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091-012/013

FINANCE AND STRATEGY COMMITTEE

Minutes of meeting held on 09 October 2012

Present: Cllr. P Baden, Cllr. V Carter, Cllr. K Fouhy, Cllr. S Haynes, Cllr. P Pike,
Cllr. R Jakeman, Cllr. A Winter

In attendance: Jeanne Pike, Clerk

01 Apologies:

There were no apologies.

02 Declaration of Interest in items on the agenda:

None

03 Public Participation:

There were no members of the public present.

04 September Finance Statement:

The Clerk presented the September Finance Statement

Proposal: That the finance statement for September 2012 be accepted and passed to Full Council for ratification and the approvals passed for payment, proposed by Cllr. S Haynes and seconded by Cllr. R Jakeman with **all in favour**

Pass to Full Council for ratification

05 Groundsman's Contract:

There have been two burials this month and this will impact on the amount of the Groundsman's invoice for October.

There were no other financial issues to consider.

06 Skate Park – VAT issues:

Members considered carefully the question of reclaiming the VAT element incurred in the cost of the proposed skate park. HMRC informed the Clerk that VAT can be recovered provide the cost is incurred by the Town Council and all goods are in their name with the project run by them. VAT must not be included in the amount for the grant application. Page 20 (see appendix 1) of the VAT for Local Authorities (issued by HMRC) clearly concurs with this and it was agreed that after careful scrutiny the VAT should be recovered at the appropriate time. **All in favour**

All correspondence to The Clerk to the Council

07 Budget v Actual April - September:

The Clerk issued a report on the Budget v Actual for the first six months of the financial year. It was noted that there had been no overspend and the finances were looking healthy.

08 Budget 2013/2014:

The Budget and resulting Precept demand needs to be considered and in place for the end of 2012.

The Youth Committee has asked that consideration be given for a £15,000 allocation and PLA has asked for an amount to allow refurbishment and provision of benches in the town.

The Clerk presented a draft Budget as a start point for discussion. Members considered the various options carefully and were reluctant to increase the Precept. However it has to be borne in mind that there will inevitably be increases in the utilities as well as the additional expenses for the public conveniences and rising costs in all sectors of service. Salaries will be frozen for the next year and so the only increase will be the additional caretaking costs for the extra work at the Plaza.

The main option is either to increase the Precept by 3% or to find reserves to bolster the Budget and keep the Precept at its current level.

Members agreed to make a final decision on their recommendations to Full Council at the next Finance meeting. **Pass to November F&S**

A vote of thanks was passed to the Clerk for the work on the Budget.

09 Revision of Standing Orders:

As agreed at last month's meeting Councillors have considered the Standing Orders in the light of the new Code of Conduct.

A few minor details were corrected and the dates corrected on the Financial Regulations and Code of Conduct. (page 8 item ii, page 15 item 7c and page 25 item 10) The Power of Well Being was changed to the General Power of Competence (page 22 item 25) and the conditions that apply to this were added.

The main item was added under the Code of Conduct and item d now sets out the rules for the granting of dispensations.

Cllr. P Pike proposed that the changes be accepted subject to any additional proposals that may come out of the training session due on 16 October and that the document be passed to Full Council for ratification; seconded by Cllr. R Jakeman with **all in favour**.

Clerk to issue copies to all members. **Action Clerk**

10 Banking in Thrapston:

Members expressed concern that the banking offer in the town has degenerated from four banks to one open full time and one only two days (8 hours) per week.

Thrapston is in a rural position and this is not serving the older element of its population for whom on-line banking is not a feasible option.

NatWest is only open for eight hours each week and it was agreed to write to their head office setting out the position in Thrapston and asking if their opening hours could be increased. It was also suggested that the Town Council contact the Banking Ombudsman, Clerk to write to both. **Action Clerk**

11 Cleaning the Town Council Office:

Three potential cleaners had been interviewed and costs had been quoted at £8 an hour, £10 an hour and £12 an hour, all the applicants are able to provide references and are known, in a professional capacity, to the Council and or staff. After consideration it was agreed to offer the contract to the one who came in at the average cost. Clerk to contact applicants.

Action Clerk

12 Diamond Jubilee Calendar:

The Diamond Jubilee Committee would like to produce a calendar showing pictures of the events held during this special year. They hope that sales for the calendar will cover the production costs but there will be some expense up front and they ask if this can be covered temporarily by the Town Council.

Members expressed concern that the time left for producing this was minimal so Cllr. A Winter proposed that an amount of £500 should be allocated from the Diamond Jubilee budget to cover the upfront costs if necessary, this will allow as much time as possible for the production of the calendar; seconded by Cllr. R Jakeman with **all in favour**. Clerk to inform Diamond Jubilee Committee.

13 Clerk's Report:

- 1) The Mayoral Chain has been returned for inspection and a decision by the Council. After inspection it was agreed that the work was unacceptable and the Clerk will contact Vaughtons again to see what can be done to rectify the situation.
- 2) Cllr. R Jakeman has taken on the position of Town Council representative at the business lunches. The previous member paid £10 each time he attended a lunch but the business men have offered Cllr. Jakeman a cost of £50 per year as a donation and no further charge for a lunch. This is a useful tool for the Council and the Clerk will raise a cheque for the cost on receipt of an invoice.

14 Items for Future Agendas:

- 1) Christmas festivities (Ancer Spar) – **October Full Council**
- 2) Members were reminded that there would be **Training for the whole Council on Tuesday 16 October 2012** in the Town Council Office commencing at **7 pm prompt**.

There being no other relevant business the meeting closed at 9.05pm.