



Minutes of the Council Affairs & Finance Committee meeting held on Tuesday, March 12, 2024 at Old Landscore School, Greenway, Credition

Present: Cllrs Steve Huxtable, Liz Brookes-Hocking, Rachel Avery, Rachel Backhouse, Jim Cairney, Guy Cochran, Giles Fawssett, Joyce Harris, Frank Letch

In Attendance: One member of the Public

Minute Taker: Rachel Avery, Town Clerk

MINUTES

148 WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION

Opening of meeting by the Chair and member introductions

Cllr Huxtable opened the meeting and members introduced themselves.

149 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

To receive questions from members of the public relevant to the work of the council (a maximum of 30 minutes is allowed for this item; verbal questions should not exceed 3 minutes)

Questions were raised by a member of the public. The questions and full responses would be provided on the town council's website in due course.

150 APOLOGIES To receive and accept Town Councillor apologies (apologies should be made to the Town Clerk)

There were no apologies.

151 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND REQUESTS FOR DISPENSATIONS

151.1 TO RECEIVE DECLARATIONS OF PERSONAL INTEREST AND DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY INTERESTS (DPI'S) IN RESPECT OF ITEMS ON THIS AGENDA

Cllr Brookes-Hocking declared a DPI relating to item 165.

151.2 TO CONSIDER ANY DISPENSATION REQUESTS (REQUESTS SHOULD BE MADE TO THE TOWN CLERK PRIOR TO THE MEETING)

There were no requests for dispensation.

152 ORDER OF BUSINESS

At the discretion of the Chair, to adjust, as necessary, the order of agenda items to accommodate visiting members, officers or members of the public

There was no requirement to change the order of business.

153 CHAIR'S AND CLERK'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

To receive any announcements which the Chair and Town Clerk may wish to make (for information only).

There were no announcements.

154 COUNCIL AFFAIRS AND FINANCE COMMITTEE MINUTES

To approve and sign the minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday 12 December 2023 and Tuesday 13 February 2024, as a correct record

It was **resolved** to approve the minutes of 12 December 2023 and 13 February 2024. (Proposed by Cllr Cochran)

The Town Clerk advised that the draft minutes of 12 December 2023 had not been approved at the following meeting on 10 January 2024, and therefore the draft minutes remained as unapproved approved by the committee and ratified by Full Council.

155 FINANCE

155.1 TO RECEIVE AND APPROVE TRANSACTIONS BETWEEN 01 FEBRUARY 2024 AND 29 FEBRUARY 2024

It was **resolved** to receive and approve the transactions between 01 February 2024 and 29 February 2024. (Proposed by Cllr Harris)

155.2 TO RECEIVE AND APPROVE THE BANK RECONCILIATION TO 29 FEBRUARY 2024

It was **resolved** to receive and approve the bank reconciliation to 29 February 2024. (Proposed by Cllr Harris)

155.3 TO NOTE BANK ACCOUNT BALANCES TO 29 FEBRUARY 2024

The bank account balances to 29 February 2024 were **noted**.

155.4 TO RECEIVE AN UPDATE ON TRANSFER OF CCLA FUNDS

The following update was provided:

- United Trust Bank – confirmed funds will be transferred and account closed on 14 June 2024
- Hampshire Trust Bank – awaiting confirmation (90 day notice – approximate date of closure 4 June 2024)
- Cambridge & Counties – awaiting confirmation (120 day notice – approximate date of closure 4 July 2024).

156 COMMUNITY GRANTS

To approve the proposed Community Grants, as recommended by the Grants Sub-Committee, for payment in April 2024 for the 2024/25 financial year

Enquiries were made relating to two applications. Cllr Brookes-Hocking advised that meetings had been held with some of the applicants to ascertain the requirements of the grant and the support provided to the community, of which the committee had been satisfied.

Cllr Brookes-Hocking stated that she felt 10% of the town council's overall annual budget should be given in community grants. Many voluntary organisations should be supported and their work benefits Crediton.

It was **resolved** to approve the payment of grants for 2024/25. (Proposed by Cllr Cairney)

157 REVIEW AND ADOPTION OF POLICIES

To review and adopt the Co-Option Policy

Cllr Fawcett advised that he was unaccepting of the three-mile rule for councillors to stand. He stated that the law was incorrect and should be challenged.

There was a discussion around the use of secret ballot when co-opted. The Town Clerk advised on the legal basis of which you cannot remove a member of the public from the meeting or hold a secret ballot.

It was **resolved** to adopt the Co-option Policy, with the requested wording amendment from Cllr Brookes-Hocking. (Proposed by Cllr F Letch)

158 PORTRAIT OF HIS MAJESTY KING CHARLES III

To consider and agree for Crediton Town Council to apply for a portrait to commemorate the accession of His Majesty King Charles III, at no cost to the council, following the resolution at the last meeting to undertake a Facebook Poll

The Town Clerk stated that the Facebook poll had received, with 56% of respondents voting against applying for the official portrait.

It was **resolved** that the town council would not apply for the official portrait, following the results of the poll, with a review in six months' time should sufficient support for the portrait be made. (Proposed by Cllr Brookes-Hocking)

159 COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION

159.1 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

To receive the report regarding Public Question Time and to approve the proposals therein

The following comments were made:

- CTC meetings used to be held whereby members of the public were welcome to speak on an item at the point of discussion
- Some questions require full debate and discussion, and should take place outside of a formal meeting
- Any question relating to how other councils are run should not be responded to, given that the town council is unable to provide an informed response
- The way in which public question time is currently being run is depressing. There are other types of events where engagement with the public has been high, but it is proving difficult to find a positive way to run Public Question Time
- The way that Public Question Time is currently being run is not perfect, however there must be structure and for the opportunity for both members and members of the public to understand given that it is not an opportunity for debate
- A high level of understanding of the legislation that governs the sector is required of members
- All three levels of Devon government have rules around public question time, offering members of the public 3 minutes. If someone provides a written letter four days prior to the meeting, they are provided with a response on the day of the meeting. The council needs to ensure anything that is agreed works for both council members and members of the public.

It was **resolved** to approve the guidance proposed within the report, as Appendix A, in the interim. (Proposed by Cllr Cochran)

It was agreed that Cllr Backhouse would recommend a proposal, regarding the future use of Public Question Time, for consideration at the next meeting.

159.2 COFFEE AND CONVERSATION

To receive an update and to approve any recommendations

There was no further update at this time, and further consideration would be given to this item at the next meeting.

160 DEVON DEVOLUTION DEAL

To receive the report and associated paperwork regarding the proposals and to consider representation for Full Council approval

Cllr F Letch stated this the impact on town and parish councils will be negligible, so there should be little or no debate on this matter.

Cllr Brookes-Hocking stated that the DALC response has been made and whilst there is currently limited impact on town and parish council sectors, she does not feel this is true. There will be more pressure on the sector to provide services if there is a lack of funding available.

Cllr Harris expressed concerns at the creation of another tier. The money used to create such a tier should be devolved to the existing authorities. Town and parish councils will have less of a voice than they do currently, given another layer of governance

Cllr F Letch stated that the Combined County Authority Board of 10 is not necessarily representative of Devon.

It was **noted** that the Town Clerk would draft a response for consideration at the next meeting of Full Council.

161 GDPR

161.1 TO RECEIVE THE REPORT REGARDING THE CONCERN RELATING TO A GDPR BREACH AND TO AGREE ANY FURTHER ACTION

The Town Clerk provided the following statement regarding the complaint raised by the member of the public.

'The use of surnames has been used administratively, in line with the council's Privacy Policy and other legislation such as the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 and the Accounts and Audit Act 2015. However, as the issue has been raised, I have taken the operational decision to trial the use of plot numbers only. This has already commenced, as we will receive fewer payments between now and September when the invoices for 2024/25 are raised. This will enable us to assess the administrative burden of not including such data. As an officer of the council, I take the responsibility of data protection very seriously. This amendment in administration is in no way an admission of breach. At no point has the ICO stated that there has been a breach, and nor has the ICO professional used for advice. However, to comply with data minimisation where possible, the internal process has been altered'.

The contents of the report were **noted**. (Proposed by Cllr F Letch)

161.2 TO RECEIVE THE QUOTE RECEIVED REGARDING ONGOING SUPPORT AND OFFICER/MEMBER TRAINING

It was **resolved** to consider a further quote, if obtained before the end of March, at the next meeting of this committee. If not received, the quote contained within the report will be accepted. (Proposed by Cllr Huxtable, Cllr Fawssett voted against)

162 ANNUAL TOWN MEETING

To receive the report and consider the recommendations therein

Cllr Brookes-Hocking provided information on why the Mayoral Reception and Annual Town Meeting would be incorporated.

It was **noted** that the funds for the 2023/24 Mayoral Reception would be requested to be extended to 2024/25 at the next meeting of Full Council.

Friday 17 May had been provisionally booked for use of the Town Hall, but availability of the Boniface Centre will be confirmed.

163 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

To note that the date of the next meeting will be Tuesday 09 April 2024

The date of the next meeting was **noted**.

164 PART II

To resolve that under section 1(2) of the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960, the public and press be excluded from the meeting for the following items as it involves the likely disclosure of sensitive and confidential information

It was **resolved** to move into Part II (Proposed by Cllr)

165 COUNCIL OFFICES

To receive the report and to agree any further actions

It was **resolved** to approve the recommendations in the report. (Proposed by Cllr Cochran)

166 REPORTS PACK

Signed

Dated.....