

**HOUGHTON REGIS TOWN COUNCIL**  
**Corporate Services Committee**  
**Minutes of the meeting held on**  
**4<sup>th</sup> March 2024 at 7.00pm.**

Present: Councillors: C Slough Chairman  
J Carroll  
E Cooper (Sub)  
Y Farrell (Sub)  
W Henderson  
M Herber  
C Rollins

Officers: Clare Evans Town Clerk  
Amanda Samuels Administration Officer

Public: 0

Apologies: Councillors: E Costello  
D Jones

**12722 APOLOGIES & SUBSTITUTIONS**

Apologies were received from Cllr Costello (Cllr Cooper substituted) and Cllr Jones (Cllr Farrell substituted).

**12723 QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC**

None.

**12724 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST & REQUESTS FOR DISPENSATIONS**

None.

**12725 MINUTES**

To approve the Minutes of the meeting held on 4<sup>th</sup> December 2023.

**Resolved: To approve the Minutes of the meeting held on 4<sup>th</sup> December 2023 and for these to be signed by the Chairman.**

**12726 TO RECEIVE THE MINUTES OF THE FOLLOWING MEETINGS AND CONSIDER ANY RECOMMENDATIONS CONTAINED THEREIN**

Personnel Sub-Committee: 9<sup>th</sup> October 2023

**Resolved: To receive the Minutes of the Personnel Sub-Committee meeting of the 9<sup>th</sup> October 2023.**

**12727 INCOME AND EXPENDITURE REPORT**

Members were provided with a copy of the Income and Expenditure Report, highlighting significant variances, for Corporate Services Committee to date.

#### **12728 BANK AND CASH RECONCILIATION STATEMENTS**

Members were requested to receive the monthly bank and cash reconciliation statements for November and December 2023 and January 2024.

- Resolved:**
- 1. To approve the monthly bank and cash reconciliation statements for November and December 2023 and January 2024;**
  - 2. For these along with the original bank statements to be signed by the Chair of Corporate Services Committee and the Council's RFO.**

#### **12729 LIST OF CHEQUE PAYMENTS**

Members were provided with a list of payments for the period November 2023 to January 2024 (inclusive).

This report was provided for information.

#### **12730 INVESTMENT REPORT**

The Corporate Services Committee received the quarterly report on investments containing a forecast of capital expenditure, investment opportunities and a recommendation for further investment including: where, length and amount.

It was highlighted that the gross dividend yield from the property fund was 4.94% while the yield rate on the deposit account was 5.3%. This was something that Members might want to take into consideration when discussing the investment review report.

#### **12731 INVESTMENT REVIEW REPORT**

At the Corporate Services meeting held on the 4<sup>th</sup> December 2023 Members were advised that a report on the review of the Town Councils investments would be presented at this meeting.

It was highlighted that the initial investment of £600,000 in the Property Fund in 2014 was currently valued at £595,000. While the capital value had, historically, been higher than this, it was worth noting that quarterly interest continued to be received on this investment in the region of £30,000-40,000. Houghton Regis Town Council had been asked to assess its appetite for risk and to consider whether more secure investments would be advisable. A review had been carried out and it was felt that funds from the property fund should be withdrawn and consideration given to options with a more secure rating. Members voted for the recommendations as follows:

Proposed by Cllr Herber  
Seconded by Cllr Farrell  
Members voted unanimously to accept all recommendations

- Resolved:**
- 1. To give notice to the CCLA Property Fund that the council wants to withdraw its funds.**
  - 2. To subsequently invest these funds in the CCLA Deposit account as it is a AAA rated investment.**
  - 3. To confirm that the Council has an investment risk appetite comparable to at least a AA-rating or higher.**
  - 4. To use the Property fund 6-month notice period to investigate government gilts and investment opportunities at local banks and building societies further and report back to Corporate Services in due course.**

#### **12732 INSURANCE CLAIMS**

Members were advised that there had been no insurance claims since the last meeting.

#### **12733 REVIEW OF CHARGES 2024/2025**

In accordance with Financial Regulation 9.3 Members were provided with a list of charges for 2023/24 which were under the control of the Committee. In order to support users of these facilities, it was suggested that Members consider applying the same charges for 2024/25.

Members were reminded, the information in regard to the hire of the small meeting room had been removed as this room was now occupied by office staff.

**Resolved: To approve the charges for 2024/25 as attached.**

#### **12734 VAT RETURN & VAT ON SPORTING FEES - UPDATE**

Members were provided with a copy of the VAT Return for quarters 1, 2 and 3 for financial year 2023/2024.

Members were advised that following this committee's decision to submit a reclaim of VAT for the period October 2019 to the end on the financial year 2023, a full refund had been received and had been distributed to those clubs who had paid VAT during this period.

#### **12735 PHOTOCOPIER LEASE RENEWAL**

The council's current photocopier lease was due to expire on the 30<sup>th</sup> June 2024. This lease agreement was for a period of 5 years.

Members were requested to agree to enter into a new lease agreement for a replacement copier.

Members were provided with a report and asked to approve Company A to supply a quarterly lease of £108.63; however, an addendum to this item amended the figure to £127.80.

Cllr Henderson proposed the change to the recommendation

Seconded by Cllr Herber

Members agreed unanimously to the amendment

Cllr Henderson proposed the amended recommendation

Seconded by Cllr Herber

Members agreed unanimously to the amended recommendation

**Resolved:** To enter into a contract with Latent Digital Solutions for the supply, installation and maintenance of a Ricoh copier at a quarterly lease of £127.80 with copying charges of mono copies at £0.003 per copy and colour copies at £0.03 per copy, for a period of 5 years.

## **12736 DATA PROTECTION POLICY & DATE RETENTION POLICY**

Members were provided with a report and advised that the Town Council's Data Protection Policy was last reviewed on the 25th November 2019. Since there had been no changes to Data Protection legislation the Data Protection Policy remained fit for purpose.

Houghton Regis Town Council was obliged to retain documentation for a number of purposes, in relation to data, and in order for the Town Council to comply with these obligations a Data Retention Policy had been produced.

It was confirmed that the retention period for data was six years, after which the information needed to be deleted. This was in line with NALC and SLCC best practice guidelines.

**Resolved:**

- 1) To recommend to Town Council the adoption of the Town Councils Data Protection Policy**
- 2) To recommend to Town Council the adoption of the Town Councils Data Retention Policy**

## 12737 REFERENCES POLICY

Members were reminded that at the last meeting of Corporate Services meeting held on the 4<sup>th</sup> December 2023 Members deferred the adoption of the draft Town Council Reference Policy until further advice had been sought, in regard to whether a reference could be provided indefinitely. The adoption of the Town Council Safer Recruitment & Selection Policy, which would automatically guarantee an interview to a candidate with a disability who met the essential criteria of the post, had also been deferred while advice was sought.

Members were informed that the References Policy was a new policy, however, the Safer Recruitment & Selection Policy and the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy were updated documents.

Members had been in favour of Houghton Regis Town Council providing references indefinitely; however, based on HR advice and Data Protection and Retention timelines, references should only be provided for 6 years. It was suggested that an open reference could be offered to employees as part of the exit process, which would confirm their term of employment with the Council.

The Safer Recruitment Policy and the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy would enable Houghton Regis Town Council to guarantee an interview to disabled applicants who met the essential criteria for the role. It was felt that it would be a positive move if a logo to reflect this could be included on the application form.

**Resolved:**

- 1) **To recommend to Town Council the adoption of the Town Council's References Policy.**
- 2) **To recommend to Town Council the adoption of the revised Town Council's Safer Recruitment & Selection Policy.**
- 3) **To recommend to Town Council the adoption of the revised Town Council's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy**

## 12738 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

- **Staff Salaries**
- **Staff appraisal outcomes**

**Resolved:** **In accordance with Section 1(2) of the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960, the public and press be excluded from the meeting during the consideration of the item set out below on the grounds that publicity would be prejudicial to the general interest by reason of the confidential nature of the business to be transacted.**

## 12739 PAY SCALES 2024/25

At the Personnel Sub-Committee meeting held on the 15<sup>th</sup> January 2024, members received a list of the Salary Point number for all staff along with overtime rates, additional payments, mileage rates and employer and employee pension contribution rates and to resolve (minute number PE305) to recommend to Corporate Services that these be noted and signed by the Chair Corporate Services at its meeting on 4<sup>th</sup> March 2024.

**Resolved:** To note the list of the Salary Point number for all staff along with overtime rates, additional payments, mileage rates and employer and employee contributions rates and for this list to be signed by the Chair of Corporate Services.

#### **12740 STAFF APPRAISALS**

Members were provided with a report on the outcomes of the autumn staff appraisal process.

**Resolved:**

- 1. To note the update on the Autumn staff appraisals;**
- 2. To receive and approve a summary of the Clerk's appraisal completed on 13<sup>th</sup> December 2023.**

**The Chairman declared the meeting closed at 7.51pm**

**Dated this XX day of XXXX**

**Chairman**