

**HOUGHTON REGIS TOWN COUNCIL**  
**Corporate Services Committee**  
**14<sup>th</sup> September 2020 at 7.00pm.**

Present:

Councillors:	D Jones	Chairman
	D Abbott	
	C Copleston	
	M S Kennedy	
	S Thorne	
	K Wattingham	
Officers:		
	Debbie Marsh	Corporate Services Manager
	Louise Senior	Head of Democratic Services
Public:		
	0	

Apologies: 0

**11324 APOLOGIES & SUBSTITUTIONS**

None.

**11325 QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC**

None.

**11326 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST & REQUESTS FOR DISPENSATIONS**

None.

**11327 MINUTES**

To approve the Minutes of the meeting held on 8<sup>th</sup> June 2020.

**Resolved: To approve the Minutes of the meeting held on 8<sup>th</sup> June 2020 and for these to be signed by the Chairman.**

**11328 INCOME AND EXPENDITURE REPORT**

Members received the Income & Expenditure report to date for the Corporate Services Committee.

Members noted the report.

**11329 BANK AND CASH RECONCILIATION STATEMENTS**

Members received the monthly bank and cash reconciliation statement for April, May, June and July 2020.

Members sought clarification on the reconciliation for May and June, which would be queried with the Town Clerk.

Members agreed the recommendations, subject to clarification with the Town Clerk, an update of which would be provided at the next meeting.

**Resolved:**

- 1. To approve the monthly Bank and Cash Reconciliation statements for April, May, June and July 2020;**
- 2. For these along with the original bank statements to be signed by the Chair of Corporate Services Committee and the Council's RFO.**

### **11330 LIST OF CHEQUE PAYMENTS**

Members received a list of payments for the period May 2020 to July 2020.

Members noted a late payment fee charge. Members requested clarification be sought from the Town Clerk as to what caused this late payment to occur and to find out what measures were in place to avoid this happening again in the future.

**Resolved: To note the information.**

### **11331 INVESTMENT REPORT**

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

The Corporate Services Committee were 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.

Members raised concerns regarding the property fund account, which had been temporarily suspended by SLCC. This was due to be reviewed by SLCC in October.

**Resolved: To note the information.**

### **11332 COUNCILLOR'S EXPENSES POLICY**

At the Corporate Services meeting held on the 2<sup>nd</sup> March 2020 members considered the revised Councillor's Expenses Policy however, following discussions members resolved to defer this item to allow further research to be undertaken to allow for the inclusion of alternative arrangements, including taxis and car hiring.

Members received the report and discussed the updated policy. It was agreed that this be recommended to Town Council.

**Resolved: To consider and recommend to Town Council a Councillor's Expenses Policy.**

### **11333 FLEXIBLE WORKING POLICY & FLEXI-TIME POLICY**

At the Personnel Sub-Committee meeting held on the 13<sup>th</sup> July 2020 members were advised that all staff appraisals had been completed. However, what was reported that during these appraisals feedback from staff was that they felt that working from home, brought about by the COVID-19 restrictions, allowed them to be more productive in some aspects of their role. Members discussed the idea of staff continuing to work from home once restrictions were lifted and recommended (PE142) that a report be presented to Corporate Services committee for consideration.

The Corporate Services Committee last reviewed its Flexible Working & Flexi-time Policy at its meeting held on the 20<sup>th</sup> March 2017.

Members were advised that there were always staff in place, on site, to ensure that the day to day operational functionality of the office and reception was unaffected. Members were advised that the hours worked by staff under the flexi-time scheme was monitored closely to ensure that staff were not regularly working under or over their contracted hours.

Members acknowledged feedback from staff, and countrywide research, which had indicated that working from home had increased staff productivity.

Members were advised that with staff working from home, the office reception would remain manned and available to members of the public.

Members suggested that this could possibly present a cost and space saving opportunity when seeking new premises for the Town Council.

**Resolved:**

- 1) To recommend to Town Council that the Flexible Working Policy be approved.**
- 2) To recommend to Town Council that the Flexi-time Policy be approved.**
- 3) To approve, until 7<sup>th</sup> May 2021, an informal agreement to enable staff to continue to work from home taking into account that the Office Reception will be opened in accordance with government guidelines and for this to be staffed on a rota basis**

### **11334 DRUG, ALCOHOL & SUBSTANCE MISUSE POLICY**

The Town Council last reviewed this policy on the 14<sup>th</sup> March 2016.

Following a review of the current policy, the Town Councils Human Resources consultant recommended an up to date policy to reflect the current issues surrounding drug, alcohol and substance misuse. One current issue is the use of legal highs.

Members received a report accompanied by an updated policy.

**Resolved: To consider and recommend to Town Council a Drugs, Alcohol and Substance Misuse Policy.**

**11335 BANKING ARRANGEMENT, INVESTMENT STRATEGY & INVESTMENT ARRANGEMENT POLICY**

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 Arrangement Policy.

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. Therefore, this policy remained fit for purpose.

Banking Arrangements

Members were advised that even though staff access to the offices had been limited due to the Covid-19 restrictions, any payments received had continued to be banked weekly, or more frequently.

Members advised that the Banking Arrangements, Investment Strategy & Investment Arrangements policy remained fit for purpose.

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

**11336 COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE**

The Corporate Service committee reviewed this document at its meeting held on the 20<sup>th</sup> June 2019. At that time amendments were made to reflect guidance that had been issued from NALC in December 2018. Therefore, the Complaints Procedure remained fit for purpose.

Members were being requested to consider placing the review of the Complaints Procedure onto a 4 yearly review cycle and not annually as currently stated.

- Resolved:**
- 1) **To recommend to Town Council that the Complaints Procedure be approved.**
  - 2) **To agree to the Complaints Procedure being reviewed every 4 years unless required be considered sooner.**

### **11337 CODE OF CONDUCT**

Members received a track change document for consideration.

Members were reminded that a consultation had recently be undertaken by NALC, therefore, the Town Councils Code of Conduct may need to be revisited sooner than the next review date.

- Resolved: To recommend to Town Council that the Code of Conduct be approved.**

### **11338 RISK MANAGEMENT STRATEGY AND 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 activates of the council. Risk policy statements and consequential risk management arrangements shall be reviewed by the council at least annually.

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

Members were advised of the following:

- Income generation (page 15), that general reserves were around the minimum level;
- Non-compliance with legislation (page 18), it was highlighted that there would be a reduced risk to the council with enhanced member training through take up of opportunities and through making training mandatory (at the local level) for Cllrs
- Senior Staff and Member leadership, this was an additional risk which had been added. It covered a situation where senior members of the council were unavailable for whatever reason (this could include absence due to a pandemic)

Members advised that they could foresee various issues with the enforcement of mandatory training.

Members highlighted that the councillors were a mix from different backgrounds, each bringing different skills to the council, which would make it difficult to ascertain where training was needed. Members advised that it had been previously suggested that joint training could be arranged with other councils.

Members were advised that although training was being constantly offered to councillors, uptake had been poor.

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

**11339 VISION**

Members received an extract from the approved Vision 2020/2024 as it related to the work of this committee. The format of the Vision was still being worked on, but it was hoped that as presented the Vision was in a suitable manner at this stage. Members were requested to note that Covid-19 had a significant impact on the progression of the Vision.

Members suggested that training analysis be added to the vision to identify areas of training required. Members requested that the Corporate Services Manager raise this with the Town Clerk.

**The Chairman declared the meeting closed at 8.17pm**

**Dated this 23<sup>rd</sup> day of November 2020.**

**Chairman**