

Minutes of the Meeting of the Policy & Finance Committee held on Monday 5 December 2016

Present Councillor TA Matthews (in the Chair). Councillors: SWJ Ashley, M Day, M Johnston, R Jones, WJ Walker and TJ Winter.

Also David Collins (Clerk to the Council)

CL16/054 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were accepted from Councillor S Brooks (personal), S Evans (work commitments) and DJ Williams (personal).

Apologies for absence were also subsequently received from Councillor KK Manneh (ward matters)

PF16/055 Declarations of Interest

Members were asked to declare any personal and/or prejudicial interests they had and sign the Interests Sheet to give details of the nature of their interest.

PF16/056 Itemised Schedule of Receipts & Payments, Bank Reconciliation (September & October 2016) and Quarterly Financial Monitoring Quarter 2 (April – September 2016)

Members considered the above information.

It was **recommended** that the information is noted.

PF16/057 Internal Audit Services

Members noted with regret that the Council's internal auditor, Nicola Eyre, had recently stood down from her role due to ill health. Members paid tribute to the professional manner with which she had carried out her responsibilities.

The Clerk explained that he had hoped to continue discussions with the internal auditor about issues raised by the external auditor during the audit of the 2015/16 accounts. (Minute CL16/044 refers). This would not now be possible and he was seeking other opportunities to address these issues and discuss a way forward with the external auditor.

Members underlined the need to secure the services of a new auditor as soon as possible and identified local accountants/auditors who might be interested in the role.

It was **recommended** that:

- (1) the Clerk is instructed to take forward the identification and appointment of a new internal auditor as a matter of urgency.
- (2) the Council's best wishes are conveyed to Nicola Eyre for a speedy recovery and to thank her for her work for the Council.

Subject to Confirmation by Cwmbran Community Council

PF16/058 Local Government Pension Scheme: Lump Sum Payment 2016-17

Members noted that the Actuarial Valuation from March 2013 had set the employers rate as 18.7% plus a lump sum. The amount of the lump sum for this year is £12,800. This amount was now due to the pension fund.

It was **recommended** that the payment is approved.

PF16/059 Christmas Tree Budget

Members noted that the cost of Christmas trees at The Council House and Pontnewydd this year had amounted to £1800 per tree, a total of £3,600 net, with VAT bringing the cost to £4,320. The approved budget was £4000 (Code L09 – Christmas Trees, Lights & Carols). Financial Regulations allowed the Clerk to approve up to £3000 extra expenditure in urgent cases, which must be reported to Members. The cost of lights on the building was expected to be around £650 net, with VAT bringing the total to £780. This was met from code L08 (“Other Miscellaneous Events.”).

Members discussed potential future options for the location and financing of Christmas Trees. The Clerk confirmed that such matters would be kept under review. A report reviewing the Council’s programme of Christmas activities would be considered by the Events & community Projects Committee.

It was **recommended** that the expenditure is endorsed and noted.

PF16/060 Insurance Renewal

Members noted that the council was in a Long Term Agreement (LTA) with Zurich. This means that the Council was committed to renew its existing policy. In return, Zurich had applied an LTA discount and frozen the rates that had been applied to the relevant lines of cover. The renewal premium was £8,240.83 (including taxes).

It was **recommended** that the premium is accepted.

PF16/061 Review of Post 16 Education in Torfaen

Members noted that Torfaen County Borough Council had commenced consultation on proposals to establish a 6th Form Centre for Torfaen and make a regulated alteration to Croesyceiliog School, Cwmbran High School and St Alban’s RC High School by ending sixth form provision. It was proposed that these arrangements were implemented on 1 September 2019.

The consultation period in relation to these proposals began on 11 November 2016 and would close on 23 December 2016. Details had been circulated to Members separately.

It was **recommended** that the Clerk provide Members with further details of the proposals, such as number of spaces, provision for playing fields etc.

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PF16/062 Regeneration Projects Update

On 11 July 2016, Members agreed to meet the costs of a planning application for a notice board at Oakfield Flower Gardens. (Minute PF16/022 refers). Members noted that consent to display the advertisement had been granted by Torfaen County Borough Council on 10 November 2016.

Members also considered a request from Bron Afon Community Housing in taking part in further discussions about additional wildflower planting projects to build upon the success achieved to date. Members emphasised their wish to be fully consulted on the details of any proposals.

It was **recommended** that

- (1) the decision to grant consent for the notice board at Oakfield Flower Gardens is noted.
- (2) the Clerk is instructed to request further details of the proposals under consideration by Bron Afon Community Housing, such as maps, detailed plans, costs etc.
- (3) the Clerk is instructed to seek assurances from Bron Afon Community Housing and any other partners to the project, that any contribution from Cwmbran Community Council would be fully acknowledged and publicised.

PF16/063 Council House Update

Members considered a report which set out details of various matters of routine maintenance and associated matters in relation to the Council House. The report included details of proposals to put in place an Energy Performance Certificate (EPC). The cost of obtaining an EPC would be around £600. Members considered that this could prove invaluable as a benchmark for the Council's current energy performance and put in context any potential improvements from alternative energy sources such as solar power as part of the Council's response to the Well Being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015.

It was **recommended** that the Clerk proceed with obtaining an Energy Performance Certificate, as described above.

PF16/064 HR Visit by Peninsula

Members considered a short report which provided details of issues discussed by the Clerk and Administrative Officer during a recent visit to the Council by the Council's HR Consultants, Peninsula.

The visit had provided a useful opportunity to discuss recent staff changes with Peninsula and discuss an updated Flexible Working Hours Scheme for staff. The Clerk explained that the Scheme formed part of a wider package of HR measures which included, for example, procedures relating to grievances. Members supported opportunities for staff to work from home when circumstances allowed and emphasised the need to accommodate circumstances such as hospital visits.

Policy & Finance Committee

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It was **recommended** that:

- (1) the above information is noted.
- (2) the Flexible Working Hours Scheme is approved

PF16/065 Torfaen Boundary Changes

At the meeting of this committee held on 24 October 2016, members discussed the implications of the Review of the Parliamentary Constituencies for Wales. (Minute PF16/044 refers). At the Council meeting held on 16 November 2016, Members noted that the Review did not affect Council ward boundaries but asked the Clerk to clarify the position in relation to forthcoming reviews. (Minute CL16/068 refers)

On 9 December 2013, the Committee received details of a review on boundaries for the County of Torfaen, together with the proposals for community boundaries. (Minute PF13/049 refers.). These changes would take effect for the 2017 elections. A further review would be undertaken in 2017, to be put in place in time for the elections, currently expected in 2022.

It was **recommended** that the information is noted.

PF16/066 Seminars & Meetings of Outside Bodies

Members considered reports in relation to the following seminars and meetings of outside bodies, attended by representatives of the Council:

- (i) One Voice Wales Larger Councils Committee 19 October 2016

(Members also noted that the Clerk had been invited to attend a Welsh Government Engagement Event about proposals for local government reform on 9 December 2016. The Clerk undertook to report to Members on issues arising.)

- (ii) Randomz Committee Meeting 17 November 2016

(Members noted that Councillors Ashley and Johnston had also attended this meeting.)

It was **recommended** that reports are noted.

Signed.....

(Chair, Cwmbran Community Council.)