

FINANCE & GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 14th October 2020

Due to the Covid19 pandemic and related restrictions the meeting was held remotely using the Zoom Cloud meetings application

Present: Councillors Grisenthwaite (Chair); Branyan; Bromilow (Town Mayor); Gardner; Jones (part); Parker & Watson

In attendance: Bob Bailey, Town Clerk

20052	Apologies: There were no apologies
20053	Declaration on interests and dispensations: There were no declarations of interest or dispensations on items on the agenda
20054	<p>Urgent Business: The following items of urgent business was considered:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">External Audit of the 2019/20 Annual Governance & Accountability Return (AGAR): It was reported that the government appointed external auditors examining the AGAR for 2019/20 and supporting statements had raised three questions. The Town Clerk explained his responses to the questions asked. Members were informed that due to the coronavirus pandemic the deadline for the AGAR to be signed off by the external auditors is now 30th November 2020. It was then RESOLVED that the questions raised by the external auditors be noted and the Town Clerk's response endorsed;Community Benefit Fund applications: Members considered two applications for funding received from Carnforth Community Swimming Pool and Friends of Carnforth Christ Church. Questions were asked about the purpose of both projects and their planned funding from other organisations and through their own fund-raising efforts. There was a discussion as to whether the applications received met the criteria for funding through the Community Benefit Fund and it was considered that they did. The Town Clerk reported that with the recent receipt of £3,426 from Back Lane Quarry the balance of the Community Benefit Fund is currently £9,964. After some discussion, it was then RESOLVED that the Town Council be RECOMMENDED to award a sum of £1,000 to both Carnforth Community Swimming Pool and the Friends of Carnforth Christ Church for their planned projects;Cloud storage & file sharing: The Town Clerk reported that the Council's email and domain providers, IONOS, currently have offers available for cloud storage and file sharing of documents and information. This would mean that important standing information and joint working could be stored in the 'Cloud' for immediate access and version control. Members commented on the offers available and questioned whether the number of users able to access these packages would be limited. It was then RESOLVED that the Town Clerk be requested to carry out further research and report back to the Committee;Venues in Carnforth: Members RESOLVED that this item of business be exempt due to the information under consideration being in relation to ongoing consultations and negotiations. This matter will be considered in more detail at the meeting of the Town Council on Wednesday 21st October.
20055	Notes of previous meeting: The Chair outlined the main items of discussion and the resultant resolutions and actions arising from the meeting of the Committee held on 9 th September 2020. It was RESOLVED that the notes of the meeting held on Wednesday 9 th September be agreed.
20056	Scheme of Delegation: The Town Clerk presented a draft Scheme of Delegation requested by the Town Council and previously circulated to all Councillors for comment. Members were informed that it is good practice for local authorities to adopt a scheme of delegation, in line with the Local Government Act 1972.

This is so that the Council's functions can be carried out effectively and that the Town Clerk, Committees and Council itself can be confident that they have the delegated authority to make decisions and that these are clearly set out.

The Town Clerk advised that subject to adoption the Council's Standing Orders and Financial Regulations would need to be reviewed accordingly.

Members acknowledged that the recent absence of the Town Clerk had demonstrated the need for clarity on decision making when carrying out Council functions. Members noted that whilst this is intended to be a generic document it would benefit from a supplementary document or checklist outlining key processes and relevant contacts.

It was also noted that the Council has yet to appoint a part-time Assistant Clerk – budgeted for in 2020/21 – who would be able to help with business continuity and resilience acting as the Town Clerk's deputy as required.

Members asked a variety of questions about how the scheme of delegation would operate and be of benefit and it was then **RESOLVED** that it be presented to the Town Council for their consideration and subsequent adoption.

20057 **Budget Monitoring & Planning:** The Town Clerk presented a *Summary of Receipts and Payments* report as at 30th September 2020. The report sets out for each Cost Centre and individual cost code the planned *Budget*, *Actual* income and expenditure as at the end of September, the *Variance* and *Net Position* (under/overspend)

Members acknowledged that the coronavirus pandemic has had a major impact on the Council's plans for the 2020/21 financial year. This has included some unplanned expenditure; a reduction in expected income and savings from plans being cancelled or abandoned due to the government guidelines on COVID19.

The Town Clerk reported that at the mid-point of the year most budget headings are significantly underspent and, on the face of it, will be well within budget at the end of the financial year, although 2020/21 continues to be unpredictable.

Members were also informed that as at 30th September 2020 the Council's bank accounts totalled £99,600.

The Town Clerk was thanked for the report generated from the accounting system which clearly and simply sets out the current position and helps to inform effective financial management and actual performance against budget. There was then a discussion on evaluating the year-end outturn (as at 31st March 2021) and arrangements for preparing, for approval, the budget for 2021/22 and the setting of the annual precept.

It was then **RESOLVED** that the *Summary of Receipts & Payments* report be noted; that the Chair, Councillor Grisenthwaite, informs Committees to review their plans for the remainder on 2020/21 and consider budgets required in 2021/22 and, that the Chair and Vice-Chair, Councillor Jones, supported by the Town Clerk, prepares a forecasted outturn, precept and 2021/22 budget for consideration by the Town Council in January 2020.

20058 **Effectiveness of Internal Controls:** The Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 requires parish/town councils to conduct a review of the effectiveness of the system of internal control and prepare an annual governance statement in accordance with proper accounting practices.

Members considered the approach to conducting this review and the expected requirements and standards for the nine 'assertions' in the annual governance statement as set out in the *Joint Panel on Accountability & Governance Practitioners' Guide 2020 [Practitioners' Guide]*

Members recognised that robust arrangements need to be in place to provide assurance that there are effective controls in place. After comments and questions, it was **RESOLVED** that the Committee reviews one assertion at each monthly meeting to gain assurance on its relevance and effectiveness, with recommendations being made where the standards set out in the *Practitioners' Guide 2020* are not met.

20059 Skills Audit & Member Development: As previously requested by the Town Council, the Town Clerk presented a proposed document aimed at gaining information on each Councillors relevant experience, skills, local interest and knowledge. The document is also intended to determine Member training requirements and attributes that will help them fulfil their role as an elected Councillor.

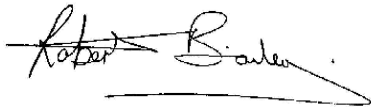
It was acknowledged that Member training and development is an essential aspect in the Council being an effective and efficient organisation serving our community. It was suggested that it would be useful for Councillors to be issued with an (induction/refresher) pack of important information that will help them to understand the powers and duties of a Council and how they can effectively make lawful decisions and contribute to its work.

It was then **RESOLVED** that the Town Council be **RECOMMENDED** to approve the revised Skills Audit and Member Development form and that every Councillor be directed to complete the form so that the Council can make the best use of its resources and can develop an effective Member training programme.

20060 Payments List: The Town Clerk presented the Payments list for recommendation to the Town Council for approval. The total payments amount to £6,874.79 and include expenditure to re-glaze 17 'failed' window units; a trailer and a range of plants and flowers.

Members asked some questions and it was then **RESOLVED** that the payments listed be **RECOMMENDED** for approval by the Town Council at its meeting on 21st October.

20061 Date of next meeting: The next meeting of Finance & Governance Committee will be on **Wednesday 11th November 2020** at 5:00pm. **The meeting closed at 6:40pm**



Clerk to the Council Date:

Chair

Date: