

**HOUGHTON REGIS TOWN COUNCIL**  
**Corporate Services Committee**  
**Minutes of the meeting held on**  
**Monday 9<sup>th</sup> September at 7.00pm.**

Present: Councillors: D Jones Chairman  
E Billington  
P Burgess (Substitute)  
J Carroll  
E Costello  
T McMahon (Substitute)  
C Slough (Substitute)

Officers: Debbie Marsh Corporate Services Manager  
Louise Senior Head of Democratic Services  
Clare Evans (Part)

Public: 0

Apologies: Councillors: W Henderson  
M Herber  
C Rollins

**12956 APOLOGIES & SUBSTITUTIONS**

Apologies were received from Cllr Henderson (Cllr Slough substituted), Cllr Herber (Cllr McMahon substituted) and Cllr Rollins (Cllr Burgess substituted).

**12957 QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC**

None.

**12958 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST & REQUESTS FOR DISPENSATIONS**

None.

**12959 MINUTES**

To approve the Minutes of the meetings held on 10<sup>th</sup> June 2024, 23<sup>rd</sup> July 2024 and 27<sup>th</sup> August 2024.

Members agreed to approve the minutes with the amended date of 4<sup>th</sup> March 2024 contained in Minute 12853 and the resolution.

**Resolved: To approve the Minutes of the meeting held on 10th June 2024, 23<sup>rd</sup> July and 27<sup>th</sup> August 2024 and for these to be signed by the Chairman.**

**12960 TO RECEIVE THE MINUTES OF THE FOLLOWING MEETINGS AND CONSIDER ANY RECOMMENDATIONS CONTAINED THEREIN**

Personnel Sub-Committee: 7th May 2024

**Resolved: To receive the Minutes of the Personnel Sub-Committee meeting of the 7<sup>th</sup> May 2024.**

#### **12961 INCOME AND EXPENDITURE REPORT**

For information purposes, Members were provided with the income and expenditure report, highlighting significant variances, for Corporate Services Committee to date.

It was noted that there were two overspends in the report and it was likely further expenditure would be made under Miscellaneous Establishment Costs (190-4020).

#### **12962 BANK AND CASH RECONCILIATION STATEMENTS**

Members received the monthly bank and cash reconciliation statements for May, June and July 2024.

**Resolved:**

- 1. To approve the monthly bank and cash reconciliation statements for May, June and July 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.**

#### **12963 LIST OF CHEQUE PAYMENTS**

For information purposes, Members were provided with a list of payments for the period May to July 2024 (inclusive).

#### **12964 INVESTMENT REPORT**

In accordance with Committee Functions, Financial Regulation 8 and Banking Arrangements, Investment Strategy & Investment Arrangements.

The Corporate Services Committee are to oversee and manage the financial obligations of the Council, including:

To receive quarterly reports on investments containing a forecast of capital expenditure, investment opportunities and a recommendation for further investment including where length and amount.

This would potentially be the final report on the CCLA Property Fund account as Houghton Regis Town Council had given notice to withdraw the funds held.

Members were reminded that at the Corporate Services meeting held on the 4th March 2024 Members resolved (minute number 12731) to withdraw the Town Councils funds from the CCLA Property fund and to subsequently invest these funds in the CCLA Deposit account as it is a AAA rated investment.

## 12965 CORPORATE PEER CHALLENGE ACTION PLAN

At its meeting on the 16th July 2024, the Town Council endorsed the Corporate Peer Challenge Action Plan.

In addition to this, Town Council under minute number 12906, resolved to approve the use of General Reserves up to £14,000 to support the Amber flagged projects within the Action Plan to enable delivery, subject to Committee approval, in 2024/25.

In doing so, the Corporate Services Committee was allocated a project to be funded through general reserves. Below was the detail of that project.

### Corporate Services Committee

Ensure that the council fully utilises the talents and skills of current members of staff	Consider the engagement of external support to undertake as skills audit of staff, to identify any skills gaps and develop a training and development strategy	Budget availability	£2000	Autumn 2024	Corporate Services Committee	Head of Corporate Services
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**Resolved: To support Town Councils recommendation of the use of £2000 from General Reserves to support the delivery of the amber flagged project for the Corporate Services Committee as detailed.**

## 12966 CCLA MANDATE

CCLA Investment Management Ltd was committed to maintaining up to date accurate information. A review of the Town Councils account files had identified that CCLA must request up to date details of account information.

The CCLA required a minimum of two or more (maximum 4) authorising persons on the account. Names and job titles of those authorising persons needed to be sent to CCLA along with the accompanying minutes confirming this detail.

Members were reminded that any funds withdrawn, by officers, from the CCLA were deposited in the Town Council's NatWest bank account.

**Resolved:** To confirm, the following persons:  
Ms Clare Evans, Town Clerk  
Mrs Debbie Marsh, Head of Corporate Services  
Mr Andrew Gaudion, Finance Officer  
are authorised by the Council, to manage Houghton Regis Town Councils accounts held by the CCLA

#### **12967 DRUGS, ALCOHOL AND SUBSTANCE MISUSE POLICY**

Members received the Town Councils Drugs, Alcohol and Substance Misuse Policy. Members were advised that it was proposed to remove paragraph 5.2 from this policy. Other than this proposal the policy remained fit for purpose.

It was clarified that the proposed changes were to discourage alcohol consumption on council premises and that failure to comply could potentially result in disciplinary action.

**Resolved:** To recommend to Town Council the adoption of the Town Councils Drugs, Alcohol and Substance Misuse Policy.

#### **12968 FREEDOM OF INFORMATION POLICY AND MODEL PUBLICATION SCHEME**

Members were advised that the Town Councils Freedom of Information Policy remained fit for purpose; however, the Town Council Model Publication Scheme had been revised.

Members were provided with a copy of the report.

For clarification, it was explained that the Transparency Code requirements only applied to councils with an income of over £25,000 and under £6.5million. Houghton Regis Town Council had adopted this in principle by publishing expenditure over £500.00; however, there was other legislation, more applicable to the Town Council, which was the Model Publication Scheme applying to any expenditure over £100.00. The auditor had clarified which piece of legislation the Town Council should apply and now the Model Scheme of Publication relating to £100.00 and above showed on the ICO template document.

An amendment to item 20 on page 98 was requested, changing wording from 'Her Majesty' to His Majesty'.

**Resolved:** 1) To recommend to Town Council the adoption of the Town Councils Freedom of Information Policy  
2) To recommend to Town Council the adoption of the Town Councils Model Publication Scheme

#### **12969 RESERVES POLICY**

Houghton Regis Town Council was required to maintain adequate financial reserves to meet the needs of the organisation.

The purpose of this policy was to set out how the Council would determine and review the level of reserves.

Members were provided with a copy of the report.

While the report set out the approach, there was some feeling that more robust parameters were needed to determine what the reserve level and policy should be. The policy would form part of the annual budget setting and, therefore, the reserves would be reviewed every year

**Resolved: To recommend to Town Council, the adoption of the Town Councils Reserves Policy**

#### **12970 INTERNAL AUDIT PLANNING, REPORTING & REVIEW POLICY AND INTERNAL AUDIT SPECIFICATION**

At the Corporate Services meeting held on the 4<sup>th</sup> October 2022 (minute number 12208) it was agreed that, although historically this document had been presented annually at a full Council meeting, moving forward this policy should be added to the Policy Review list in order that the Committee had sight of it, for comment, before being presented to Council.

Members were provided with a copy of the approved document. There had been no changes in legislation, therefore it was suggested that it remained suitable and fit for purpose.

Members of the Committee were asked to consider the Internal Audit Planning, Reporting & Review Policy and Internal Audit Specification and make a recommendation to Town Council for approval.

**Resolved: To recommend to Town Council that the Internal Audit Planning, Reporting & Review Policy and Internal Audit Specification be approved.**

#### **12971 HEALTH AND SAFETY POLICY**

Members received a copy of the Town Council's Health & Safety at Work Policy. There were no changes proposed to this policy, therefore it remained fit for purpose.

It was brought to the attention of the Committee that a reference was made to a previous employee in the policy (page 132, reference 3.2) and further occurrences subsequently appeared. It was requested that these be amended.

Members were happy to support the recommendation with the suggested amendments.

**Resolved: To recommend to Town Council the adoption of the Town Councils Health & Safety at Work Policy (as amended).**

## **12972 BANKING ARRANGEMENTS, INVESTMENTS STRATEGY & INVESTMENT ARRANGEMENTS**

The Town Council's Banking Arrangements, Investments Strategy & Investment Arrangements policy had been amended to reflect the Town Council's decision to remove investments being placed in the CCLA Property Fund. Members were aware that the Town Council gave notice to remove funds from this account and for those funds to be placed in the CCLA Public Sector Deposit account.

Members were provided with a copy of the amended policy.

The policy had been amended to remove references to CCLA Property Fund. (Pg 138 item 4) and there had been some discussion about investing in more liquid investment options. The amended document reflected the present situation, but Houghton Regis Town Council would be taking further investment advice going forward.

Members were informed that there had been some investigation into gilts, but further investigations were required in order to ascertain whether this type of investment would be appropriate. It was highlighted that other councils had put funds in high interest accounts in high street banks

It was highlighted that the document referred to the Department for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities (DLUHC) but that this department had been renamed to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG).

Investments would need to be approved by the Committee and a recommendation to update the policy could be made as necessary.

Members were advised that it was hoped a report on potential investments would be made at the next meeting. It was, therefore, suggested that this item was noted and considered further once the report had been produced.

## **12973 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC**

- **Staff Plan**

A recorded vote was requested:

Proposed by: Cllr Billington

Seconded by: Cllr McMahan

In favour: Cllrs C Slough, Cllr Billington, Cllr Costello and Cllr McMahan.

Against: Cllr Carroll

Abstention: Cllr Burgess

**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.

#### **12974 STAFF PLAN**

At the last Corporate Services Committee meeting, members were presented with an initial proposal for a 5-year staffing structure plan.

Following discussions, members comments were taken on board, thus a revised report was submitted to the committee containing additional information for consideration.

Members engaged in a thorough review and discussion of the revised report, considering the various options presented to meet the council's future staffing needs.

Members voted on the recommendations contained within the report.

Accordingly, option 2 was carried.

**Resolved:** To agree the suggested way forward.

**The Chairman declared the meeting closed at 8.13pm**

**Dated this 2<sup>nd</sup> day of December 2024**

**Chairman**