

WOOTTON BASSETT TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of a Meeting of the Revenue & Resources Committee held on Thursday 24th June 2010 at 7.32pm in the Council Chamber, Council Offices, Station Road, Wootton Bassett.

PRESENT: Councillors: Peter Doyle, Susan Doyle, Owen Gibbs, Mike Leighfield, Peter Roberts and Steve Walls.

Also in Attendance: Councillor: Jenny Stratton.

Officers in Attendance: Johnathan Bourne, Town Clerk
Susan Huish, Administrative Assistant
and Michelle Temple, Administrative
Team Leader

4. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Mary Champion

5. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

To receive Declarations of Interest in accordance with the Local Authorities (Model Code of Conduct) Order 2007.

Councillor Mike Leighfield declared a prejudicial interest in the final item as a founder member of the Wootton Bassett Rugby Football Club.

6. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

No announcements were made.

7. CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

RESOLVED to confirm and sign minutes of meetings of the Revenue and Resources Committee held on Thursday 18th March 2010

[R&R/6/2009-2010] and Thursday 13th May 2010 [R&R/1/2010-2010]. Copies previously emailed.

8. GRANTS/EVENTS

At a meeting of the Amenities Committee held on Thursday 3rd June 2010, a report recommending that the balance from Permitted Grants under Christmas Lights and Events be transferred to Grants and Donations was considered. A copy of the report was attached for information.

At that meeting, Members resolved that all Grant Aid awards should be managed by the Revenue and Resources Committee and that the budget and balance be transferred to Revenue and Resources accordingly.

The Committee further resolved that the full amount of £5,000 be ring-fenced for the purpose of supporting local events and that any outstanding balance at the end of the financial year 2010-2011 is not rolled over.

The Committee was asked to adopt the recommendations made at the Amenities meeting.

RESOLVED to adopt the recommendations.

9. GRANT AID APPLICATIONS

At a meeting of the Revenue and Resources Committee held on Thursday 24th September 2009, Members resolved to introduce a phased release of funds, making one third available for awards at intervals starting from June 2010. A budget of £500.00 was available for this meeting leaving a balance of £1000.00, to be equally divided at the September 2010 and January 2011 meetings.

Members received a report from Susan Huish, Administrative Assistant, detailing Grant Aid applications for consideration. Copy was attached.

The following applications were received;-

(a) Vitalise

- Criteria Assessment scored **8** out of **30**
- Legislative Power – Local Government Act 1972 Section 137

RESOLVED to make a donation of £250.00 to Vitalise.

(b) Prospect Hospice

- Criteria Assessment scored **18** out of **30**
- Legislative Power – Local Government Act 1972 Section 137

RESOLVED to declare that no grant be offered on this occasion, but advise the Prospect Hospice that the application will be further considered in the next round, at the September meeting of the Revenue and Resources Committee.

(c) Longleaze Pre School and Nursery

- Criteria Assessment scored **15** out of **30**
- Legislative Power – Local Government Act 1972 Section 133

RESOLVED to declare that no grant be offered on this occasion, but advise Longleaze Pre School and Nursery that the application will be further considered in the next round, at the September meeting of the Revenue and Resources Committee.

(d) Community First

- Criteria Assessment scored **11** out of **30**
- Legislative Power – Local Government Act 1972 Section 137

RESOLVED to make a donation of £250.00 to Community First.

Copy of the application forms, supporting correspondence and score sheets were attached.

It was further RESOLVED that Officers of the Town Council score any future Grant Aid applications for the Committees consideration.

10. CHEQUE SIGNATORIES

At a meeting of the Town Council held on Thursday 13th May 2010, Members resolved to tighten up the Financial Regulations to prevent Members of the same family signing cheques.

Banking Arrangements and Cheques, Paragraph 5.3 currently states:-

Cheques drawn on the bank account in accordance with the schedule referred to in Paragraph 5.2 shall be signed by any 2 of the following members:

*The Town Mayor or Deputy Town Mayor
The Chairman of any of the Council's Standing Committees*

Due to the fact that the possibility exists for Councillors with aligned personal or commercial interests to sign the same cheque, the Officers overseeing cheque signing will ensure that this does not happen.

It was suggested that this reads;-

*Cheques drawn on the bank account in accordance with the schedule referred to in Paragraph 5.2 shall **normally** be signed by any 2 of the following members:*

*The Town Mayor or Deputy Town Mayor
The Chairman of any of the Council's Standing Committees*

*Due to the fact that the possibility exists for Councillors with aligned personal or commercial interests to sign the same cheque, **the Council will not appoint members of the same family to sign cheques.***

RESOLVED to adopt the above.

11. REVIEW OF CORPORATE GOVERNANCE

Report from Johnathan Bourne, Town Clerk. Copy was attached.

On 9th December 2008, a suite of Corporate Governance documents covering all aspects of the Council's activities was adopted by the Council. The only document not covered was the Council's Standing Orders, as NALC [National Association of Local Councils] was expected to produce a new Model Code. This is now available.

The Committee was asked for its initial thoughts for the review of the Council's Corporate Governance documents.

RESOLVED to schedule this as follows;-

[a] Review its Standing Orders, a report be brought back for Members consideration

[b] Review its Grant Aid Criteria

[c] Undertake short, medium and long term planning for the Council, appropriate sections of the Policy Plan and Performance Management Strategy be reviewed as appropriate.

12. STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDING 31st MARCH 2010

Report from Johnathan Bourne, Town Clerk. Copy was attached.

It is a statutory requirement for the statement of accounts in each financial year to be adopted by the Council prior to their submission for audit.

During the 2005-2006 financial year, new guidelines were issued by the Government which increased the financial threshold at which a full disclosure band C audit of accounts was required, from £500,000 per annum to £1,000,000 per annum.

The Town Councils financial turnover was just short of one million pounds and given the added condition that a Council must have turnover greater than this amount for three consecutive years before

becoming band 'C' accounted, the Council has been taking advantage of not having to submit full disclosure of accounts. This is resulting in the Council making a saving on its audit fees.

However, in order to ensure continuity, accounts are still being prepared in both ways. This has the advantage that firstly Members can continue to monitor the accounts as the unaudited set will observe continuity and secondly when the Council does cross the threshold, it will not then face major difficulties trying to produce full disclosure accounts once again.

In adopting this approach though, the Council has been able to save approximately £2,500 each year whilst avoiding the pitfalls of moving away from full disclosure accounts.

This year, there has been a change for band 'C' Councils from SORP [Standard of Recommended Practices to FRSSE [Financial Reporting Standard for Smaller Entities].

Accordingly, the Council was asked to receive firstly an unaudited set of financial statements for the year ending 31st March 2010 which were prepared on the same basis as those previously submitted to the Council for approval, a copy of which was attached. The Council was then asked to receive documentation in the form of a Statutory Annual Return to the Audit Commission which from a legal point of view is the documentation that must be adopted by the Council. A copy of this was also attached.

The Councillors were encouraged to raise any detailed questions prior to the meeting so that answers can be properly researched. It should be understood that in addition to the forms circulated to Members, there is a considerable weight of documentation that must be sent to the auditors and in addition to this again there is further documentation which could be used to answer any of any Members queries.

The Council was asked to adopt the accounts for the financial year ended 31st March 2010.

RESOLVED the accounts be adopted noting that the net saving on the projection is £27,660 which represents a 3% saving on the budget projection.

Further RESOLVED to note an increase in value of the business by £148,482 which represents a 5.7% growth.

13. CONSULTATION REPORT

Report from Johnathan Bourne, Town Clerk. Copy was attached.

As a Statutory Local Authority, the Wootton Bassett Town Council has always received and been expected to comment on consultation documents usually generated by National, Regional and Local organisations. In the past these documents have been included in full Council and Committee agendas for consideration.

In recent years however the volume of these documents has increased and with the advent of Information technology, consultation documents have been made more widely available than ever before.

This poses some problems for Local Councils, as to consider all of these individually, would not be a cost effective use of the Council's time. Many documents have little or no relevance to the Wootton Bassett Town Council and their consideration by Committees at formal meetings would be futile. That said, it is not always easy to clearly identify which documents are important, as individual members each have their own views on this matter.

Over the past few years the Council has moved incrementally towards a system whereby Consultation Documents, or their email links, have been forwarded to Councillors inviting comment. However, the system has been somewhat ad hoc with no clear records being retained. Furthermore, it has not always been made clear to Councillors, that the document is for comment and that they can ask for issues of concern to be considered at the appropriate Committee.

Outlined, below, was a proposal which sought to address these points by regulating the current arrangements, offering clarity to all concerned and establishing a clear method for documenting the

outcome of each document, without clogging up the Committee agendas.

Outline of draft Procedure

1 Consultation documents identified for comment are entered onto a register held at the Town Council Offices and could be published on the Website.

2 The register records not only the document, but also some important dates: date received, date sent to members, date by which comments must be returned, date document could go to Committee (including which committee) and the date by which Councillors must request an agenda item to be raised in order to hit the Committee deadline.

3 The document, or its hyperlink, is emailed to all Councillors referencing the document and giving the key dates on the register, in particular the date by which an agenda item must be requested. This is a “call in” procedure similar to that already used by the Planning Committee.

4 Agenda items requested should be in writing by email specifying what the Councillor wants the Council or Committee to consider. Committee Chairs retain the right to request that an item go before Committee, which follows the idea of the Chairman having a watching brief over the work of their Committee. As proper officer, the Town Clerk also retains the normal legal rights over the agenda. It is further suggested that the Committee Chairs and Town Clerk will work together to help provide guidance to members where consultations should be “called in” and for what reasons.

5 If no item is requested then the Committee has an agenda item entitled “Consultation Documents” which just lists those documents that have been circulated on which no comments have been raised. This follows the model successfully established for Development Control items on the Planning Committee. The list is then entered into the minutes as a public record of the matter having been considered without the cumbersome mechanism of raising individual agenda items.

The Committees instructions were sought.

RESOLVED to adopt the procedure detailed and further recommend this to full council for adoption.

14. PRESS RELEASES

RESOLVED to issue Press Releases on the following items:-

- The 3% saving on expenditure
- Grant awards

15. PRIVATE SESSION

RESOLVED that members of the public and press be requested to leave the meeting to allow discussion of the establishment, property and finance matters as it is considered the publicity would be prejudicial by reason of the confidential nature of the business to be transacted.

Meeting closed at 8.47pm