

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE FINANCE & GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE
HELD IN THE GUILDHALL
ON WEDNESDAY 27TH MARCH 2024 AT 7.00PM

Councillors: Councillor W Ramsden in the Chair

M Kenchington (Town Mayor)	F N E Boase	M Benyon
R Williams	J Martin	M P Andrew
R J L Boase	T Grattan-Kane	

Officers: Miss P J Lavelle – Town Clerk

322. Apologies

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Willey.

323. Minutes of the Finance & General Purposes Committee

On the proposition of the Mayor, seconded by Councillor Benyon, and

RESOLVED – that the Minutes for the Finance & General Purposes Committee meeting held on 25th January 2024 be approved and signed as a true record.

Voting: For – 8, Against – 0, Abstain – 1

324. Carbon Offsetting

The Chair advised that information had been circulated with the Agenda regarding carbon offsetting and expressed the opinion that the activity could be considered ‘green washing’. Following a brief debate it was proposed by the Chair, seconded by Councillor Benyon, and

RESOLVED – that the Town Council cease buying carbon credits with other agencies and explore other options at a later date.

Voting: For – 7, Against – 0, Abstain – 2

325. Budget Monitoring Statement

Members considered the Budget Monitoring Statement to 29th February 2024. It was proposed by the Chair, seconded by the Mayor, and unanimously

RESOLVED – that the Budget Monitoring Statement be accepted.

Voting: For – 8, Against – 0, Abstain – 1

326. Internal Audit by Members

Members considered a report by the Town Clerk which contained details of an internal audit conducted by Councillors Mrs Boase and Grattan-Kane on 12th March 2024. The Town Clerk responded to Members questions.

Following a brief debate it was proposed by Councillor Benyon, seconded by Councillor Willey, and unanimously

RESOLVED – that the report be accepted.

The Town Clerk confirmed that she was organising a further Internal Audit by Members on the remainder of the financial year to be held in April.

327. Review of Effectiveness of Internal Controls

Members considered a report by the Town Clerk that contained details on the Review of Internal Controls which had been conducted by the Mayor and Councillor R J L Boase on 29th January 2024. On the proposition of Councillor Mrs Boase, seconded by Councillor Andrew, it was unanimously

RESOLVED – that the report on the Review of the Effectiveness of Internal Controls be accepted.

328. Policies Reviewed by the Policy Review Working Party

- i) Fire Safety Policy**
- and
- ii) Health and Safety Policy**

It was proposed by Councillor Martin, seconded by Councillor Grattan-Kane, and

RESOLVED – that consideration of the above policies be deferred to the Finance & General Purposes Committee meeting in May to allow feedback to be obtained from the Council's newly appointed health and safety advisor.

- iii) Information Technology Policy**

It was agreed that all bulleted points in all policies should be replaced with a numbering system for ease of reference.

- iv) Investments Policy**

It was agreed that 3.2 be amended to read 'The Town Council shall retain a minimum of three to four months estimated expenditure in current and deposit accounts giving immediate access'.

v) Learning & Development Policy

No changes were proposed to the Learning & Developments Policy.

It was proposed by Councillor Andrew, seconded by Councillor Benyon, and unanimously

RESOLVED – that the Information Technology Policy, Investments Policy and Learning & Development Policy be accepted subject to the above amendments.

329. Environmental Policy

Members considered the revised Environmental Policy which had been reviewed by the Environmental Working Party. The Town Clerk agreed to ensure that a link to the Helston Climate Action Plan was included in the appendix.

On the proposition of the Mayor, seconded by Councillor Martin, it was unanimously

RESOLVED – that the Environmental Policy be accepted subject to the above amendment.

330. Lone Worker Policy

Members considered the draft Lone Worker Policy (circulated prior to the meeting). Following a detailed debate it was agreed that:

- 3.1 – bullet point ‘Ensure that lone workers have no medical condition that may make them unsuitable for working alone’ be amended to read ‘Identify individual characteristics of staff that may increase their risk when loan working (e.g. health conditions, visual impairments, mobility needs).’; and
- 3.1 – bullet point ‘Take all reasonable steps to minimise risks identified and report any substantial risks to the Staffing Committee.’ be amended to read ‘Take all reasonable steps to minimise risks identified and report any substantial risks or events to the Staffing Committee in order that they can be reviewed.’

On the proposition of the Chair, seconded by the Mayor, it was unanimously

RESOLVED – that the Lone Worker Policy be adopted subject to the above amendments and the Policy Working Party be requested to produce an equivalent policy for Councillors.

Councillor Grattan-Kane left the meeting at 7.49pm.

331. Review of Standing Orders

Members considered the Council’s Standing Orders which also contained Financial Regulations and Committee Terms of Reference (circulated prior to the meeting). The Town Clerk confirmed that she had reviewed the document prior to circulation and suggested corrections where highlighted in the copy document included as part of the Agenda. The Town Clerk further advised that new model Financial Regulations were due to be published by NALC in April and these would require further consideration and incorporation when available.

It was agreed that Standing Order 2.3 be amended to included ‘... as detailed at 1.2.’

The Chair expressed concern with Standing Order 2.11 for the procedure to nominate the Mayor-elect and Deputy Mayor-elect for the following civic year particularly when this was an election year. A detailed debate ensued, during which it was suggested that advice be sought from CALC on any potential of a prior nomination with an election.

It was proposed by the Mayor, seconded by Councillor Benyon, and

RESOLVED – that further advice be sought from CALC regarding the impact of the nomination procedure on an election and the nomination procedure remain in the current format whilst the advice was sought.

Voting: For – 7, Against – 0, Abstain – 1

It was further proposed by the Mayor, seconded by Councillor Benyon, and unanimously

RESOLVED – that Standing Orders, as amended, be recommended to Full Council subject to a further review of the Financial Regulations following the publication of the model document.

332. Ear-marked Reserves

Members considered the proposed adjustments to the ear-marked reserves detailed in the Town Clerk's Report as listed below. The Town Clerk advised that balances would be adjusted to reflect the actual expenditure at 31st March 2024.

- Guildhall Refurbishment (EMR 322) – The balance of the Guildhall Building Repairs budget be added to the reserve.
- Public Seating and Noticeboards (EMR 323) – The balance from the Public Seating and Signs & Notice Boards Budgets be added to the reserve.
- Elections (EMR 324) – The balance of the Elections Budget be added to the reserve.
- Professional Fees (EMR 326) – The balance of the Consultancy/ Professional Fees Budget be added to this reserve.
- Play Equipment Replacement Fund (EMR 330) – £10,000 be added to this reserve.
- Marketing (EMR 333) – The balance of the Marketing budget be added to the reserve.
- Christmas Lights (EMR 341) –£5,000 be added to this reserve.
- Pledged Grants (EMR 342) – The unspent balance of the grants budget would be added to this reserve.
- Carbon Footprint Reduction (EMR 345) – The balance of the Carbon Footprint Reduction budget be added to this reserve.
- Defibrillators (EMR 346) – The balance of the Defibrillator budget be added to this reserve.

- Events (EMR 349) –£5,000 be added to this reserve.
- St Piran’s Events (EMR 351) – Delete this reserve.
- Match Funding (EMR 352) – £20,000 be added to this reserve for match funding for the Community Café funding application.

It was proposed by Councillor R Williams, seconded by the Chair, and unanimously

RESOLVED – that:

- (a) the Ear-marked Reserves be adjusted as set out above; and
- (b) the 2023/24 surplus be transferred to General Reserves.

333. Calendar of Meetings 2024/25

Members considered the draft Calendar of Meetings 2024/25 circulated prior to the meeting. The Town Clerk advised that the January Planning Committee meeting fell on the 2nd January 2025 and Members agreed that this should be postponed to the following Thursday. The Town Clerk further advised that the scheduled date for the Full Council meeting in April 2025 would fall on the day before a bank holiday which was not permitted under Standing Order 1.30 and therefore had been moved to the previous Wednesday. Memebers expressed concern with the proposed date and agreed that the Full Council meeting in April 2025 would be held on the fourth Thursday instead.

It was proposed by the Chair, seconded by the Mayor, and unanimously

RESOLVED – that, subject to the above amendments, the draft Calendar of Meetings 2024/25 be recommended to the Full Council at the Annual Meeting as set out.

Voting: For – 7, Against – 0, Abstain – 1

334. Strategic Plan

Following a brief debate it was proposed by the Mayor, seconded by Councillor Benyon, and

RESOLVED – that an informal meeting of all Councillors be held to review the Strategic Plan and produce a report on activity.

335. Report of the Town Clerk

i) Keep Helston Tidy Litter Picks

This item was noted.

ii) King George V/ Coronation Gardens Tree Maintenance Advice

It was proposed by the Chair, seconded by the Mayor, and unanimously

RESOLVED – that a Task & Finish Group be formed to produce a succession planting & maintenance plan for Coronation Gardens.

Councillors R Williams, Benyon and Ramsden indicated their interest in being on the Task & Finish Group. It was agreed that the opportunity be offered to the Committee Members not present at the meeting and to interested community representatives. It was agreed that the Task & Finish Group have a maximum of 7 members.

iii) Hedgehog Highway Project

Members considered this item but continued to be concerned with the use of plastic surrounds. Following a brief debate it was proposed by the Chair, seconded by Councillor Benyon, and unanimously

RESOLVED – that the Council not purchase highway surrounds but promote the need for the creation of hedgehog highways in other ways.

336. Exclusion of the Press and Public

On the proposition of Councillor Mrs Boase, seconded by Councillor Benyon, it was unanimously

RESOLVED – that pursuant to the provision of the Public Bodies (Admissions to Meetings) Act 1960, the press and public be excluded from the Meeting for the following items of business by reason of the confidential nature of the business to be transacted.

337. Confidential Report of the Town Clerk

i) Generator

Following a detailed debate, it was proposed by Councillor Benyon, seconded by Councillor Kenchington, and

RESOLVED – that the petrol generator be purchased from Lawn & Power at a cost of £883.30 + vat.

Voting: For – 5, Against – 2, Abstain – 1

It was later highlighted that the generator required earthing which was not in accordance with previous knowledge. It was further proposed by the Chair, seconded by Councillor Martin, and unanimously

RESOLVED – that the Town Clerk investigate the issue to determine if a resolution could be found to allow the purchase to proceed and if not the item be brought back to the next meeting.

ii) Asbestos Survey

On the proposition of Councillor Mrs Boase, seconded by Councillor Martin, it was unanimously

RESOLVED – that Allium Environmental Ltd be appointed to carry out an asbestos survey at a cost of £455 + vat including sampling.

iii) Gas Contract

It was suggested that advice be sought from Community Energy Plus on which providers had the least greenhouse gas emission impact. It was further advised that press coverage had indicated that price reductions were anticipated within the following month.

It was proposed by Councillor Benyon, seconded by Councillor Martin, and unanimously

RESOLVED – this item be deferred to the May Committee meeting to allow advice to be sought regarding preferred contractors and price changes.

iv) Analysis of Council Finances

Following a detailed debate it was proposed by Councillor Benyon, seconded by Councillor Martin, that the Council accept the banking review option from Mother Tree for a period of 12 months following which a further review would be carried out. This Motion failed.

Voting: For – 2, Against – 4, Abstain – 2

Councillor Benyon requested that her vote in favour of Motion be recorded.

v) Guildhall Window Cleaning

The Town Clerk advised that the cost of the equipment to allow the Maintenance Team to carry out the Guildhall Window Cleaning had been significantly higher than the previously authorised sum. She further advised that whilst additional contractors names had been received no responses had been received to the request for a quotation.

It was agreed that this item be deferred to the May Committee meeting.

Meeting closed at 9.49pm

Confirmed

Chair