

MINUTES OF THE FLEET TOWN COUNCIL POLICY AND FINANCE COMMITTEE

15 November 2010 7.30pm
Harlington Centre

Councillors

Robert Schofield (Chair), Paul Einchcomb, Helen Perthen, Richard Appleton, Arthur Hurley.

Also Present

Shar Roselman – Clerk

P & F NOV 2010 ITEM 1: APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillor Richard Robinson and Councillor Jenny Radley

P & F NOV 2010 ITEM 2: DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

P & F NOV 2010 ITEM 3: PUBLIC SESSION

No members of the public attended the meeting.

P & F NOV 2010 ITEM 4: MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

Resolved to receive and approve as a correct record of the meeting the minutes of the Policy and Finance meeting held on the 18 October 2010 with one amendment being to correct the name of the committee from whom minutes had previously been received.

The issue of the Lions' lease was discussed. The clerk advised that she had received a letter confirming that Malcolm Harris had increased the amount paid for electricity to £1500, but that the bills received from Lions came to approximately £1000.

Action: The clerk will circulate the letter sent to Lions regarding the increase. This matter will be carried forward onto the next Policy and Finance Agenda.

P & F NOV 2010 ITEM 5: MONTH SEVEN INCOME AND REVENUE STATEMENT AND PAYMENT SCHEDULE.

Resolved to approve and accept into the minutes the Payment Schedule for October 2010, the Bank Reconciliation, and month 7 Income and Revenue Statement.

Action: The clerk is to arrange for an actual figure for the month's hires to be available for forthcoming meetings, as the cashbook system only reflects

receipts once invoices have been sent out and payments received. This gives a 6 week delay on income figures on hall hires.

Resolved that a rotating group of councillors will meet-prior to future Policy and Finance Meetings to go over the accounts in detail.

Specific questions on accounts to be sent into the clerk in advance to allow full and comprehensive answers to be provided.

Cllr Robinson was nominated, in his absence, to convene the first pre Policy and Finance meeting.

The clerk to write to Emma Broome, regarding invoices that are being received from Capita with no detailed information or dates.

P & F NOV 2010 ITEM 6: REVIEW OF THE PROJECTED OPERATIONAL BUDGET TO YEAR END.

The committee received the projected operational budget to year end. Estimates show an increase of approximately £49,000 over the contingency fund, but this figure is subject to potential changes as new invoices for unbudgeted items are likely to bring this figure downwards.

It was discussed that a further working group meeting was needed to go over the projected budget figures and next year's operating budget.

It was resolved that for the year 2010/2011 there would be no back-dated salary increases for any of the staff TUPEd over to Fleet Town Council.

P & F NOV 2010 ITEM 7: CAPITAL PROJECTS 2011/2012

The following capital projects were discussed for completion this year:

The drainage works at the Cemetery. Expenditure here could possibly be regarded as operational expenses. The sum involved is around £5000, and the committee felt that it would be prudent to complete these works before the winter set in.

One of the two schemes to convert the gym at the Harlington into useable space. This matter will be resolved by the RLA committee. Funding for this has already been vired from other cost centres.

The Calthorpe Park play and planter area to be funded from S106 funds. A decision needs to be taken on whether to go ahead with this following the altered circumstances of the S106 funding requirements.

The development of the Council Website.

P & F NOV 2010 ITEM 8: POTENTIAL S106 FUNDING.

The committee received a report showing that £113000 was available for Fleet Town Council from historic s.106 collections, providing projects met the funding requirements.

The clerk to write to Daryl Phillips to establish whether the sum set aside for Calthorpe Park playground funding formed part of this £113000 and whether improvements to the Harlington coffee shop and function room could be funded from this sum.

It was resolved to recommend to Full Council that £50,000 from the 2010/2011 budget be retained in General Reserves, to cover the working capital needs of the council. In time the intention is to increase this to ¼ of income, which will provide an excellent hedge against financial risk. Any surplus over £50,000 to be allocated to reserves for capital projects.

The following risks to the council which might require a level of working capital were identified:

- 1) Late payment of the precept, which would require a working capital reserve of £35,000 per month.
- 2) A fire or other damage to the Harlington which could result in a loss of income for an extended period, say an entire year (approximately £200,000), plus the provision of a Town Council Office elsewhere.
(Post meeting note: The current insurance cover is for a maximum of £50,000 loss)

Fund raising through communities' efforts was discussed, with the Fleet Town Council providing match funding for community projects in our parks.

P & F NOV 2010 ITEM 9: OPERATIONAL BUDGET 2011/2012

The committee received from the clerk the preliminary operating budget for next financial year and discussed setting up a separate meeting to further explore this budget proposal. It was noted that administrative salaries included the full time employment of the deputy clerk and a part time assistant for cemetery and website services. There was no longer any contingency staff budget or Town Centre Manager as these activities had been included in the administrative services. The salary and associated costs of the Sport's Development Officer will be moved to Open Spaces.

The clerk explained that the budget included a proposed 2% increase for everyone but herself. Other increases to expenditure had been calculated at 3.5 % inflation.

The Harlington income figure for the coffee shop was dependant on a level of refurbishment. The lower of the two costs estimates to be received by the RLA committee had been assumed to generate the projected income.

It was recognised that the preliminary budget contained an increase in grant funding for community organisations of £10,000. This matter needs resolution.

It was resolved to delay the discussion about grant policy to the next meeting. Any comments on the proposed grant policy distributed by Cllr Schofield to be sent into the office before the next meeting.

P & F NOV 2010 ITEM 10: PRECEPT (2011/2012)

A long debate followed on this item considering the sensitivity of an increase in the precept at time of financial restraint. The Town Council would need to show progress and the longer term spending plans against a Vision.

The impact on not increasing the precept for a second consecutive year and the erosion of funds by three years of inflationary increases was raised as a concern as to maintaining, at least, basic services.

Resolution: To delay a final decision on the precept recommendation to Full Council until January 2011, so that at the next Policy and Finance meeting the merits of increasing the precept by 2.5%, 5% or 10% can be evaluated.

In parallel a review of the initial capital budgets programme needs to be undertaken, to put a value and a time frame on the identified projects.

Action: To produce for the next Policy and Finance meeting a paper showing what each % increase will mean in terms of capital projects that can be undertaken.

Councillor Perthen tendered her apologies and left the meeting at 10h15.

P & F NOV 2010 ITEM 11. CAPITAL BUDGETING 2011/2012

It was clarified that the preliminary budget proposal resulted in a contingency sum that only met the proposed working capital reserve. It did not produce any surplus for new capital works.

The only significant resource for undertaking any major capital work was the windfall s.106 funds made available by Hart District Council

Resolved to use part of the S106 funding for the Harlington Coffee shop and function room renovations if this was possible.

It was discussed that funding for a Feasibility Study on the Views might be able to come out of Hart District Council Town Centre Plan.

It was recommended that the RLA committee decide on a priority order for potential capital projects, so that initial projects can be fully costed. Preliminary costings for the Harlington renovations will be produced for the next RLA meeting.

The clerk advised that the cost per item of new play equipment could be in the region of £1,500 to £2,500 depending on the supplier and the type of equipment. Potentially therefore, even small sums of capital expenditure could be distributed around the parish play areas.

Recognising that this was an important meeting that had required lengthy discussion about the precept, at 10.30 pm the council resolved to suspend the three hour rule in standing orders in order to complete items on the agenda.

P & F NOV 2010 ITEM 12: CLERK’S FINANCIAL AUTHORITY

Resolved to approve authority for the clerk to spend up to £500 on small items as long as these were within the budget.

P & F NOV 2010 ITEM 13: COMMUNICATION STRATEGY

Cllr Forster has completed a specification for the website. A copy of the specification to be received by the office in order to obtain quotes for website production.

A copy of the specification to be circulated to all committee members.

Resolved to develop a newsletter for distribution in December at an approximate cost for printing and delivery of under £1000.

Action: Cllr Schofield to provide editorial from the chair. Cllr Einchcomb and other committee chairs may also wish to provide an editorial piece relating to activities of the committee. The newsletter is to introduce all councillors to the public, outlining the wards for which they are responsible. Councillors are requested to prepare a few sentences of introduction about themselves.

P & F NOV 2010 ITEM 14: AUDITOR’S INTERIM REPORT

Cllr Schofield had prepared two papers giving annotated comments and a proposal on each aspect of the auditor’s report. The latter paper is attached to the minutes.

Resolved to accept the proposed methods of dealing with each item, excluding the item 1, the matter of co-option, which will be passed to Full Council.

P & F NOV 2010 ITEM 15: SPORT’S OFFICER

In terms of the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960 Exclusion of the public Sector 1(2) the committee resolved that, by reason of the confidential nature of the following business to be transacted, the Public and Press should be excluded from further items taken at this meeting.

A resolution was taken to appoint the new Sport’s Development Officer.

There being no further business
the meeting closed at 23h10

Signed.....

Date:.....