

HOUGHTON REGIS TOWN COUNCIL
Corporate Services Committee
Minutes of the meeting held on
22nd November 2021 at 7.00pm.

Present: Councillors: M S Kennedy
J Carroll
C Copleston
S Goodchild
Yvonne Farrell Substitute
C Slough
K Wattingham

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

Public: 1

Apologies: Councillor: D Jones

11851 APOLOGIES & SUBSTITUTIONS

Apologies were received from Cllr Jones (Cllr Farrell substituted).

11852 QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC

None.

11853 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST & REQUESTS FOR DISPENSATIONS

None.

11854 MINUTES

To approve the Minutes of the meeting held on 21st September 2021.

Resolved: To approve the Minutes of the meeting held on 21st September 2021 and for these to be signed by the Chairman.

11855 TO RECEIVE THE MINUTES OF THE FOLLOWING MEETINGS AND CONSIDER ANY RECOMMENDATIONS CONTAINED THEREIN

Personnel Sub-Committee: 12th July 2021

Resolved: To receive the Minutes of the Personnel Sub-Committee meeting of the 12th July 2021.

11856 INCOME AND EXPENDITURE REPORT

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

Members requested clarification whether unused election funding would go into general reserves or whether it remained ringfenced.

Members were advised that the Clerk was looking to use the underspend on property maintenance on the interior decoration of parts of the council offices.

11857 BANK AND CASH RECONCILIATION STATEMENTS

Members received the monthly bank and cash reconciliation statements for August and September 2021.

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

11858 LIST OF CHEQUE PAYMENTS

Members received a list of payments for the period September 2021 to October 2021 (inclusive).

This report was provided to members for information.

11859 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.

This report was provided to members for information.

11860 INSURANCE CLAIMS

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

This report was provided to members for information.

11861 HUMAN RESOURCES PROVISION

At the Corporate Services meeting held on the 21st September 2021 (minute number 11775) members agreed to seek competitive quotes for this service provision.

Members received a report for consideration.

Members highlighted the value of access to a Human Resources provision.

Resolved: To recommend to Town Council that company C be appointed to provide this service.

11862 REVIEW OF TOWN COUNCIL MEMBERSHIP TO OTHER BODIES

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

<i>Membership</i>	<i>Period</i>	<i>Annual Subscription 2021/22</i>
Society of Local Council Clerks (SLCC)	Annual	£421
Bedfordshire Association of Town & Parish Councils (NALC)	Annual	£2,101
Institute of Cemetery and Crematorium Management	Annual April to March	£95
Information Commissioners Officer (ICO)	Annual	£40
National Allotment Association	Annual	£56

Members agreed to continue with the memberships listed.

11863 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.

<i>Service</i>	<i>Minute No.</i>	<i>Details</i>	<i>Cost/ annum</i>	<i>Start date</i>
IT Support & Hosting		Support charge	£1800	

		Microsoft 365 Business Standard - Annual Subscription	£1,015	3rd November 2020
		Microsoft Exchange On-Line Plan1 - Annual Subscription	£576	10th November 2020
		SolarWinds Cloud Backup - per month	£600	17th November 2020
		McAfee Endpoint Protection Ess SMB 1:1 GL	£347	18th October 2020
		Total / annum	£4338	
Website hosting		Annual fee	£346	
DCK Accounting		Annual arrangement for year end close down and year end accounts preparation	£1,250	
Operation Hana	11388	Annual arrangement.	£34,990	1st April 2021 to 31st March 2022
Internal Audit	TBC	Annual arrangement	£1000 (est)	Quotes to be presented to Corporate Services February 2022
Human resources advisor	9942	Annual arrangement (rolling contract - see agenda item 11)	£2,451.60 £2,574.12	24 th June 2019 price increase with effect from 1 st January 2022

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 – discussions are ongoing with the provider over future arrangements.
Insurance	9829	Long term agreement	£11,907 plus additional premiums relating to any changes in circumstance.	13 th May 2019 - 31st May 2022
Payroll	11454	Initial 6 months, then 30-day notice period	£108.23	1 st April 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		24months	£611.40 p.a.	27/1/2021-26/1/2023
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	11774 CS <i>To be ratified at Council on the 13th December 2021</i>	Long term agreement	£500	1 st March 2022 to 28 th February 2027

Members raised concerns that the new developments were not included in the Op Hana patrols, and budget was prohibitive until this additional precept was received by the Town Council.

Councillor Goodchild noted the Town Centre Toilets contract had expired and raised concerns that any additional costs might have an impact during the 2022/23 budget setting process. The Corporate Services Manager confirmed that the contract would roll over and that it was unlikely that costs would rise significantly.

Members noted the contracts listed.

11864 SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE POLICY

At the Corporate Services meeting held on the 23rd November 2020, members were advised that the Town Councils Safeguarding policy was last reviewed on the 5th March 2018 and that whilst this policy was scheduled to be 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).

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

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

Members raised concerns that the revised Induction Process could prove too onerous on staff. They requested this policy, and the practicalities of implementation should be brought to and discussed at the next members open session.

Members requested that these policies be reviewed every four years or earlier if required.

- Resolved:**
- 1.1 To recommend to Town Council that the Safer Recruitment and Selection Policy be approved.**
 - 1.2 To recommend to Town Council that the Induction Process be approved.**
 - 1.3 To recommend to Town Council that the Ex-Offenders Recruitment Policy be approved**
 - 1.4 To recommend to Town Council that the Disciplinary Policy be approved**

11865 WORKPLACE HEALTH POLICY

At the Corporate Service meeting held on the 1st March 2021, members welcomed the revised Stress Policy however members also discussed the benefits of adding a Wellbeing Policy to their suite of policies (minute number 11532).

For information members received a report and example of a Workplace Health Policy.

Members were supportive of the inclusion of a Wellbeing Policy and highlighted the value of such a policy. Members were supportive of a Mental Health First Aider. It was suggested that a round table discussion with staff could prove valuable in order to shape the final version of the policy.

11866 REVIEW OF CHARGES 2022/2023

In accordance with Financial Regulation 9.3 Members received a list of charges for 2021/22 which were under the control of this Committee. In order to support users of these facilities, it was suggested that members consider applying the same charges for 2022/23.

Members suggested that additional charges for the evening hire of the chamber be included in the fees document, however, members were advised that it would be unusual for the Chamber to be booked during the evening.

Resolved: To approve the charges for 2022/23

11867 BUDGET 2022/23

Members received the officer draft budget for 2022/23 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.

It was highlighted to members that a figure for the precept had not been included at this stage. However, in the explanatory notes members found information on the tax base for 2022/23 and a note outlining the arising implications.

Members advised they were hopeful the precept would increase. It was suggested that Central Bedfordshire Council be approached regarding s106 money for open spaces and play areas. It was also suggested that details of s106 money be included on Town Council agendas as a standing item.

Members suggested that officers explore whether redundant computer equipment could be donated to charity.

Members acknowledged the uncertainty of aspects within the budget.

Maintenance costs were queried, members were advised that the last condition survey was completed in 2017, the advice at the time of the survey was the current building, with a few modifications, was fit for purpose for a further 20 years.

The Chairman declared the meeting closed at 7.50pm

Dated this 28th day of February 2022.

Chairman