

**HOUGHTON REGIS TOWN COUNCIL**  
**Corporate Services Committee**  
**23<sup>rd</sup> September 2019 at 7.00pm.**

Present:           Councillors:   D Jones           Chairman  
  D Abbott  
  C Copleston  
  Y Farrell       Substitute  
  K Wattingham  
  T Welch

  Officers:       Debbie Marsh   Corporate Services Manager  
  Louise Senior   Head of Democratic Services

  Public:        0

Apologies:       Councillor:   S Thorne

Absent:           Councillor:   M S Kennedy

**10055   APOLOGIES & SUBSTITUTIONS**

Apologies were received from Cllr Thorne, Cllr Farrell substituted.

**10056   QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC**

None.

**10057   DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST & REQUESTS FOR DISPENSATIONS**

Councillor Copleston and Councillor Wattingham declared an interest in minute number 10061 as payment to the SOS Bus were detailed.

**10058   MINUTES**

To approve the Minutes of the meeting held on 10<sup>th</sup> June 2019 and 4<sup>th</sup> September 2019.

**Resolved:   To approve the Minutes of the meeting held on 10th June 2019 and 4th September 2019 and for these to be signed by the Chairman.**

**10059   TO RECEIVE THE MINUTES OF THE FOLLOWING MEETINGS**

Personnel Sub-Committee: 15<sup>th</sup> April 2019.

**Resolved:   To receive the Minutes of the Personnel Sub-Committee meetings of the 15<sup>th</sup> April 2019**

**10059a   SCHEME OF DELEGATION**

In accordance with Standing Order 4.j.iii. Council is required to review its Scheme of Delegation.

The Scheme of Delegation authorises the Proper Officer and Responsible Financial Officer, Council and Standing Committees of the Council to act with delegated authority in the specific circumstances detailed.

The approved Scheme of Delegation was reviewed at the Annual Council meeting held on the 15<sup>th</sup> May 2019.

Subsequent to this meeting further revision are suggested, shown in bold and italics.

In order to not impede the running of the next Annual Council meeting Members of this committee are requested to consider the revised document and to recommend to Town Council that the Scheme of Delegation be approved.

**Resolved: To recommend to Town Council that the Town Councils Scheme of Delegation be approved.**

## **10060 BUDGET REVIEW & INCOME AND EXPENDITURE REPORT**

Members received a report on the Corporate Services Committee budget for 2019/20 supported by the relevant extract from the approved budget for 2019/20 and income and expenditure report.

Members discussed the possibility of alternative telephone hardware and suggested that there may be a more cost effective system that could be implemented. It was requested that this be looked into as the current contract was coming to an end. In light of this an amendment to officer recommendation 2 was proposed to read:

To vire £4000 from 190 to 199 to fund the capital purchase of a replacement server and investigate the capital purchase of office telephone hardware and system review, subject to current BT lease.

The officer recommendation was:

*To vire £4000 from 190 to 199 to fund the capital purchase of a replacement server and the capital purchase of office telephone hardware.*

This became the substantive motion.

- Resolved:**
- **To note that a new contract will be entered into for the maintenance of the photocopier;**
  - **To vire £4000 from 190 to 199 to fund the capital purchase of a replacement server and investigate the capital purchase of office telephone hardware and system review, subject to current BT lease.**

#### **10060a DRAFT BUDGET 2020/21**

Members will find attached the officer draft budget for 2020/21 along with explanatory notes for the Corporate Services Committee.

The draft budget reflects on ongoing budgetary commitments along with anticipated budgetary commitments arising from the draft Council Vision 2020/24.

**This is provided for initial consideration and comment.**

#### **10061 BANK AND CASH RECONCILIATION STATEMENTS**

Members were requested to receive the monthly bank and cash reconciliation statements from April to July 2019.

Members requested clarification on the time limit on several non-cashed cheques dated November 2017, May 2018, October 2018 and November 2018. Members requested advice be sought from Nat West as to the length of time a cheque remained valid and to provide this advice at the next Corporate Services meeting. Members could then consider whether to draft some procedures for officer to use, should a cheque payment remain unrepresented for a long period of time.

- Resolved:**
- 1. To approve the monthly Bank and Cash Reconciliation statements from April to July 2019;**
  - 2. For these along with the original bank statements to be signed by the Chair of Corporate Services Committee and the Council's RFO.**

#### **10062 LIST OF CHEQUE PAYMENTS**

Members received a list of cheque payments for the period May 2019 to July 2019.

- Resolved:** **To receive and note the list of cheque payments made in the period May, June, and July 2019 approved for payment by the Town Clerk and two bank signatories.**

#### **10062a INVESTMENT REPORT**

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.

**Resolved: To reinvest in both the long term and short-term investment accounts.**

### **10063 BANKING ARRANGEMENTS, INVESTMENT STRATEGY & INVESTMENT ARRANGEMENTS**

In accordance with the Committee Functions & Terms of Reference and Financial Regulations 8.4, this Committee was required to annually review the Banking Arrangements, Investment Strategy & Investment Arrangements.

Members were advised that the investment strategy complied with the guidance issued by the Secretary of State under Section 15(1)(a) of the Local Government Act 2003 and being effective from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2018, no further guidance had been issued.

Members queried the update of the bank mandate and agreed that the wording under paragraph 1.1 (ii) be amended to read ‘When a new Council comes into Office, bank mandates will be updated within 3 months, or as soon as practicable hereafter’.

**Resolved: To recommend to Town Council that the Banking Arrangements, Investment Strategy & Investment Arrangements be approved with the agreed amendment.**

### **10065 RISK MANAGEMENT STRATEGY & SCHEDULE**

In accordance with Financial Regulation 17.1, the council was responsible for putting in place arrangements for the management of risk. The Clerk prepared, for approval by the council, risk management policy statements in respect of all activities of the council. Risk policy statements and consequential risk management arrangements would be reviewed by the council at least annually.

Members received a copy of the Risk Management Strategy and Schedule.

Members were reminded, in association with income generation, that general reserves were around the minimum level.

**Resolved: To recommend to Town Council that the HRTC Risk Management Strategy & Schedule be approved.**

## 10066 REVIEW OF CONTRACTS – INTERIM REPORT

In accordance with the approved Committee Functions and Terms of Reference the Corporate Services Committee was required to annually review existing contracts. Whilst this committee would ordinarily be due to review existing contracts in November, it was thought that members might like to have sight of an updated list due to recent appointments. In addition to this and in support of the Town Council operating in an open and transparent way, an additional column had been included to allow for the input of minute numbers.

<i>Contract</i>	<i>Minute Number</i>	<i>Period</i>	<i>Annual Expenditure</i>	<i>Signed</i>
IT Support & Hosting	9069	Rolling contract	£1,800	3 <sup>rd</sup> October 2017
Website hosting		Annual fee.	£150	
DCK Accounting		Annual arrangement.	£1,000	
Operation Hana	9543	Annual arrangement. 1 <sup>st</sup> October 2018 to 30 <sup>th</sup> September 2019 – one month's termination notice	£33,000	19 <sup>th</sup> September 2018
Internal Audit	9690	Annual arrangement	£750 based on 3 days	
Human resources advisor	9942	1 <sup>st</sup> September 2019 for an initial 12-month period	£2,451.60	24 <sup>th</sup> June 2019
External audit		5 years from 2017/18 until 2021/22	£2,000	Appointed via Regulation 3 of the Local Audit (Smaller Authorities) Regulations 2015.
Town centre toilets	6846	1 <sup>st</sup> July 2019 – 30 <sup>th</sup> June 2021	£18,360 plus consumables per annum	13 <sup>th</sup> May 2019
Insurance	9829	Ongoing Long term agreement until 31 <sup>st</sup> May 2022	£12,210 plus additional premiums relating to any changes in circumstance.	13 <sup>th</sup> May 2019
Payroll		Ongoing Annual arrangement	£750	

Photocopier	9695	2018 to 2023	£94 with copying charges	21 <sup>st</sup> December 2018
Xmas lights	9782	April 2019 to 31 <sup>st</sup> March 2024	£10,500	Letter of engagement
Employee Assistance	8835	5 years from 1 <sup>st</sup> March 2017 – 28 <sup>th</sup> February 2022	£425	8 <sup>th</sup> February 2017
Groundwork	9776	1 <sup>st</sup> April 2019 to 31 <sup>st</sup> March 2020.	£18,150	10 <sup>th</sup> July 2019

**Resolved: To note the report.**

### 10067 REPORT ON MAYORAL ROBES

At the Corporate Services Committee meeting held on the 4<sup>th</sup> March 2019 Members received a report and draft policy on the wearing of ceremonial robes.

Members were concerned that the wording within the policy could be deemed as discriminatory and requested that the item be deferred until clarification on this matter was sought.

Advice was sought from the Town Councils Human Resources consultant. They reported that in order for something to be viewed as discriminatory (either directly or indirectly), the Equality Act 2010 highlights 9 protected characteristics:

1. Age
2. Gender
3. Race
4. Disability
5. Religion
6. Pregnancy and maternity
7. Sexual orientation
8. Gender reassignment
9. Marriage and civil partnership

Whilst this policy does not contravene any of the 9 protected characteristics, Members were advised that based on the Muslim faith, it was impermissible for males to wear silk or real gold.

Therefore, if ever there was a requirement for a Muslim male to wear these ceremonial robes then they could technically object if either of these materials were used.

An amendment was proposed to remove the following footnote from page two of the policy ‘The mayor may seek dispensation from wearing these robes from the Clerk should there be a personal reason’ as it was now superfluous.

Members for: 4      Members against: 1      Abstentions: 1

**Resolved: To recommend to Town Council that the Ceremonial Robes Policy be approved with the agreed amendment.**

**10068 REVIEW OF VISION – CORPORATE SERVICES COMMITTEE**

Members received a review of the initiatives under this committee.

**Resolved: To note the report.**

**10069 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC**

Staff issue

**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.**

**10070 STAFF ISSUE**

At the Personnel Sub-Committee meeting held on the 15<sup>th</sup> April 2019 Members received and discussed a confidential report regarding a staff issue. At this meeting Members resolved to advise Corporate Services Committee of staff management processes and the resource being accorded to them and to recommend an option for a way forward.

Members discussed ongoing issues and the options to move this matter forwards.

Members fully supported the options outlined in the report however requested that legal advice be sought in order to endorse the advice already received. Members agreed that the cost for this, to a limit of £2,000, be taken from budget heading 190-4059 (Central Services - Other Professional Fees). Members were advised this budget heading would need to be checked against any outstanding commitments before being used.

Members requested that once legal advice had been obtained that special meeting of the committee be called.

**Resolved: To obtain legal advice in order to support the options outlined in the report and to use budget heading 190-4059 (Central Services - Other Professional Fees) to a limit of £2,000, to fund this advice.**

**The Chairman declared the meeting closed at 8.40pm**

**Dated this 25<sup>th</sup> day of November 2019**

**Chairman**

