

DURSLEY TOWN COUNCIL

MINUTES and REPORT of the MEETING of the POLICY & FINANCE COMMITTEE of the Council held in the Dursley Methodist Church, Castle Street, Dursley at 7:00pm on Tuesday 18th June 2024 for presentation to the Council on Tuesday 2nd July 2024.

PRESENT

Councillors: S Creswick (Chair), M Stennett (Vice Chair), A Stennett, P Hayes, J Rubin and T Stride.

Officers: L Wellings (Deputy Town Clerk).

Absent: Councillor S Abraham

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillors M Nicholson and K Eales (both personal).

(Apologies from Councillor B Schoombie received after the meeting)

2. MEMBERS DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no members declarations.

3. REPRESENTATIONS FROM THE PUBLIC

There were no public representations.

4. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meetings of the Policy and Finance Committee held on Tuesday 16th April and Tuesday 7th May 2024 were confirmed as a true record and signed by the Chair.

5. TO RECEIVE A REPORT FROM THE CHAIR OF THE COMMITTEE

The Chair had no matters to report.

6. TO NOTE & REVIEW THE INTERNAL AUDITORS REPORT

The Internal Auditor's report for the year ended 31st March 2024 was reviewed. It was recognised that no major issues had been raised, some of the recommendations made would be discussed as agenda items later in the meeting e.g risk management.

IT WAS RESOLVED to note the report; to accept small recommendations under 6.8 and 6.7; to review Council's internal control process, including the audit checklist used by Councillors, how audit outcomes could be fed back to Council, the audit rota and training and finally, in respect of holding personal data, to check that letters had been issued in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulations.

7. TO APPROVE THE REVIEWED RISK MANAGEMENT REGISTER

The draft Risk Register was reviewed and amendments were made relating to document formatting and changing wording to the present tense, to make it clear what mitigations were already 'in place' as opposed 'to be' implemented.

In relation to the protection of electronically held data, Council needed to be clear about the use of emails for sensitive data (e.g. staff reports) and the processes for ensuring downloads were avoided/or removed from devices, for example.

In relation to finance, 'borrowing to be submitted to Gloucestershire Association of Parish and Town Councils for approval' was believed to be an error and would be checked and amended.

IT WAS RESOLVED to recommend that Council adopt the document as amended by the Committee, Committee members would be given the opportunity to check the amendments again via email prior to its presentation to Council.

8. TO APPROVE THE UPDATED FINANCIAL REGULATIONS

It was noted that the updated Financial Regulations reflected the new model financial regulations template produced by the National Association of Local Councils (NALC) in April 2024.

The document was reviewed in detail and some minor amendments were made to the wording.

The following areas were identified for further work at future meetings:

- a) Review the use of paper copies relating to payments and the requirement for paper signatories following electronic approval.
- b) Aggregation of salary information related to financial reports (white/green copies).
- c) In relation to 6.8 iv, include in the new Councillor internal control auditing process.
- d) In relation to 6.9, review the information required under the Local Authorities (Data Transparency) Code 2015.
- e) In relation to online banking, review the application of the multi-factor authentication process, given signatories differing experiences.

IT WAS RESOLVED to recommend Council adopt the updated Financial Regulations, as amended by the Committee and programme the further work identified in points a) to e) above.

9. TO CONSIDER THE TOWN CLERK BE ADDED TO THE LLOYDS BANK ACCOUNT AS A SIGNATORY

It was noted that the Town Clerk had found it difficult to liaise with Lloyds Bank on banking issues without a signatory being present in the office at the time, which had led to frustrations and delays. Also compounding the difficulties, was the current low number of online signatories.

IT WAS RESOLVED to recommend to Council that the Town Clerk be made a bank signatory for the purposes of communication with the bank only and not for the approval of payments.

10. TO APPOINT A VOLUNTEER TO REVIEW STANDING ORDERS WITH THE TOWN CLERK & REPORT BACK

IT WAS RESOLVED that Councillor Creswick would review Standing Orders with the Town Clerk and report back to the next Policy and Finance Committee meeting.

11. TO CONSIDER THE PROCUREMENT OF A BOARD TO RECORD THE DEPUTY TOWN MAYORS APPOINTED BY COUNCIL

IT WAS RESOLVED that a board would not be required for the position of Deputy Mayor but that the Council's website would be updated to include a suitable page recording those appointed by Council, dating back at least 10 years. A photo of the board recording Town Mayors, located in the Town Hall, would also be included as an historical online record.

12. TO CONSIDER A REQUEST TO PURCHASE A NEW PROJECTOR

It was noted that the proposed projector (details circulated) was no longer available.

IT WAS RESOLVED that Councillor A Stennett and the Town Clerk would proceed with the purchase of a suitable projector for Council, with a budget of up to £600.

13. TO NOTE THE INTERNAL CONTROL CHECK COMPLETED IN MAY 2024

It was noted that Councillor M Patrick completed an internal control check in May 2024. Members referred back to minute item 6, where a review of the process had been agreed.

14. TO RECEIVE AN UPDATE ON INVESTMENTS & CASHFLOW

Information reports providing an update on investments and cashflow were noted.

15. BUSINESS DEALT WITH IN CLOSED SESSION

To resolve to exclude the press and public from the remainder of the meeting by reason of the confidential nature of the business.

IT WAS RESOLVED to carry out the remainder of business in a closed session due to the confidential nature of the business. There were no members of the public or press present.

16. TO CONSIDER THE STANDARD TERMS OF BUSINESS BY KINGSCOTT DIX

The terms of business supplied by the Council's current payroll supplier, Kingscott Dix, were reviewed. Questions were raised about fees and notice periods which were not clear.

IT WAS RESOLVED that although in principle the terms were acceptable, given the questions raised, sign up would be subject to confirmation of the fee. The matter could be considered at the next Council meeting. A suitable review of payroll services would be scheduled to take place in the near future.

17. TO CONSIDER ADVANCE RENEWAL OF OUR ENERGY CONTRACTS

IT WAS RESOLVED not to proceed at this time with a renewal in relation to Council's energy contracts but to consider again September time, ahead of Council budgeting. Prices across June, July and August would be sought to aid with monitoring price projections.

The meeting closed at 9:30pm.

.....Chair

.....Date