

MINUTES of the FINANCE & GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE meeting held at Felixstowe Town Hall on Wednesday 28 September 2016 at 7.30pm

PRESENT: Cllr G Newman (Chairman) Cllr S Gallant
Cllr S Bird (Vice-Chairman) Cllr Jan Garfield
Cllr N Barber Cllr D Savage
Cllr M Deacon

OFFICERS: Mr A Tadjrishi (Town Clerk)
Mrs D Frost (Finance Administration Officer)

244. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from **Cllr A Smith, Cllr S Wiles and Cllr K Williams**

245. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Member(s)	Minute No.	Nature of Interest
Cllr S Bird Cllr S Gallant Cllr D Savage	All	Local Non-Pecuniary (as Members of Suffolk Coastal District Council)
Cllr G Newman Cllr N Barber	All	Local Non-Pecuniary (as a Members of Suffolk County Council)

246. REQUESTS FOR DISPENSATION

There were none.

247. CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

It was RESOLVED that the Minutes of the Finance & General Purposes Committee Meeting held on 27 July 2016 be signed by the Chairman as a true record.

248. BUDGET MONITORING TO 31 AUGUST 2016

Committee received the budget monitoring report to 31 August 2016.

A list of those items of expenditure exceeding budget estimates for the period by 10% or £500 was considered. Members discussed various elements of income and expenditure.

The Clerk advised that since the report had been published some additional expenditure had been incurred in preparation for the 2017 Civic Awards. This would result in a small overspend of around £11 on budget for heading 4513/301.

It was RESOLVED that the budget monitoring report to 31 August 2016 be noted with no other action required at this time.

249. BUSINESS BANKING CHARGES

Committee noted the report on Business Banking Charges. Although some savings could be made by transferring Council's current account to another provider, Members agreed that Barclays provided a secure and efficient on-line banking service, with a local branch for Council's weekly banking of receipts. It was noted that the introduction of electronic payments last year would reduce the impact of banking charges, however, receipts of cash and cheques would incur higher fees. Members advised that encouragement should be given towards payments being received via online banking as this could considerably reduce bank charges. It was considered that a review in 12 months' time year would give a Committee a clearer understanding of the impact of the new charges and give a chance to reduce monthly charges in-house by encouraging payments online.

It was RESOLVED that a review of banking charges be carried out in the autumn of 2017.

250. DEBT RECOVERY PROCESS

Committee noted that an outstanding debt had not been paid and considered approving a Warrant of Control in order to recover the outstanding debt.

It was RESOLVED that Council approve a Warrant of Control in order to recover an outstanding debt.

251. LOCAL COUNCIL AWARD SCHEME WORKING GROUP

Committee received an update from the Local Council Award Scheme Working Group and reviewed five draft supporting statements which had been prepared and the qualifying evidence list. Members agreed that the required documentation for the Gold Award should be referred to the November Council Meeting for approval. The Clerk advised that the supporting statements may require further modifying in the interim period and Committee agreed that these should be amended as the Clerk and the Finance Administration Officer thought necessary. It was understood that once the application had been submitted it would be considered by the Local Council Award Scheme Panel. Council would be given constructive feedback and suggestions to support development towards an accreditation. There were no resubmission fees.

RESOLVED that all qualifying evidence and documentation for the Local Council Gold Award be referred to Council in November and recommended for submission.

252. CONSULTATION: AUTOMATIC PRECEPT REFERENDUMS

Members considered the report regarding a technical consultation containing proposals for automatic referendums if certain criteria were met during the raising of the precept. Following a debate, Committee agreed that although

the proposals as they stood were unlikely to affect Felixstowe Town Council in the short-term – as the Band D was not likely to increase higher than that of the lowest charging district council for 2016/17 (£75.46) – parish and town councils should be rightfully expected to engage fully with their local communities before considering significant precept increases. On the basis of the proposals as written, Committee were pleased to endorse the principle of limiting council tax increases for the town and parish sector to 2% for those councils with a Band D rate above that of the lowest charging district council for 2016/17.

However, Committee felt that the cost of official referendums would be disproportionately burdensome for town and parish councils and it was hoped that an appropriately robust local consultation arrangement could be employed instead, which would not cost as much to local tax payers.

It was RESOLVED that the Town Clerk responds to the consultation on proposed technical changes to the 2017/18 local government finance settlement on the above basis.

253. SALC SURVEY

Committee considered the SALC Survey. Some Members reported as having completed the survey online already. Committee generally agreed that the themes and issues were worthy of focus by SALC but felt that the format of the survey had not been designed in such a way that was suitable for a corporate response. It was agreed that the Town Clerk would advise SALC of Committee's concerns about the survey style and to also email all Councillors to encourage them to complete the SALC survey online individually.

It was RESOLVED that the Town Clerk email all Councillors to invite them to complete the SALC survey online and to refer Committee's concerns about the survey style to SALC directly.

254. CLOSURE

The meeting was closed at 8.38pm. The next meeting was noted as being scheduled for 23 November 2016 at 7.30pm.

Date: _____

Chairman: _____