

POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

WEDNESDAY 21ST JULY 2021

Minutes of the meeting of the **POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE** held in the Council Chamber, Council Offices, School Aycliffe Lane, Newton Aycliffe on Wednesday 21st July 2021 at 7.15pm.

PRESENT

Councillor Arun M. Chandran (Chairman)

Councillors Eddy Adam, Tony Armstrong, Martin Ashcroft, Jim Atkinson, John D. Clare, Neil Collinson, Bob Fleming, George Gray, Brian Haigh, Mrs. Sandra Haigh, Phillip Hawkins, Jed Hillary, Wendy Hillary, Kate Hopper, Andrea Miller, John Moore, Carl Robinson, and Ken Robson.

OFFICIALS

Mr. D. Austin (Town Clerk)
Mrs. T. Woodhead (Finance Manager)
Mrs. C. Walton (Corporate and Policy Officer)
Mr. S. Cooper (Works and Environment Officer)
Mrs. S. Stretch (Senior Administrative Officer)

IN ATTENDANCE Mr. I. Wiggett

24. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors Peter Bergg, Barbara A. Clare, John Clark, Ian Gray, Dave Hardaker and Michael Stead.

25. MEMBERS DISPENSATIONS

There had been no applications for dispensations.

26. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

27. PUBLIC QUESTIONS

There were no public questions.

28. POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE MINUTES

It was proposed by Councillor Martin Ashcroft, seconded by Councillor Bob Fleming and

RESOLVED - that the minutes of the meeting of the Policy and Resources Committee, held on the 9th June 2021, be confirmed as a correct record, and signed by the Chairman.

29. ASSET MANAGEMENT WORKING GROUP NOTES

The notes and following recommendations from the meeting of the Asset Management Member Working Group held on the 30th June 2021 were submitted for consideration:

- (i) That the update report and detailed appendices be received and agreed.
- (ii) That the function room carpet at the Sports Complex be cleaned while the Covid restrictions are still in place and the room is not in use.
- (iii) That the replacement of the golf fairways mower, which was included in the Medium-Term Financial Plan for 2022/23, should be brought forward to the current year subject to the approval of the notes of this meeting by the Policy and Resources Committee.
- (iv) That officers carry out a survey of the general condition of the Great Aycliffe Way, including the parts of it which are on land owned by Durham County Council, and report back to the Environment Committee.

It was proposed by Councillor Ken Robson, seconded by Councillor Martin Ashcroft, and

RESOLVED - that the notes and recommendations of the meeting of the Asset Management Working Group, held on the 30th June 2021, be confirmed as a correct record, and signed by the Chairman.

30. PERSONNEL SUB-COMMITTEE MINUTES

It was proposed by Councillor Martin Ashcroft, seconded by Councillor Ken Robson, and

RESOLVED – that the minutes of the meeting of the Personnel Sub-Committee held on the 6th July 2021 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

31. REVIEW SUB-COMMITTEE MINUTES

Councillor Jed Hillary asked why the Maternity / Adoption and Surrogacy Policy and Confidential Reporting Policy had been considered at the Review Sub Committee meeting but not subsequently included on this Policy and Resources Committee Agenda for approval.

The Town Clerk advised that the Maternity / Adoption and Surrogacy Policy had been referred back to the Personnel Sub Committee by the Review Sub Committee prior to being brought forward to a future Policy and Resources Committee for approval. The Confidential Reporting Policy should have been included on this Policy and Resources Committee Agenda had been omitted in error.

A discussion took place, and it was agreed that the minutes of the Review Sub Committee should be approved subject to the Maternity/Adoption and Surrogacy Policy and Confidential Reporting Policy being presented to a future Policy and Resources Committee for approval.

It was proposed by Councillor Ken Robson, seconded by Councillor Martin Ashcroft and

RESOLVED – that the minutes of the meeting of the Review Sub-Committee held on the 7th July 2021 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman, subject to the amendment that the Maternity/Adoption and Surrogacy and Confidential Reporting Policy are presented to a future Policy and Resources Committee for approval.

32. AUDIT, RISK AND G.D.P.R SUB-COMMITTEE

It was proposed by Councillor Ken Robson, seconded by Councillor Phillip Hawkins, and

RESOLVED – that the minutes of the meeting of the Audit, Risk and GDPR Sub-Committee held on the 14th July 2021 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

33. ACCOUNT CONTROL SHEETS

Account Control Sheets for the period 4th June 2021 to the 5th July 2021 and the General Bank Accounts for June 2021 were submitted.

RESOLVED – that the Account Control Sheets for the period 4th June 2021 to the 5th July 2021 and the General Bank Accounts for June 2021 be received.

34. FOOTPATH SURFACING WORKS

The Works and Environment Manager submitted a report to consider three quotations from contractors to resurface or repair various footpaths and tarmac surfaces.

The Works and Environment Manager explained that all contractors were given the same specifications on which to build their quote.

A discussion took place and Councillor Eddy Adam requested that the Council consider environment and climate change implications when seeking quotes for works and selecting contractors, with regard to distance travelled, jobs being retained in the local area as much as possible, and to request if the contractors have environmental policies in place.

It was proposed by Councillor Martin Ashcroft, and seconded by Councillor Jim Atkinson, and

RESOLVED – that

- (i) Members receive the report.
- (ii) Members recommend officers proceed with the cheapest quotation from AWG of £11,152 and agree the slight over spend on £172.

Steve Cooper left the meeting at this point.

35. GRANTS AND DONATIONS

The Town Clerk submitted a report to advise that no requests for Grants and Donations had been received since the last meeting.

A total of £2,961 is currently available in the 2021/22 Small Grants and Donations Budget, £2,000 remains available in the Youth Council Grants Budget and £25,000 in the new COVID Recovery Community Grants Fund.

As agreed at the Recreation Committee on 14th July 2021, a decision at the Events Sub Committee to award a £1,000 grant to Neville Parade Community Association had been rescinded due to a procedural error in relation to declarations of interest, and the substantive motion referred to this Policy and Resources Committee Meeting for consideration and approval.

The Town Clerk advised that the event had already taken place over the previous weekend and that the Chairman of the Community Association has advised that the final cost of the event was less than expected at £760.00, and that the Association did not therefore require the full £1,000 grant.

It was proposed by Councillor Martin Ashcroft, seconded by Councillor Jed Hillary, and

RESOLVED – that

- (i) the report is received
- (ii) the previously agreed substantive motion and resolution made at the Events Sub Committee on 22nd June is approved and that a grant of £760.00 be made to Neville Community Association towards the cost of an event held in the town centre on 17th July 2021.
- (iii) thanks be forward to the Chairman of the community association for their honesty.

36. COMMUNITY BENEFIT FUND

The Town Clerk submitted a report to provide Members with an update regarding the potential use of the Community Benefit Fund monies received from Lightsource in relation to the solar panels site off School Aycliffe Lane, as requested at the previous Policy and Resources Committee Meeting.

Councillor Eddy Adam requested that the monies be set aside for green initiatives with a maximum grant award of £1,000.

It was proposed by Councillor Eddy Adam, seconded by Councillor Arun Chandran, and

RESOLVED – that

- (i) the report is received

- (ii) the Community Benefit Fund monies are set aside for green initiatives with a maximum grant award of £1,000.

37. 2021/22 REVENUE AND CAPITAL BUDGET POSITION

The Finance Manager gave a report on the financial position on the Council's approved 2021/22 Revenue and Capital Programme Budget, for the first three months of the financial year, up to 30th June 2021.

Councillor Eddy Adam thanked the Finance Manager for the report and queried the Council's investment strategy and policy for monitoring investments.

The Town Clerk advised that there is no stand-alone investment policy, but the Treasury Management Code of Practice sets out the Council's arrangements and approved instruments for loans and investments.

RESOLVED – that:

- (i) the report be received
- (ii) the financial position on the Council's 2021/22 Revenue and Capital Budgets for the three months to 30th June 2021 be received.
- (iii) further Revenue and Capital Budget Position Reports be received on a quarterly basis throughout the year.

38. 2021/22 TO 2025/26 MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL PLAN

The Finance Manager submitted a report for Members' consideration and approval of the 2021/22 to 2025/26 Medium Term Financial Plan.

Councillor Jim Atkinson commended the Finance Manager for the excellent report and referred to the National Minimum Wage increases, querying whether a job evaluation process would be required in the future to pre-empt this.

RESOLVED – that:

- (i) That the report be received.
- (ii) That the Medium-Term Financial Plan for 2021/22 to 2025/26 be approved.

39. DRAFT MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING POLICY

A report providing the Draft Mental Health and Wellbeing Policy, was submitted for members consideration and approval.

Councillor Jed Hillary requested that the wording in paragraph 15 of the policy be removed and for the phrase 'recognised mental health condition' to be removed.

RESOLVED – that:

- (i) the report and policy be received.

- (ii) the Draft Mental Health and Wellbeing Policy be approved and implemented subject to the above amendments being made.

40. DRAFT WORKPLACE DRUG & ALCOHOL POLICY

A report providing the Draft Workplace Drug and Alcohol Policy, was submitted for members consideration and approval.

Councillor Jed Hillary requested that the term 'undertaking Council business' be added at paragraph 7.4 and 'following a disciplinary hearing' be added at point 10.3.

RESOLVED – that:

- (i) the report and policy be received.
- (ii) the Draft Workplace Drug and Alcohol Policy be approved and implemented subject to the above amendments being made.

41. DRAFT HOMEWORKING POLICY

A report providing the Draft Homeworking Policy, was submitted for members consideration and approval.

Councillor Jed Hillary thanked officers for this comprehensive policy and asked that within this policy, if there are issues with staff capability or performance, that the Council should have the right to cancel the homeworking provision.

Councillor Bob Fleming proposed that the policy be introduced on a two-year trial basis with regular review of the success of the policy by officers.

It was proposed by Councillor Bob Fleming, seconded by Jim Atkinson, and

RESOLVED – that:

- (i) the report and policy be received.
- (ii) the Draft Homeworking Policy be approved and implemented on a two-year basis only.

42. POLICIES REPORT

A report setting out the following policies was submitted for members consideration and approval.

- a) Draft General Data Protection Policy
- b) Equality and Diversity Policy
- c) Child Protection and Safeguarding Children Policy
- d) Social Media Acceptable Use Policy

Councillor Jed Hillary requested that the Draft General Data Protection Policy be resubmitted for approval in the corporate policy format.

Councillor Jed Hillary also made the following specific comments on the policies:-

- Item a) That paragraphs 46 and 47, should apply to both staff and members.
- Item c) That the term 'bullying is added to paragraph 8.6.

- Item d) That the term 'partners' be removed from Paragraph 3 and 4 and replaced with 'partner organisations'.

RESOLVED – that:

- (i) the report be received.
- (ii) The General Data Protection Policy be resubmitted for approval in the corporate policy format.
- (iii) the following policies be approved and implemented subject to the above amendments being made:
 - a) Equality and Diversity Policy
 - b) Child Protection & Safeguarding Children Policy
 - c) Social Media Acceptable Use Policy
- (iv) That the Council reaffirms its commitment to equality and diversity.

43. HUMAN RESOURCES SERVICE LEVEL AGREEMENT

A report was submitted giving an update regarding the human resources services, currently provided by Durham County Council, to decide on a preferred option for the future provision of support for the Council.

It was agreed that the Council's service level agreement with Durham County Council would be terminated and that a new service level agreement be agreed with Oculus HR.

Councillor Jed Hillary requested that the first three months of the agreement be entered into on the basis of 70 hours per month with a view to reducing this to 20 hours per month at a later date.

It was proposed by Councillor Bob Fleming, seconded by Councillor Martin Ashcroft and,

RESOLVED – that:

- (i) Members receive and consider the report.
- (ii) agree to end the SLA with DCC.
- (iii) officers approach Oculus HR for the future provision of HR support at the Town Council.

44. NOTICE OF MOTION

To consider the following Notice of Motion submitted by Councillor John D. Clare and seconded by Councillor Eddy Adam:

“During the May local election campaign, a LibDem leaflet referred to what called “Aycliffe’s Council Tax scandal”, reporting that “residents in Aycliffe pay up to £400 more in Council Tax than other places in County Durham”. It promised to “cut Council Tax and end ‘double taxation’”. The voters’ response at the ballot box made it clear that this was what residents wanted to see. Indeed, before the elections, Cllr Michael Stead had challenged a number of what he saw as wasteful practices and had proposed a savings-seeking working group which would exhibit “a passion for every penny”.

Politicians are often accused of ‘not listening’, and it is believed that this is an issue on which the Council needs to listen to residents’ clearly expressed wishes.

Therefore it is proposed:

- (1) that this Council sets up a Special Working Group charged to propose new moneysaving opportunities relating to the Council’s existing services, which can result in a reduction in Council Tax;*
- (2) that this Special Working Group be called the ‘Passion-For-Every-Penny Working Group’;*
- (3) that Cllr Stead be asked to chair the Working Group, with the authority to appoint to it members whom he feels will understand and further its aims;*
- (4) that the Working Group meet no more than monthly with reasonable access to officer time and advice;*
- (5) that the Working Group be required to report its interim findings to the 20th October Policy & Resources Committee, with a view to conducting a public consultation, after which formal proposals could be made to the 19th January 2022 Policy & Resources Committee.*

There followed a lengthy discussion, following which it was proposed by Councillor Bob Fleming and seconded by Councillor Martin Ashcroft that the motion be amended as follows:

- 1) That the Council sets up a Special Working Group charged with proposing new money saving opportunities relating to the Council’s existing services, which can result in a reduction in Council Tax;*
- 2) That this Special Working Group be called the ‘Passion-For-Every-Penny Working Group’;*
- 3) That reference to Councillor Michael Stead be deleted from the motion.*
- 4) That the Chairman of this working group be appointed at the first meeting.*
- 5) The Group meets every six weeks or as required and reports to the Policy and Resources Committee.*
- 6) That the first meeting of the working group takes place as soon as possible.*
- 7) That the working group has multi-party representation.*

There followed a vote on the amendment with the following results:

12 for and 7 against.

The amendment was carried.

There then followed a vote on the substantive motion with the following result:

18 for and 1 Abstention

The substantive motion was carried.

RESOLVED – that:

- 1) That the Council sets up a Special Working Group charged with proposing new money saving opportunities relating to the Council's existing services, which can result in a reduction in Council Tax;
- 2) That this Special Working Group be called the 'Passion-For-Every-Penny Working Group';
- 3) That the Chairman of this working group be appointed at the first meeting.
- 4) The Group meets every six weeks or as required and reports to the Policy and Resources Committee.
- 5) That the first meeting of the working group takes place as soon as possible.
- 6) That the working group has multi-party representation and consists of the following members:
Councillors Martin Ashcroft, Phillip Hawkins, Carl Robinson, Bob Fleming, Tony Armstrong and a further three members to be confirmed.

45. PLANNING CONSULTANT

Following the resolution at the Environment Committee on 2nd June that the Council appoints a planning consultant to assist and represent the Town Council in regard to the planning application for the high temperature thermal treatment facility adjacent to Hitachi, and the subsequent presentation from ELG Planning at the Environment Committee on 14th July, Members were asked to agree in principle to agree to seek a quote from ELG Planning to represent the Council and agree the use of the Council's Budget to fund this work.

RESOLVED – that:

- i) the Council seeks a quote from Engage ELG Planning to prepare evidence and a written report on the Council's objections to the planning application and to represent the Council at the Planning Meeting; and
- ii) Agree to the use of monies from the Consultancy Budget and, if necessary the Contingency Sum Budget to meet the costs of this consultancy support, subject to monitoring and control of the costs by officers.

CHAIRMAN.