

POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

WEDNESDAY 18TH JANUARY 2023

Minutes of the meeting of the **POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE** held in the Council Chamber, Council Offices, School Aycliffe Lane, Newton Aycliffe on Wednesday 18th January 2023 at 7.15pm.

PRESENT

Councillor Arun M. Chandran (Chairman)

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

OFFICIALS

Mr. Dan Austin (Town Clerk)
Mrs. Tracey Woodhead (Finance Manager)
Mrs. Sharna Stretch (Senior Administrative Officer)
Mr. Chris Lawson (Golf Administrator)

IN ATTENDANCE

11 Representatives from the Oak Leaf Golf Club

85. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors Peter Bergg, Neil Collinson and Andrea Miller.

86. MEMBERS DISPENSATIONS

No requests for dispensation had been received.

87. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Declarations of a non-pecuniary interest were given by Councillor Eddy Adam and Councillor Jed Hillary as members of the Rotary Club of Newton Aycliffe and Neville Jones as an Honorary Member of the Rotary Club of Newton Aycliffe for Agenda Item 7, Grant and Donations.

88. PUBLIC QUESTIONS

Several members from the Oakleaf Golf Club were in attendance and four members gave statements and asked questions regarding the Town Council's proposed introduction of non-residents membership fees for the 2023/24 season.

Copies of the statements and questions were circulated to officers and councillors prior to the meeting and are available to view upon request.

The Town Clerk made a brief response to the questions raised, advising that the Council considered fees and charges on a service-by-service basis and that non-residents fees were also charged in respect of other services such as cemeteries.

It was advised that the Oak Leaf Sports Complex does not currently have a non-residents fees but this will be reviewed as part of the forthcoming service review.

The Chairman stated that no decision will be made at this meeting as this issue is not specifically on the agenda. He added that it will be included on the agenda for Full Council on 25th January 2023 for the Council to give consideration to the concerns raised and determine whether it wished reconsider, vary or change the original decision. He added that the Town Council do not consult on all decisions including on fees and charges, but will take on board the comments made regarding consultation with the club.

The Chairman thanked members of the Oakleaf Golf Club for their attendance.

89. POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE MINUTES

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

RESOLVED - that the minutes of the meeting of the Policy and Resources Committee held on the 7th December 2022 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

90. ACCOUNT CONTROL SHEETS

Account Control Sheets for the period 14th December to 29th December 2022 and the General Bank Account for November and December 2022 were submitted for approval.

Councillor Jed Hillary queried the cost of batteries for LED lanterns which officers will investigate and email an explanation to all members of the Committee.

RESOLVED – that it be recommended that the Account Control Sheets for the period 14th December to 29th December 2022 and the General Bank Account for November and December 2022 be received.

91. GRANTS AND DONATIONS

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

It was noted that the following funds were currently available:

Donations Budget	£1,128
Youth Council Grants Budget	£1,500
Community Grants Fund	£22,643
Community Benefit Fund	£5,109

The following grant and donation requests were considered:

a) Rotary Club of Newton Aycliffe - Application for Financial Support from the Donations Budget

An application was received from the Rotary Club of Newton Aycliffe for £175 The donation will be used to cover the cost of printing 6,000 flyers for the annual Model Railway Exhibition Event to be held at the Youth Centre on 25th March 2023.

It was proposed by Councillor John Clark and seconded by Councillor Carl Robinson and

RESOLVED – that it be recommended:

- i) that a donation of £175.00 be given to the Rotary Club of Newton Aycliffe towards the cost of the annual Model Railway Exhibition Event to be held at the Youth Centre on 25th March 2023, to be funded from the Donations Budget.

An email was received thanking the Town Council together with a summary of income and expenditure from Neville Community Association in relation to the Christmas Live Music Event that the Council provided a donation towards.

RESOLVED – that it be recommended:

- ii) that the information be received.

92. NOTICE OF MOTION

To consider the following Motion proposed by Councillor Eddy Adam and seconded by Councillor Jim Atkinson:-

“That the budget sum of £25,000, included within the 2022/23 COVID Recovery Reserve, and originally allocated for environmental works on the former Elmfield School Site, be reallocated as match funding towards the Simpasture Pavilion Refurbishment Project”.

In support of the motion Councillor Eddy Adam added that this is an opportunity to invest in a property that hasn't been invested in a long time, would attract significant external grant funding and increase usage.

Councillor Bob Fleming opposed the motion, highlighting that capital balances have reduced significantly, and that the remaining resources set aside in the COVID Recovery Reserve should be transferred to capital reserves at the end of the year.

Councillor Jim Atkinson added this was an important asset management issue and improving the building would open up usage to a wider audience including girl's teams.

Councillor Michael Stead queried the tender prices, stating that new modular buildings would be more cost effective and he would not support the motion.

Councillor Eddy Adam in closing the debate stated that Councils need to look at their assets when additional funds are available and if the Council does not go ahead, the external funding will not be there forever.

A vote on the motion was carried out with the following results:

For: 4

Against: 20

The motion was defeated by a majority decision.

93. 2022/23 REVENUE AND CAPITAL BUDGET POSITION TO 31ST DECEMBER 2022 AND YEAR END OUTTURN FORECAST

The Finance Manager presented the financial position on the Council's approved 2022/23 Revenue and Capital Budget for the nine months to 31st December 2022, along with a forecast of the expected year-end outturn position.

It was proposed by Councillor Arun Chandran and seconded by Councillor Lindsey Aston and

RESOLVED – that it be recommended that;

- a) the latest financial position on the Council's 2022/23 Revenue and Capital Budgets and the projection of year-end expected outturn be received and;
- b) the £64,746 projected unused balance on the COVID Recovery Reserve balance at the end of the year be returned to the Council's earmarked reserves with the exception of £4,000 which is to be retained for bus shelter improvements.

94. 2023/24 REVENUE AND CAPITAL BUDGET APPROVAL

The Finance Manager submitted a report for Members approval regarding the setting of the Council's 2023/24 Revenue and Capital Budget, which will enable the 2023/24 Precept and Town Council Tax to be set at the Council Meeting next week in line with the Durham County Council deadline.

Councillor Carl Robinson referred to the budget survey and commented that as there were only 14 responses, they could not be taken as an accurate indication of public views.

Councillor Eddy Adam suggested that alternate methods of consultation are looked into for future budget setting rounds. He suggested that the Town Council tax be quoted in £/p and not as a percentage (%) increase in reports.

Councillor Arun Chandran wished to record his appreciation for members having passed the Budget and Precept unanimously, singling out Cllr Lyndsey Aston Leader of the Liberal Democrats, in particular, and adding that Members should all take a moment to reflect on the fact that Labour, Liberal Democrats and Independents, having considered the issues and challenges facing the Council are all united as one Council, serving the public interest on this one issue.

It was proposed by Councillor Arun Chandran, and seconded by Councillor Ken Robson and

RESOLVED – that it be recommended that;

- i) the final 2023/24 Revenue and Capital Budget proposals be received, and changes made to the draft budget be noted;
- ii) the feedback from the 2023/24 Budget Survey be received with members comments regarding the low response noted;
- iii) the Council's 2023/24 Revenue and Capital Budget as set out in the report and the attached appendices be received;
- iv) the 2023/24 Precept be set at £1,890,739 and the proposed increase of 7.5% to the Town Council Tax be agreed.

95. **SIMPASTURE PAVILLION REFURBISHMENT PROJECT**

A report was submitted providing information to Members regarding the completion of the feasibility study into options and costings for the potential refurbishment of Simpasture Pavilion and football changing rooms.

Councillor Arun Chandran proposed that the project be left in abeyance at this time and for the foreseeable future. Further exploration of available external funding streams should proceed at the appropriate time but given the cost-of-living crisis, energy cost increases and usage of the facility, the expenditure cannot be justified at this time.

Councillor Eddy Adam expressed his regret and stated that he felt this was a short-sighted decision to give up the opportunity of match funding for the project and that it would be unlikely that such monies would be available in the future.

It was proposed by Councillor Arun Chandran, and seconded by Councillor Ken Robson and

RESOLVED – that it be recommended that:

- i) the report and information provided in relation to the plans for refurbishment of Simpasture Pavilion be received;
- ii) the Town Council does not proceed with submitting a funding bid to Durham County Council's Towns and Villages Fund;
- iii) the project to be held in abeyance with no match funding from Great Aycliffe Town Council;
- iv) no exploration into other funding sources proceed at this time;
- v) the Town Clerk and Finance Manager investigate the VAT implications for reference in case a similar situation arises in the future; and
- vi) a letter be sent to GAMP advising and explaining the decision.

96. **TOWN CLERK APPRAISAL – APPOINTMENT OF APPRAISAL PANEL**

A report was submitted to request Members appoint an Appraisal Panel from the Personnel Sub Committee to undertake the annual appraisal of the Town Clerk.

It was proposed by Councillor Arun Chandran and seconded by Councillor Ken Robson and that the appraisal panel comprise the Chairman and Vice Chairman of Personnel Committee plus Councillors Eddy Adam, Lindsey Aston, Ken Robson and Bob Fleming with the power of substitution in the event that those named cannot attend.

Councillor John Clark queried the proposed nominations and whether members were to be selected from the Personnel Sub Committee.

The Town Clerk clarified that it is normal practice for the selection to be taken from the Personnel Sub Committee but as it is over six months since the original decision was taken, the Council is free to change its mind.

Councillor Ken Robson suggested that all members should be trained so there is a pool of people to draw on.

RESOLVED – that it be recommended that:

- i) the report be received;
- ii) an Appraisal Panel comprising the Chairman and Vice Chairman of Personnel Committee plus Councillors Eddy Adam, Lindsey Aston, Ken Robson, Bob Fleming be appointed, with the power of substitution in the event that those named cannot attend;
- iii) the Appraisal Panel, along with any other interested councillors, undertakes training on the application of the Council's Appraisal Scheme with the Corporate and Policy Officer;
- iv) a representative from the Council's human resources consultants be present to oversee the appraisal and to guide the members of the panel in ensuring that the appraisal process is undertaken fairly and effectively.

CHAIRMAN.