

MINUTES of the **Finance, Staffing and Performance Management Committee** Meeting held on Thursday 16 June 2016 at 6:30 p.m. in the Shire House Suite, Bodmin.

PRESENT: Chairman, Councillor R Solomons, presiding; together with Councillors, A J Coppin, J Gammon, S J Horne and K W Stubbs. Councillors J R Gibbs (arrived at 6.35 p.m. from Item FSPM/2016/52), J M Lyne and P L G Skea were also present but did not vote, not being members of this Committee.

IN ATTENDANCE: Mr S Facer (Town Clerk), Mrs A Banks (Responsible Finance Officer) and Mr D Kinnair (Committee and Cemeteries Officer)

CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS AND APOLOGIES

There were no announcements and apologies were received from Councillors L G J Kennedy, A M Kerridge and S H Kinsman.

FSPM/2016/49 **Election of Vice Chairman**

Councillor S J Horne was elected as Vice-Chairman of this Committee.

FSPM/2016/50 **Public Representation Session**

Mr Peter Hodges was in attendance but wished to make no representation.

FSPM/2016/51 **Declarations of Interest – Members to declare interests in respect of any item on the agenda**

No Declarations of Interest were made.

FSPM/2016/52 **Minutes of the Finance, Staffing and Performance Management Committee Meeting held on Thursday 21 April 2016**

These minutes had been before Council and were acknowledged as a true record.

Matters arising:

Page 3 – Summary of Investments for 2015/16 – the RFO advised that she had considered the request by Councillor Stubbs to explore investing larger sums in the Wealth Strategic Solutions Service, but informed that this would be considered as Capital Reserves and would restrict use of these funds into the future.

FSPM/2016/53 **Correspondence:**

- a) **Any item of correspondence that the Chairman considers appropriate**

There were no items of correspondence for consideration.

FSPM/2016/54 **Risk Management Update – Report from Accounts Technician (CA)**

The report from the Accounts Technician (CA) detailing the corporate and project risks for review by both the FS&PM Committee and Full Council was circulated with the Agenda and was noted.

FSPM/2016/55 **To receive Draft Accounting Statements for the Year Ending 31 March 2016 – RFO to report**

The RFO circulated the Draft Accounting Statements for the year ending 31 March 2016.

The document was reviewed on a page-by-page basis with the RFO identifying significant variances and key points.

The RFO circulated the document detailing the Movements in Reserves for the financial year ending 31 March 2016, along with earmarked reserves for consideration as at 31 March 2016.

Following discussion, it was **AGREED** to **RECOMMEND** that the following earmarked reserves be reclassified:

- Community Benefit Scheme Contributions becomes BMX/Scooter/Skate Park/Youth Project and;
- CCTV New System becomes Local Government and Rating Act 1997 (s.17).

Following discussion, it was **AGREED** to **RECOMMEND** to the Special Council Meeting to be held immediately following this meeting, that the Movements in Reserves for the year ending 31 March 2016 be adopted.

It was further **AGREED** to **RECOMMEND** to the Special Council Meeting to be held immediately following this meeting that the Draft Accounting Statements for the year ending 31 March 2016 be adopted.

FSPM/2016/56 **Larger Council Transparency Code – Strengthening Local Government Transparency – NALC policy consultation document PC10-16 and Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) Consultation Paper (copies enclosed) – to consider a corporate response to this consultation (consultation deadline 8 July 2016)**

The Town Clerk reported that the DCLG is consulting on proposals to update the existing Transparency Code with a view to bringing in requirements for councils with a gross annual income or expenditure exceeding £200,000 to publish data on parking charges and enforcement, land and property assets and contracts and procurement data.

The paper sets out the additional administrative burden that it proposes to introduce albeit that, from reading the Code, BTC should have implemented the applicable requirements from February 2015. Officers will therefore need to spend some time to explore this Code and to see which elements are applicable and where data should be provided and in what prescribed format.

Whilst some of the data requirements are for data to be produced in a fixed format and to a central source there will be an undoubted increase in the administrative burden for local (parish and town) councils. Whilst it will be easier for councils towards the £6.5 Million threshold to implement these changes and to absorb the additionality, for council's like Bodmin Town Council and for council's above the threshold of £200,000 this will be an undoubted challenge.

Some councils will not have the necessary land or property portfolio information

to upload to ePIMS and there could be a cost of compliance with meeting these requirements. Staff resources at the local council tier are at capacity and cascading more bureaucratic red tape and tick box compliance is unlikely to increase efficiencies or reduce fraud. Internal and external audit would seem to be a mechanism for localised scrutiny rather than relying on uploading of data which is 'more easily interrogated and compared.' The Town Clerk was not sure however how this process is handled and whether information is interrogated on a sampling basis or by which department at DCLG.

With regards car parking, the Town Clerk assumed a response should include the fact that Bodmin Town Council operates and applies a modest car parking charging tariff as it recognises the important role between providing affordable parking and supporting the high street. This is also balanced off against the fact that this is non-precept orientated income which can mitigate the overall impact to the local rate payers which is vitally important as parish and town councils do not benefit from any non-domestic rate collection. Further, the Council is extremely reasonable with its fixed penalty notice at £60.00 and the prompt payment rate at £10.00 which is a mechanism to promote pay and display rather than to look to maximise income through penalties. Collection and publishing data associated with the number of penalties issued, written off etc would seem to fit better with district, borough and unitary councils with multiple parking sites rather than a one size fits all approach which would include a town council operating a single, small car park.

The Town Clerk concluded that if Members are comfortable, Officers can construct a succinct response highlighting these concerns.

Following discussion, it was **AGREED** to **RECOMMEND** the Town Clerk's response as set out.

FSPM/2016/57

Public Works Loan Board (PWLB) – Transfer of functions from the Public works Loan Board: consultation on new governance arrangements – NALC policy consultation document PC09-16 and HM Treasury Consultation Paper (copies enclosed) – to consider a corporate response to this consultation (consultation deadline 3 August 2016)

The Town Clerk reported that the Council responds to this consultation with the following statement:

Government should seek to address the significant early repayment clause to enable prudent councils to make an early repayment of any PWLB loan. Fiscally prudent Councils should not be penalised for making an early repayment either in part payment or in full as this would seem to be an opportunity for the government to reduce the debt on its books whilst bringing in much needed income that could then be reinvested to meet other government initiatives.

Following discussion, it was **AGREED** to **RECOMMEND** the Town Clerk's statement as set out.

FSPM/2016/58

To consider and, if appropriate, pass for payment the Schedule of Accounts for June 2016

Councillor S J Horne queried whether, in regard to postage fees, if all Councillors were now only receiving Agenda packs via dropbox.

The Town Clerk responded to advise that currently two thirds of the Members had 'signed-up' to electronic only copies of the Agenda packs but that five were still receiving paper Agenda packs.

Councillor Horne requested if Officers could remind those Councillors of the saving to be made from just producing documents electronically but that if they did insist on receiving hard copy packs that they collect them from their Councillor pigeon-holes in the Shire Hall to save on postage.

The Committee and Cemeteries Officer confirmed that he would send an email to this effect to the Members concerned.

The Schedule of Accounts for June 2016 was approved and passed for signing from cheque no.123376 to 123424 in the sum of £72,213.70.

Due to the confidential nature of the next business, it was **RESOLVED** to go into Committee. Please see separate page.