

WORKINGTON TOWN COUNCIL

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Minutes of the Finance, Property and Employment Committee Meeting on Thursday 21 November 2013, Workington Town Hall

N Schofield Chair	apologies
A Lawson Vice Chair	present
C Armstrong	present
B Bacon	absent
B Cannon	absent
D Coe	apologies
M Fryer	absent
N Hardy	absent
H Harrington	present
M Heaslip	absent
R Jones	present
B Reville	present

F13.51 Apologies

Apologies were received and accepted from Cllr Schofield and Coe.

F13.52 Declarations of Interest

None.

F13.53 Exclusion of Press and Public (Public Bodies Admission to Meetings Act 1960)

No issues were considered.

F13.54 Minutes of the Last Meeting

The minutes of the last meeting on 19 September were affirmed as a true record.

F13.55 Schedule of Payments

a) The clerk made a statement on queries relating to the last period of payments. He suggested that the apparent discrepancy between income figures had been due to several

revenue items being concerned with the mayoral fund, and therefore cancelling themselves out whilst appearing in balances.

He also apologised for making a payment from the In Bloom budget which was around £70 over the amount agreed in committee. He accepted that the payment should have been queried at the time and either paid at the agreed amount or sent back to the sub-committee for consideration. The clerk suggested a more robust reporting mechanism for checking payments against council resolutions, which would make it easier for officers and councillors to spot issues as they arose. He would endeavour to introduce a revised reporting procedure for the schedule of payments which would include a note of the resolution and the power the council was exercising in spending the money.

Resolved: To note the statement

b) The committee received the Schedule of Payments 6 September to 7 November 2013

Resolved: To note the Schedule of Payments

F13.56 Bank Reconciliation Statement

The committee received the Bank Reconciliation Statement as at 31 October 2013.

Resolved: To note the Statement

F13.57 Budget Monitoring Statement

The committee received a report on the Budget Monitoring Statement for 2013 – 2014 to 7 November 2013.

There was a query about the likelihood of capping by the Secretary of State, and whether this might make the council more cautious in its spending. It was noted that the Secretary of State had not yet revealed whether he would exercise his power to cap parish and town councils in 2014. The council budget process would have to take all these factors into consideration. A further note of caution was added concerning the extent of the Town Council's liabilities following recent statements about service cuts at Allerdale Borough Council.

Resolved: To note the Statement

F13.58. Opening of a Bank Account with Cumberland Building Society

The committee considered a proposal to open a new bank account with the Cumberland Building Society, in line with the recommendations of the Internal Auditor that our current balances are too high to be held in only two institutions.

Resolved: To authorise the opening of a new bank account, with Cllrs Lawson and Hansen as suggested additional signatories.

F13.59 Internal Auditor

The committee considered the recommendations for an appointment procedure for an Internal Auditor presented by the clerk. Interested parties would be asked to submit a CV and covering letter explaining their suitability for the post. This would be reviewed by an advisory group and an appointment recommended.

Resolved: To adopt the procedure with Cllrs Harrington, R Jones and Lawson acting as an advisory group to the clerk.

F13.60 Staffing issues

a) The committee received an update from the clerk on the progress made towards pension provision for council staff. The Local Government Pension Scheme had been approached and the views of the actuary were awaited.

b) The clerk reported the Culture Committee had requested a plan for the employment of an Events Officer. The issue had not been brought to their last meeting because the clerk was engaged in dialogue with other parties. It was noted that the emerging role could be suitable to support an apprenticeship, but that this would require an experienced person in place first.

c) The clerk outlined the current alterations to the council's risk management practices for staff and asked if the committee had any further suggestions which might contribute. No further suggestions were made.

Resolved: To note the reports

F13.61 Property issues

The committee received updates from the clerk on the progress of the following issues:

a) Accommodation for the Council's officers and Mayor's Parlour

The clerk had been reviewing the various options and would now ask Full Council for the establishment of an Advisory Group to bring them forward.

b) The acquisition of play areas.

The issue was still with the council's solicitors, due to illness at the firm.

A potentially confidential issue was raised in relation to one of the sites, but was considered to be hypothetical and therefore not requiring further discussion.

c) The securing of the allotment estate

No further news was available.

d) Management of the land at Vulcan's Lane

The clerk reported that the car parking tenants had given notice to quit, so the search for new tenants would be added to the emerging management plan for the site.

Resolved: To note the reports

F13.62 Photocopier

The committee considered a proposal to install a stapler/collater on the council's photocopier, to enable swifter collating of papers.

Resolved: To authorise the expenditure of £350 plus VAT on the equipment

F13.63 Changes to the Budgeting Allocations for 2014-15.

The committee considered the draft FPE budget and Service Plan. It was noted that the Cenotaph and War Memorials were to be grouped together for a maintenance budget, and that no further budget was allowed for the Beacon outside the general Asset Repairs and Renewals allocation.

Resolved: To recommend adoption of the Service Plan and Budget proposals. (Appendix A)