

POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

WEDNESDAY 17TH APRIL 2024

Minutes of the meeting of the **POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE** held in the Council Chamber, Council Offices, School Aycliffe Lane, Newton Aycliffe on Wednesday 17th April 2024 at 7.00pm.

PRESENT

Councillor Arun M. Chandran (Chairman)

Eddy Adam, Tony Armstrong, Martin Ashcroft, Lindsey Aston, John Clark, George Gray, Ian Gray, Phillip Hawkins, Andy Hill, Jed Hillary, Wendy Hillary, Simon Hocking, Joanne Jones, Neville Jones, Sandra Kirby, Brian McAnaney, John Moore, Carl Robinson, Ken Robson and Michael Stead.

OFFICERS

Mr. Dan Austin (Town Clerk)
Mrs. Tracey Woodhead (Finance Manager)
Miss. Amanda Donald (Corporate and Policy Officer)
Mr. Lee Williams (Grounds Maintenance Service Co-ordinator)
Mrs. Sharna Stretch (Senior Administration Officer)

IN ATTENDANCE

Two members of the public.

119. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors: Jim Atkinson, Dorothy Bowman, Sandra Haigh, Anita Sparrow, Anne Woodward and John Woodward.

120. MEMBERS DISPENSATIONS

No dispensation requests had been received.

121. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Eddy Adam declared a non-pecuniary interest in Agenda Item 9 (Grants and Donations) as a board member of the Pioneering Care Partnership and in Agenda Item 10 (War Memorial) as an affiliate of Rotary Great Aycliffe.

Councillor Carl Robinson declared a non-pecuniary interest as a member of the Oakleaf Golf Club in relation to Agenda Item 12 (Golf Course Footpaths).

122. PUBLIC QUESTIONS

There were no public questions.

123. POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE MINUTES

It was proposed by Councillor Andy Hill, seconded by Councillor Lindsey Aston and;

RESOLVED - that the minutes of the meeting of the Policy and Resources Committee, held on the 6th March 2024, be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

124. SERVICE REVIEW WORKING GROUP NOTES

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

RESOLVED - that the notes and the recommendations from the Service Review Working Group held on the 11th March 2024 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

125. PERSONNEL SUB COMMITTEE MINUTES

It was proposed by Councillor Ian Gray and seconded by Councillor Andy Hill and;

RESOLVED - that the minutes and the recommendations from the Personnel Sub Committee held on the 21st March 2024 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

126. ACCOUNTS CONTROL SHEETS

Accounts Control Sheets for the period 1st March to 28th March 2024 and the General Bank Accounts for February and March 2024 were submitted for approval.

RESOLVED – that it be recommended that the Account Control Sheets for the period 1st March to 28th March 2024 and the General Bank Accounts for February and March 2024 be received.

127. GRANTS AND DONATIONS

The Town Clerk submitted a report highlighting that a total of £5,000 is currently available in the Small Grants and Donations Budget, £7,156 in the Community Benefit Fund and Community Events Grants Budget £3,000.

The following grant and donation requests were considered:

a) K Little

A donation request was received from a local gymnast requesting a donation towards the costs of completing in the Turin Acro Cup with his Acro Gymnastic group at Deerness Gymnastic Academy.

It was proposed by Councillor Martin Ashcroft and seconded by Councillor Ken Robson that a grant of £250.00 be given.

An amendment was proposed by Councillor Lindsey Aston and seconded by Councillor Neville Jones that a donation of £500.00 be given.

A vote then took place on the amendment to the proposal and was agreed by a majority decision.

A further vote took place on the substantive motion and was agreed by a majority decision.

RESOLVED – that it be recommended that;

- i) A donation of £500.00 be given to K. Little towards funding the trip to compete in the Turin Acro Cup.

b) Pioneering Care Partnership

A grant application form was received from the Pioneering Care Partnership (PCP) requesting a grant of £1,000 to fund a Summer Fayre on Saturday 10th August for adults and children in Great Aycliffe.

It was proposed by Councillor John Clark and seconded by Councillor Simon Hocking that a grant of £350.00 be given.

An amendment was proposed by Councillor Neville Jones and seconded by Councillor Wendy Hillary that no donation be given.

A vote then took place on the amendment to the proposal with the following results:

For (not giving a donation): 11 Against (giving a donation): 9

The amendment was carried.

A further vote took place on the substantive motion with the following results:

For: 13 Against: 4

RESOLVED – that it be recommended that;

- i) No grant be given to the Pioneering Care Partnership (PCP).

c) Great Aycliffe Cancer Support Group

Members discussed the donation request from the Great Aycliffe Cancer Support Group from the previous meeting for funding towards the cost of a laptop and printer.

Members had agreed to defer the decision to the next meeting or such a time as the audited accounts are available and that officers were to contact the group to question the late submission of accounts to the Charity Commission.

It was reported that Officers had contacted Great Aycliffe Cancer Support Group and to date had not received any response.

Councillor Joanne Jones proposed that all requests from registered charities should be checked with the Charity Commission initially, to confirm their accounts had been filed on time and were up to date and that officers should seek clarification if this is not the case and include this in the Grants and Donations Report.

Councillor Wendy Hillary seconded this proposal and further requested that the Council's Grants and Donations Policy and Grant Application Form should be updated accordingly.

It was further proposed by Councillor Arun Chandran and seconded by Councillor Martin Ashcroft that the previous request from Great Aycliffe Cancer Support Group should now fall and they be advised that they can resubmit a new application to come to a future meeting at such a time as their accounts are up to date.

RESOLVED – that it be recommended that;

- i) The previous donation request from the Great Aycliffe Cancer Support Group be declined.
- ii) All grant requests from registered charities are checked with the Charity Commission, to confirm that their accounts have been filed on time and are up to date and that officers should seek clarification if this is not the case, and include this in the Grants and Donations Reports.
- iii) The Council's Grants and Donations Policy and Grant Application Form should be updated to reflect this.

128. WAR MEMORIAL UPDATE

Members were given an update in relation to the request from Rotary Newton Aycliffe to transfer ownership of the war memorial outside St Clare's Church to the Town Council.

Councillor Jed Hillary requested that any signage around the war memorial should be unobtrusive and sympathetic.

It was proposed by Councillor Jed Hillary and seconded by Councillor Michael Stead, and

RESOLVED – that it be recommended that:

- i) The update report be received.
- ii) The decision taken at the September 2023 Council Meeting, that the Town Council takes on ownership of the war memorial be agreed.
- iii) The cost of installing signage on the war memorial and replacing one light be agreed and met from existing maintenance budgets.
- iv) The advice received from the War Memorials Trust that funding would not be available for a war memorial less than 30 years old be noted.
- v) The previous resolution that '*any future replacement of the war memorial is undertaken via grant funding or local fundraising*' be reaffirmed.
- vi) The war memorial should be periodically checked by a competent structural expert in future years, and officers are authorised to make provision for the cost of these surveys in the Medium-Term Financial Plan.

129. SOLAR PANELS FEASIBILITY STUDY

The Town Clerk and Works and Environment Manager submitted a report for Members' consideration setting out the information gathered by officers in relation to the feasibility of installing solar panels on Council buildings, including the Sports Complex and works depots, and to request their guidance as to how the Council wishes to proceed with this matter.

In relation to the funding of any potential solar panels project, the Finance Manager advised that there is currently £120,000 in unallocated VAT windfall resources available, which could be identified as a 'Climate Change Reserve'.

Councillor Eddy Adam queried the grant being sought from the Community Energy Fund and the expected cost of consultancy support.

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

RESOLVED – that it be recommended that:

- i) The report be received.
- ii) The Oak Leaf Sports Complex be agreed as the priority for investment, due to the short payback period and high returns on investment via reduced running costs, and the significant reduction in CO2 emissions.
- iii) Capital budget provision be set aside in the next update of the Medium-Term Financial Plan for the installation of solar panels at the Oak Leaf Sports Complex;
- iv) Officers liaise further with the North East and Yorkshire Net Zero Hub to further investigate the possibility of submitting a bid to the Community Energy Fund to engage a professional consultant to undertake a full paid-for feasibility study into the installation of solar panels in order to ensure that all implications have been fully thought through and look into options for other renewable energy generation at Council facilities.
- v) Officers seek to set aside a budget for a full feasibility study, with support from Durham County Council Procurement Department, in the event of a funding bid not being successful (subject to a report to the Policy and Resources Committee).
- vi) The project be deferred until such a time as a full feasibility study has been undertaken and support from DCC Procurement Department has been secured to manage a full tender process on the Council's behalf.

130. GOLF COURSE FOOTPATH ADDITIONAL BUDGET REQUEST

The Grounds Services Maintenance Co-ordinator submitted a report to request an additional capital budget approval to purchase materials to extend the existing footpath from the 2nd tee of the Oak Leaf Golf Course, and to agree the installation of this additional footpath when ground conditions and works staff capacity allows.

Councillor Eddy Adam questioned whether officers required the monies to be approved at this meeting, in which case Standing Orders would need to be waived. It was confirmed that approval of the additional monies could wait for ratification at the Council Meeting.

Councillor John Clark questioned the use of the tarmac scrapings donated by Durham County Council and the Grounds Services Maintenance Co-ordinator provided clarification on this.

It was proposed by Councillor Eddy Adam and seconded by Councillor Martin Ashcroft and:-

RESOLVED – that it be recommended that:

- i) The report be received.
- ii) An additional capital budget approval to support the installation of the additional golf course footpath, at a cost of £3,360, be agreed.

131. SPECIAL LEAVE POLICY UPDATE

A report was submitted by the Corporate and Policy Officer to advise members of new legislation which gives employees the statutory right, under the Carer's Leave Regulations 2023, to request up to one week of unpaid Carer's Leave per year, in order to provide or arrange care for a dependant with long-term care needs.

Members were requested to agree an additional section in the Council's Special Leave Policy to reflect the new requirements.

It was proposed by Councillor Jed Hillary and seconded by Councillor Martin Ashcroft that the recommendations of the report be agreed.

RESOLVED – that it be recommended that:

- i) The report be received.
- ii) The additions to the Special Leave Policy be approved.

132. FLEXIBLE WORKING POLICY UPDATE

A report was submitted by the Corporate and Policy Officer advising members of amendments to flexible working legislation which took effect on 6th April 2024, and to request the approval of updates made to the Council's existing Flexible Working Policy, to reflect these changes.

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

RESOLVED – that it be recommended that:

- i) The report be received.
- ii) The amendments to the Flexible Working Policy be approved.

133. YOUR PARISH, YOUR CHOICE, YOUR VOICE COUNCIL SATISFACTION SURVEY RESULTS

The Corporate and Policy Officer submitted a report providing members with an overview of the results of the recent Your Parish, Your Voice, Your Choice Satisfaction Survey.

Councillor Eddy Adam thanked the Corporate and Policy Officer for an excellent report and asked if officers will review the comments and determine any key issues and priorities requiring further action by the Council.

It was confirmed that the results had been shared with all service managers and that any issues requiring action would be reported to the Council.

Councillor Lindsey Aston asked whether the comments received regarding special events such as raising the minimum age of the Senior Citizens Trips would be considered by the Council.

The Chairman advised this would be a policy decision for the Council but that such issues could be discussed at future meetings of the Events Sub Committee, or formally raised as an item or motion for the Council to consider.

RESOLVED – that it be recommended that:

- i) The report and information provided be received.
- ii) The survey results are considered by all service managers and any issues requiring action would be reported to the Council for consideration.

134. FINANCE SERVICE PLAN

The Finance Manager submitted the Finance Service Plan for the 2024/25 financial year for Member's consideration and approval.

RESOLVED – that it be recommended that:

- i) The report be received.
- ii) The 2024/25 Finance Service Plan, be approved.

CHAIRMAN.