



Minutes of a meeting of the Policy, Resources and Finance Committee held on 9 January 2024 in the Council Chamber, Town Hall, East Street, Wareham at 7.00pm.

Committee Members Present: Councillors K Critchley (Chairman), (Vice Chairman), Z Gover, K Green, V Green, D Robinson, C Turner

Officers present: N Gray, Town Clerk

PRF 073/24 Apologies for absence

Apologies were received and accepted from Cllr D Budd, Cllr M Cotton and Cllr M Russell.

PRF 074/24 Declarations of interest

There were no declarations of interest.

PRF 075/24 Public participation time

There was 1 member of the public present who spoke regarding the overgrown foliage in Causeway Close and the flooding in the underpass resulting in pedestrians having to cross the busy A351 on the Saxon Roundabout, which he considered dangerous.

The Chair thanked the member of the public and reminded him that Wareham Town Council had no greater power in influencing Dorset Council than residents, and the more residents reported matters the more likely Dorset Council would act. The Clerk would also report the matters to Dorset Council.

PRF 076/24 Confirmation of the minutes of the previous meeting

It was **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the previous meeting of the Policy, Resources and Finance Committee, held on 5 December 2023, were **APPROVED** and would be signed by the Chairman following the meeting.

PRF 077/24 Matters arising from the minutes of the previous meeting

Cllr Robinson asked if notice had been given to the current Health and Safety advisor. The Clerk confirmed that 12 months' notice had been given in December in line with the contractual requirement.

PRF 078/24 Payment of outstanding creditors

Cllr Robinson asked what the two payments were in respect of the Chairlift. The Clerk advised the maintenance contract was separated into the curved section and straight section, so showed as a split payment.

Cllr Robinson asked what the two payments for SSE related to. The Clerk confirmed they were for the streetlighting, one payment for off peak (dawn to dusk) and one payment for outside of these times.

Cllr Robinson noted the descriptions on the report were truncated and asked if it would be possible to manipulate the report, so they showed in full. The Clerk advised the report was a PDF produced direct from the Accounts package, so would not be able to amend it, but reminded members that they did have full access to the accounts to view everything in order to satisfy any queries they may have.

PRF 079/24 Bank Reconciliation – November 2023 and December 2023

Members noted and approved the balanced bank reconciliations for November and December 2023.

PRF 080/24 Lease Vehicle Unplanned Costs

The Clerk presented the report explaining the lease agreement had not been severed in January 2023 due to the Finance Officer making the annual lease payment of £510 for the year 2023/24 without realising what it was for and believing it to be the release fee which had been authorised by Council. The finance company had not been very clear in their correspondence, and it had come to light when the invoice for the 2024/25 lease year arrived with the Clerk, that the release fee had not been paid but another year of lease contract had in fact been paid for.

The Clerk advised she had brought the matter to committee for transparency and the Deputy Clerk had cancelled the contract on 5 January 2024, meaning the only payment required was the 2% release fee of £139.50, which would be shown on the next Accounts for Payment schedule.

The report was noted.

PRF 081/24 2024/25 Draft Budget

Cllr Critchley advised that he had spoken to two of the absent members to gauge their views, and noted that Cllr Budd as Chair of Personnel, wished Cllr Critchley in his absence to advise members that although there was a budgetary provision for additional staff, no decisions or appointments had been made.

Cllr Critchley noted a couple of minor queries which were clarified by the Clerk, as the Responsible Finance Officer (RFO), in respect of budget lines relating to business rates for 3 East Street, NI contributions and computers for Councillors.

Members considered the two options and the Clerk, as RFO, advise that the current Council had a duty to ensure the incoming Council had a sufficient and workable budget that wouldn't leave it in a position of being in possession of holding excess funds. Nor should it leave it in a position of having to impose a significant precept increase in its first year.

It was **RESOLVED** to recommend to Council to accept the budget figure £510,270.

It was **RESOLVED** to recommend to Council to increase its precept by 2.9% (equating to £6.53 per annum, or 12.5p per week, or 0.02p per day on a Band D property).

PRF 082/24 Any other items the Chairman deems urgent

There were no items deemed urgent.

PRF 083/24 Date of next meeting

It was noted that the next meeting of the Policy, Resources and Finance Committee was scheduled to be held at 7.00pm on 13 February 2024.

Chairman.....

Date.....