins, the committee should consider if three is necessary as they cost £325 each plus the ongoing additional emptying costs.

Cllr J Browning stated that it was a shame more Committee members were not at the meeting to consider the budget. He suggested that the Committee note the Clerk's recommendation but not make any amendments until Full Council on 12<sup>th</sup> January.

Cllr J Browning then proposed that the Committee recommended to Full Council the amended draft budget and precept figure for 2017/8 as per the amended spreadsheet.  
Seconded Cllr C Feetham.

Vote –  
For 2  
Against – 1

**AGREED.**

The meeting closed at 10.29pm

Signed .....

Date .....