

FINANCE & GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 11th November 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; Parker & Watson

In attendance: Bob Bailey, Town Clerk

20062 Apologies: There were no apologies

20063 Declaration on interests and dispensations: There were no declarations of interest or dispensations for items on the agenda

20064 Urgent Business: The following items of urgent business was considered:

- 1) Skills Audit & Members Development:** The Chair noted that the form approved by Town Council had now been issued by the Town Clerk with a deadline for completion and return of 30th November 2020.

It was reiterated that the purpose of the 'audit' was to make best use of finite resources and provide Councillors with an opportunity for their own training and development and to introduce an effective development programme. **As agreed at the Town Council meeting all Councillors are encouraged to complete and return the form by the deadline.**

- 2) Cloud storage & file sharing:** The Town Clerk advised that he has not been able to complete his research of the best options for effective cloud storage and file sharing. It was reported that there are a wide range of solutions and associated costs, each with different advantages and value for money. **The Town Clerk requested, and it was agreed, that Councillor Branyan with his knowledge and experience supports the options analysis and recommendations for consideration;**

- 3) Zoom meetings:** The Town Clerk reported that given the number, importance and complexity of Zoom meetings in recent weeks they had been recorded. Permission to do this had been given at the time and, where necessary, the recordings have been shared with Councillors and other representatives attending the meetings.

This action afforded some benefits but has highlighted that the Town Council's Pro Account with Zoom only allows for 1GB per month of space in the Cloud. Councillors were advised that as current circumstances is creating demand for many more meetings, space for the Town Council's needs is proving to be insufficient - Zoom offer an 'add-on' that provides cloud storage of 100GB per month at an additional cost of £32 per month.

There followed a discussion on whether the benefits of recording meetings outweighed the additional cost and represented value for money. In response to a question, the Clerk advised that should the Town Council take up the 'add-on' it would not be committing itself to a long-term contract and could cancel at any time. **It was then agreed that the option to add 100GB of cloud storage space be approved until 31st March 2021 and its value reviewed before any extension is considered.**

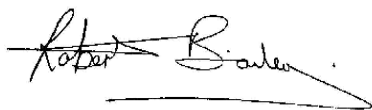
- 4) Assets:** Councillor Branyan, Chair of the Asset Management Committee brought to this Committee's attention two potential purchases being a Video doorbell for installation at Carnforth Civic Hall and a Lenovo laptop for use by the Town Clerk, who currently uses his own device for all Carnforth Town Council work.

After some discussion, **it was agreed that consideration be given to possible alternatives to the video doorbell and that the Town Council be recommended to approve the purchase of a laptop for use by the Town Clerk that will be added to the assets register.**

20065	<p>Minutes: It was RESOLVED that the notes of the meeting held on Wednesday 14th October be approved.</p>
20066	<p>External Audit Report & Certificate 2019/20: The Clerk was pleased to present the final report of the government appointed external auditors, PKF Littlejohn LLP. The committee were informed that following the Clerk's detailed response to questions raised the external auditors had concluded that in their opinion '...the information in Sections 1 and 2 of the Annual Governance & Accountability Return (AGAR) is in accordance with Proper Practices and no matters have come to our attention giving cause for concern that relevant legislation and regulatory requirements have not been met'</p> <p>The Committee thanked the Clerk for the work he had done through the year and during the audit resulting in the external auditor's positive conclusion. It was then RESOLVED that the Town Council notes the conclusion of the audit and, gives public notice detailing the rights of inspection of the accounting statements and AGAR in line with statutory requirements by 30th November 2020</p>
20067	<p>Scheme of Delegation (SofD): Considering comments made by Town Council when the first draft of the SofD was presented in October, amendments were suggested to clarify 'actions' that can be delegated to the Town Clerk in consultation with the Town Mayor and Committee Chairs and to ensure that emergency expenditure stated in the SofD is in line with adopted Standing Orders.</p> <p>It was then RESOLVED that, subject to the changes being made, the Town Council be recommended to adopt the revised Scheme of Delegation</p>
20068	<p>Budget Monitoring & Planning: The Town Clerk presented a report setting out the up to date 'Net Position' of the Town Council's budgets. The committee were asked to note that there is a favourable variance of over £62,000 arising from a combination of the award of a business grant and both unplanned and unused expenditure arising from the coronavirus pandemic.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>Given the current position it was suggested that there may be an opportunity to bring forward projects and expenditure planned for 2021/22 and/or consider other priorities in the remainder of this financial year and the next one.</p> <p>After discussion on some potential projects/expenditure on the horizon it was RESOLVED that the current net position be noted and that the Chair of Finance and Governance again directs all committees to formulate their plans and aspirations for the remainder of 2020/21 and financial year 1st April 2021 to 31st March 2022 so that a full draft budget and precept can be approved at the January meeting of Town Council.</p>
20069	<p>Effectiveness of Internal Controls: The Clerk presented a paper setting out his opinion on the effectiveness of internal controls within Assertion 1 of the AGAR – <i>Financial management & preparation of accounting statements</i>.</p> <p>The Clerk stated of the six controls set out under this assertion he had concluded that four have been achieved in full and two partially achieved. The paper set out recommendations to meet these two controls.</p> <p>After brief comments, it was RESOLVED that Councillors consider the paper in detail for further discussion at the next meeting, when a paper on Assertion 2 – Internal control will be presented for consideration.</p>

20070 **Payments List:** The Town Clerk presented the Payments list. The total payments amount to £6289.18, including grant funding of £2,000 to two community groups; the cost of the recent external auditor and a printer to be added to the Asset Register. After some comments / questions, it was **RESOLVED** that the payments listed be **RECOMMENDED** for approval by the Town Council at its meeting on 18th November 2020

20071 **Date of next meeting:** The next meeting of Finance & Governance Committee will be on **Wednesday 9th December 2020** at 5:15pm. **The meeting closed at 6:20pm**

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Robert B. Bailey', with a long horizontal line extending from the end of the signature.

Clerk to the Council Date: 12th November 2020