

POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

MONDAY 26TH SEPTEMBER 2022

Minutes of the meeting of the **POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE** held in the Council Chamber, Council Offices, School Aycliffe Lane, Newton Aycliffe on Monday 26th September 2022 at 7.15pm.

PRESENT

Councillor Arun M. Chandran (Chairman)

Councillors Eddy Adam, Martin Ashcroft, Lindsey Aston, Jim Atkinson, Bob Fleming, George Gray, Ian Gray, Brian Haigh, Mrs. Sandra Haigh, Andy Hill, Jed Hillary, Wendy Hillary, Joanne Jones, Neville Jones, Carl Robinson, Ken Robson, Michael Stead, Anne Woodward, and John Woodward.

OFFICIALS

Mr. Dan Austin (Town Clerk)
Mrs. Tracey Woodhead (Finance Manager)
Mrs. Judith Thexton (Head of Leisure and Events)
Mr. Steve Cooper (Works and Environment Officer)
Ms. Amanda Donald (Corporate and Policy Officer)
Mr. Andy Clark (Sports Complex Manager)
Mrs. Sharna Stretch (Senior Administrative Officer)

A minute's silence was observed in memory of the passing of Queen Elizabeth II. The Chairman of Policy and Resources Committee, Councillor Arun Chandran and Councillor Eddy Adam both gave a short speech in memory of the Queen.

39. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors Tony Armstrong, Dorothy Bowman, John Clark, and John Moore.

40. MEMBERS DISPENSATIONS

No dispensation requests had been received.

41. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

42. PUBLIC QUESTIONS

There were no public questions.

43. POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE MINUTES

It was proposed by Councillor Ken Robson, seconded by Councillor Andy Hill and

RESOLVED - that the minutes of the meeting of the Policy and Resources Committee, held on the 20th July 2022, be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

44. ACCOUNT CONTROL SHEETS

Account Control Sheets for the period 14th July 2022 to the 11th August 2022 and the General Bank Account for July 2022 were submitted for approval.

RESOLVED – that it be recommended that the Account Control Sheets the period 14th July 2022 to the 11th August 2022 and the General Bank Account for July 2022 be received.

45. GRANTS AND DONATIONS

The Town Clerk submitted a report setting out the Grants and Donations requests which had been received since the last meeting.

The following grant and donation requests were considered:

a) Durham Hospital Radio

Durham Hospital Radio submitted a grant request for £500 towards the cost of upgrading the technology used to broadcast their radio station.

It was proposed by Councillor Arun Chandran and seconded by Councillor Lindsey Aston that no donation be given, due to the current financial constraints and the fact that other councils closer to Durham could contribute instead.

It was further proposed by Councillor Eddy Adam and seconded by Councillor Jim Atkinson that £100 be donated with a view that other councils will also make small contributions.

A vote was taken with the following results:

For a donation of £100: 5
Against a donation of £100: 10

RESOLVED – that it be recommended that

i) no donation be given to Durham Hospital Radio.

b) Post Grant Questionnaires

Post grant questionnaires were received from Newton Aycliffe Tri Club and Junction 7 in relation to previously awarded grants.

RESOLVED – that it be recommended that

ii) the information be received

46. 2023/24 BUDGET SETTING FRAMEWORK AND TIMETABLE

The Finance Manager submitted a report to seek Member's approval of the proposed framework and timetable for the setting of the Council's 2023/24 Revenue and Capital Programme Budgets.

Councillor Eddy Adam thanked the Finance Manager for a detailed report and agreed with the proposed framework and timetable. He requested that the Labour Group wish to have a meeting with officers ahead of the draft budget being presented to the October cycle of meetings.

Councillor Bob Fleming agreed with the Finance Manager's assessment of the current and future financial situation. He proposed to agree with the recommendations of the report and then read out a prepared statement making a number of proposals in relation to the forthcoming budget discussions.

There followed a lengthy discussion and the Chairman proposed moving progress on the item.

Councillor Michael Stead stated that he disagreed with moving progress and that Councillor Fleming should be allowed to continue to speak on the subject.

A vote then took place with a unanimous decision in favour of Councillor Bob Fleming continuing with his statement.

Councillor Fleming concluded his statement and read out five proposals:-

1. That 5% savings are made across all service areas ahead of the setting of the 2023/24 Revenue Budget and that revenue spending is controlled in the current financial year.
2. That the remaining balances in the COVID Recovery Fund are transferred back to Council Reserves.
3. That the contingency budget is used to help fund any overspend in the current financial year.
4. That the Council considers implementing a Precept increase of up to 10% in 2023/24 to help balance the budget.
5. That service reviews of all Council services are undertaken next year, and capital spending is reviewed and controlled.

Copies of Councillor Fleming's notes were copied and circulated to members.

Councillor Eddy Adam stated that he felt it was inappropriate to discuss these proposals as members have not had prior notice of them.

Councillor Jim Atkinson asked for the Town Clerk to clarify what should be done.

The Town Clerk stated that the report was requesting that members agree the framework and timetable for setting the budget and that a full report setting out details of the draft 2023/24 Revenue and Capital Budget will follow in the October meeting cycle. He advised that Councillor Fleming's proposals might be better being deferred until the consideration of the draft budget at these meetings.

It was proposed by Councillor Arun Chandran, and seconded by Councillor Jim Atkinson and:

RESOLVED – that it be recommended that

- i) the Budget Framework and Timetable for the setting of the Council's 2023/24 Revenue and Capital Budgets is approved;
- ii) in-person budget consultation meetings are not held as part of the 2023/24 budget process.
- iii) Councillor Bob Fleming's proposals regarding the 2023/24 budget setting be put forward for consideration at the next Policy and Resources meeting on 26th October 2022.

47. INTERNAL AUDIT PROVISION

The Finance Manager submitted a report to update Members on the Council's Internal Audit provision following the previous Internal Auditor leaving the employment of the Council on the 29th July 2022.

It was proposed by Councillor Jed Hillary, seconded by Councillor Jim Atkinson and

RESOLVED – that it be recommended that

- i) the information contained in the report be received;
- ii) a further update is provided ahead of the new financial year, commencing 1st April 2023.

48. 2022/23 CAPITAL BUDGETS PROJECTS REVIEW

The Senior Management Team submitted a report to provide Members with a schedule of the capital projects planned for the current financial year as part of the Council's 2022/23 Capital Programme Budget and setting out the outcome of an officer review of the programme of works to identify essential projects, provisional sums, projects that can be deferred to a future year, and non-essential projects that could be deleted from the programme.

Councillor Eddy Adam proposed that the item for the cleaning and maintenance of West Park Lakes be deleted from the schedule and deferred until after the end of the current Medium-Term Financial Plan cycle in 2026. This was seconded by Councillor Arun Chandran.

Councillor Adam also proposed that the replacement of the safety resurfacing at St. Oswald's Park should be for maintenance and repair only. The Works and Environment Manager advised that the safety surface fabric was already breaking down and that patching repairs were ongoing.

Councillor Jed Hillary suggested that only essential capital projects should go ahead and anything not already in a procurement process should not proceed.

The Chairman added that no capital monies will be spent without a formal decision from the committee and referred to the Town Clerk for confirmation of current spending controls.

The Town Clerk confirmed that there are now extra controls in place for revenue expenditure; with any non-essential expenditure going through an additional approval process via himself and the Finance Manager.

He went on to clarify that capital spending of more than £5,500 must be approved by the relevant Committee as per the Council's Standing Orders for Contracts and Procurement. He suggested that any projects with a value of less than £5,500 should now be referred to the Chairman and Vice Chairman for consideration prior to retrospective approval at meetings.

The Finance Manager raised concern that reporting any essential capital expenditure less than £5,500 to committee may create delays and lead to operational problems.

The Chairman suggested that all capital works be reported to committee for approval with the exception of any urgent spending relating to health and safety issues or breakdowns.

RESOLVED – that it be recommended that:

- i) the report and appendices be received;
- ii) the schedules of capital works and officers' recommendations be agreed, and the delivery of the 2022/23 Capital Programme proceed as set out.
- iii) the item for the cleaning and maintenance of West Park Lakes be deleted from the schedule and deferred until after the end of the current Medium-Term Financial Plan in 2026.
- iv) in light of the current financial situation, all capital works be reported to committee for approval with the exception of any urgent spending relating to health and safety issues or breakdowns.

49. COUNCIL OFFICES FLAT ROOF REPLACEMENT UPDATE

A report was submitted by the Works and Environment Manager to provide Members with an update in relation to the replacement of the flat roof on the Council Offices and to report the quotes for the works for consideration.

Councillor Michael Stead proposed that the quote for the insulated roof from Lord Roofing be accepted, and this was seconded by Councillor Eddy Adam.

Councillors Stead and Adam spoke in support of the proposal stating that insulation was important, the money is in the budget, and it is the appropriate course of action for long-term savings.

Councillor Carl Robinson had the opposite opinion, stating that the insulation would be of no benefit as there were no guarantees given as to the savings this would generate and proposed that the quotation for an uninsulated roof from Lord Roofing be accepted. Councillor Martin Ashcroft seconded this proposal.

There followed a discussion on this item.

Councillor Michael Stead requested a named vote on his proposal, which was later retracted.

A vote was then taken with the following results:

For the Uninsulated roof:	8
For the Insulated roof:	11
Abstention:	1

The motion was carried that Lord Roofing provide an insulated roof at a cost of £57,560.

RESOLVED – that it be recommended that:

- i) the report be received,
- ii) Lord Roofing provide the insulated roof as per the quotation and specification provided at a cost of £57,560.

50. EXEMPT BUSINESS

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

RESOLVED – that in view of the confidential nature of the business about to be transacted it was in the opinion of the Council, advisable that the public and press be excluded from the meeting.

51. OAKLEAF SPORTS COMPLEX BAR SUPPLIES CONTRACT

A report was submitted by the Head of Leisure and Events, Sports Complex Manager and Finance Manager. Councillors were asked for their consideration and approval of the proposed award of the new contract for the supply of beers, wines, and spirits to the Oak Leaf Sports Complex.

RESOLVED – that it be recommended that:

- i) the report and the detailed tender and tender evaluation information set out in the appendices be received.
- ii) the award of the bar supplies contract to be given to the successful tenderer on an initial two-year contract, with the option to extend for three further extension periods each of one year be agreed.

52. RE-ADMISSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

It was proposed by Councillor Arun Chandran, seconded by Councillor Jim Atkinson and

RESOLVED – that it be recommended that the press and public be re-admitted to the meeting.

53. OAKLEAF SPORTS COMPLEX BAR PRICES REVIEW

The Sports Complex Manager submitted a report detailing the Town Council's current bar price setting methodology and requested consideration of options for implementing changes to the bar prices following the award of the new bar supplies contract.

It was proposed by Councillor Michael Stead and seconded by Councillor Lindsey Aston that an additional 20p be applied to the adjusted selling prices as set out in recommendation 13.1 (ii) (3) of the report.

Councillor Eddy Adam proposed that the Council retain the current price setting methodology as set out in report, that an additional 10p be applied to the adjusted selling prices as set out in recommendation 13.1 (ii) (2) of the report, and that officers are authorised to calculate, update, and implement the new bar prices as set out at recommendations 13.1 (iii) and (iv). This was seconded by Councillor Arun Chandran.

There followed a discussion on the bar price setting methodology.

Councillor Michael Stead wished to have it recorded in the minutes that he felt the Council was missing an opportunity if the 20p increase was not agreed.

The Chairman reminded members that the Council do not subsidise bar prices.

A vote was then taken whether to agree the 10p increase in bar prices with the following results:

For: 14 Against: 5

The motion was carried to increase the bar prices by 10p.

RESOLVED – that it be recommended that:

- i) the report and the bar pricing information set out in Appendix 2 be received;
- ii) the methodology for setting the prices at the Oak Leaf Sports Complex bar facility be agreed;
- iii) the following price setting options be agreed:
 1. The current selling price to be adjusted in line with the target profit percentage as well as to take account of changes to products under the new contract, market prices and for rounding prices to remove any 5p's.
 2. Applying a further 10p price increase to these adjusted prices.
- iv) officers are authorised to calculate, update and set new bar prices in line with the principles agreed at this meeting; and
- v) officers are authorised to implement the changes to the bar prices on the leisure till system, as soon as possible following the commencement of the new bar supplies contract start date which should be implemented from Tuesday 27th September 2022.

CHAIRMAN.