

**MINUTES of the FINANCE & GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE meeting held at
Felixstowe Town Hall on Wednesday 25 January 2017 at 7.30pm**

PRESENT: Cllr G Newman (Chairman) Cllr D Savage
Cllr S Bird (Vice-Chairman) Cllr A Smith
Cllr M Deacon Cllr S Wiles
Cllr S Gallant Cllr K Williams

OFFICERS: Mr A Tadjrishi (Town Clerk)

IN ATTENDANCE: Ms J Woodward (Felixstowe Beach Huts & Chalets Association)
Ms B Grace (Felixstowe Beach Huts & Chalets Association)
Ms J Downton (Felixstowe Beach Huts & Chalets Association)
9 Members of the public

424. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from **Cllr N Barber** and **Cllr Jan Garfield**.

425. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Member(s)	Minute No.	Nature of Interest
Cllr S Bird Cllr M Deacon Cllr S Gallant Cllr D Savage Cllr A Smith	All	Local Non-Pecuniary (as Members of Suffolk Coastal District Council)
Cllr G Newman	All	Local Non-Pecuniary (as a Members of Suffolk County Council)
Cllr S Gallant Cllr A Smith	428	Disclosable Pecuniary Interest (as owners of beach huts)

Having declared that their interests were Pecuniary in nature, Cllrs Gallant and Smith advised that they would leave the Chamber prior to any discussion on, and throughout the consideration of, item 428

426. REQUESTS FOR DISPENSATION

There were none.

427. CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

It was **RESOLVED** that the Minutes of the Finance & General Purposes Committee Meeting held on 23 November 2016 be signed by the Chairman as a true record.

At this point in the meeting, Cllrs S Gallant and A Smith left the chamber.

428. CONSULTATION: SCDC BEACH HUTS

The Chairman invited Ms J Woodward, Chairman of the Felixstowe Beach Huts and Chalets Association (FBHCA), to address Committee on behalf of around 500 FBHCA members.

Ms Woodward advised that the FBHCA were not against the principle of fair and appropriately benchmarked price increases but had significant concerns about the process and detail of the proposals which had been recommended to SCDC in the cabinet report.

Committee acknowledged the issues raised by FBHCA and considered the report. It was noted that a copy of the full consultation document which had been requested from SCDC had not been forthcoming.

Members agreed that, as 906 of the 918 huts located in the District were in Felixstowe, Suffolk Coastal District Council should consider transferring the provision of beach hut sites to Felixstowe Town Council for the benefit of the town. Notwithstanding this request, it was strongly asserted that the administration of beach huts should continue to be predominately carried out from the Town Hall.

Committee also agreed that SCDC should give particular consideration to comments to the consultation from respondents in Felixstowe as well as individual Beach Hut owners. Members were sympathetic to the challenges faced by Suffolk Coastal District Council in meeting its economic responsibilities in the forthcoming years but remained concerned that raising funds through significant increased beach hut revenues would risk the town's seafront offer and future.

Committee felt that any reassessment of beach hut fees and charges should be based on the sustainability of the offer coupled with an improvement to services provided and it was not convinced of the accuracy of the financial data presented for comparison in the Cabinet Report. Members were concerned that a ten-year lease renewal fee of £7,000 would be simply unaffordable for many existing beach hut owners, combined with a proposed real-terms doubling of the annual rental fee over the next 8-10 years.

Similarly, Members were concerned that leases offered outside the Landlord & Tenant Act would not give tenants the right to automatically renew at the end of their term and therefore little protection was being offered.

Members accepted that the current administration fee of £32.64 to transfer a licence to a new hut owner was low but felt that a proposed lease assignment fee of "three times the annual rent" was not sustainable.

Committee was most concerned that no real assessment appeared to have been made of the risk of implementing the recommendations in the Cabinet Report. Members commented that, if beach hut occupancy drops as a result of increased charges, this could be detrimental to Felixstowe's highly valuable tourism offer and the future development of the town.

It was RESOLVED that the Clerk be instructed to respond to the consultation on the basis above.

Cllrs S Gallant and A Smith returned to the chamber.

429. BUDGET MONITORING TO 31 DECEMBER 2016

Committee received the budget monitoring report to 31 December 2016.

A list of those items of expenditure exceeding budget estimates for the period by 10% or £500 was considered. Committee noted that the implementation of the recent staffing restructure was projected to impact on the expected outturn of the total staffing budget for 2016/17. This had been estimated to comprise an expected outturn for employer pension contributions of approx. £85,490 (against a budget of £62,196) and salaries of approx. £284,921 (against a budget of £270,617). Members noted that projected savings across other areas of Council's budget were anticipated to mitigate the one-off costs associated with the implementation of the staffing structure. The new structure would to provide ongoing savings to Council from financial year 2017/18.

Members thanked the Town Clerk and Council's Finance Administration Officer for the comprehensive report.

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

430. INTERNAL AUDIT REPORT – QUARTER 3 2016/17

Committee considered the Internal Audit report for the period ending 31 December 2016. It was noted that there were no matters arising or actions recommended.

It was RESOLVED that the Internal Audit Report for Quarter 3 2016/17 be noted as received with no actions or recommendations arising.

431. INVESTMENT POLICY & STRATEGY

Committee considered the Council's Investment Policy & Strategy for 2017/18 as presented which had been updated to reflect current investments.

It was RESOLVED that the Investment Policy & Strategy for 2017/18 be recommended to Council for adoption as presented.

432. INSURANCE ADEQUACY REVIEW

Committee reviewed Council's insurance provision as presented in the agenda report. Members asked the Clerk to investigate the benefits or otherwise of Cyber Liability Insurance and report back to Committee with any recommendation.

It was RESOLVED that the arrangements for insurance cover in respect of all insured risks be recommended to Council and confirmed as adequate for 2017-18.

433. CLOSURE

The meeting was closed at 9.07pm. The next meeting was noted as being scheduled for 22 March 2017 at 7.30pm.

Date: _____

Chairman: _____