

## **POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE**

**WEDNESDAY 19<sup>TH</sup> JULY 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 19<sup>th</sup> July 2023 at 7.00pm.

### **PRESENT**

#### **Councillor Arun M. Chandran (Chairman)**

Eddy Adam, Tony Armstrong, Martin Ashcroft, Lindsey Aston, Peter Bergg, Dorothy Bowman, John Clark, George Gray, Ian Gray, Brian Haigh, Andy Hill, Jed Hillary, Joanne Jones, Neville Jones, John Moore, Carl Robinson, Ken Robson, Anita Sparrow, Anne Woodward and John Woodward.

### **OFFICIALS**

Mr. Dan Austin (Town Clerk)  
Mrs. Tracey Woodhead (Finance Manager)  
Mr. Steve Cooper (Works and Environment Manager)  
Mrs. Sharna Stretch (Senior Admin. Officer)

*A minute's silence was observed as a mark of respect for the passing of Councillor Bob Fleming, former Chairman of the Policy and Resources Committee.*

### **23. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors: Jim Atkinson, Sandra Haigh, Phillip Hawkins, Wendy Hillary, Simon Hocking, Sandra Kirby and Michael Stead.

### **24. MEMBERS DISPENSATIONS**

No dispensation requests had been received.

### **25. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Councillor Carl Robinson declared an interest in Agenda Item 13 as a member of Oak Leaf Golf Club.

### **26. PUBLIC QUESTIONS**

There were no public questions.

### **27. POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE MEETING 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 7<sup>th</sup> June 2023, be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

## 28. SERVICE REVIEW WORKING GROUP NOTES

It was proposed by Councillor Martin Ashcroft, seconded by Councillor Andy Hill, and;

**RESOLVED** - that the notes of the meeting of the Service Review Working Group, held on the 21<sup>st</sup> June 2023, be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman, and its recommendations and decisions be agreed.

## 29. ASSET MANAGEMENT MEMBER WORKING GROUP NOTES

It was proposed by Councillor Martin Ashcroft, seconded by Councillor Andy Hill, and;

**RESOLVED** - that the notes of the meeting of the Asset Management Working Group, held on the 28<sup>th</sup> June 2023, be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman, and its recommendations and decisions be agreed.

## 30. PRE-SCHOOL SUB COMMITTEE MEETING

It was proposed by Councillor Peter Bergg, seconded by Councillor Eddy Adam, and;

**RESOLVED** - that the minutes of the meeting of the Pre-School Sub Committee, held on the 5<sup>th</sup> July 2023, be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman, and its recommendations and decisions be agreed.

## 31. ACCOUNT CONTROL SHEETS

Account Control Sheets for the period 1<sup>st</sup> June 2023 to 29<sup>th</sup> June 2023 and the General Bank Account for May and June 2023 were submitted for approval.

**RESOLVED** – that it be recommended that the Account Control Sheets for the period 1<sup>st</sup> June 2023 to 29<sup>th</sup> June 2023 and the General Bank Account for May and June 2023 be received.

## 32. GRANTS AND DONATIONS

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

It was reported that a total of £4,250 is currently available in the Donations Budget and £5,109 in the Community Benefit Fund.

The following donation request was considered:

### a) **Heel and Toe Children's Charity – Application for a Donation of a Raffle or Auction Prize**

A letter was received from the Heel and Toe Charity, addressed to the Oak Leaf Golf Complex asking the Council to consider donating a prize for a fundraising raffle or auction.

It was proposed by Councillor Eddy Adam, seconded by Councillor Martin Ashcroft, and;

**RESOLVED** – that it be recommended that;

- i) The report be received.
- ii) A 4 Ball Golf Voucher be given to Heel and Toe Children's Charity towards their fundraising efforts.

**33. 2023/24 REVENUE AND CAPITAL BUDGET POSITION TO 30<sup>TH</sup> JUNE 2023**

The Finance Manager submitted a report presenting the financial position on the Council's approved 2023/24 Revenue and Capital Programme Budget, for the first three months of the new financial year, up to 30<sup>th</sup> June 2023.

**RESOLVED** – that it be recommended that:

- i) The financial position on the Council's 2023/24 Revenue and Capital Budgets for the three months to 30<sup>th</sup> June 2023 be received.
- ii) Further Revenue and Capital Budget Position Reports setting out the financial position as at 30<sup>th</sup> September 2023 and 31<sup>st</sup> December 2023, including projections of expected outturn, be reported to the October and January meetings of the Policy and Resources Committee.

**34. LOCAL COUNCIL TAX REDUCTION SCHEME - REDUCTION PROPOSALS**

The Finance Manager submitted a briefing note with supporting information to provide an overview on correspondence recently received from Durham County Council in relation to the Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme (LCTRS) grant.

Members were asked to note that the Medium-Term Financial Plan had been deferred and would be updated to include the proposed reduction in the LCTRS Grant along with options to fund the reduction, and that the updated plan will be presented to the Policy and Resources Committee in September.

The Finance Manager advised members about the impact that this proposal will have for the Town Council finances.

Option 1 would result in a grant cut of £51,228 in 2024/25 and Option 2 would see a £56,235 reduction in 2024/25.

Councillor Eddy Adam thanked the Finance Manager for the information and advised Members of the timescales of the consultation.

The Chairman suggested a 3<sup>rd</sup> option should be included in the consultation to reject the proposed reductions with no cut in the grant and a 4<sup>th</sup> option to reduce the grant by 10% over 10 years.

Councillor Jed Hillary suggested that if the proposals are agreed by the Durham County Council Cabinet, then the Great Aycliffe County Councillors should seek to call the decision in.

Councillor Ken Robson suggested a fifth option should be to defer it and take the matter up with the joint administration and proposed that the Town Council should invite officers from Durham County Council to a future meeting to discuss this issue.

Councillor Eddy Adam further added that the Labour Group at the County Council would be calling it in and that more pressure would be needed for the County Council to explore more options.

After further discussion, it was proposed by Councillor Ken Robson and seconded by Councillor Martin Ashcroft that the Town Council invite members from Durham County Council to a meeting, to include the Corporate Director of Resources, Leader of the Council and the Cabinet Member for Resources.

The Town Clerk advised that at the next Policy and Resources Meeting in September would be the most appropriate meeting as the Finance Manager will be reporting the updated Medium Term Finance Plan to this meeting.

**RESOLVED** – that it be recommended that:

- i) the briefing note and supporting information be received.
- ii) Officers invite members from Durham County Council to a future Committee meeting to discuss the issue.
- iii) The Finance Manager will update the MTFP to incorporate a worst-case scenario for the Town Council finances and report this to the next meeting.

### **35. USE OF VAT WINDFALL RESOURCES**

A report was submitted by the Town Clerk and the Finance Manager requesting members' consideration of options identified by officers in relation to the potential use of backdated VAT windfall resources, as requested by the Committee in April.

The Finance Manager and Town Clerk pointed out that the report was seeking agreement in principle of how any backdated windfall monies should be utilised, and that any spending would only be undertaken once it has been confirmed by HMRC that these will be paid, and how much is to be received.

There followed a lengthy debate,

Councillor Lindsey Aston thanked the officer for the report and proposed that there is a hold on any decision until the windfall is received and at that point a special meeting is called to discuss how the windfall monies are utilised.

Councillor Peter Bergg seconded this proposal and reiterated that no decision be made until the money is received.

The Town Clerk and the Finance Manager reiterated that officers had been asked to prepare a detailed report on this issue in April and that by agreeing the use of the monies in principle, no commitment to any expenditure would be made until such a time that the full amount is received.

Councillor Jed Hillary thanked the officers for the report and added it was good that there is a plan in place for spending the windfall.

Councillor Joanne Jones questioned whether the windfall resources could be used to offset the grant cuts faced and keep council tax down and proposed that the Council does nothing with the windfall until the state of the Council's finances is clearer.

Councillor Martin Ashcroft added that the drainage work on the golf course should be a priority as the facility is losing members due to course closures.

The Chairman proposed that the Council do nothing at this time and once the windfall is received, a special Policy and Resource Committee is convened. He further proposed that if the full amount is granted, then the golf course drainage improvements should be progressed straight away ahead of winter.

Councillor Ken Robson agreed with this investment should be prioritised.

Councillor Lindsey Aston agreed to include this addition to the original proposal.

The Town Clerk clarified that the Council would need to agree to waive standing orders to allow the golf course drainage works to go ahead without a further report to Council, subject to the completion of a Standing Order Exemption Form.

It was proposed by Councillor Lindsey Aston, and seconded by Councillor Peter Bergg, and

**RESOLVED** – that it be recommended that;

- i) The report be received.
- ii) No decision is made on how the windfall should be spent until the funds are received.
- iii) A special meeting of the Policy and Resources Committee is arranged when/if the windfall is received to reconsider the report.
- iv) Provided that the full amount is received; the golf course drainage works be progressed, without the need for a further report to Council.
- v) Standing Orders relating to Contracts and Procurement be waived in order to progress this work, subject to officers completing a Standing Order Exemption Form.

*Councillor Dorothy Bowman left the meeting at this point.*

### **36. PLAY AREA SAFETY SURFACING REPLACEMENT**

The Works and Environment Manager submitted a report outlining the proposed priority works for the improvement of the safety surfacing within the Council's play areas this year, as part of the approved 2023/24 Capital Programme Budget.

It was proposed by Councillor Jed Hillary, and seconded by Councillor Ken Robson, and

**RESOLVED** – that it be recommended that;

- i) the report be received;
- ii) RTC be awarded the contract to complete the overlay of the junior play area within St Oswald's Park at a cost of £27,280.

### 37. SUPPORTED INTERNSHIP – WORKS DEPARTMENT

The Works and Environment Manager submitted a report to provide Members with details of a proposed student placement from East Durham College (Houghall), on a new Supported Internship Scheme.

**RESOLVED** – that it be recommended that:

- i) The report be received.
- ii) The Supported Internship of one student within the Works Department, for up to a one-year placement, be agreed.

### 38. NOTICE OF MOTION

To consider the following motion from Councillor Arun M. Chandran, and seconded by Councillor Ken Robson:-

*" That the Council ask the Corporate Management Team to look into the feasibility of having solar panels fitted to the Sports Complex and Works Depot and anywhere else suitable and secure with the view of discovering the likely costs and likely incomes returns, and practicalities, to assess if the Council can introduce a new income stream and help reduce its carbon footprint ."*

The Chairman requested that the feasibility study should be undertaken within the period of approximately one year and added that the scope of the study would need to include:

- a) The Feed in Tariffs
- b) The payback period
- c) Whether the returns would justify the outlay
- d) Which roofs would be suitable
- e) The initial capital costs
- f) Whether battery storage is suitable
- g) Whether connecting the system to the grid to export surpluses is viable

Councillor Jed Hillary proposed that the Environment Centre at Moore Lane be included in this feasibility study.

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

**RESOLVED** – that it be recommended that:

- i) The motion be agreed and progressed.
- ii) The feasibility study be undertaken within the period of approximately one year.
- iii) the scope of the study to be as follows;
  - a) The Feed in Tariffs
  - b) The payback period
  - c) Whether the returns would justify the outlay
  - d) Which roofs would be suitable
  - e) The initial capital costs
  - f) Whether battery storage is suitable
  - g) Whether connecting the system to the grid to export surpluses is viable
- iv) the Environment Centre be included in the feasibility study.

### **39. ADDITIONAL CAPITAL BUDGET APPROVAL**

Following the recommendation made at the Recreation Committee meeting on Wednesday 12<sup>th</sup> July, Members were requested to agree the additional capital budget amount of £5,400 towards the upgrade of the Byerley Park play area.

The Town Clerk advised that a funding application had been submitted to Great Aycliffe and Middridge Partnership for £5,400 from Councillor Michael Stead's Neighbourhood Budget and that the additional budget approval was effectively a contingency sum in the event that this funding bid is not successful and would also allow the order to be placed and the works to take place ahead of the autumn and winter period.

It was proposed by Councillor Peter Bergg, seconded by Councillor Ken Robson and

**RESOLVED** – that it be recommended that:

- i) the additional capital budget amount of £5,400 towards the upgrade of the Byerley Park play area be agreed.

**CHAIRMAN.**