

POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

WEDNESDAY, 20 JANUARY 2021 – 7.15 p.m.

Minutes of the meeting of the Policy and Resources Committee held in the Council Chamber, Council Offices, School Aycliffe Lane, Newton Aycliffe, and virtually, on Wednesday, 20 January 2021 at 7.15 p.m.

PRESENT

Councillor R.S. Fleming (Chairman) and
Councillors Eddy Adam, M. Ashcroft, Jim Atkinson, Kathy Beetham, P.J. Bergg, Bill Blenkinsopp, Arun M. Chandran, B.A. Clare, J.D. Clare, Mrs. M. Dalton, George C. Gray, I. Gray, Mrs. S. Haigh, B. Hall, Dave Hardaker, Jed Hillary, Wendy Hillary, M. Iveson, Mrs. S.J. Iveson, Ken Robson and Michael Stead.

OFFICERS

Mr. A Bailey (Town Clerk)
Mr. D. Austin (Finance Manager)
Miss C. Ryder (Senior Admin Officer)
Mrs. S. Stretch (Admin. Assistant)

151. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors J. Clark, Mrs. V.M. Raw and Paul Symons.

152. MEMBERS' DISPENSATION

No dispensation requests had been received.

153. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillors M. Iveson, Jed Hillary and Eddy Adam declared non-pecuniary interests in Agenda Item No. 8 (Grants and Donations – Rotary Application)

Councillor Ken Rosbon declared a non-pecuniary interest in Agenda Item No. 8 (Grants and Donations – Womens Institute Application)

154. PUBLIC QUESTIONS

A Member of Aycliffe Village Residents Association was in attendance to make a statement in support of the application for a 'Small Grant Application' for flower pots to be established on the greens of Millfields to enhance the appearance of the area for elderly residents who have been subjected to Covid regulations.

The Chairman thanked the Member of AVRA for the extra information in support of the application and informed him that this would be considered under agenda item No. 8 (Grants and Donations).

155. MINUTES

It was proposed by Councillor M. Iveson, seconded by Councillor Bill Blenkinsopp and

RESOLVED – that the minutes of the Meeting of the Policy and Resources Committee, held on the 2nd December 2020, be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

156. CHARGES WORKING GROUP

The notes and following recommendations from the meeting of the Charges Working Group held on the 16 December 2020 were submitted for consideration:-

- (i) The proposed 5% increase in cemeteries fees for 2021/22 be agreed.
- (ii) The proposed freeze in football pitches fees for 2021/22, which takes into account the impact of the pandemic during the current year, be agreed.
- (iii) The proposed 25p increase in pre-school charges for 2021/22 be agreed.
- (iv) The proposed 2.5% increase in allotments rent charging bands for 2022 and the proposed 2.5% increase in pigeon and poultry site rents be agreed.
- (v) The proposed freeze in sports complex fees for 2021/22 and the introduction of a flat rate for bowls hall hire of £3 for members and £3.75 for non-members be agreed.
- (vi) The proposed extension of all 2020/21 sports complex memberships to 31st March 2022 in recompense for the months lost due to Coronavirus lockdowns in the current year be agreed.
- (vii) The proposed freeze in 2021/22 golf membership charges for all *existing* members and the offer of a driving range card for full members in compensation for the months of membership lost due to Coronavirus lockdowns in the current year be agreed.
- (viii) The proposed £20 increase in the 2021/22 adult and over 60 golf membership charge, and £10 increase in the 19 to 25 membership charge, for *new* members be agreed.
- (ix) The proposed freeze in junior 14 to 18 membership charges for 2021/22 be agreed.
- (x) The proposed introduction of a £15 charge for the junior under 14 membership to cover the Durham County Golf Union fee be agreed.
- (xi) The proposed 14 months for the price of 12 months golf membership special offer for new members be agreed.

- (xii) The proposed changes to the golf green fee pricing structure including a £1 increase to the peak adult rate, the removal of the concession rate during peak times, and increases in off-peak prices for both adults and concessions of between £1.50 and £3.00 be agreed.
- (xiii) The proposed freeze in golf buggy hire charges and equipment hire fees be agreed.
- (xiv) The proposed 50p increase in driving range fees for 2021/22 be agreed.
- (xv) The proposed 2.5% increase in charges for the caravan site for 2021/22 be agreed.
- (xvi) That the request by the Recreation Committee for consideration of a charge for community events and sponsorship was not appropriate at this time due to the current situation related to the ongoing effects of the Covid pandemic and staff vacancies.

It was proposed by Councillor Arun M. Chandran and seconded by Councillor Mrs. M. Dalton that the Cemetery fees for residents of Great Aycliffe be frozen for the next financial year.

Members were in favour of this being sanctioned for the next budget year.

It was proposed by Councillor M. Ashcroft, seconded by Councillor M. Iveson and

RESOLVED – that the notes and recommendations from the Charges Working Group held on the 16 December 2020 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman subject to the following amendment:-

Item (i) – That the proposed 5% increase on Cemetery Fees be agreed, however, the fees for residents of Great Aycliffe for the financial year 2021/22 be frozen.

157. ACCOUNT CONTROL SHEETS

Account control sheets for the period 26 November 2020 to the 7 January 2021 and the General Bank Accounts for November and December 2020 were submitted.

Councillor Eddy Adam raised a question on the amount of fuel which was being purchased via a 'Fuel Card' system and when the last review of this card had been carried out to monitor the efficiency and costings.

RESOLVED – that it be recommended:-

- (i) That the accounts control sheets for the period 26 November 2020 to the 7 January 2021 and the General Bank Accounts for November and December 2020 be received.
- (ii) That Officers undertake a review of the 'Fuel Card' system in place with a view to reducing purchase of fuel costs.

158. GRANTS / DONATIONS

Councillors M. Iveson, Jed Hillary and Eddy Adam declared non-pecuniary interests on the application in respect of Rotary Newton Aycliffe.

Councillor Ken Robson declared a non-pecuniary interest on the application in respect of the Womens Institutute.

The Town Clerk submitted a report setting out details of requests received from four organisations for consideration of being granted funding from the 'Small Grants Fund'.

A 'Small Grants Fund' had been created of £15,000 to specifically assist organisations that are experiencing funding problems affecting their organisation in delivering their support services as a consequence of the Coronavirus Pandemic and restrictions. Each grant allocation being up to a maximum of £1,000.

The 'Small Grants Fund' currently stands at £12,000 and the General Donations Balance is currently £1,623.55.

- (a) **Aycliffe Village Residents Association** – Request to establish 6 flower pots on the greens of Millfields to attempt to raise the spirits of the residents, many of whom are older and have been limited to any interaction they can have by Covid 19.
Request for £600 being sought for this project.

Councillor Bill Blenkinsopp proposed an amount of £600 which was seconded by Councillor Arun Chandran and subsequently agreed.

- (b) **Aycliffe Beekeepers Association** – Requesting funds to provide training to new Beekeepers to maintain the apiary running costs at St. Oswalds and to provide speakers to the Club members. Also to supply sugar and fondants for the hives over winter, new frames and foundations every year for the bees to store honey. Regular medical treatments to prevent verroa. Beekeepers also need protective clothing to operate inside the apiary and spare clothing for training new members
Request for £1,000 being sought for this project.

Councillor Ian Gray proposed an amount of £500 which was seconded by Councillor M. Ashcroft and subsequently agreed.

- (c) **Newton Aycliffe Womens Institute** – Requesting funds to support members with printer ink, paper, cards, stamps and craft equipment. Flowers and chocolates for sick members, baking ingredients, transport costs and items to make 'a meeting in a bag'.
Request for £1,000 being sought for this project.

Councillor Arun Chandran proposed an amount of £1,000 which was seconded by Councillor Jim Atkinson.

Councillor Mrs. M. Dalton proposed an amount of £500 which was seconded by Councillor I. Gray.

Following a vote it was agreed that an amount of £1,000 be allocated to this application.

- (d) **Rotary Newton Aycliffe** - Requesting further funding towards helping families in the area with urgent domestic needs. Again these are identified by Health Visitors and Social Workers.
Request for £1,000 being sought for this project.

It was proposed by Councillor R.S. Fleming and seconded by Councillor Bill Blenkinsopp that a decision on the further request from Rotary be deferred until the next meeting pending more clarification on the application.

- (e) Discussion took place on how Grant / Donation monies were used by organisations or individuals once they had been allocated and what check procedures were in place for the use thereof. Currently the Council did not have a Grant/Donation Policy in place. It was suggested that Officers investigate developing a Policy for the future allocation of Grants / Donations.

RESOLVED – that it be recommended:-

- (i) That the current donation budgets of £12,000 for the 'Small Grant Fund' and £1,623.55 for the General Donations be noted.
- (ii) That the following grants be made from the 'Small Grants Fund':-
- **Aycliffe Village Residents Association** - £600 donation
 - **Aycliffe Beekeepers Association** - £500 donation
 - **Newton Aycliffe Womens Institute** - £1,000 donation
 - **Rotary Newton Aycliffe** – that the application be deferred to the next meeting pending more clarification being obtained on the further application request.
- (iii) That the letters of thanks from Newton Aycliffe Rotary Club, Acorn Community Association and the Great North Air Ambulance be received.
- (iv) That Officers investigate the developing of a Grant and Donation Policy.

159. 2020/21 REVENUE AND CAPITAL BUDGET POSITION TO THE 31ST DECEMBER 2020 AND YEAR END OUTTURN FORECAST

The Finance Manager submitted a report to present the financial position on the Council's approved 2020/21 Revenue and Capital Programme Budget for the nine months up to 31st December 2020 together with a projection of the expected year-end outturn position.

It was proposed by Councillor Bill Blenkinsopp, seconded by Councillor M. Iveson and

RESOLVED – that it be recommended:-

- (i) That the report be received.
- (ii) That the financial position on the Council's 2020/21 Revenue and Capital Budgets up to the 31st December 2020 and the projection of expected year-end outturn be approved.
- (iii) That it be endorsed that a relevant proportion of the 2020/21 Revenue Budget be set aside in a COVID-19 Recovery Reserve, with a view to passing the savings back to local taxpayers via. a one-off investment during the 2021/22 financial year should the financial situation of the Council allow this.

160. 2021/22 REVENUE AND CAPITAL BUDGET APPROVAL

The Finance Manager had submitted a report seeking approval from members for the Council's 2021/22 Revenue and Capital Budget.

This approval would then enable the 2021/22 Precept and Town Council Tax to be set at the Council meeting on the 27th January 2021.

It was proposed by Councillor Jim Atkinson, seconded by Councillor Eddy Adam and

RESOLVED – that it be recommended:-

- (i) That the report be received.
- (ii) That the final 2021/22 Revenue and Capital Budget proposals be approved together with the changes made to the draft budget.
- (iii) That the feedback from the 2021/22 Budget survey exercise be received.
- (iv) That the Council's 2021/22 Revenue and Capital Budget as set out in the report and appendices be agreed.
- (v) That the level of 2021/22 Precept be set at £1,697,500 and the freeze to the Town Council tax be agreed.

CHAIRMAN.