

POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

WEDNESDAY 11TH SEPTEMBER 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 11th September 2024 at 7.02pm.

PRESENT

Councillor Arun M. Chandran (Chairman)

Councillors Tony Armstrong, Martin Ashcroft, Lindsey Aston, Jim Atkinson, Dorothy Bowman, John Clark, Neil Collinson, George Gray, Ian Gray, Brian Haigh, Phillip Hawkins, Andy Hill, Jed Hillary, Wendy Hillary, Simon Hocking, Joanne Jones, Neville Jones, Sandra Kirby, John Moore, Carl Robinson, Ken Robson, Michael Stead, Anne Woodward and John Woodward.

OFFICERS

Mr. Dan Austin (Town Clerk)

Mrs. Tracey Woodhead (Finance Manager)

Mrs. Sharna Stretch (Senior Administration Officer)

IN ATTENDANCE

Two members of the public

33. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors Eddy Adam, Sandra Haigh and Peter Musa.

34. MEMBERS DISPENSATIONS

No dispensation requests had been received.

35. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillors Joanne Jones and Neville Jones declared a non-pecuniary interest in Agenda Item 7 as they attend the Glow Church.

36. PUBLIC QUESTIONS

There were no public questions.

37. POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE MINUTES

It was proposed by Councillor Jed Hillary, seconded by Councillor Andy Hill and;

RESOLVED - that the minutes of the meeting of the Policy and Resources Committee, held on the 17th July 2024, be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

38. ACCOUNTS CONTROL SHEETS

Accounts Control Sheets for the 5th July, 19th July, 1st August and 10th August 2024 and the General Bank Account for July 2024 were submitted for approval.

The Finance Manager circulated an updated version of the General Bank Accounts for July as the original had omitted the salaries payment in error.

RESOLVED – that it be recommended that the Account Control Sheets for the 5th July, 19th July, 1st August and 10th August 2024 and the amended General Bank Account for July 2024 be received.

39. 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 £2,565 is currently available in the Donations Budget, £7,156 in the Community Benefit Fund and £3,000 in the Community Events Grants Budget.

The following grant and donation requests were considered:

a) Glow Church – Grant Application

A grant application form was received from the registered charity; Glow Church requesting a £9,900 grant towards the costs of their community Christmas show “The Gift”.

Councillor Tony Armstrong proposed a grant of £500 be given which was seconded by Councillor Ken Robson.

Councillor Lindsey Aston proposed an amendment that a grant of £1,500 be given, which was seconded by Councillor John Woodward.

Councillor Andy Hill further proposed an amendment that a grant of £1,000 be given and this was seconded by Councillor Martin Ashcroft.

Councillor Lindsey Aston requested that the grant be paid from the Community Events Grants Budget.

Councillor Joanne Jones suggested that grant and donation decisions made by the Council are not always consistent and that the Council may need to review and adapt its Grants and Donations Policy to improve consistency.

A vote was then taken on the first amendment of a grant of £1,500.

The result of the vote was as follows:

For: 7
Against: 13

The first amendment failed.

Members were then asked to vote on the next amendment of a grant of £1,000. This was agreed by a majority decision.

The amendment then became the substantive motion and was agreed by a majority decision.

RESOLVED – that it be recommended that;

- i) A grant of £1,000 be given to Glow Church towards the costs of their community Christmas show “The Gift”, to be funded from the Community Events Grants Budget.

b) Cute Fox Events – Grant Application

A grant application form was received from local community organisation: Cute Fox Events; requesting a £2,000 grant towards the costs of running a ‘Comic-Con’ type event at the Oak Leaf Sports Complex in May 2025.

A discussion took place regarding this request and whether a grant should be awarded, the grant amount, and whether offering a grant equivalent to the cost of using the sports complex facilities would be appropriate.

The Town Clerk advised that the hire cost for using the sports hall for the event would be £450.

It was proposed by Councillor Lindsey Aston, and seconded by Councillor Jed Hillary, that a grant of £450 be given towards the hire of the hall at the Oak Leaf Sports Complex, from the Community Events Grants Budget, and that the grant be paid via an internal transfer between the Community Events Grants Budget and the Oak Leaf Sports Complex Income Budget.

Councillor Joanne Jones queried the proposal as previously the Council had declined another request for room hire costs.

A vote then took place with a majority decision in favour of the proposal with one member voting against.

RESOLVED – that it be recommended that;

- i) A grant of £450 be given to Cute Fox Events towards the costs of running a ‘Comic-Con’ type event in Great Aycliffe in May 2025, to be funded from the Community Events Grants Budget.
- ii) The grant be paid via an internal transfer between the Community Events Grants Budget and the Oak Leaf Sports Complex Income Budget.

c) Letter of Thanks / Post Grant Questionnaire

A letter of thanks and a post-grant questionnaire had been received from Opera Nova and a letter of thanks from the Newton Aycliffe Pipe Band.

RESOLVED – that it be recommended that;

- i) The letters of thanks from Opera Nova and the Newton Aycliffe Pipe Band and the post-grant questionnaire from Opera Nova be received.

40. MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL PLAN

The Finance Manager and Town Clerk provided a report setting out the Council's 2024/25 to 2028/29 Medium Term Financial Plan and its associated appendices for members' consideration and approval.

The Finance Manager outlined some key points and risks including officer pay awards which has not been agreed, future increases to the National Living Wage and the cuts to the Council Tax Support Grant by Durham County Council.

It was highlighted that the forecast council tax increases in the Revenue Budget forecast were impacted by the cut to the Council Tax Support Grant, and excluding these grant cuts, the forecast increase for 2025/26 was below the current rate of inflation.

Members agreed unanimously to receive the report and approve the Plan.

Councillor Tony Armstrong wished to record his thanks to the Finance Manager and Senior Management Team for the work that had been undertaken on the Plan.

Councillor Jim Atkinson echoed these comments.

RESOLVED – that it be recommended that:

- i) The report be received;
- ii) The 2024/25 to 2028/29 Medium Term Financial Plan is approved.

41. 2025/26 BUDGET FRAMEWORK AND TIMETABLE

The Finance Manager submitted a report setting out the proposed framework and timetable for the setting of the Council's 2025/26 Revenue and Capital Programme Budgets for members' consideration and approval.

It was proposed by Councillor Jim Atkinson, and seconded by Councillor John Clark and;

RESOLVED – that it be recommended that:

- i) The Budget Framework and Timetable for the setting of the Council's 2025/26 Revenue and Capital Budgets be approved.
- ii) The proposed online budget consultation as part of the 2025/26 budget process be agreed.

42. ADDITIONAL CAPITAL BUDGET APPROVALS

Members were asked to approve the two Capital Budget amendments, as agreed at the Recreation Committee on 4th September 2024.

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

RESOLVED – that it be recommended that:

- i) A total of £10,205 is brought forward, from the £75,000 West Park Lakes Capital Budget currently set aside in the 2027/28 year in the Medium-Term Financial Plan, to the 2024/25 Capital Programme, to fund further bridge adaptations to aid future management of the bridge and lake; and
- ii) An additional capital budget approval of £5,250 be approved to fund the cost of the required repairs to the climbing frame unit in Scott Place Play Area.

CHAIRMAN