

Minutes of the meeting of the Resources & Policy Committee held at Birchwood Leisure Centre, Longmead, Hatfield on Wednesday 13th June 2018 at 19:30.

PRESENT: Councillor J. Fitzpatrick - Chairman
Councillor L. Brandon
Councillor J. Broach
Councillor S. Jones
Councillor F. Bowron
Councillor J. Nelson
Councillor G. Wiltshire

OFFICERS: C. Lloyd (Town Clerk)

1. ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN AND VICE CHAIRMAN

Councillor J. Fitzpatrick was elected Chairman and Councillor L. Mendez was elected Vice Chairman for the ensuing Municipal Year.

2. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor L. Mendez (holiday), Councillor P. Knott (County Football meeting), Councillor B. Zhaveri (work).

3. QUESTIONS

There were no declarations of interest.

4. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillors Fitzpatrick & Brandon declared an interest in the Blue Plaque application.

5. MINUTES

Minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 11th April 2018 were approved and signed by the Chairman.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS FROM INDEPENDENT AUDITOR

The Council's External auditors had noted in the 2016/17 accounts that the Council had been unable to reconcile its accounting systems to the previous year's annual return figures. The reconciling figure of £152,150 had been charged to reserves in the year by being included in box 6, other payments. The finance team had been unable to reconcile the system, the accounting system therefore included expenditure that may not be valid and approved expenditure.

The External Auditor recommended that the opening balances in the accounting system be properly reconciled. The Council should consider

whether an independent review should be undertaken to reconcile the systems and account for the difference of £152,150.

Greenbiro were appointed as an independent auditor and Members noted the conclusions and recommendations from the independent auditor which found that there was no evidence to suggest that any monies had been misappropriated.

The Auditor's recommendations were;

1. The Head of Operations has already taken steps to remedy the financial records through setting up a new coding structure.
2. The Council should agree the writing back to reserves of the disputed balance as it is most likely made up of money spent over a number of years on **assets**, that has not been properly recorded in Sage. This will facilitate regular reconciliation in future.
3. Monthly and annual bank reconciliation should be recorded and reported to Council by the Head of Operations, and signed off by the Town Clerk or other senior officer. Supporting evidence such as reports from Sage, including unrepresented cheque listings, should also be presented to Members for review.
4. Sage should be used to record all financial transactions, and, used to produce management information reports and financial statements. The reports should be presented and explained to Members at least quarterly. The use of manually produced spreadsheets for reporting should be discouraged as the risk of data error from manual manipulation is high, and there is no audit trail to trace any changes.
5. If training on Sage is needed to ensure accurate and appropriate records can be maintained, and that proper reporting can be easily produced, this should be factored in to future training for the Head of Operations and the Town Clerk. This should result in better transparency and efficiency, and improved financial governance.
6. The Town Clerk and the Head of Operations should ensure they refer to the Local Government Act 1972 and the Audit & Accounts Regulations 2011 when producing financial statements to support the accurate completion of the Annual Return and compliance with accounting standards for reporting.

Following consideration of the recommendations and conclusions of the Independent Auditor Members RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND that

- (i) £152,150 be adjusted on the fixed asset register;
- (ii) A press release be issued regarding the spurious comments made on social media, explaining the historical nature of the inaccurate recordings and the conclusions of the independent auditor.

(Action: Town Clerk)

7. GENERAL DATA PROTECTION REGULATIONS UPDATE

Members were advised that privacy notices had been issued to Town Council customers. Archives had been cleared.

Staff had cleared unnecessary emails and contacts.

Councillors would be changed over to a new email system shortly which would make everyone compliant.

Legislation had changed so that the Town Clerk could remain the council's DPO.

(Action: Town Clerk)

8. REQUEST BY BOVIS TO TRANSFER ADDITIONAL SITES

Members considered the additional sites.

RESOLVED that

- (i) Members accept the additional site on drawing 12820/001
- (ii) Members require further information on the Aviation Ave site including the "balancing pond/drainage ditch" that requires repair and suitable alternative sites for a play area in the locality;
- (iii) Members do not consider it acceptable that the maintenance contract sums paid will be deducted from the commuted sum, had Bovis engaged another contractor over the last few years the Town Council would be entitled to the full s.106 sum plus interest and that is what Members wish to see transferred with the sites.

(Action: Town Clerk)

Cllr Broach in the Chair, Cllrs Fitzpatrick & Brandon took no part in the discussion and voting on this item.

9. BLUE PLAQUE SCHEME

Members considered the application for a blue plaque for Donovan and RESOLVED that subject to his agreement it be approved.

(Action: Town Clerk)

10. HACKNEY WHEELCHAIR ACCESSIBILITY VEHICLE CONSULTATION

Councillors considered that 20% - 30% of Hackney Carriages should be Wheel chair accessible in the Borough and that a reduction in the licensing fee could be used as an incentive. They wished to see more obvious livery on licenced cabs than at present.

RESOLVED that the comments in the preamble to this minute be conveyed to the Borough Council.

(Action: Town Clerk)

11. DOCUMENT RETENTION POLICY

Members considered the Policy and RESOLVED that it be approved.

(Action: Town Clerk)

12. NEW TRIMAX FOR TRACTOR

Members considered the purchase of a new trimax mower for the tractor and RESOLVED that the purchase of a new mower be delegated to the Town Clerk following obtaining 3 quotations and consultation with and concurrence by the Chairman, Leader and Deputy Leader of the Council.

(Action: Town Clerk)

13. CCLA DEPOSIT ACCOUNT

Members considered details of the CCLA deposit account and Local Authorities' Property Fund.

Considering the uncertainty caused by Brexit it was RESOLVED that Council funds should be placed only with high street banks at present.

(Action: Town Clerk)

14. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Noted that the next meeting of the Committee will take place on 11th July 2018 at 7.30pm.

Closure 8.45pm

Chairman