

HOUGHTON REGIS TOWN COUNCIL
Corporate Services Committee
23rd November 2020 at 7.00pm.

Present: Councillors: D Jones Chairman
D Abbott
S Thorne
K Wattingham

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

Public: 0

Absent: Councillor: C Copleston
M S Kennedy

11415 APOLOGIES & SUBSTITUTIONS

None.

11416 QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC

None.

11417 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST & REQUESTS FOR DISPENSATIONS

None.

11418 MINUTES

To approve the Minutes of the meeting held on the 14th September 2020.

Resolved: To approve the Minutes of the meeting held on 14th September 2020 and for these to be signed by the Chairman.

11419 TO RECEIVE THE MINUTES OF THE FOLLOWING MEETINGS

Personnel Sub-Committee: 13th January 2020 and 13th July 2020.

Resolved: To receive the Minutes of the Personnel Sub-Committee meetings of the 13th January 2020 and 13th July 2020

11420 INCOME AND EXPENDITURE REPORT

Members received the income and expenditure report, highlighting significant variances, for Corporate Services Committee to date.

Members queried whether Central Bedfordshire Council could claim back the Town Councils election costs following the by-election being suspended due to Covid-19. Members were advised the by-election process would need to start afresh in April. Members were informed that the Town Clerk was making enquires with Central Bedfordshire Council.

11421 BANK AND CASH RECONCILIATION STATEMENTS

Members were requested to receive the monthly bank and cash reconciliation statements for August and September 2020. Members were advised that the month end process for August had been completed by a different consultant. A number of queries were raised which had been followed up on and resolved. The bank reconciliation for August listed these outstanding queries.

- Resolved:**
- 1. To approve the monthly bank and cash reconciliation statements for August and September 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.**

11422 LIST OF CHEQUE PAYMENTS

Members received list of payments for the period August 2020 to September 2020.

Members were advised that late payment fees from Castle Water were to be queried and a refund of these fees to be investigated.

11423 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 noted that the bank rate had dropped substantially.

11424 PAYROLL SERVICES

For information, the Town Council had been advised that Bedford Borough Council would no longer be renewing their contract for the provision of payroll services. The current contract would cease on the 31st March 2021.

The Town Clerk was currently seeking an alternative payroll provider who would be able to support the Town Council with these services, effective from 1st April 2021.

Due to the scheduling of meetings it was not possible to provide a report to Corporate Services, at the meeting to be held on the 1st March 2021, at which a recommendation would ordinarily be provided to Council for ratification. Therefore, it was anticipated that a report and costings would be presented to full Council at the meeting to be held on the 14th December 2020.

11425 REVIEW OF TOWN COUNCIL MEMBERSHIP TO OTHER BODIES

In accordance with the approved Committee Functions and Terms of Reference the Corporate Services Committee was required to annually review the Council's and/or employees' memberships of other bodies.

Members were advised of the current memberships listed below:

<i>Membership</i>	<i>Period</i>	<i>Annual Subscription</i>
Society of Local Council Clerks (SLCC)	Annual	£421 (2020/21)
Bedfordshire Association of Town & Parish Councils (NALC)	Annual	£2,101 (2020/21)
Institute of Cemetery and Crematorium Management Association of Accounting Technicians (AAT)	Annual April to March	£95 (2020/21)
Information Commissioners Officer (ICO)	Annual	£99 (2020/21)
		£35
		Renewal due 3/12/20

11426 REVIEW EXISTING CONTRACTS

In accordance with the approved Committee Functions and Terms of Reference the Corporate Services Committee was required to annually review existing contracts.

Members were advised of the existing contracts listed below:

<i>Service</i>	<i>Minute No.</i>	<i>Details</i>	<i>Cost</i>	<i>Start date</i>
IT Support & Hosting		Support charge £1800 / annum Microsoft 365 Business Standard -	£4338	

		Annual Subscription Period Beginning 3rd November 2020 - £1,015.20		
		Microsoft Exchange On- Line Plan1 - Annual Subscription Period Beginning 10th November 2020- £576.00		
		SolarWinds Cloud Backup - per month Period Beginning 17th November 2020 - £600.00		
		McAfee Endpoint Protection Ess SMB 1:1 GL Period Beginning 18th October 2020 £347.40		
Website hosting		Annual fee.	£150	
DCK Accounting Operation Hana	10125	Annual arrangement.	£1,250	
Internal Audit	11366	Annual arrangement	£875	1st April 2020 to 31st March 2021
Human resources advisor	9942	Annual arrangement (rolling contract)	£2,451.60	24 th 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	Ongoing	£18,360 plus consumables per annum	1st July 2019 – 30th June 2021

Insurance	9829	Long term agreement	£11,907 plus additional premiums relating to any changes in circumstance.	13 th May 2019 - 31st May 2022
Payroll		Ongoing Annual arrangement (see agenda item 10)	£750	Expires 31 st March 2021
Photocopier lease	9695	Long term agreement	£396	2018 to 2023
Mobile Phones		10 x phones 24months	£2400	Oct 2020-Sept 2022
Telephone software		12 months then rolling	Set up £270 £65 / month year 1 £88 / month year 2 £276 cost of maintenance, annual fee after year 1	November 2020
BT Broadband		24 months	£552	18/3/2019-17/3/2021
Franking Machine		Long term agreement	£300	1 st August 2019- 31 st July 2023
Accounting Software support		Annual arrangement	£1018	1/4/21-30/3/22
Cemetery Software support		Annual arrangement	£290	1/4/21-30/3/22
Christmas Lights	9782	Long term agreement	£10,500 fixed (excluding tree)	1 st April 2019 to 31st March 2024
Employee Assistance Programme	8835	Long term agreement	£425	1 st March 2017 to 28 th February 2022

11427 INSURANCE CLAIMS

Members were advised that the following insurance claims had been made since April 2020

<i>Claim number</i>	<i>Details</i>	<i>Repair cost</i>	<i>Date settled</i>
---------------------	----------------	--------------------	---------------------

27200000680	Cemetery Gate repair after vehicle had knocked them down	£1,362.00 Excess £100	September 2020
27200000816	Vandalism to Springer - October	£1,096.00	Awaited
27202126353	Damage to St Vincent's School building by ride on mower, whilst grass cutting, in September / October	Estimated £1,164.00	Awaited

11428 SAFEGUARDING POLICY UPDATE

The Corporate Services committee last reviewed the Town Councils Safeguarding policy on the 5th March 2018. Whilst this policy was reviewed every 4 years, it was apparent that the policy was not compatible with the standards set out by the NSPCC (National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children).

Members received a report that identified the work needed to bring this policy up to standard.

Members noted that this would identify staff training needs and requested that this be looked at within the budget.

- Resolved:**
- 1. To support the completion of a mapping exercise in order to identify documents that are needed and policies that may need adapting;**
 - 2. To identify possible cost implications associated with meeting the 6 NSPCC standards for the voluntary and community sector in support of safeguarding and protecting Children and Young People aged 0-18;**
 - 3. To identify cost implications for staff training.**

11429 WHISTLEBLOWING POLICY

Members received a report and draft policy for consideration.

The introduction of the proposed policy would allow the Town Council to effectively monitor whistleblowing complaints and provide annual reporting to the Corporate Services Committee.

- Resolved:**
- 1. To accept the need for and endorse the following new policy:**
 - Whistleblowing policy**
 - 2. To recommend to Council that the policy, along with any recommended changes, be formally adopted by full council at its meeting to be held on the 14th December 2020**

11430 BULLYING AND HARASSMENT

Whilst the current Bullying and Harassment policy was suitable, it was felt that it was somewhat brief. Therefore, members received a report and revised Bullying and Harassment Policy displaying track changes.

- Resolved:**
- 1. To accept the need for and endorse the updated Bullying and Harassment Policy.**
 - 2. To recommend to Council that the policy, along with any recommended changes, be formally adopted by full council at its meeting to be held on the 14th December 2020**

11431 DRAFT BUDGET 2021/22

Members received the officer draft budget for 2021/22 along with explanatory notes for the Corporate Services Committee.

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

As members were aware the council revised its budget for 2020/21 in July 2020 to reflect on the implications of Covid-19. At the time of revising the budget members requested that the budget for 2021/22 be set on the original budget figures as these were reflective of a 'normal' council year. However, due to software limitations, the draft budget included the revised budget amounts for 2020/21. However, the budget explanatory notes provided members with the original budget figures for 2020/21 as requested. The draft budget for 2021/22 assumed normal delivery of services during the year, i.e. it assumed that Covid would not affect the services of the council during 2021/22.

11432 VISION

Members received an extract from the approved Vision 2020/2024 as it related to the work of this committee.

Members queried the introduction of an electronic payment system as depicted on the Vision, it was requested that an update be sought on this item and fed back at the next meeting.

The Chairman declared the meeting closed at 7.50pm
Dated this 1st day of March 2021

Chairman