

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE ESTABLISHMENT COMMITTEE HELD ON WEDNESDAY 29TH SEPTEMBER 2021 AT 7.15PM IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER, GREENACRE CENTRE, STOTFOLD.

Committee Members present:

A Cooper (Chairman), Mrs M Cooper, S Hayes, Mrs J Hyde

Also present:

Town Clerk – Mrs K Elliott-Turner

24/21 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Mrs A Clarey, B Collier and D Matthews.

25/21 DISCLOSURE OF MEMBERS INTERESTS ON MATTERS CONTAINED IN THE AGENDA AND REQUESTS FOR DISPENSATIONS

There were no disclosures of interests and no requests for dispensations. Members were reminded that if at any time during the meeting they feel they have an interest in an item being discussed, they should declare it at that point.

26/21 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION – QUESTIONS, COMMENTS & RESPONSES

There were none in attendance.

27/21 CLERK'S REPORT, CORRESPONDENCE RECEIVED & MATTERS ARISING FOR INFORMATION

Nothing to report.

28/21 GRANT APPLICATIONS

Members considered new applications for funding (budget available £7,155).

Grants are awarded where the money is to be used for the direct benefit of the area, or part of it, or all or some of its inhabitants, and benefit obtained must be commensurate with the expenditure incurred. The decision of whether benefit would be in the interest of the area, or its inhabitants, and whether it would be commensurate with the expenditure incurred is made by the Council. Grants are awarded at the Council's discretion.

Members were reminded that as the Council has adopted the General Power of Wellbeing, no consideration into available powers is required. However, we may not go against any existing power which specifically prohibits something.

RECOMMENDED that the following grants are approved:

Stotfold Mill Preservation Trust

Amount granted: £1,500

Purpose of grant: to install security fencing in Stotfold Nature Reserve

Keech Hospice Care

Amount granted: £500

Purpose of grant: to fund 12 music and art therapy sessions advertising of their services which provides pre- and post-bereavement support to children with life-limiting conditions and their family members.

Transitions UK

Amount granted: £1,000

Purpose of grant: to provide workshop and learning materials for the Aspire Plus project – providing support for school leavers (partnership with Academy of Central Bedfordshire) at risk of exclusion and/or offending before transition through summer and into place of education, employment or training during their first year.

Bedfordshire Police & Partnership Trust

Amount granted: £750

Purpose of grant: to support the Bobby Scheme, set up and help the vulnerable and elderly victims of domestic assault by providing security assessments and advice for home and personal security – replacement door and window locks, video doorbells, key safes, etc.

Magpas Air Ambulance

Amount granted: £1,500

Purpose of grant: support to fund the ongoing costs of running our aircraft

Members were advised of an application which, although was received before the deadline for grant applications, had been delivered to the enquiries email junk inbox, and so was missed when the agendas were published. The Clerk advised that because this application was not on the agenda and it was a spend item, it could not be considered. Members noted the Clerk's advice but felt that because it was received before the agenda was issued, they wished to consider the application at this meeting.

FURTHER RECOMMENDED that the following grant is approved:

Just Out

Amount granted: £1,500

Purpose of grant: set-up costs for new community youth club

29/21 GRANT FEEDBACK FORMS

Members noted feedback forms and letters received relating to grants previously awarded.

30/21 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

Under Section 3d of Standing Orders, the Chairman proposed that the press and public are temporarily excluded whilst matters are discussed which include staffing matters and that they be instructed to withdraw from the meeting for the following agenda item only. **PASSED** by members.

31/21 STAFF APPRAISALS - CONFIDENTIAL

Office staff appraisals have been carried out for the Assistant Clerk, x2 Administration Assistants and the Finance Assistant. The Town Clerk's appraisal is yet to be carried out. Members considered requests and comments following those appraisals, as agreed to be circulated to the committee by each appraisee.

Formal thanks were given to all office staff for their continuing their hard work during a difficult period of working. Members who are also Trustees of the Eleemosynary Charity of William Field, thanked Annette Dabner, Administration Assistant, for her professionalism whilst working on behalf of the Charity on Common Road Allotments matters.

RESOLVED that the following is agreed:

- The Clerk is to carry out a staffing review to ensure staff skills are utilised to greatest benefit.
- To ensure business continuity, in-house training will be provided to office staff on the basics of each other's roles, including producing an 'office manual'.
- In-house training will be provided to office staff on Excel, Allotment software basics, Cemetery software basics.
- Office staff to undertake council paid-for training to ensure continuous professional development, as and when it becomes available.
- The Finance Assistant is to undertake FILCA (£120) (Financial Introduction to Local Council Administration) as soon as the new course becomes available.
- The Finance Assistant is to undertake training (provided by RBS or other appropriate provider, including in-house) on completion of year end accounts and annual returns, with a view to carrying out this process in-house in future years.
- The Finance Assistant is to undertake Level 4 Professional Diploma (AAT) qualification (£1,200), following successful completion of FILCA. Approving this paid-for qualification is on the agreement that should the Finance Assistant leave Council's employment within 3 years of obtaining the qualification, then a proportional re-payment of fees is due.
- The Finance Assistant is to increase her hours from 20 per week to 25 hours per week.

A request was made on behalf of office staff, who have returned to office working with the reception now open to the public, that councillor visits are kept to a minimum to ensure that there is no unintended disruption to office working. A request is made for councillors to use telephone or email to contact staff as a first action, rather than visits to the office, of course unless a face-to-face visit is necessary.

Members discussed training for councillors, and it was agreed that when training is provided to staff on Excel, this will be open to councillors to attend also. Training on use of Google Chromebooks, as the council provided IT device, will also be sought for members.

32/21 ITEMS FOR INFORMATION PURPOSES, RELEVANT TO THIS COMMITTEE ONLY

Nothing to report.

There being no further business the meeting closed at 8.54pm

MINUTES APPROVED (date):

SIGNED BY CHAIRMAN: