



## Minutes of the Council Affairs & Finance Committee of the Democratic Services held on Tuesday, April 16, 2024 at 19:00 at Old Landscore School.

**Present:** Cllrs Steve Huxtable, Rachel Backhouse, Liz Brookes-Hocking, Jim Cairney, Guy Cochran, Giles Fawssett, Joyce Harris and Frank Letch

**In Attendance:** One member of the public  
Rachel Avery, Town Clerk

### MINUTES

#### 167 WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION

The meeting was opened at 19:03 and members introduced themselves.

#### 168 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

The following questions were raised by a member of the public:

- Whether a grant application could be considered for Welcoming Refugees. It was noted that ad-hoc applications for grants can be made subject to a budget still being available for the relevant year
- What benefit to the community the outsourcing of HR and Health and Safety and if the cost will come from reserves.

*Cllr Cairney joined the meeting at 19.10*

Questions raised by a member of the public not in attendance were read out by the Chair. Responses to all questions would be added to the council's website.

#### 169 APOLOGIES

There were no apologies.

#### 170 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND REQUEST FOR DISPENSATIONS

##### 170.1 TO RECEIVE DECLARATIONS OF PERSONAL INTEREST AND DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY INTERESTS (DPI'S) IN RESPECT OF ITEMS ON THIS AGENDA

Cllr Brookes-Hocking declared a DPI relating to item 183.

##### 170.2 TO CONSIDER ANY DISPENSATION REQUESTS (REQUESTS SHOULD BE MADE TO THE TOWN CLERK PRIOR TO THE MEETING)

There were no dispensation requests.

## **171 ORDER OF BUSINESS**

It was resolved to move 183 to 180. (Proposed by Cllr Huxtable)

## **172 CHAIR'S AND CLERK'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

There were no announcements.

## **173 COUNCIL AFFAIRS AND FINANCE COMMITTEE MINUTES**

Item 156: It was noted that enquiries regarding grant applications were made by Cllr Backhouse.

Item 157: Cllr Fawssett clarified that the law regarding co-option was correct, but that he did not agree with it. He reiterated that members should be able to walk to meetings and therefore from the town.

It was **resolved** to approve the minutes (Proposed by Cllr Cochran).

## **174 FINANCE**

### **174.1 TO RECEIVE AND APPROVE TRANSACTIONS BETWEEN 01 MARCH 2024 AND 31 MARCH 2024**

It was **resolved** to receive and approve transactions between 01 March 2024 and 31 March 2024. (Proposed by Cllr Harris)

### **174.2 TO RECEIVE AND APPROVE THE BANK RECONCILIATION TO 31 MARCH 2024**

It was **resolved** to receive and approve the bank reconciliation to 31 March 2024. (Proposed by Cllr Harris)

### **174.3 TO NOTE BANK ACCOUNT BALANCES TO 31 MARCH 2024**

The bank account balances were **noted**.

### **174.4 TO RECEIVE AND APPROVE THE DIRECT DEBITS FOR 1 APRIL 2024 - 31 MARCH 2025**

It was **resolved** to approve the direct debits for 1 April 2024 - 31 March 2025. (Proposed by Cllr Harris)

**175 GRANT FUNDING**

It was **resolved** to approve the grant application, to support the maintenance of links with Dokkum and Fulda. (Proposed by Cllr Brookes Hocking)

**176 GDPR**

Cllr Backhouse raised concerns that the training had been intended for the public, which no longer appears to be the case.

Cllr Cairney stated that a member of the public raised a concern. To not act on such a complicated subject would be wrong, but opening to the public would be inappropriate.

Cllr Huxtable agreed that members of the public should not be attending training.

Cllr Fawssett stated that he did not support spending money on this matter.

Cllr Backhouse noted the importance of communicating learning and any actions to the public.

It was **resolved** to recommend quote A, for approval by Full Council. (Proposed by Cllr Harris, Cllr Fawssett voted against)

**177 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME**

The council acknowledged that the current way of running public question time was not satisfactory and does not reflect the Communication Strategy. A change to standing orders may be required in the future, but some new approaches should be considered and attempted.

Consideration and discussion were given to each proposal within the report written by Cllr Backhouse:

- *Public question time is to be renamed as public question and answer time. The chair is encouraged, when possible, to invite opinion from around the table, from other councillors, when addressing some of the questions. Alternatively, the chair could state that the issue will be placed on SharePoint and be discussed here by a range of councillors on this platform over the coming days*

It was **resolved** to refuse this proposal, but the use of Teams to discuss questions would be investigated. (Proposed by Cllr Harris, Cllr Backhouse voted against)

- *Before each full council meeting, we hold an informal public debate time. This will begin at 1830 and will last 30 mins, and will not follow standing orders. This will not be minuted and will be on camera only if members of the public agree to this. Tea and coffee to be offered. I am happy to organise this. Attendance of this session will be voluntary for councillors. Issues arising will not be followed up in the meeting immediately following, but items can be actioned for the next appropriate agenda. The formal meeting will begin at 1900*

It was resolved to approve this proposal, subject to the Town Clerk's confirmation of agenda setting and ensuring that meetings can commence earlier if there is no attendance. (Proposed by Cllr Fawssett, Cllr F Letch voted against)

- *Regular (dates and times to be discussed) “coffee and conversation” events will be held, aiming to cover different timings and days to allow a wide cross section of the community to attend if they wish*

It was **resolved** to approve this proposal. (Proposed by Cllr Fawssett)

#### 178 EXTERNAL SUPPORT FOR HUMAN RESOURCES AND HEALTH AND SAFETY SUPPORT

Cllr Huxtable advised that he had discussed aspects of this item have been discussed with the Town Clerk. It was **noted** that further information is outstanding, and this item would be considered at a further meeting.

#### 179 ANNUAL TOWN MEETING AND MAYORAL RECEPTION

It was **noted** that the Annual Town Meeting will take place on Friday 17 May, with the main meeting commencing at 18.30. This will be followed by a Mayoral Reception. It was noted that the agenda would be circulated and invitations have been sent.

#### 180 OLD COUNCIL OFFICE BUILDING, MARKET STREET

It was noted that the Old Council Office Building at Market Street was no longer listed as an Asset of Community Value, and this would be reviewed as required in the future.

#### 181 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The date of the next meeting was **noted**, Tuesday 14 May 2024.

#### 182 PART II

It was **resolved** to move into Part II. (Proposed by Cllr Brookes-Hocking)

#### 183 COUNCIL OFFICES

*Cllr Cairney left the meeting at 20.50*

It was **resolved** to approve recommendations, for Full Council approval. (Proposed by Cllr Huxtable)

#### 184 REPORTS PACK

Signed .....

Dated.....