

FORDINGBRIDGE TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the Finance & Policy Committee held on Wednesday 25th April 2012 at 7.30 pm in the Town Hall Council Chamber, Fordingbridge

Present:

Cllr Adams – Chairman

Cllrs Anstey, Connolly, Lewendon, Hale, Paton, (A) Wilson & (G) Wilson, Fulford, Paton and Shering

In attendance:

Miss D Vine, Asst Clerk

Deborah Gordon, Finance Officer

1. To accept apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Cllr Price

2. To receive any Declarations of Interest

There were declarations of interest received from Cllr Adams for payment of accounts and Cllr Anstey for travel allowance.

3. To report any matters arising from the minutes of the meeting held on the 28th March 2012

Youth Shelter – This had been delivered and erected.

Diamond Jubilee Celebrations – Deborah Gordon, Finance Officer reported that donations totalling £3,850 had been received.

New Sports Club facilities - Cllr Connolly reported that a positive meeting had taken place with NFDC and there was agreement in principle that the size and footprint of the proposed new facilities was acceptable. It may also be acceptable to consider moving the building towards the car park, incorporating an L shape or having a double storey. With this in mind it had been decided that whilst the current design was purposeful, aesthetically it was not as good as it could be, so further design ideas would be sought. Cllr Fulford asked whether NFDC had charged for this information, bearing in mind the new Planning regulations. Cllr Connolly advised that there was no charge.

VIC – The lease is currently with the solicitors for renewal.

Town Council Website - Cllr Adams confirmed an invoice for £350 had been received.

4. To receive details of Monies Collected and Payment of Accounts

Finance Officer, Deborah Gordon distributed details of receipts and payments which were noted by Members. She advised that the year end accounts would be available at the next meeting but confirmed that that the surplus for the year was likely to be in the region of £38,917, however with and adjustment for Brownsea Land of approx £9,000 this leaves approx £29,000. The sums of £17,000 would be carried forward to cover Town Hall expenditure, £6,000 for children's play areas, £2,000 for machinery and £500 for staff gratuities. Members asked if this would be acceptable to the auditors and Deborah confirmed that she was satisfied that the amounts could be explained.

5. To receive any Finance & Policy Matters referred from sub-committees

Amenities Committee – cost of re-positioning the rugby posts – The Rugby club had submitted two quotes, one for new rugby sockets at a cost of £234.00 and one for £1,584 to carry out the groundworks. Whilst Members were in agreement with the cost of the new sockets, following discussion it was agreed to ask for a further quote for the groundworks.

Members also asked for confirmation that there would be no additional cost if re-seeding was required.

6. To review the Section 137 grant application process

Cllr Adams reminded Members of the basic principles under Section 137. Members reviewed the current Grant application form used with a view to clarifying certain sections. Members agreed that it would be more useful to know the number of users rather than members of an organisation as this would give a better idea of who was benefiting. Cllr Fulford suggested that the section relating to the amount of grant requested should be more specific as occasionally the amounts requested could be random. Cllr Lewendon recommended that details of applications made to other bodies should include not only names and amounts but results of their application, as this could encourage negotiation. Cllr Fulford agreed this would also be in the interest of fairness. Cllr Fulford also suggested that a final paragraph be added asking if there was any further relevant information which could be added in support of the application to assist the Council's decision. Members AGREED that this should be added.

7. To consider the following grant applications

Fordingbridge Junior School PTA – This application had been deferred for inclusion under the new financial year. Following a lively debate Members were divided as to whether this application fitted the Section 137 criteria. It would not be possible nor appropriate for the Council to agree to the amount of grant requested as this would fall outside the limitation of expenditure as laid down under Section 137 in relation to the budget set aside for Grants this year of £5,000. It was proposed by Cllr Paton and seconded by Cllr Connolly that a letter should be sent to the PTA explaining the Council's position and offering a small grant if they could demonstrate they could complete the project. 10 in favour. 1 objection. Carried.

Avon Valley Concerts - An application for a grant of £200 had been received which was the same as last year. Cllr Fulford queried the figures for budgeted expenditure against estimated income for this year. Cllr Lewendon noted that requests had been made to other bodies although we did not know how much or whether they had been successful, and they were putting in money from reserves. It was proposed by Cllr. Connolly and seconded by Cllr. Anstey that a grant of £200 be made. 10 in favour. 1 objection. Carried.

Victoria Rooms - *Cllr Hale declared an interest and left the room*

An application for a grant of £1,389 had been received. A grant of £500 had been made last year. NFDC were contributing £1,555. Cllr Connolly confirmed that considerable improvements had been made. Cllr Shering advised that the Rooms were well used by all areas of the community from adult education to playgroups and often took the overflow from Avonway. Cllr Lewendon stated that as the project for which the money was required was smaller this year then a smaller grant should be considered. Cllr (G) Wilson suggested £300. Cllr Lewendon suggested £250. It was proposed by Cllr Lewendon and seconded by Cllr Connolly that a grant of £250 be made. 8 in favour. 1 objection. 1 abstention. Carried
Cllr Fulford felt that there were problems in the consistency of agreements being reached.

Cllr Hale re-entered the room

8. To discuss the sale of Council Land

Members had agreed at the meeting held on the 28th March 2012 to look at the piece of land concerned in Normandy Way. Cllr Paton advised that Members should think very carefully about the implications of transferring responsibility or sale of land. Cllr Fulford advised that the Council was short of open land/spaces and would not wish to see the Council start to consider selling or transferring odd bits of land. After further discussion it was proposed by Cllr Connolly and seconded by Cllr Paton that the request to transfer responsibility/ownership of the land be refused. All in favour. Carried.

9. To discuss the NFDC Section 106 Developer Contribution Guidance Notes

The Asst Clerk advised Members that at the request of the Association of Town and Parish Councils, the consultation period for submission of representations on the use of developer contributions guidance has been extended to the end of May. A paper would be presented to New Forest District Council Cabinet on 2 May to approve the guidance, in principle, with the recommendation that the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Transportation be authorised to make such amendments as he deems appropriate to take account of any further representations received at the end of the consultation period.

Cllr Fulford expressed concern that NFDC had not consulted properly over the issue of how existing 106 contributions would be spent once the new CIL came into being. Cllr Fulford believed that in order for the Council to be effective in negotiation with NFDC it needed to have the General Power of Competence, two thirds of the Council needed to be elected Members and a number of Councillors should also undertake General Power of Competence training. After discussion it was agreed to add this matter to the agenda for the Annual Council Meeting.

10. To conduct the annual review of the following policies

Standing orders – Noted by Members. It was agreed to amend the following.

Section 2

- a Each of the following staff policies will be reviewed annually by the Staff & Remuneration Committee: Dignity at Work Policy, Disciplinary Policy, Grievance Procedure and Retirement Policy.
- b Each of the policies below will be reviewed annually at the Finance & Policy meeting held in April:
 - i. Review and adoption of appropriate standing orders and financial regulations.
 - ii. Establishing or reviewing the Council's complaints procedure.
 - iii. Establishing or reviewing the Council's procedures for handling requests made under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and the Data Protection Act 1998.
 - iv. Establishing or reviewing the Council's policy for dealing with the press/media.

Financial Regulations – Section 3 3.4 – After a brief discussion it was proposed by Cllr Adams and seconded by Cllr Lewendon that the limit under which the Clerk may incur expenditure on behalf of the Council which is necessary to carry out any repair replacement or other work which is on extreme urgency be increased from £1,000 to £2,000. All in favour.
Carried.

Freedom of Information Publication Scheme – It was agreed that this scheme be adopted for a further year without amendment.

Press & Media Policy – It was agreed that this policy be adopted for a further year without amendment.

Complaints Procedure – The Asst Clerk advised that under the Localism Bill new legislation would give the Council the right to adopt its own procedures or follow that of NFDC but as this piece of legislation was not yet in force the matter would be brought back to the table at a later date for review. It was agreed this procedure be adopted for a further year without amendment.

Data Protection Policy – It was agreed that this policy be adopted for a further year without amendment

11. To receive any matters raised by Members of the Public

No public present.

12. To note any items of Correspondence

A letter from the Chairman –elect of NFDC, Cllr Mrs Alexis McEvoy had been received seeking nominations of residents of the New Forest who had made an outstanding contribution to the community, to mark the Queens Diamond Jubilee. After discussion Members agreed to give this further thought and give a nomination at the Annual Council Meeting on the 2 May 2012.

13. To receive a report from the Clerk or any other relevant business

Nothing to report.

14. To note the date of the next meeting as Wednesday 30th May 2012

The meeting closed at 8.55 pm