

HOUGHTON REGIS TOWN COUNCIL
Corporate Services Committee
Minutes of the meeting held on
21st September 2021 at 7.00pm.

Present: Councillors: J Carroll
E Cooper Substitute
C Copleston
Y Farrell Substitute
S Goodchild
M S Kennedy
C Slough

Officers: Clare Evans The Town Clerk
Louise Senior Head of Democratic Services

Public: 0

Apologies: Councillors: D Jones
K Wattingham

11764 APOLOGIES & SUBSTITUTIONS

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

11765 QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC

None.

11766 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST & REQUESTS FOR DISPENSATIONS

None.

11767 MINUTES

To approve the Minutes of the meeting held on 1st June 2021.

Resolved: To approve the Minutes of the meeting held on 1st June 2021 and for these to be signed by the Chairman.

11768 TO RECEIVE THE MINUTES OF THE FOLLOWING MEETINGS AND CONSIDER ANY RECOMMENDATIONS CONTAINED THEREIN

Personnel Sub-Committee: 11th January 2021 and 13th April 2021.

Resolved: To receive the Minutes of the Personnel Sub-Committee meetings of the 11th January 2021 and 13th April 2021.

11769 INCOME AND EXPENDITURE REPORT

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

11770 BANK AND CASH RECONCILIATION STATEMENTS

Members received the monthly bank and cash reconciliation statements for May, June and July 2021.

Resolved:

- 1. To approve the monthly bank and cash reconciliation statements for May, June and July 2021;**
- 2. For these along with the original bank statements to be signed by the Chair of Corporate Services Committee and the Council's RFO.**

11771 LIST OF CHEQUE PAYMENTS

Members received a list of payments for the period May 2021 to August 2021 (inclusive).

Members received this report for information.

11772 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.

The amount of notice required to withdraw funds to finance the all-weather pitch was queried. This would be confirmed and fed back to the committee.

Members received this report for information.

11773 INSURANCE CLAIMS

Members were advised that there had been no insurance claims from the 1st June 2021 to date.

Members received this report for information.

11774 EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAMME (EAP)

Members were advised that the current Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) contract does not end until February 2022, however due to the administration of committee meetings, the need to revisit this provision was required now if members were to support the continuation of this service.

Members advised of the value of such provision and as such supported the recommendations.

Resolved:

- 1. To support the continuation of this provision**
- 2. To recommend to Town Council that company B be appointed to provide this provision at the end of the current contract.**

11775 HUMAN RESOURCES PROVISION

The council had retained the services of a local HR company for the last few years. This contract was now a rolling contract. As such it was appropriate for members to consider the suitability of the current contract and any alternative providers.

It was intended to seek quotes for this service in accordance with the attached specification. Members feedback on the suitability of the specification was invited.

Feedback from members regarding the current supplier of this service was positive. Members were advised that the current supplier would be included in the quotation process.

Resolved: **To seek competitive quotes for this service provision based on the HR specification.**

11776 CIVIC HANDBOOK

Members received, for information, updated Mayoral and Deputy Mayoral Handbooks.

Members were reminded that the town council's Ceremonial Robes Policy would also accompany this handbook.

It was queried whether the Deputy Mayor should wear their chain when the Mayor was also present at the same event and wearing their chain. After discussion, the statement within the handbook was to remain as specified, allowing the chain to be worn by the Deputy Mayor with the agreeance of the Town Mayor.

Members received this report for information.

11777 FREEDOM OF INFORMATION AND MODEL SCHEME OF PUBLICATION

The Town Council was required to review annually the Freedom of Information Act (2000) Policy and the Model Publication Scheme. These documents were last reviewed by this committee on the 10th June 2019.

Members received a copy of the approved document. Some amendments had been made, shown as track changes, to reflect changes in legislation. It was suggested that it remained suitable and fit for purpose.

Members of this Committee were asked to consider the Freedom of Information Act (2000) Policy and Model Publication Scheme and make a recommendation to Town Council for approval.

Members were advised that photocopying costs remained adequate.

Resolved: To recommend to Town Council that the Freedom of Information Act (2000) Policy and the Model Publication Scheme be approved.

11778 COMMUNICATIONS POLICY AND STRATEGY

Members received an updated Communications Policy and Strategy.

Amendments had been made, shown as track changes. Members were advised that the inclusion of Press Policy had been removed as the Town Council had a standalone Press Protocol Policy.

The following point was highlighted:

- **Town Guide**

The Community Services Committee had delayed this publication due to Covid-19 and the reliance of the publication of business advertisements

Although amendments had been made to this policy, it was suggested that this document remained suitable and fit for purpose

Members were advised that the next edition of the Town Crier was due in October.

Members acknowledged the additional effort made during Covid to reach residents and keep information updated and relevant, with the more recent addition of posts championing the new Town Ranger.

Resolved: To recommend to Town Council that the Communications Policy and Strategy be approved.

11779 LOCAL GOVERNMENT PENSION SCHEME: STATEMENT OF LOCAL DISCRETIONS

Members received the Town Councils Local Government Pension Scheme: Statement of Local Discretions.

There had been no amendments to the regulations, therefore it was suggested that it remained suitable and fit for purpose.

Resolved: To recommend to Town Council that the Local Government Pension Scheme: Review of Statement of Local Discretions be approved.

11780 PRESS PROTOCOLS

Members received the Town Councils Press Protocols Policy.

There were slight amendments to this policy as shown by track changes.

Although amendments had been made to this policy, it was suggested that this document remained suitable and fit for purpose.

Resolved: To recommend to Town Council that the Press Protocols Policy be approved.

11781 RISK MANAGEMENT PLAN

In accordance with Financial Regulation 17.1, the council was responsible for putting in place arrangements for the management of risk. The Clerk shall prepare, 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 shall be reviewed by the council at least annually.

Members were advised of the following:

- Income generation, that general reserves were within the 3-9 month banding;
- Non-compliance with legislation, 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

Members were advised that the BATPC had offered online training and it was hoped that further training would be available soon.

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

11782 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 complies with the guidance issued by the Secretary of State under Section 15(1)(a) of the Local Government Act 2003 and being effective from 1st April 2018, no further guidance had been issued.

Therefore, this policy remained fit for purpose.

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

11783 VISION UPDATE

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

Members were advised that Central Bedfordshire College had been approached to begin the recruitment process for an office apprentice, members acknowledged the additional work for officers, but felt it offered a good growth opportunity for young people.

It was suggested, that as some items within the Vision were difficult to quantify, a review could be provided in the March Town Crier.

Members were advised that due to Covid, events and activities had been re-designed to reach people in an alternative way, using social media as a priority platform.

The Chairman declared the meeting closed at 8.11pm

Dated this 22nd Day of November 2021

Chairman