
MINUTES of the FINANCE AND GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE MEETING OF STANLEY TOWN COUNCIL held via Microsoft Teams on Tuesday 17th March 2020 at 6.30pm

PRESENT: Cllr J Stephenson * Cllr G Binney Cllr M Davinson Cllr H Clark
 Cllr B Nair Cllr J Kane Cllr J Nicholson Cllr J McMahon
 Cllr L Timbey Cllr D Tully Cllr C Hampson Cllr D Marshall

*Chairman

OFFICERS: James Black (Town Clerk)
 Alan Tubman (Deputy Town Clerk)
 Ann Barry (Finance Officer)
 Nicola James (Senior Administration Officer)

Before the Chair opened the meeting, she made the following announcement:

Good evening everyone and welcome to our first remote meeting of the Finance & General Purposes Committee. This meeting is taking place on Tuesday 17 November 2020 at 6.30pm and is streamed live to YouTube. It will be available for a minimum of 6 months. Please be aware footage from meetings could be used in media broadcasts. I am Jeanette Stephenson, Chair of the Finance & General Purposes Committee, and I would like to extend a warm welcome to Members, Officers, members of the public and media who are watching this live stream.

Before I commence with the formal business on the agenda, I would like to cover housekeeping issues for us all to follow.

For those taking part in the meeting could you please only speak when invited to speak by myself as chair, keep your microphone on mute at all times unless invited to speak. If you wish to speak please raise your hand. Please bear in mind all participants can see discussions in the chat function. Once invited to speak, please introduce yourself with your name and position unless you have already introduced yourself earlier in the meeting. If you are having issues with connectivity, try switching off your video and use the audio function. If connectivity issues continue, you may have to leave the meeting and re-join to get a better signal.

Please follow these simple rules as it will help us run the meeting as efficiently as possible. I will be pausing briefly when questions and comments are being invited to allow members to register their interest to speak.

As I have mentioned this is our first remote meeting of the Finance & General Purposes Committee so please be patient should we encounter any issues. Thank you.

16 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

None.

17 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

18 PROCEDURAL AND APPROPRIATE ANNOUNCEMENTS FROM THE CHAIR

The Chair welcomed James Black to his first Finance & General Purposes meeting and noted that there are an awful lot of papers and items on the agenda, so please bear with us. We are catching up.

The Town Clerk welcomed Members, Officers, public and press to the meeting. He reminded all that the meeting is being live streamed to YouTube. He thanked everyone for welcoming him to his first Finance & General Purposes meeting as the Town Clerk. He reminded Members of the etiquette for online meetings, reminding Members to have their microphones off at all times unless invited to speak, and any requests to speak should be made by using the raise hand function. The Town Clerk apologised for the delay of the meeting which was calendared for 10th November, and thanked Members for agreeing the new meeting date. A roll call was taken to ensure Members could see and hear each other and that they had access to all necessary paperwork. All Members confirmed this was correct.

19 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Nothing was received in writing before the meeting.

20 CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

It was proposed by Cllr B Nair, seconded by Cllr G Binney and **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the Finance & General Purposes Committee meeting held on 10th March 2020 be **APPROVED** and signed as a correct record.

21 ACCOUNTS FOR PAYMENT & BANK RECONCILIATION

It was proposed by Cllr M Davinson, seconded by Cllr L Timbey and **RESOLVED** by unanimous recorded vote that the Committee:
APPROVE the payment of accounts for March – October 2020 and
NOTE the bank reconciliation for March – October 2020.

22 BUDGET UPDATE

The Finance Officer advised that the Council is currently projecting a deficit outturn figure for the year ending 31st March 2021 of £27,536 due to a number of understated budgets, loss of income, additional costs of utilities, COVID grants and repairs & maintenance costs. Officers are working closely on a line by line basis to look for further in year savings.

The Committee **NOTED** the report.

23 MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL PLAN

The Town Clerk noted the report provided to Members. If Council were to repeat last years budget for 2021/22, there would be a shortfall of £144,346. The Town Clerk and Finance Officer have reviewed the base budget costs and have listed a number of options to see the variance reduced. Members need to look into making savings for next year and future years.

Cllr Timbey requested that the Town Clerk goes ahead with a full organisation review and come back to the next meeting with recommendations for Councillors to make decisions on. The cut to the Remembrance Services budget should be removed and the budget be £2000.

Cllr H Clark requested officers investigate the feasibility of the Town Council not providing funding to the Stanley Fund and look into the possibility of grants for the Town Council to apply for.

Committee agreed to the Town Clerk conducting a full organisation review, **NOTED** the report and were happy with the suggestions made.

24 AUDITED ANNUAL RETURN / EXTERNAL AUDIT

The Finance Officer noted that the audit of the accounts for year ending 31 March 2020 has concluded. The Annual Governance and Accountability Return is now available for inspection. There are three areas for improvement which are achievable for next years submission.

The Committee **NOTED** the report.

25 EMERGENCY EXPENDITURE

The Town Clerk noted the report of which sets out expenditure made under Emergency Powers outlined in the Stanley Town Constitution. Information had been previously circulated at the time of the powers being used.

Committee **NOTED** the report.

26 FINANCIAL SERVICE COMPENSATION SCHEME

The Finance Officer discussed the report and made Members aware of the options available to them.

It was proposed by Cllr L Timbey, seconded by Cllr J Nicholson and **RESOLVED** by unanimous recorded vote that the Committee recommends that Council look to set up additional bank accounts in which to deposit some of the Councils reserves

in line with the Financial Compensation Scheme restriction of £85,000, to spread the risk as soon as possible.

27 **CONTRACT REGISTER**

The Town Clerk noted that the Contract Register provided was a working document which will be reported to Committee regularly. It was proposed by Cllr L Timbey, seconded by Cllr D Marshall and **RESOLVED** by recorded unanimous vote that the Town Clerk should renew the Payroll and HR SLA's with Durham County Council as soon as possible.

28 **COMPLIANCE REGISTER**

Committee **NOTED** the report presented by the Town Clerk which shows compliance activity inspections.

29 **REDMOND REVIEW**

The Town Clerk noted the report which looks at the effectiveness of external audit and transparency of financial reporting in Local Authorities. There is little impact on the Town Council. Committee **NOTED** the report.

30 **STANLEY CIVIC HALL – HIGH PRIORITY**

(i) **Stock write off**

The Town Clerk noted the current situation. It was proposed by Cllr M Davinson, seconded by Cllr H Clark and **RESOLVED** by unanimous recorded vote that the Committee **RECOMMEND** that Council write off the Stock as reported, and offer any nonalcoholic stock to local community groups or foodbanks and Council give the Town Clerk authority to write off future stock of up to £500 per quarter, a report be provided to the Finance & General Purposes Committee and any nonalcoholic stock written off be offered to local community groups or foodbanks.

(ii) **Furlough scheme**

The Town Clerk noted the situation in relation to staff who have been furloughed. The Finance Officer noted a saving of £4700 for November and a possible further saving of £19,000 if staff continue to be furloughed until March 2021. Committee **NOTED** the report.

(iii) **Priority maintenance**

The Town Clerk advised that the full budget for maintenance for the Civic Hall has been spent. A planned maintenance programme where items of high risk require immediate action, and other works which had been identified as being able to be done while the building is closed. The full cost is £16,500 + 20% variance of which would be taken from Reserves. Some works needed

are due to Health and Safety issues. It was proposed by Cllr M Davinson, seconded by Cllr L Timbey and **RESOLVED** by unanimous recorded vote that Committee **RECOMMEND** that Council give the Town Clerk authority to spend the necessary monies on the maintenance and report back to the Committee.

31 **PAY AWARD**

Committee **NOTED** the report and **APPROVED** the Pay Award.

32 **REQUEST FOR FREE ROOM HIRE**

The Deputy Town Clerk advised that the Council had been approached by Age UK to request free room hire so they could provide a service to residents of the Town.

It was **RESOLVED** that the free room hire not be granted at this time and that the Committee suggests that they approach other advice groups (such as the advice partnership) in the area to provide this service.

33 **DATE, TIME AND VENUE OF NEXT MEETING**

The Town Clerk advised that the January Full Council meeting is scheduled for Tuesday 26th however the deadline to submit the precept demand is Friday 22nd. It was **AGREED** that the Committee propose to Council that the January Full Council meeting be brought forward to Tuesday 19th January.

Tuesday 8th December 2020, 6.30pm, via Microsoft Teams.