POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

WEDNESDAY 4TH JUNE 2025

Minutes of the meeting of the **POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE** held in the Council Chamber, Council Offices, School Aycliffe Lane, Newton Aycliffe on Wednesday 4th June 2025 at 7.00pm.

PRESENT

Councillor Carl Robinson (Chairman)
Tunde Akinsanya, Tony Armstrong, Martin Ashcroft, Lindsey Aston, Jaci Beddard, Tony Beddard, Dorothy Bowman, Arun M. Chandran, Neil Collinson, Luke Ellis, Jordan Gill, George Gray, Brian Haigh, Andy Hill, Richard Hutchinson, Sandra Kirby, Jackie McFadden, John Moore, Kyle Robinson, Ken Robson, Michael Stead, Tracey Williams, Anne Woodward and John Woodward.

OFFICIALS

Mr. Dan Austin (Town Clerk)
Mrs. Tracey Woodhead (Finance Manager)
Ms. Amanda Donald (Corporate and Policy Officer)
Mrs. Sharna Stretch (Senior Administration Officer)
Mr. Andy Clark (Sports Complex Manager)

IN ATTENDANCE

There were no members of the public.

7. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors Lisa Conners, Phillip Hawkins and Brian Sowerby.

8. MEMBERS DISPENSATIONS

No dispensation requests had been received.

9. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

10. PUBLIC QUESTIONS

There were no public questions.

11. POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE MINUTES

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

RESOLVED - that the minutes of the meeting of the Policy and Resources Committee, held on the 16th April 2025, be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

12. AUDIT, RISK AND G.D.P.R. SUB COMMITTEE MINUTES

It was proposed by Councillor Ken Robson, and seconded by Councillor Brian Haigh, and;

RESOLVED - that the minutes and recommendations of the meeting of the Audit, Risk and G.D.P.R Sub Committee, held on the 22nd April 2025, be agreed, confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

13. ACCOUNT CONTROL SHEETS

Account Control Sheets for the 9th, 25th April and 9th May and the General Bank Accounts for March and April were submitted for approval.

It was proposed by Councillor Lindsey Aston, and seconded by Councillor Richard Hutchinson, and;

RESOLVED – that it be recommended that the Account Control Sheets for the 9th April, 25th April and 9th May and the General Bank Accounts for March and April be received.

14. GRANTS AND DONATIONS

The Town Clerk submitted a report setting out for consideration a donation request received since the last meeting.

It was reported that a total of £2,500 is currently available in the Grants and Donations Budget, £8,510 in the Community Benefit Fund and £4,000 in the Community Events Grants Budget.

The following donation request was considered:

a) Heighington Village Family Fun Day

A donation request was received from a resident of Heighington Village requesting a raffle prize for a Family Fun Day being held in the village in September 2025.

Councillor Lindsey Aston stated that as Heighington is not within the boundary of Great Aycliffe Town Council, it is ineligible as per our Grants and Donations Policy.

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

RESOLVED – that it be recommended that;

(i) The request for a donation be rejected as it does not meet the Town Council's eligibility criteria as outlined in the Grants and Donations Policy, as it lies outside the parish.

15. 2024/25 REVENUE AND CAPITAL BUDGET YEAR END OUTTURN

The Finance Manager provided a report for Member's with details of the year-end outturn position on the Council's approved Revenue and Capital Budgets for the 2024/25 financial year.

The report also outlined the year-end position on the Council's balances and reserves, loans, investments and debtors.

The Finance Manager provided a detailed overview of the report and explanation of the reasons for Revenue Budget saving, lower than expected Capital Budget outturn and the ensuing increase in the level of the Council's balances and reserves.

Councillor Carl Robinson thanked the Finance Manager for the comprehensive report and referred councillors to the various recommendations of the report, and asked that questions and comments be made relating to each recommendation.

A number of councillors asked questions and made comments on the outturn position.

It was proposed by Councillor Richard Hutchinson and seconded by Councillor Ken Robson that a total of £50,000 be set aside into the Community Support Fund, rather than the £30,000 indicated in the report.

It was proposed by Councillor Arun Chandran and seconded by Councillor Neil Collinson that the ideas put forward by Councillor Aston for use of the Community Support Fund be considered and costed by officers, and that councillors forward any further ideas for investments to officers ahead of the next meeting.

Members discussed the outstanding AJX Academy debt, and it was proposed by Councillor Kyle Robinson and seconded by Councillor Neil Collinson that the debt is not written off and officers contact Durham Football Association to see what assistance they may be able to provide to assist with recovering the debt.

The Finance Manager added that changes have been made to our Financial Regulations to mitigate this issue arising in the future.

RESOLVED – that it be recommended that:

i) The year-end financial position on the Council's 2024/25 Revenue Budgets be received,
ii) The year-end financial position on the Council's 2024/25 Capital Programme Budgets be received,
iii) The year-end position on the Council's Balances and Reserves and the proposed allocation of those balances be approved,
iv) A total of £50,000 from the Revenue Budget savings should be set aside in the Community Support Fund;
v) Members to submit their ideas for the allocation and use of this fund and officers to cost these and submit a report to the July Meeting.
vi) The Revenue Budget Reserve carry forward requests totalling £31,149 be approved;
vii) The VAT Windfall Reserve carry forward requests totalling £12,750, be approved;
viii) The Capital Programme carry forward requests totalling £366,900 be approved;

ix) The AJX Academy debt is not written off and officers contact Durham Football Association regarding the outstanding AJX Academy debt to ascertain what, if any, assistance they can provide;
x) The Committee continues to receive quarterly budgetary control reports during the 2025/26 financial year, detailing the financial position and expected outturn on the Council's 2025/26 Revenue and Capital Budgets.

16. PURCHASE OF COMMUNITY EVENT MARQUEES

The Head of Leisure and Events submitted a report to request Members' consideration and approval to purchase two marquees for use at its programme of community events and to approve an advance payment in accordance with the Council's Financial Regulations.

RESOLVED – that it be recommended that:

i) the report be received;
ii) officers to purchase the marquees and payment to be made in advance of the goods being delivered.

17. OAKLEAF SPORTS COMPLEX CAPITAL EXPENDITURE - MALE TOILETS REFURBISHMENT

The Sports Complex Manager submitted a report requesting the consideration of quotes for the refurbishment of the sports complex male toilets.

A lengthy debate followed regarding the various options and quotes.

Councillor John Moore queried whether specifications were drawn up for capital projects and whether surveyors should be utilised to assist with this.

The Town Clerk explained that procurement was undertaken in line with the Standing Orders for Contracts and Procurement and that tender specifications were only drawn up for large and complex capital projects above the thresholds in the Standing Orders and that caution needed to be exercised in engaging surveyors for smaller projects as this would significantly add to the cost of delivering the Council's Capital Programme Budget. It was however acknowledged that officers needed to ensure consistency in quotes.

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

RESOLVED – that it be recommended that:

i) The report be received;
ii) The officer's recommendation that Company 1 carry out the refurbishment of the male toilets be agreed;
iii) The additional unbudgeted cost of £264 is met from the Sports Complex Building Maintenance Budget.

18. ADDITIONAL CAPITAL BUDGET REQUEST – BAR CHAIRS

Members considered an additional Capital Budget approval request of £4,200 to replace 30 bar chairs at the Oak Leaf Sports Complex, as agreed at the Recreation Committee Meeting on 28th May 2025.

RESOLVED – that it be recommended that:

i) The request for an additional Capital Budget amount of £4,200 be approved.

19. EXEMPT BUSINESS

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.

20. EMERGENCY ACTION PLAN FOR COUNCIL OFFICES AND MEETINGS

The Corporate and Policy Officer submitted a report and provided a short briefing session for members regarding an Emergency Action Plan for the Council Offices, which included arrangements for ensuring safety at Council Meetings.

Councillor Tony Beddard proposed that a report be brought forward to a future meeting asking the Council to consider adopting a policy of issuing identification badges to all councillors and officers. This was seconded by Councillor Richard Hutchinson.

A lengthy debate ensued regarding the merits of issuing identification badges with a number of councillors indicating that they did not want to use them.

Councillor Tracey Williams left the meeting.

It was agreed to take a vote on the proposal and Councillor George Gray requested a named vote.

The outcome of the vote was as follows:

For: 11 Votes	**Against: 12 Votes**
Councillor Martin Ashcroft	Councillor Tunde Akinsanya
Councillor Jaci Beddard	Councillor Lindsey Aston
Councillor Tony Beddard	Councillor Arun Chandran
Councillor Dorothy Bowman	Councillor Neil Collinson
Councillor George Gray	Councillor Luke Ellis
Councillor Andy Hill	Councillor Jordan Gill
Councillor Richard Hutchinson	Councillor Brian Haigh
Councillor Jacqui Mcfadden	Councillor Sandra Kirby
Councillor John Moore	Councillor Kyle Robinson
Councillor Carl Robinson	Councillor Michael Stead
Councillor Ken Robson	Councillor Anne Woodward
	Councillor John Woodward

Abstention: Councillor Tony Armstrong

The vote was against a report being brought forward to a future meeting asking the Council to consider adopting a policy of issuing identification badges to all councillors and officers.

It was proposed by Councillor Arun Chandran and seconded by Councillor Lindsey Aston that a practice drill is undertaken once each Council term to test Councillors understanding of the requirements of the Emergency Action Plan.

RESOLVED – that it be recommended that:

i) The report be received;
ii) The Emergency Action Plan for the Council Offices be approved;
iii) Members familiarise themselves with the content of the Emergency Action Plan and actions which may need to be taken in the event of an emergency;
iv) An evacuation drill be arranged for a future date during the term of the Council;
v) A report is not brought forward to the Council regarding the adoption of a policy of issuing identification badges to all councillors and officers.

21. RE-ADMISSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

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

CHAIRMAN.