

FORDINGBRIDGE TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the Finance & Policy Committee held on Wednesday 29th September 2013 at 7.30 pm in the Town Hall, Fordingbridge

Present:

Cllr Connolly – Chairman
Cllrs Adams, Anstey, Fulford, Hale, Paton, Price, (A) Wilson & (G) Wilson

In attendance:

Mrs M Coatham, Finance Officer
Ms. K Mason, Town Clerk
1 member of the public

1. To accept apologies for absence

There were apologies from Cllrs Lewendon & Perkins

2. To receive any Declarations of Interest

Cllrs Adams & Anstey declared an interest in agenda item 5, Payment of Accounts, but remained in the room to speak.

3. To confirm the minutes of the meetings held on 28th August and 11th September 2013 and report any matters arising.

Cllr Price proposed and Cllr Anstey seconded and it was **RESOLVED:** that the minutes of the meeting held on 28th August 2013 be signed as a true record. There were no matters arising.

Cllr (G) Wilson proposed and Cllr Adams seconded and it was **RESOLVED:** that the minutes of the meeting held on 11th September 2013 be signed as a true record. There were no matters arising.

4. To receive any matters raised by members of the public

No matters were raised.

5. To receive details of Monies Collected and Payment of Accounts and any other financial matters

Cllrs Adams & Anstey declared an interest and remained in the room.

Monies collected and payment of accounts were noted by members and signed by the Chairman.

6. To receive any Finance & Policy matters referred from Committees

Amenities Cmt – funding for tree works – the Clerk explained that while a budget had been allowed for the inspection of trees by NFDC no budget had been made for any works which might be required. Following the inspection in July the trees works required were divided into those that needed to be done within 3 months of the inspection and the rest within 12 months. A quote was included by NFDC from a company who had agreed reduced rates which amounted to £5000. A further quote had been sought from Avon Tree Care for £3,130. The Groundsman and Lengthsman would be assisting to reduce the labour costs.

It was proposed by Cllr Adams and seconded by Cllr Anstey and **RESOLVED:** that the money be taken from reserves and all the tree work required by the inspection be carried out by Avon Tree Care at the soonest possible date.

Cllr Paton raised the issue of the Groundsmen emptying the dog bins to make a saving. The Clerk to discuss with the staff.

7. To discuss the Asset Register update and changes to Financial regulations

The Finance Officer explained that the External Auditor had requested changes to the asset register. Legislation had changed which meant that the assets could only be valued from the value they had in 2011/12 or since being purchased. There was a separate asset register for insurance purposes.

Changes to Financial Regulations will be on the next agenda.

8. To consider the following grant applications:

New Forest Disability Information Service – Members discussed the application. Cllr Fulford suggested that the money would be better spent by the small projects that the Disability Access Committee wished to put in place. Cllr (G) Wilson agreed.

It was proposed by Cllr (G) Wilson and seconded by Cllr Fulford that no money be given as a grant.

A counter proposal was made by Cllr Price and seconded by Cllr Paton and **RESOLVED:** that £100 be granted. Against Cllrs Fulford & (G) Wilson, abstained Cllrs Adams, Buchanan & Connolly.

Forest Forge theatre Company – Members discussed the application.

It was proposed by Cllr Hale and seconded by Cllr Fulford and **RESOLVED:** that a grant of £200 be given to Forest Forge Theatre Company. Cllr Buchanan abstained.

9. To discuss the provision of Christmas lights 2013

Because there were no resources to continue to erect the Christmas lights as in previous years, tenders were sent out by the Town Council for the work on a 3 year contract for the provision of catenary wires to hang the existing lights together with maintenance of the existing lights for the next 3 years. A 3 year contract was the preferred length of time because of the uncertainty surrounding local government funding through council tax.

STN Solutions were the accepted tender. Their proposal was:

£5k to erect and test the catenary wires.

£7.5k per year to erect, test and maintain the lights. Any additional hardware (lights) would require to be paid for in addition to the contract.

£5k is in the budget for Christmas lights 2013. A further £800 has been donated by members of the public and Fordingbridge Rotary are currently holding £1200 in the Christmas light fund. The Rotary Club have also committed £2,500 for the next 3 years to go towards the Christmas lights. Martin Claver (from the floor) advised that the Rotary Club had discussed the matter and felt that the value the lights brought to the Town justified money raised from the Summer Festival being donated.

For the next 3 years (the length of the contract) the Town Council needs to budget £5k per year and also find £3k this year towards the erection of the catenary wires.

The Mayor advised that collection boxes would be in place in retail establishments across the town and following the Summer Festival a fun raising event would be held in one of the marquees before it was taken down.

Cllr Fulford reminded members that the money being spent by the Town Council was raised via taxes and was not voluntary.

It was proposed by Cllr Connolly and seconded by Cllr Hale and **RESOLVED:** that the Town Council budget £5k for the next 3 years (the length of the tender) towards the Christmas

lights and this financial year only commit an additional £3k from reserves towards the provision of catenary wires. Cllr Fulford abstained.

10. To discuss 106 agreement bids for projects throughout the parish

Members had no further suggestions to add to the list of projects agreed at the last meeting.

11. To discuss a proposal for Cemetery funding

Members discussed the current legislation which allows the provision of burial facilities to be carried out by more than one authority. This is the case with Stuckton Road Cemetery which is funded and managed by the Town Council while the District Council applies a portion of Council tax to each Fordingbridge resident to cover costs of maintaining cemeteries throughout the district.

Ringwood Town Council have put forward a suggestion that the District Council adjusts the amount of Council tax payable by residents who live in parishes which provide burial facilities to end the current inequitable system.

It was AGREED by members that they support the request by Ringwood Town Council to NFDC to reduce the Council tax charged to residents.

12. To note any items of Correspondence

Fordingbridge & District Day Care Centre – a letter of thanks for the grant received.

Middle Bronze Age Burial Urn – a middle bronze age burial urn was unearthed from Stuckton Road Cemetery during the digging of a grave. Professor Tim Darvill of Bournemouth University will confirm its provenance and has suggested that it could be a project for a Master's degree student to write up and survey the rest of the cemetery. Members agreed permission and following that, it could be decided where it should be stored or displayed. It is currently in the Town Hall Office.

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

Nothing to report

14. To note the date of the next Finance & Policy meeting as Wednesday 30th October 2013.

The meeting ended at 9.10 pm.