

MINUTES of the **FINANCE & GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE** meeting held at Felixstowe Town Hall on **Wednesday 23 May 2018 at 7.30pm**

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

OFFICERS: Mr A Tadjrishi (Town Clerk)
 Mrs D Frost (Deputy Town Clerk)

30. PUBLIC QUESTIONS

Referring to the popular Art on the Prom event, a Member asked whether the Town Council could request SCDC to remove any beach huts from the prom at the end of August so that there would be no disruption to the event. Members understood that, due to weather circumstances, Suffolk Coastal District Council had not been able to relocate a number of beach huts on to the beach for the summer months and had agreed that around 60 huts would remain on the prom for this year only whilst a longer term solution could be found. To reduce the impact on other users the affects huts had been turned sideways to maximise the remaining width of the prom and prevent hut owner from taking up additional space when huts were open.

Members reported having received correspondence directly from individual stall holders concerns about the arrangements for this year’s event. It was understood that SCDC were working with the event organisers to minimise any likely disruption and had offered several alternative areas, such as the Pier Plaza, Beachside Events Area and the Spa Gardens, to accommodate any stall which were affected by the beach huts. It was also noted that these particular beach hut owners had been advised that they would not be able to access their huts whilst the event took place. Members agreed that, whilst the situation was not ideal, it was reasonable in the circumstances.

31. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from **Cllr N Barber, Cllr A Smith** and **Cllr K Williams**

32. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

33. REQUESTS FOR DISPENSATION

There were none.

34. CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

It was RESOLVED that the Minutes of the Finance & General Purposes Committee Meeting held on 28 March 2018 be signed by the Chairman as a true record.

35. BUDGET MONITORING FOR THE FINANCIAL YEAR 1 APRIL 2017 – 31 MARCH 2018

Committee received the budget monitoring report for the financial year 1 April 2017 - 31 March 2018. A report of any variance to budget estimates for the period greater than 10% or £500 was also received, alongside a report on Balances and Reserves. It was noted that the Annual Return for the financial year 2017-18 was prepared on the basis of the figures given, and was approved by Annual Council on 16 May 2018 due to the earlier deadline of 11 June from the new External Auditors PKF Littlejohn.

It was also noted that the Internal Audit report, which was presented at this meeting in previous years, had been reviewed at Annual Council on 16 May 2018.

RESOLVED that the accounts to 31 March 2018 and the Council's financial position as at year end 2017/18 be noted, with no other action required at this time.

36. BUDGET MONITORING TO 30 APRIL 2018

Committee received the budget monitoring report to 30 April 2018. A report of any variance to budget estimates for the period greater than 10% or £500 was considered.

RESOLVED that the budget monitoring report to 30 April 2018 be approved, with no other action required at this time.

37. REVIEW OF INTERNAL AUDIT EFFECTIVENESS

Committee reviewed the arrangements for, and effectiveness of, Council's internal audit.

Members commented on the good service received from the SALC-appointed auditor and it was proposed that the arrangement be continued on the same basis for 2018/19.

It was therefore RECOMMENDED to Council that:

- i. having reviewed the effectiveness of its internal audit, it be recorded that Council considers the arrangements to be effective; and,**
- ii. in being satisfied of the independence and competence of its internal auditor, Mr Colin Poole of the Suffolk Association of Local Councils, be appointed to continue as the Council's internal auditor, undertaking a half-yearly and year-end audit on the basis of the schedule provided by Appendix 9 of the "Governance and Accountability for Local Councils – a Practitioner's Guide 2014".**

38. STATEMENT OF INTERNAL CONTROL

Committee noted the requirement of the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 for Council to ensure that it has a sound system of internal control.

It was noted that no changes had been made to the Internal Control Statement from the previous year.

Following consideration of the Council's policy and internal control statement document it was proposed that it be recommended to Council for approval and adoption with no further changes.

It was RESOLVED that the Internal Control Statement for the year ending 31 March 2019 be recommended to Council for formal adoption as presented.

39. DIGITAL COMMUNICATIONS

Committee considered the costs and benefits of Councillors being provided with an official Town Council email address, especially with the introduction of GDPR e.g. `cllr.firstname.lastname@felixstowe.gov.uk`

For 16 councillors, paid annually the current cost would be £ 758.40 + VAT per year.

Members agreed that it would be easier to distinguish Town Council business from other business and personal emails and would add more professionalism to using a corporate email. Members would require the email to be easily accessible and very secure. Council would need to have a Security Policy in place which would ensure that passwords were protected and would detail the procedure of handing the email address back when a Member's term is over, or leaves Council.

Members agreed that it would be beneficial to introduce the official Town Council email addresses in May 2019 for the new term, once the new Council had been elected.

Committee received the report detailing figures of the approximate cost of printing out agendas for members throughout their four year term. Members discussed the introduction of electronic tablets for Agenda publication, use at meetings and the reduction of printed paper and environmental benefits. The figure of approximately £332 compared to the cost of an electronic tablet plus the software and maintenance did not make it financially proven. Members also felt that looking at a screen could be tiresome on the eyes for a long meeting and also a distraction from the meeting. Some Members also felt that the agendas were helpful for them to write notes on. It was unanimously agreed to stay with the paper version, however if Members wished to opt out of receiving the paper and use their own tablet or laptop this could be done.

It was RESOLVED that it be recommended to Council to adopt official Town Council email addresses from May 2019; paper agendas would continue to be printed, however, if Members wished to opt out of paper agendas this would be possible.

40. BUSINESS PLAN 2016-2020 – ACTION PLAN REVIEW

Committee reviewed the Council's Action Plan which had been updated to reflect progress against Business Plan objectives achieved to May 2018. Members were pleased that the review listed some genuine real achievements such as the Local Councils Quality Gold Award, completing the Community Emergency Plan and the Armed Forces Weekend. Members advised that the format of the Action Plan could be reviewed in the future in order that it may be more succinct and strategic.

The Clerk advised that the Action Plan review was the first step towards a review and update to the Council's full Business Plan. This would be brought back to Committee in July for consideration.

It was RESOLVED that the Action Plan review be agreed as presented with no changes at this time; future iterations of the Action Plan to be condensed and streamlined on a more strategic and thematic basis.

41. CLOSURE

The meeting was closed at 8.33pm. The next meeting was noted as being scheduled for Wednesday 25 July 2018 at 7.30pm.

Date: _____

Chairman: _____