

**MINUTES OF THE FINANCE AND POLICY COMMITTEE OF THE TRING TOWN
COUNCIL HELD IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER, THE MARKET HOUSE, TRING, ON**

MONDAY
6th SEPTEMBER 2010 at 7.58 p.m.

Present: Councillors: J. S. Allan (in the chair)
L. J. Harris
Mrs P. J. Hearn
M. J. James (sub. for W. D. Berdinner)
Mrs R. L. Ransley (ex officio)
C. F. Townsend

Also present: Councillors: B. F. Batchelor
Mrs M. V. Booth
N. A. Hollinghurst

Mrs S. Johnson, Clerk of the Council
No members of the public

15602. **APOLOGIES**

Apologies were received from Councillor Berdinner; Councillor James was his substitute.

15603. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Councillor James declared a personal interest in Item 6 Grants 2010/11 as the applicant on behalf of Tring's Own Apple Fayre was a friend. Councillors Mrs Hearn and Hollinghurst, as Trustees of Tring Youth Project, had omitted to declare personal interests in relation to the grant given to TYP at the meeting held on 21st June 2010 Minute 15517(vi) and did so now.

15604. **MINUTES**

The Minutes of the Finance & Policy Committee meeting held on 21st June 2010 were confirmed as a true record and signed by the Chairman, with the addition of the attendance of Councillor Mrs D. M. Rance under 'Also present'.

15605. **MATTERS OF REPORT**

Arising from Minute 15523, the Clerk reported on the Internal Auditor's suggestion of moving towards Direct Debit payments. Currently payment by cheque with two councillor signatures was the only way allowed for paying bills, and to move from that required a change to primary legislation. Additionally she felt that the small amount of time and money expended by failing to move to DDs was more than compensated for by the control retained by paying in arrears. The Committee concurred.

15606. **CHAIRMAN'S COMMUNICATIONS**

- (i) The NALC had objected to the possibility that the Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG) would seek to cap the levels of council tax set by billing authorities and thus the level of precept issued by parish councils. In this area DBC was the relevant billing authority. The Committee decided to support the NALC stance as the capping of parish councils seemed overly restrictive and a denial of grass roots representation.
- (ii) The NALC had similarly objected to the suggestion by the DCLG and the Cabinet office that parish council elections be delayed next year to make way for the referendum on voting reform. The Committee decided to support the NALC stance as the postponement would be disruptive and costly to the taxpayer.

15607. **GRANTS 2010/11**

Letters of thanks had been received from the 1066 Club for the Blind, Tring Beavers Swimming Club, and Age Concern Dacorum towards the Handyperson Scheme.

The new application from Tring's Own Apple Fayre had been temporarily withdrawn. The organisation would seek deficit funding from this Council, should the need arise.

Under S137 of the Local Government Act 1972 the Council **RESOLVED** to make the following grants:

- (i) To Age Concern Dacorum the sum of £300 towards its Independent Living Scheme Tring teas.

Councillor Harris arrived at 8.13 p.m.

- (ii) To the Justice and Peace Group Tring the sum of £60 towards its advertising activities for the local Fairtrade Group. Its request for funding towards purchase of religious publications was ultra vires as regards the Council's grant-giving capabilities.

15608. **DBC CONSULTATION: DRAFT VOLUNTARY & COMMUNITY SECTOR COMMISSIONING FRAMEWORK**

The Chairman outlined the proposed Voluntary & Community Commissioning Framework which sought to limit grant-giving by DBC by passing the emphasis to top-down commissioning and strategic partnership identification; and limiting one-off grants to £10,000 in any one financial year. The Chairman considered that the proposal to limit grants the most damaging proposal for individual charities; and councillors agreed that it was a method often adopted by larger authorities to offload costs onto the Third Sector. The Committee **RESOLVED** to object to the Framework, in particular: Item 8 Commissioning & Procurement and Item 9 Strategic Partner Programme – the Council thought the emphasis should be on identifying need, and only later the voluntary partner organisation; Item 10 Grants – capping grants at £10,000 for organisations not in the first two processes would lead to difficulties for charities seeking to support the most disadvantaged.

15609. **ANNUAL ACCOUNTS 2010/11**

The Clerk reported that the Budget v. Actual statement to date issued with the agenda was internally inaccurate in that certain figures had been posted incorrectly against codes. However the overall figures were properly indicative of Council income and expenditure. The Clerk would re-run the figures following work in association with the Deputy Clerk, and re-issue a revised Statement in due course.

15610. **TREASURY RESERVE 2010/11**

The Council had opened a Treasury Reserve Account with Barclays Bank in October 2009 (Minute 15387 of F&P Committee 8th March 2010 refers). However the cost of transferring monies and the currently stable nature of banking conditions had led, with the Internal Auditor's advice, to all the Council's investments remaining with NatWest. Barclays now sought clarification of the Council's intentions as regards the inactive account. The Committee decided that it was still prudent to diversify the Council's assets and therefore **RESOLVED** to transfer £50,000 of the Precept in 2011/12 into the Barclays account, to be left as a long-term investment.

15611. **EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC & PRESS**

It was **PROPOSED** by Councillor Mrs Ransley, **SECONDED** by Councillor Mrs Hearn and **RESOLVED** that under Section I of the Public Bodies (admission to Meetings) Act 1960 the public and press be excluded during the Items in Part II of the agenda for this meeting, because it

was likely that publicity would prejudice the public interest by reason of the confidential nature of the business or for other special reasons arising from the nature of the business or proceedings.

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15612. **THE COUNCIL'S RETAINED PROFESSIONAL ADVISERS**

The Committee had received a sample Client Care letter from its solicitors; and had compared rates of charging with those of solicitors in Tring. The Council's solicitors' rates remained competitive; and there was a benefit from continuity. The Council decided to stay with its current solicitors.

15613. **STAFFING MATTERS**

The Clerk, in association with the Staffing Working Party, had presented a report to the Committee, which was noted. It was **RESOLVED:**

- (i) To confirm the permanent appointment of Belle Daytonn as Deputy Clerk from 1st September 2010 on Scale LC1 Above Substantive, pro rata 22/37; and her salary at Point 24 from that date.
- (ii) To note the retirement of the Market House caretaker on 30th September 2010 and to thank her for her 5 years' service.
- (iii) To issue a local advertisement to start the process of recruiting a permanent successor to the Market House caretaker.
- (iv) To note the retirement of the Clerk of the Council on 31st December 2010.
- (v) To refer consideration of the matter of recruiting a successor to the current Town Clerk to the Council Meeting due to be held on 27th September 2010.

The meeting ended at 9.32 p.m.

Chairman