

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE ESTABLISHMENT COMMITTEE HELD ON WEDNESDAY 25 OCTOBER 2023 AT 7.00PM IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER, GREENACRE CENTRE, STOTFOLD.

Committee Members present:

S Buck (Chairman), Mrs M Cooper, S Hayes (Vice Chairman), Mrs J Hyde, J Smith, D Matthews (arrived at 1911), B Saunders, J Talbot.

Also present:

E Payne, Town Clerk

87/23 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

All Members were present.

88/23 DISCLOSURE OF MEMBERS INTERESTS ON MATTERS CONTAINED IN THE AGENDA

There were no disclosures of interest.

89/23 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION – QUESTIONS, COMMENTS & RESPONSES

There were no Members of the Public present.

90/23 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

Members received the minutes of the Establishment Committee meeting held on 27 September 2023 and it was **RESOLVED** that:

The minutes are a true record of the meeting.

91/23 CLERK'S REPORT, CORRESPONDANCE RECEIVED AND MATTERS ARISING FOR INFORMATION.

91/23.1 Bank Mandate

This is being updated as a matter of urgency.

92/23/1 REPORTS TO COMMITTEE

92/23.1 Review of Standing Orders and Financial Regulations

Members reviewed the Standing Orders and Financial Regulations, noting where the Town Council's documents vary from the model documents issued by NALC. Members noted the section regarding Co-Option and felt that the Town Council's procedures would benefit from being supported by a separate policy.

Members agreed that the Financial Regulations should include a Members were advised that the Financial Regulations are in the process of being updated and may need to be reviewed in the future. It was **RESOLVED** to:

a) Devise a Co-Option Policy for adoption by the next Committee meeting.

b) Defer the recommendation to adopt Standing Orders and Financial Regulations until a Co-Option Policy is agreed.

19:11 Cllr Matthews arrived.

92/23.2 Town Council Investments

The Clerk explained that due to other matters taking precedence, they had been unable to liaise with Cllr Hayes on this matter. It was **RESOLVED** to:

Defer this item to the next meeting.

92/23.3 Budget 2024-25

Members received a proposed budget for this Committee's responsibilities. It was noted that some additional work needed to be undertaken in light of the library's relocation in the Greenacre Centre and the Clerk will meet with Cllr Hayes to undertake this review. Members were advised that there was an error in the salaries budget which the Clerk had been made aware of.

Clarification was needed on the IT budget and Cllr Smith will provide some information to the Town Clerk on this budget line. Some discussion was held about paying off the Public Works Loan which had been taken out to buy the Simpson Centre. It was **RESOLVED** to:

Defer this item to the next meeting.

92/23.4 Review of Establishment's Committee Q2 Performance

Members received this Committee's Income and Expenditure report for Q2. It was **RESOLVED** to:

Note the report.

92/23.5 Review of VAT Partial Exemption

Members received a letter and report from DCK Accounting Solutions to confirm the Town Council's status relating to VAT. Members were advised that the Town Council should consider engaging sector specific VAT advice in the event of future projects which may mean the Town Council's expenditure exceeds the VAT threshold. Members considered that the cost of engaging the services of a VAT consultant would be worthwhile to avoid any breaches in VAT. It was **RESOLVED** to:

Note the letter and accompanying report.

92/23.6 Town Council Vehicle

Members considered the purchase of another vehicle for the Town Rangers and were advised that it would increase productivity and autonomy of the staff. It was also noted that the truck wasn't necessarily the best vehicle for all the activities of the Town Rangers. Cllr Hayes advised the meeting that the previous vehicle has been purchased, it had been agreed to borrow the capital from EMR S106 and to repay it back over a period of years, precepting for the repayment. The Clerk will investigate how the vehicle had been funded. It was **RESOLVED**:

- a) To purchase a Ford Tipper Vehicle at a cost of £24,094 plus VAT***
- b) That funding to be released from EMR S106 Greenacre Centre***
- c) To repay the funding to EMR at £2,409 over 10 years***

Post meeting note: The purchase of the first vehicle was from EMR Working Capital and not an EMR for S106.

92/23.7 The Haven – Christmas Tree Location

Members received a report regarding enhancing the area by The Haven which would then be the new location for the Town Centre Christmas Tree. Grand Union Housing were prepared to contribute 50% of the cost with the remaining funding from the Town Council. The area could include raised planters which could be used as a community garden. Members considered the options of concrete, block paving and resin. It was **RESOLVED** to:

Release £10,171.45 to be met from EMR Town Strategy for the enhancements to The Haven with the area to be surfaced in resin.

92/23.8 Bank Reconciliation

Members were advised that it is a requirement of internal control, as set out in Financial Regulations, that the RFO and a Councillor signs the bank reconciliations to show that they have been undertaken appropriately and that the balance matches the bank statements. It was **RESOLVED** that:

The Bank Reconciliations for April – September 2023 inclusive were signed by the RFO and Cllr Buck.

92/23.9 Work Programme

Members received the Work Programme for this committee, and it was **RESOLVED** to:

Note the work programme.

93/23 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

Members resolved to exclude the Press and Public for the consideration of the following items under the Public Bodies (Admissions to Meetings) Act 1960.

92/23.1 Staff Matters

Members were asked to clarify to the Clerk what period the Assistant Clerk's increase in salary scale had been agreed. It was **RESOLVED** that:

The Assistant Clerk has a salary uplift from 28 June 2023, for a period of 6 months, ending December 2023 when there will be a review of the staff structure.

86/23 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

20 December 2023

The meeting closed at 2020.

MINUTES APPROVED (date):

SIGNED BY CHAIRMAN: