

ASHINGTON TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of the Finance & General Purposes Committee Meeting held at 6:00pm on Tuesday, 28 March 2017, at Ashington Town Hall, Station Road, Ashington.

PRESENT:

Councillors: Louis Brown
Nicola Chambers
Matthew Cuthbert
Stephen Fenwick
Kris Lavery (Vice Chair)
Bob Walkinshaw
Marjorie Chambers
Avril Chisholm
Glyn Davies
Lawrence Henderson
Pauline Thompson

IN ATTENDANCE:

Mike Slaughter – Town Clerk & Responsible Financial Officer
Stephen Humphrey – Funding & Projects Officer
Sharon Parmley – Senior Administration Officer
Members of the Public - 0

FGP 17/688 1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillors, Vicky Brown, Victor Bridges, Brian Gallacher, Liam Lavery, Lynne Grimshaw, Mark Purvis and Ely Turnbull

FGP 17/689 2. DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS

Cllr Walkinshaw disclosed a personal and prejudicial interest in item 5 on the Agenda, application for financial support from Parkhead and Wansbeck Power Sports.

FGP 17/690 3. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

The minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday 28 February 2017, were agreed and signed as a true record.

FGP 17/691 4. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

There were no matters arising from the previous minutes.

FGP 17/692 5. APPLICATIONS FOR FINANCIAL SUPPORT

The Grants and Funding Officer presented a request for support from Parkhead & Wansbeck Powersports, based at the Hirst Welfare Centre. The club had requested the sum of £500 to support the costs of a National Special Needs Powerlifting Competition to be held in Ashington on 8 April 2017.

Members were informed that the organisation provided gym facilities for both able and disabled people and they have been based in the Centre for several years now. Members were further informed that the same event last year had attracted over 35 competitors from all over the country and it was anticipated that a similar level would attend this year helping to raise the profile of Ashington and supporting the local economy.

Previous support from Ashington Town Council included, £600 March 2016, £500 July 2014, £500 May 2013, £500 June 2012, £590 April 2011 and £250 June 2010

Resolved:

That: a donation of £500 be awarded to Parkhead & Wansbeck Powersports.

FGP 17/693 6. SCHEDULE OF PAYMENTS.

The Town Clerk submitted a full schedule of payments and income receipts, for the financial period 24 February to 24 March 2017.

Resolved:

That: the Schedule of Payments for the period 24 February to 24 March 2017 be formally agreed and approved.

The full schedule of payments is attached to the minutes as schedule 1.

FGP 17/694 7. ENTRANCE FEATURE – ROTARY PARKWAY

The Town Clerk updated members on the proposed Mining Wheel Entrance Feature.

Members were informed that the appointed contractor, Brambledown Landscape Services Ltd had submitted a full schedule of requested works and have stated that the total capital cost of the project would be £25,700 plus VAT. The Town Clerk reported that total capital cost

to the Town Council would be £17,200, as identified and agreed external funding amounted to £8,500. Cllr.Fenwick reported that he was aware that the National Union of Mineworkers had expressed an interest and had suggested that a small donation could be available. Cllr Fenwick agreed to contact Dennis Murphy to discuss possible funding. The Town Clerk informed members that there were additional costs related to the design and development of the interpretation panel including, printing and all related artwork. The Town Clerk reminded members that although the Town Council had agreed a total funding sum of £25,000 from reserves it was likely that the required sum would be less than £20,000 after all related fees and charges.

The Town Clerk reported that, further to enquiries regarding the identified site, it had become apparent that the project required both a full planning application and also the drafting of a formal lease for land transfer; the need for a lease had not been anticipated. In addition the planning enquiries had indicated that, dependent on statutory highways comments and responses, there may be separate requirements to meet the full conditions of the Traffic Management Act 2004, New Roads and Street Works Act 1991, and Highways Act 1980.

The Town Clerk informed members that the full planning application had been submitted with a decision due for early May 2017. It was expected that all required approvals would be in place by early June 2017. Members were advised that the capital project was estimated at 4/5 weeks in total; it was expected therefore that the full project would be completed by mid-late July 2017.

The Town Clerk reported that, together with the Funding & Projects Officer, the work of the interpretation panel had been drafted and largely completed in readiness. A copy of the panel was displayed and met with full approval of members. It was agreed that any further requests for seating or other planting be placed on hold until the project was completed and in place.

FGP 17/695 8. INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (IT) & DATA PROTECTION – SERVICE DISRUPTION AND DATA RECOVERY WORK

The Town Clerk informed members of a major failure to the Town Council's internal server and the need to take urgent action to move the data storage system to a new secure IT host and platform.

The Town Clerk assured members that the public legal documents and records of the Council were secure and safe and that the data access loss was not as a result of any "hacking", unauthorised remote access or "ransomware". Members were informed that the information lost as a result of an unexpected, but major, equipment failure was

background administrative systems and file templates used in the running of the Council's full administrative service provision.

The Town Clerk remained hopeful the lost files could be recovered via an independent Data Specialist, although the Council's IT consultant had indicated that similar failure in data terrastations did not always result in data recovery.

After speaking with the IT consultant and other large Town Council's nationally, it was concluded that a 'Cloud' based storage facility was required with secure remote access. The Town Clerk reported that, in accordance with risk management procedure and the need to provide adequate and secure administrative systems, he had already taken the required action in both moving the Council's records to "Dropbox" a major recognised and used file hosting service, and also sending the current server to Dataclinic for analysis and fault.

The Clerk reassured members that internet access had not been affected and that email records and the Town Council Website were secure and operational.

The Town Clerk reminded members that a sum had been set aside from the general reserves in 2017/18 for the replacement of the Town Council's IT equipment, including all desktop computers, lap-tops and projector with appropriate new equipment. The Town Clerk reported that he would likely be looking at the acquisition together with the Council's IT consultant in late Summer.

FGP 17/696 9. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

- (i) Cllr Chisholm informed members that the Workers Memorial was due to be held on Saturday 29 April 2017, to which all members were invited.
- (ii) The Town Clerk reported that the first Monthly Saturday Market had taken place on Saturday 25 March 2017. The Town Team had organised quality market stalls as well as music and a presentation, celebrating "150 Inspirational Ashington Women". Cllr.M.Chambers reported that the feedback had been excellent and that the market had been extremely well received.

FGP 17/697 10. DATE, TIME AND VENUE FOR THE NEXT MEETING.

The next meeting of the Finance and General Purposes Committee was arranged for Tuesday 25 April 2017, at 6:00pm in the Council Chamber, Town Hall, Ashington.

The Meeting ended at 7.00pm