

Minutes of a meeting of the **Finance, Administration and Personnel Committee** of Buckingham Town Council held on **Monday 29<sup>th</sup> July 2013** in the Council Chamber, Cornwalls Meadow, Buckingham at 7pm.

**Present:** Cllr. T. Bloomfield  
 Cllr. H. Cadd  
 Cllr. Mrs. G. Collins  
 Cllr. P. Collins  
 Cllr. J. Harvey  
 Cllr. P. Hirons  
 Cllr. D. Isham  
 Cllr. H. Mordue  
 Cllr. Ms. Newell - Town Mayor  
 Cllr. Mrs. O'Donoghue  
 Cllr. M. Smith  
 Cllr. R. Stuchbury  
 Cllr. M. Try

**Also present:** Mr. C. Wayman Town Clerk  
 Mrs. K. McElligott

**264/13 Apologies for Absence**

There were no apologies.

**265/13 Declarations of Interest**

Cllrs. Bloomfield (employee), G. Collins, P. Collins, Isham and Try (Trustees) declared a prejudicial interest in Agenda item 6. It was resolved that the agenda order would be changed so that item 6 could be taken last, and these Members leave before the matter was discussed. The Town Clerk confirmed that the meeting would still be quorate.

**266/13 Minutes**

**RESOLVED** to receive the minutes of the Finance, Administration and Personnel Committee meeting held on Monday 10<sup>th</sup> June 2013 and ratified by Full Council on 24<sup>th</sup> June 2013 (FAP/01/12).

**267/13 Communications Strategy Meeting Minutes**

**RESOLVED** to receive the minutes of the meeting held on 17<sup>th</sup> July 2013 (CSG/02/13).

**268/13 Motion – Cllr Harvey**

“In pursuit of even greater transparency & better risk management, we call upon the Internal Auditor (with a suitable budget to be agreed with the Clerk) to conduct an urgent review of the significant risks that the Town Council might be exposed to through its service contracts, property ownership and other arrangements/contracts, and advise mitigating action where judged to be proportionate.”

Cllr. Harvey thought an independent review was preferable; the person could consult with Councillors and staff as necessary to gain the information. The Auditor could flag up any perceived risks and prioritise necessary action. It should be done as soon as possible.

Members discussed whether it should be done internally via the individual committees, or by an external consultant. The Town Clerk said that the Council had very few contracts, and some of these were duplicates, such as the roundabout sponsorships. A few did not currently exist in written form for historical reasons, but formal agreements could be drawn up. He estimated there might be a week's work involved at an unknown daily charge. He suggested the new Deputy Town Clerk could carry out the assessment as he had expertise in the field, but the result would not be available until October.

Cllr. Stuchbury pointed out that any contract was discussed and agreed in Committee, and then the decision acted upon by the Town Clerk; the Minutes therefore provided a record of contracts held. He could not support the motion without knowing the costs involved and a budget having been identified. He proposed that the new staff member carry out the work. The Mayor supported the proposal, adding that the Internal Auditor could check over his findings.

Cllr. Harvey opposed this idea, saying that it would put a new member of staff in a difficult position; his motion afforded the perception of objectivity and independence. The Clerk should obtain costs and the Committee set a limit, above which the Clerk needed to bring the matter back to the Committee for approval. He had suggested the Internal Auditor as he already knew the Council's business.

Cllr. Mordue asked about the existing Risk Management Policy; the Town Clerk said that this would be updated this year.

Cllr. Stuchbury, seconded by Cllr. Newell, proposed an amendment: that the Town Clerk work with the Deputy Town Clerk on the scope of the work involved, to obtain costs and identify an appropriate budget heading for external overview by a consultant. Members voted 4 for and 9 against the amendment.

Cllr. P. Collins said that as this was an unexpected expense it could be paid for from the Contingency budget.

Members then voted on Cllr. Harvey's motion: 8 for, 1 against with 4 abstentions.

*Agenda item 6 was deferred to later in the meeting (Min.276/13)*

## **269/13 Action Report**

527/12 (Devolved Services). The Town Clerk reported on a lengthy and comprehensive telephone survey conducted by BCC on this subject. He had given frank answers on past failings and the lack of engagement with Town and Parish Councils, and the lack of action resulting from a previous consultation. He looked for some response within the next two weeks, and had also discussed further devolved services with the Localities Manager separately.

Cllr. Smith noted that EP&H had discussed the day-rate for Community Payback; the Town Clerk explained that the rate had been renegotiated to a more realistic level three years ago.

It was agreed that realistic rates for any services devolved from County or District Council should be calculated to include both staff time and vehicle overheads, so that the Council was not subsidising cutbacks made by other Authorities.

Cllr. Stuchbury expressed concern about the future of BCC facilities such as the Library and the Verney Close Day Centre, both of which were assets to the town. The long-term policy should be established in case closures were mooted and the

Town Council felt that it should support the retention of such facilities for the benefit of the town, as it had with the Youth Centre and the TIC.

773.5/12 (Sickness Absence Policy): The Mayor would provide the Town Clerk with her suggestions this week.

140/13 (Grants): The Town Clerk regretted that he had not had time to review the policy; he would have something available for the next meeting. The grant packs were normally sent out in November. The feeling of the meeting was that the grant fund should be calculated as the balance left after the Precept total was agreed and all committed budgets deducted, and grants awarded accordingly, rather than agree the grant amounts before the Precept.

### **270/13 Accounts and Budgets**

Noted.

### **271/13 Air Conditioning in the Chamber**

Members felt the Chamber was too hot and airless in the very hot weather, and discussed means of alleviating the problem. The Council had owned a portable air-conditioning unit, but this had failed its PAT test three years ago and not been replaced. Cllr. P. Collins advocated air-conditioning for the whole building; Cllr. Isham said that it had been installed in the Community Centre but was removed as it was useless. Units which cooled the air through water added to the humidity in the room, and portable units were often noisy. Permanent installations used a lot of electricity and required outside fitments and ducting. Cllr. Stuchbury noted that the office was also stifling in summer, and occupied longer than the Chamber in the course of the week.

As the fan in the Chamber for the meeting had been brought over from the office and would need to be returned and an additional fan for the back of the Chamber was agreed as necessary, Members agreed to purchase two new pedestal fans so that both Chamber and office had two.

#### **ACTION OFFICE STAFF**

### **272/13 Internal Audit Report**

The final report for 2012-13 was circulated with the agenda; the Town Clerk read out the various recommendations and the reasons for them.

Members noted the report and agreed the increased Fidelity Guarantee Insurance sum and premium.

#### **ACTION TOWN CLERK**

### **273/13 NALC 2013 Pay Award**

Members noted the information received from NALC and agreed the 1% national pay increase, backdated to 1<sup>st</sup> April 2013. Pay rates had been static for four years.

### **274/13 Chairman's Announcements**

Cllr. Mrs. Collins announced that Mr. Christopher Robson had been appointed to the Deputy Town Clerk post, and would start after August Bank Holiday. He had worked in the Civil Service and for an investment bank. His appointment was subject to acceptable references, a medical, and a six-month probation period.

**275/13 Date of Next Meeting:** Monday 16<sup>th</sup> September 2013

### **276/13 Motion - Cllr Stuchbury**

(With reference to Full Council Minute 173/13)

29th July 2013

14/08/2013

RATIFIED 12<sup>TH</sup> AUGUST 2013

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Initial.....

“In light of the statement by the Buckingham Community Centre Management Committee on the difficulty of recruiting a full complement of Trustees and the eventual possibility of asking the Town Council to run the Community Centre in 18 months’ time:

I propose that this Council

1. Be provided with details of the costs of running the Centre;
  2. See the Centre accounts;
  3. Discuss plans for running the Centre in the eventuality of there being no Management Committee;
  4. Instigate open debate amongst Councillors without a declarable interest in the Community Centre;
  5. Look into the legal ramifications of there being no Management Committee;
- In order that this Council can forward plan its budgets in a prudent manner. I also advocate that Council officers meet the Management Committee only after the Council has discussed the matter.”

*Cllr. O’Donoghue took the Chair for the remainder of the meeting, as Cllr. Mrs Collins had declared an interest. Other Members who had declared an interest remained in the Chamber to provide further information as requested.*

- The Community Centre’s year-end was 31<sup>st</sup> December; previous accounts were available on the Charity Commission’s website.
- A decision on the way forward should optimally be made by 31/12/13, change to be completed by 31/12/14.
- An examination of the lease led to the conclusion that it was a ‘Full Repairing’ lease.
- The simplest way forward was for the Town Council to terminate the lease.
- The Community Association had Charity status.
- There were two sorts of Trustees: Custodian Trustees who were named on the lease (currently three in number); and the Management Trustees who formed the committee running the Centre.

*Cllrs. Bloomfield, Cadd, Mrs. G. Collins, P. Collins, Isham, and Try then left the Chamber.*

Members discussed the motion, and the difficulty posed by so many Councillors being associated with the management of the Centre. It was asked whether it was usual for a Town/Parish council to run a community centre; the Town Clerk said he knew of at least three in the District alone.

The hours of opening were varied and often unsocial, depending on bookings; however the building had to be heated and so on whether booked or not, incurring costs. The building was without a manager currently, and had 3 caretaking staff.

Cllr. Smith said that the Council needed to

- scrutinise all the relevant documents immediately;
- be mindful of the views of users;
- consider the costs of maintaining the fabric;
- consider the running costs and booking charges.

It was agreed that the Centre was an asset for Buckingham and the Town Council was committed to its support, but that insufficient information was available at

present. Cllr. Harvey proposed an amended motion which was accepted by Cllr. Stuchbury.

Proposed by Cllr. Harvey, seconded by Cllr. Stuchbury, and **AGREED** unanimously that the Town Clerk prepare an options report to be discussed at the next Finance, Administration and Personnel Committee, based on the motion submitted by Cllr. Stuchbury and mindful of the points raised by Cllr. Smith, so that the Committee could decide on an option to recommend to the Full Council.

For the avoidance of any doubt, a Recorded Vote was called for:-  
For the motion as amended above  
Cllrs. Harvey, Hirons, Mordue, Newell, O'Donoghue, Smith & Stuchbury;  
Against the motion  
None.

Meeting closed at: 9.05pm.

Signed.....

Date.....