

Minutes of the Meeting of the **FINANCE COMMITTEE** held in the Four Clocks Centre, Bishop Auckland on **TUESDAY, 8TH JANUARY 2019 AT 5.00 P.M.**

Present: Councillor Wilson (Chairman) and Councillors, Blackburn, Brownson, Chappell and S. Zair

Also Present: Councillors Cullen, Fleming and Tucker and David Anderson (Town Clerk)

FIN.41/18 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillors Allen, A Zair and L. Zair

FIN.42/18 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Item No 4.4 Authorisation of Cheques, a. Written Under Delegated Powers

Councillor S. Zair declared a 'disclosable pecuniary interest' in respect of cheque no 1720 and withdrew from the meeting for the duration of the discussion thereon.

Item No 4.5 Bishop Auckland Town Team - Request for Funding to Support Events in the Town Centre

Councillor Blackburn, Brownson and Tucker declared an 'other registerable interest' in respect of this item and took no part in the voting thereon.

Councillor S. Zair declared a 'disclosable pecuniary interest' in respect of this item and withdrew from the meeting for the duration of the discussion thereon.

FIN.43/18 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

There were no members of the public in attendance.

REPORT OF TOWN CLERK

FIN.37/18 ACCOUNT BALANCES AS AT 8TH JANUARY 2019

The Town Clerk reported account balances as follows: -

Lloyds Deposit Account	£41,657.22
Lloyds Current Account	£6,681.52
Darlington Building Society	£85,000.12
Nationwide	£85,000.58
Santander	£85,000.00

It was noted that the Santander 31 day notice account had expired. Options for a new product with Santander would be investigated.

RECOMMENDED: That the information be noted.

FIN.38/18 BANK RECONCILIATIONS AT END OF QUARTER 3

Members noted and confirmed that accounts held by the Council had been reconciled and signed by the Chairman of Finance Committee.

RECOMMENDED: That the bank reconciliations be noted and confirmed.

FIN.39/18 SPEND AGAINST BUDGET AS AT 31ST DECEMBER 2018 (QUARTER 3)

A schedule detailing spend against budget as at 31st December 2018 (end of Quarter 3) was circulated and considered. (For copy see file of Minutes).

RECOMMENDED: That the information be noted.

Signed:
Chair

FIN.40/18 AUTHORISATION OF CHEQUES – DELEGATED POWERS

In accordance with delegated powers, payments totalling the amounts below had been made as detailed in the report. (For copy see file of Minutes).

Current Account £16,220.84

RECOMMENDED: That the action taken be confirmed.

FIN.41/18 CHEQUES PRESENTED FOR AUTHORISATION

No cheques were presented for authorisation.

FIN.42/18 BISHOP AUCKLAND TOWN TEAM - REQUEST FOR FUNDING TO SUPPORT EVENTS IN THE TOWN CENTRE

Due to the number of Declarations of Interest made in relation to this item the meeting became inquorate.

This item was therefore deferred to the meeting of Council to take place on 15th January 2019.

FIN.43/18 REVIEW OF MEMBERS ALLOWANCES

Consideration was given to a report regarding recommendations relating to parish councils members' allowances made by Durham County Council's Independent Remuneration Panel. (For copy see file of Minutes).

The Local Authorities (Members' Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003 introduced a provision for parish councils to provide members with a basic allowance. In setting an allowance the parish council must have regard to the recommendations of an Independent Remuneration Panel (IRP) established by the principal authority.

The payment of Members Allowances at Bishop Auckland Town Council was introduced in 21st April 2009 following consideration of a report of an IRP established by Wear Valley District Council. (Minute No TC.223/09 refers). Durham County Council (DCC) has been the principal authority since local government reorganisation in 2009. However, its IRP has not made recommendation on allowances for parish and town councillors until recently.

DCC's IRP met on 24th October 2018 to review allowances for County Councillors and at that meeting also reviewed parish and town councillors' allowances. The IRP recommended an allowance for parish and town councillors as a proportion of the basic allowance paid to County Councillors based on population bands. As parish allowances had not been reviewed since 2009, the Panel's considerations included the effect of inflation since that time.

In addition, the IRP also made recommendations relating to travelling and substance allowances.

It was noted that with a population of 16,296 Bishop Auckland was in the top band, for which a basic allowance of £1,330 had been recommended by the IRP. The current basic members allowance was £440.

Members felt that that the current basic allowance was adequate at the current time as a nominal amount to help cover expenses. However, it was acknowledged that some people may be put of seeking to become a councillor due to the relatively low rate of basic allowance. This would particularly relate to those that may be subject to additional expenses due to a disability.

Signed:
Chair

It was suggested that enquires be made as to what assistance the Council could give to support councillors with disabilities.

- RECOMMENDED:**
1. That the basic members allowance remain at £440.
 2. That recommendations of the Independent Remuneration Panel relating to travel and subsistence be agreed and the Members' Allowance Scheme be revised accordingly.
 4. That investigations be made to ascertain options available to include an allowance to support councillors with disabilities.

FIN.44/18 MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL PLAN 2019/20 – 2021/22, COUNCIL TAX 2018/19

Consideration was given to a report relating to the Medium Term Financial Plan 2019/20 – 2021/22 and Council Tax 2019/20. (For copy see file of Minutes).

Members noted details of the Tax Base and the Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme (LCTR) Grant for 2019/20. The Tax Base (i.e. number of Band D equivalent properties) had risen by 43.90, increasing the Council Tax Yield by £2,031.69. LCTR Grant had however reduced by £2,030. The net position was therefore an increase in revenue of £1.69 for 2019/20. The MTFP has been revised to take this information into account.

Council, at its meeting held on 11th December 2018, agreed a Forward Plan, detailing actions to help achieve a number of aspirations that had been developed taking into account the key outcomes of consultation. (minute No TC.114/18 refers). The list of actions had been included in the MTFP to enable consideration to be given to the allocation of funds.

As well as allocating adequate funds to resource actions the Council also needed to consider resources in terms of staff to deliver projects. The Council currently had 2.6 FTE (full time equivalent) employees who were fully occupied and therefore additional resources would be required in order for the action plan to be delivered. An amount has been included in the MTFP to reflect the cost of employing an additional member of staff.

Members noted that the Government had advised that referendum principles would not be extended to town and parish councils for 2019/20. Members were however advised to be mindful of the principles whilst considering the council tax and budget for 2019/20, which stated that a referendum would be triggered if council tax increases were 2% or above or over £5.00, whichever was higher. If referendum principles were applicable the Town Council would therefore be able to increase Council Tax by up to £5.00 without triggering a referendum.

Following detailed consideration of budgetary requirements, the Committee made the recommendation as detailed at Appendix 1 of these minutes.

- RECOMMENDED:** That the initial budget proposals (Appendix 1) be submitted to Council for consideration.

Signed:
Chair